

The Serbian Question and the Muslim-Christian Frontiers in the Middle Ages

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Abstract: *The Serbian ethno-religious war against the Muslim Bosniaks in the 1990's has re-focused world attention on a part of Europe which, in the second half of the twentieth century, had become a geopolitical backwater. The purpose of this study is to present the clash of religions in the region from a historical perspective and to show that this area has always been one of the most turbulent areas of Europe—an area in which religious passions and a spirit of historical mission drive these nations and tribes towards aggressive expansionism.*

The Battle of Kosovo Polye in 1389 is not a key event in the history of Islam in Eastern Europe. However, it is perceived by Serbian Orthodox Christian nationalists to be the most critical happening in their history. The memory of this devastating defeat plays a crucial role in the shaping of modern Serbian revengism. The Turks, Albanians and Bosnians, being Muslims, are seen by the Serbs as the greatest obstacles in their dominance over the realm which lodges their ancient Greek Catholic shrines. The myth of Serbian heroism on the battlefield of Kosovo Polye, like the Zionist legend of "the last stand" of Jews against the Roman legions in Masada, is the most important component of modern Serbian *historia sacra*. Its results determined the Serbian hostile attitude towards Slavic Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Sandjak, and Illyrian Shqepтары (Albanians) in Kosova-Macedonia.

Kosovo Polye is the Serbian "Wailing Wall," and Hercegovina, Sandjak are, for the Serbian ultranationalists, what "Judea, Samaria and Ashkelon" are for Zionist zealots in Palestine.¹

Pre-Islamic History of Serbs

Pliny, a Roman historian of the first century CE, in writing about Sarmato-Alanian (Iranian) people referred to them as "Serboi." They lived between the Caucasus mountains and the sea of Azov. In the 5th century, the Alans, or Serbs, and Khorouatos (Hrvati, Croats) migrated westwards with their powerful military masters, the Altaic Huns. Probably in Silesia, Moravia, and Poland they had been Slavicized by the local Proto-Slavic Wendes (Venetes), Polans, and Vistulanes (Vislanye).²

The ancient Greek geographer, Ptolemy located a people called *Srbi* on the banks of the river Don, in southeastern Russia. Byzantine emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenitus mentioned their barbarian *ethne* in his *De Administrando Imperio*, as living in central Poland. In 540, the Turkic Kutrigurs, known as Bulgars, had emerged as the most powerful tribe in the Steppes to the west of the Don. Allied with bellicose Avars and eastern Slavs (Sclavini, Saklaba, Antes), they invaded the Balkans and plundered Illyricum, Thrace and northern Greece. Only the heavily fortified coastal cities of Dalmatia were able to resist their assaults. In the year of Prophet Muhammad's (SAW) *hijrah*, the Slavic tribes of Bohemia, Moravia and southern Poland, or White Khrobatia (Croatia), rose up against the supremacy of Avars with the help of Samo, a Frankish mercenary. Moravians, Serbs, Slovenes and Croats (*Hrvati*) were used by the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, in order to serve as a buffer against the ferocious Slavic Narentanes, Travunianes, Duklianen, Convalanes, Brsiaci, Drugavici, Sugadici, Rynkhynes, Velegesites, Vayunici, Yezerci and Milingovies who devastated Macedonia, Greece and Illyrium (Albania). The Serbs, as a Byzantine *foederati*, were permitted to occupy a vast territory of the Balkans. They displaced the old Albanian inhabitants of the Adriatic coast and expelled the Avars. Serbian tribes emigrated from "White Serbia" and Lusitia (present-day Saxony, East Germany). The existence of "White Croatia" and "White Serbia" in Silesia, Bohemia, and southern Poland is verified by the testimony of medieval Muslim Arab geographers.³ On their arrival in the Balkans, the Slavicized Croats and Serbs became subjects of Constantinople, and were converted to Christianity by Clement and Naum, missionaries educated by Cyril

(Constantin) and Methodius. Clement was the author of the much simpler Slav alphabet than Methodius's *glagolica cirilica*.

The Avaro-Slavic invasions of the sixth and seventh centuries completely annihilated the early Christian culture of Romanized Illyrians, who retreated before the Serbs and Croats into the mountains of Epir. Emperor Heraclius made a deal (*prostaxis*) with the Croats, promising them possession of all lands which they could capture from the pugnacious Avars and their Slavic collaborators. In 626, the Croats defeated the Avars and other Slavic tribes near Constantinople. Four years later they established their own tribal kingdom of Croatia ruled by semi-legendary Arhon Hrvat (625-635) who was succeeded by his son Borko (635-660). In 753, Budimir (740-780) was crowned as the first Roman Catholic ruler of Croatia and Dalmatia by Pope Stephen II's legate, Honorius.⁴ In the tenth century, two other peoples emerged in the Balkans: the Vlachs (Vallachians) from Bessarabia-Moldavia (ancient Daciae) and the Shqepтары (Albanians). Their ethno-racial origin has been the subject of much controversy, and their early settlement is obscure. In the earliest Osmanlı *defters*, Vlachs are described as the Christian nomads who settled down in remote regions of eastern Zahumlje (Hercegovina), and in the last decades of the XVth century CE, they established their primitive hamlets in central Bosnia. In 1530, the Habsburg envoy Benedict Kuripesic, who explored Muslim-dominated Bosnia, wrote that "Orthodox Christian Serbs from Smerdovo and Beograd came to Bosnia and call themselves Vlachs."⁵ Both the Osmanlı authorities of Muslim Bosnia, and the Catholic Habsburg overlords of Croatia used them as their Orthodox proxies known by the Greek name of *martolosi* or in the Slavic vernacular tongues as *voynuki* (in Bosnian language *vojnaci*). They were regarded by both as savage and cruel irregulars who mutilated their victims. The Vlach *vojnuki* operated inside the military frontier zone, or the Austrian Militärgrenze (in Slavic languages, *vojna krajina*, which separated the Muslim north-western Bosnia from the Habsburg-occupied Croatia). In 1527, Emperor Ferdinand I, the king of Hungary and Croatia, empowered the Vlachs by a special edict which allowed them to chose their own chieftains or *voivodas*, and in 1630, Ferdinand II affirmed the special privileges for them known as *statuta valachorium*.

The true ethnic origin of the Bosnian Serbs and Serbized Vlachs is still unknown. Were the Vlachs indigenous people from ancient Romanized Dacia or from eastern Poland where they were known to Kievan Ruses and Turks as the *Lachi* or *Lehi*? In the early Middle

Ages, Byzantine rulers employed these pastoral people as auxiliaries in their armies and called them *Mavrovlachos* or *Morlachi* (Moorish Vlachs). They were apparently descendants of barbarian soldiers from Mauretania Tingitana (today Morocco) who served in the Roman legions stationed in Dacia where they mixed with the migrating Slavs, Huns, Avars and Bulgars. Known to Venetian merchants as the *Nigri Latini*, or "Black Latines," the Romanized Daco-Mauro-Slavo-Bulgars occupied many pastures in Bessarabia, Vallachia, Transylvania, Dalmatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Thrace. Probably the original cradle of the Vlachs was located in some northern realm of the ancient Roman provinces of Moesia, Dacia, and Dalmatia, where barely Latinized-barbaric populations were later assimilated by the invading Avars and Slavicized Serbs. Like the Turkic Bulgars, the "Black Vlachs" or *Mavrovlachos* lost their ethnic identity and accepted Orthodox Christianity from Greek missionaries. In the Osmanlı Islamic state, these Dalmatian and Bosnian *Morovlachi* were called *Karavlachi* (Black Vlachs) and were regarded as the most ruthless and uncivilized among the Christians. The Osmanlı sultans, like the Greek Orthodox emperors and the Roman Catholic Austro-Hungarian monarchs, gave them *timars* in return for their military assistance, and the Morlachian leaders were treated almost like the Muslim *spahis* class. They were released from the tax on *dhimmis*, in exchange for the so-called *rusum-i eflak*, an exceptional tax for the Morlachs in the form of a sheep and a lamb from every household on St. George's Day each year.⁶ Some of them accepted Islam but most of the Morlachi turned Serbs and created a distinct ethnic and religious group of the so-called "Bosnian Serbs."⁷

In the fourteenth century, the Illyrian Albanians Shqepetaris colonized Macedonia and Kosova with a force which has been compared in its range to the earlier Avaro-Slavic invasions. The Croats, or Hrvats, accepted Arian Christianity in 450, but in 652, they were converted to both Roman Catholicism and Greek Orthodoxy. In the ninth century, the first Christian state of Croats was formed along the Dalmatian coast. The founder of the new ruling dynasty was Prince Trpimir. The state of Hrvati reached the apogee of its might in the first half of the tenth century, when Prince Tomislav was crowned king of Greater Croatia. His state occupied the western part of Bosnia. Weakened by internal power struggles, the Croatian kingdom was invaded by the Hungarians. In 1095, the last Croatian ruler, Petar Svacic, was killed by Hungarian troops in the battle of Mount Gvozda.

The expansionist ambitions of the Roman Catholic kings of Hungary

and the continuous attempts of the papacy to destroy the independent Bosnian church of the Manichean semi-Christian sect known in the early Middle Ages as Paterenes, Bogomils, Babuns, Paulicians and Theophiles, complicated the political situation of the Bosnian state founded in the 12th century by Kulin. During the rule of Kulin's successors, the Bogomil "deviation" regained its popularity, and the Anjou (Andegavin) kings of Hungary constantly appealed to the pope to launch a crusade against Bogomils in Bosnia and Zahumlye (Hercegovina). In 1377, after the fall of the Serbian kingdom, the Bosnian King Trvtko I crowned himself as ruler of Bosnia and Serbia.

The names of Serbian chieftains in the ninth century AC have not been preserved, with the exception of the warlord Vlastimir; and it is not until 830 that we hear of a Grand Zupan of Servia, known as Voislav, who ruled over a loose confederation of barbarian tribes who used to meet together in an assembly called *Skupchtina*.

The Serbs: "Christian Rampart of Europe"

The decay of the Byzantine state affected the relations between the Eastern Orthodox Empire and the nominally Eastern Orthodox Serbia. The Serbian Church acquired partial home rule (*autokephalia*) under St. Sava (1176-1235), who was consecrated at Nicaea as an archbishop of Serbia. In 1346, an autonomous Serbian Patriarchate was formed, which was recognized by the Church of Constantinople in 1375. Culturally and politically, the Serbs retained, in the 13th century, their go-between vicinity between Roman Catholic western Europe and Greek Catholic (Orthodox) eastern Europe, a position embodied by Nemanja's double baptism. His son secured a regal crown from the pope, however, the Byzantine Orthodoxy was still a dominant denomination in the Kosova, the cradle of the Serbian duchy of Rashka. The eastern Orthodoxy was not totally Greeko-Slav in character. The Church of Romania, the second largest Orthodox Church in the Balkans, was predominantly Latin.

This transitional situation changed in the beginning of the 14th century when Serbian expansionism led to the annexation of Byzantine domains in Macedonia. Byzantium conferred two gifts upon the Serbs: the doctrine of ascendancy of the Christian nation in a Slavic disguise, and the anti-Islamic credo formulated later by the Greek ethnarchs and monks on Mount Athos. Until the Turkish colonization of the Balkans and the Islamization of southern Europe, the Serbs "without severing their contacts with their western neighbors, remained within the orbit

of Byzantium, mainly through the church."⁸ The religious dichotomy of medieval Serbia was manifested in the political opportunism of the Serbian rulers, who cultivated good relations with the papacy of Rome and the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Seven monarchs of the Nemanja dynasty who ruled Serbia between 1168 and 1371, recognized the pope's authority. Stephen Dushan declared his readiness to recognize the papal superiority in exchange for being nominated the "Captain of all Christians." Simultaneously, he regarded himself as the successor of the Greek emperors.⁹

As emperor of Serbia and Romania, Stephen Dushan acknowledged the preeminence of the *basileus* (sovereign) of Constantinople as a legitimate overlord of the Orthodox commonwealth or *oikumene*. To the Serbs, the sturdy vitality of the Byzantine traditions in the Balkans emerged as the rampart of Orthodox Christianity in eastern Europe. In 1367, Byzantine Emperor John Cantacuzenus, in a dialogue with the legate of Pope Urban V, declared that "the Bulgars, the Serbs and their like are our brothers in *homopistoi* (belief)."¹⁰ In 1169, the Serbian ruler Stephen Nemanja invaded Bosnia and persecuted those who did not follow the tenets of the Greek Orthodox Church. But the annexation of Bosnia, Hercegovina and Croatian Dalmatia, brought upon Serbia the hostility of Andrew II, the king of Hungary, who recognized Bosnia and Hercegovina as a buffer state between Roman Catholic Croats and Greek Catholic Serbs.

Following the traditional Byzantine policy of playing off one Balkan people against another, Byzantine emperors established a kind of balance of power between their Bulgarian and Serb vassals. In the fourteenth century, the Muslim Osmanlı Turks were destined to overthrow both the decaying Greek empire and the Serbian kingdom. In 1301, Emperor Andronicus II proposed to the Serbian czar Stephen VI "Milutin" a matrimonial alliance between the two Orthodox states against the Muslim Turks in Asia Minor. The marriage of the old Stephen to the emperor's daughter Simonis (34 years younger than her Serbian husband) allowed the Byzantine emperor to use the Serbs against the Turks. She was five years old when her marriage was consummated by the old Serbian despot. This pathetic Greek princess was never able to have children. Simonis died in pain as an unhappy woman. In 1303, Serbian troops crossed into Asia and attacked the Osmanlı *devlet*. Twelve years later Andronicus once more applied to his Serbian son-in-law for help against Turkish intervention in Thrace. The Serbs won the battle and murdered several hundred Muslim war-

prisoners. The brutal slaughter of Turkish captives was for the Osmanlıs a clear *casus belli contra Serviae*. Stephen VI died in 1321, and the Serbian clergy at once proclaimed his eldest son Stephen VII "Urosh" as the king of Serbia. During his short reign, the Serbs invaded Hungary and defeated the Bulgarian army of Czar Michael on the field of Velbuzd on 28th June 1330 which led to the partition of Macedonia. Stephen Urosh's second wife was also a Greek princess. She plotted against her stepson Stephen, who received the surname *Dushan* (the strangler), from the Serb verb *dushiti*, which means "to strangle," because he murdered his own imprisoned father, Stephen VII, by suffocating him in 1336.¹¹

Stephen VIII Dushan repented his patricide by building numerous Orthodox churches in Serbia, Macedonia, and occupied northern Bosnia. According to a popular story, with the death rattle in his throat, Stephen VII Urosh cursed his cruel son and the Serbian kingdom. His curse was fulfilled. The reign of Dushan was the climax of Serbian power. In 1350, Stephen Dushan incorporated Bosnia and Hercegovina into Serbia, but the Bosnian *bans* (barons) never recognized it. He called himself the "emperor of all Serbs and Romans." Meanwhile Turkish Sultan Orkhan, called by the Byzantine emperor Cantacuzene to halt Serbian expansion in eastern Thrace, crossed into Europe. Theodora, Cantacuzene's daughter was Orkhan's wife. In 1345, the six-thousand-strong Muslim army landed in Thrace, and the Serbs were repelled. Four years later, the Christian father-in-law of Sultan Orkhan again appealed for the help and intervention of Muslim troops. About 20,000 Muslim troops, led by Sultan Orkhan, defeated the Serbs near Salonika and "extinguished forever their hope of replacing the Byzantine empire in Constantinople."¹²

On December 18, 1356, Stephen Dushan was poisoned at the village Diavoli, about 30 miles from Constantinople, when his troops captured Adrianople (today, Edirne). Immediately, the Bosniaks liberated their country from the Serbian yoke under the command of Stephen Trvtko. In 1376 the victorious Bosnian King Trvtko proclaimed himself "King of Bosnia, Servia, and the sea-coast." In the meantime, the Muslim peace-keeping troops, under the command of Sulaiman, restored the rule of Cantacuzene. They received from the Byzantine emperor a small citadel of Tzympe on the European side of Dardanelles. After this, a strong earthquake destroyed several Christian bases and miraculously demolished the walls of the biggest Byzantine fortress of Gallipoli, near the Muslim-occupied Tzympe. The Christian soldiers of

Gallipoli who survived the tremor believed that the earthquake was an apparent manifestation of God's will. The Turks entered "the open gate of Europe" without any opposition. Sultan Orkhan informed the Byzantines that "Allah having manifested His will in my favor by causing the ramparts to fall, my troops have taken possession of the city Gallipoli with thanks to Allah."¹³

After Cantacuzene's abdication, Emperor John Paleologus recognized the Turkish Muslim settlement in Thracian Chersonese. Orkhan and his son Sulaiman reduced the imperial power of the Byzantine ruler to the role of Christian client of the Islamic state. In 1363, Sultan Murad I crushed the Byzantine and Serbian armies at Eski Baba, and captured Adrianople without a siege. The battlefield retains until today the name of "Serbian Rout." Without delay, Pope Urban V declared a crusade against the Turks and sent twenty five thousand Serbian, Vallachian and Hungarian troops to the valley of the Maritza river, near Adrianople. The Christian coalition was completely destroyed by the Turkish army led by Ilbek. Louis Anjou, the king of Hungary, escaped from the battlefield. In 1371, the Turkish army captured the Serbian fortress of Nish and decimated the united armies of Bulgars and Serbs in the battle of Samakov near Sofia. Daughter of Bulgarian prince Shishman entered Sultan Murad's harem and the Bulgarian Rumelia was incorporated in the Osmanlı *devlet*. Serbian prince Lazar continued the war against the Turks until his execution, which took place after the Muslim victory over his army at Kosovo Polye. Only the tragic martyrdom of Sultan Murad and the ill-fated campaign of Murad's son Bayezid I "Yilderim" (Thunderbolt) against the Turkoman invasion of Anatolia led by Tamerlane resulted in the disastrous defeat of the Osmanlı army at Ankara in 1402, and gave another fifty years of decadence to Byzantium. On May 29, 1453, the valiant army of Muhammad II Abul Fatih captured Kustantiniyya al-Uzmā (Constantinople) and made it the new capital of the Osmanlı *devlet*. In the period of the Seldjuks, the name of Istinbol was used in the description of the City of Constantine. Al-Mas'ūdī mentioned that as early as the 10th century (4th H), the medieval Greeks called the city Bulin, and Stanbulin, a vernacular form of *ees ten polin*—"to the city"). The Muslims called it also *Rumiyya al-kubrā*, *Takht-i Rūm*, *Ghulghule-i Rūm*, *al-Mahmiyyā*, and *al-Mahrūsā*. Muhammad II Fatih renamed it *Islam-bol*, "the city of Islam." The geopolitical magnitude of the conquest of Constantinople was unparalleled along with his other amazing victories. Thanks to the professionalism of his *topdjular*

(gunners), *khumbardilar* (bombardiers), *toparabadjilar* (drivers of cannons) and *laghmidjilar* (sappers), the whole siege took less than 60 days (from April 6, 1453/26 Rabī I, 857 until May 29/Djumādī I, 20). By the conquest of the capital of eastern Orthodox Christianity and the heart of the Greek empire, Muhammad (Mehmet) II Fatih assumed a venerable title of "The Holder of the Sword of the Ghazawah," and became a legitimate "Kaisar," or successor to the last Greek emperor Constantine XI Paleologus, who was killed by Turkish *akyndjy*. According to the medieval European war tradition, as the possessor of the imperial *polis*, he had a right to all the territories once under the political and religious jurisdiction of the Eastern Roman Empire, including the Balkans, the Crimea, and Italy. Following the Byzantine tradition, the victorious sultan claimed the superiority of Constantinople over Rome. The acquisition of "the First Rome," the legendary Turkish *Kizil Elma* (the "Golden Apple" or the copper-clad dome of St. Peter's Basilica) was the ultimate goal for the Osmanlı *ghazawah*. In order to legitimize the annexation of the Serbian despotia, Muhammad II always alluded to his inheritance rights through the marriage of Sultan Bayezid I with the Serbian princess Olivera (Despina), a daughter of Prince Lazar, who was decapitated after the battle at Kosovo Polye.

Hungarian kings considered Serbia, Bosnia and Vallachia (Turkish, *eflak*) as their sphere of influence. The anti-Turkish alliance of the powerful Republic of Venice and the Kingdom of Hungary, confronted by the Osmanlı *devlet* in the Aegean sea, Bosnia, and in Albania, resulted in the so-called Long War (1463-1479/867-884H). Venice lost Euboea in Greece and Ishkodra (Shkoder) in Albania. The Long War ended with a sound Turkish victory, and Venice had to pay an annual tribute of 10,000 golden ducats to the Islamic state of the Osmanlıs.

The last stronghold of Serbian resistance, the huge fortress of Smederovo on the Danube river, controlled by George Brankovic, fell to Sultan Muhammad II in 1459. After the downfall of the Serbian "rampart of Christendom," the Hungarian kingdom was designed by the popes of Rome to block the Turkish colonization of the Balkans, as the next *antemurale Christianitatis* or "the bulwark of Christianity" against the expansion of Islam in eastern Europe. The papacy concluded that orthodox Serbia was not worth a Catholic mass.

The disintegration of Dushan's "Greater Serbia" was surprisingly rapid. The battle of Kosovo Polye (the Field of Blackbirds) shocked the Serbs. In memory of the national disaster, they produced the most

pathetic songs and mourning poems filled with obsessive anti-Turkish and anti-Islamic messages.

Expansion of Islam in Eastern Europe

The papacy worked tirelessly to organize crusades against the victorious Turks, but the great schism of 1378-1417, when there were simultaneously two competing popes in Rome and Avignon—and at one point three—made the anti-Islamic coalitions futile. The French and Genoese invasion of Hafsidian Tunis led by Louis of Clermont was repulsed by the well-organized Muslim defenders of the North African ports. In 1396, the Turks annexed the Danubian town Vidin. An appeal of Hungarian King Sigismund went around the West for a new anti-Turkish crusade to halt the victorious advance of Islam in Central Europe when the kings of England and France had already been considering an anti-Islamic alliance. In April 1396, a huge Christian army led by the Count of Nevers, John of Burgundy, began to amass in Hungary. The French, Burgundian and Hungarian armies were joined by Teutonic Knights, Flandrian, Scottish, Savoyan, Lombardian and English troops led by the Earl of Huntington. The Western armies marched to Buda, to meet King Sigismund of Luxemburg, who was waiting with a formidable force of crusaders from Spain, Italy, Poland and Bohemia (Czechs). They were supported by the united Venetian and St. John Hospitaller fleet, under the command of the Master Philibert of Naillac, which was making its way via the Bosphorus Strait into the Kara Deniz (Black Sea) and along the Danube river.

It was the largest Christian international army that had ever confronted Islam. The Western crusaders massacred the Muslim garrison of Vidin, who opened its gates, and murdered all inhabitants of Rahova and Nish, including a large number of Serbian and Bulgarian Christians. Sultan Bayezid "Thunderbolt," who was besieging Constantinople, immediately marched westward. On 21 Dhul'Hidjdja 798 (25 September 1396), near Nicopolis (Turkish, *Nigepulu*), the Muslim light cavalry challenged the heavily armoured Christian crusaders. After the first skirmishes, Vallachians, Hungarians and Transylvanians deserted the battlefield. The flower of Western knighthood were taken prisoners, ten thousand Christian warriors perished in the battle, and the sultan paraded his Anglo-Frankish captives as far as Afghanistan to exhibit his might to the Islamic Ummah.¹⁴ The Muslim army also included international Islamic forces, *ghazis* from Tatar khanates, Iran, Syria, Egypt, Khorasan (Afghanistan)

and Caucasus. In the battle of Nicopolis the Serbian Christian detachment fought on the Muslim side, as a loyal ally.

In 1443, Pope Eugenius IV, who successfully subjugated the Eastern Orthodox Church to Rome, launched a new crusade against Islam in the "frontline states" along the Danube. Janos Corvinus Hunyadi from Transylvania invaded the Turkish protectorate of Serbia, and forced Sultan Murad II to sign a truce with Polish and Hungarian King Ladislav Yagiellon at Szegeed in 1443. Yanos Hunyadi was a Vallachian who had emigrated from Vallachia to Transylvania. He took part in the anti-Hussitian crusades in Bohemia and supported the Polish King Vladislav Yagiellon in his struggle for the Hungarian crown. Polish-Hungarian King Vladislav rewarded Hunyadi with the title of "*voivoda* of Transylvania." As the potentate of Transylvania and a very rich feudal warlord, Yanos Hunyadi dared to challenge the Osmanli power in the Balkans and was punished by Medjid Beg of Vidin, who raided Hunyadi's domains in Transylvania. Hunyadi's army was defeated by the Mejid Beg's troops in Alba Iulia on 18 March 1442, but the Turkish commander of Vidin was killed four days later in an ambush.¹⁵ In the meantime, the Serbian wife of Murad II, Sultana Mara (Maria, daughter of George Brankovic) mediated in the Turco-Serbian negotiations which restored the power of her father and brothers as the legitimate rulers of Serbia. When the Bosnian Catholic king rebelled against the Osmanlis and refused to pay his annual tribute, the young Polish king was incited by the papal legate Julius Cesarini to break the peace treaty. Eneas Silvius Piccolomini (later Pope Pious II) wrote about this act of obvious political perfidy:

At the same time in Hungary, obligated to comply with the peace treaty with the Turks... Cardinal Julian sent by the Pope Eugene with mission to Bosphor... has been instructed to counsel King Vladislaus, who waged the war, to break the pledge which is against the advantage of Christian religion.¹⁶

Also Iohannes de Thurocz, a Hungarian author of *Chronica Hungarorum* condemned the papal legate's fraudulent policy:

The accord settled for coming years... after established pact... by the king and ruling governor... Cardinal Julian violated...¹⁷

Sultan Muhammad II Fatih, a son of Murad II, wrote in his letter to Ibrahim Beg (1445), that the "Christian king cheated and broke his own pledge."¹⁸

In 1444, the Christian army of 20,000 crusaders led by the King Vladislav and Yanos Hunyadi, supported by auxiliary troops of the ruler of Vallachia, Vlad Dracula "the Devil," invaded the Bulgarian coast. Vlad the Devil (1436-1447), who was released from Turkish captivity in 1443, quickly regained the throne of hospodar of Vallachia occupied by Besarab II, a son of Dan II, but Yanos Hunyadi eliminated him from the game of power over Vallachia in 1447 by his support of a second son of Dan II, Vladislav II. Vlad Dracula the Devil was captured by his own boyars and executed.

Polish Christian public opinion was unanimously against the anti-Turkish crusade. In December, near Varna, the crusading army was wiped out by the Muslim troops led by Sultan Murad II. Cardinal Julius Cesarini, a papal legate who inspired the crusade, fled from the battlefield and drowned in swamps with his moneybags. King Vladislav was captured by a Turkish ordinary soldier and beheaded. His head, raised upon a lance with a copy of the broken treaty, was exhibited to the defeated Christians as a lesson and punishment for their infidel artifice. "Yanko" Hunyadi retreated to his Hungarian headquarters. Ironically, the battle of Varna was initially reported in Venice as a "Christian victory."

The failure of the crusade sealed the fate of Moldavia and Vallachia. After the death of the Moldavian despot, Stephen the Great—named by the pope as *Athlete Christi*—Moldavia became a vassal state of the Osmanli *devlet*.

The Venetian Doges of Serene Republic had restored their enterprises with the Islamic state on February 23, 1446. Alfonso V, the king of Aragon, Naples and Sicily, sadly acknowledged that his great idea of the reestablished Latin empire from Constantinople to Tudela, with himself as emperor, was a reckless daydream. On October 19, 1448, Hungarian, Serb, Vallachian, German and Czech troops led by Hunyadi were obliterated by the Turkish *sipahis* on the "Fields of Black Birds" at Kosovo, where fifty nine years earlier, the Serbs had been defeated.

The second crushing defeat of the Christian armies at Kosovo Polye in 1448, defanged for some time to come the irregular militia led by Yanos Hunyadi, who terrorized the Muslim Turkish settlers in Bosnia. Hunyadi, who again escaped from the battlefield, was captured by Serbian peasants and taken to Brankovic. However, in the end of 1448, he was released from captivity after the humiliating treaty dictated to

him by the Serbian vassal of the Turkish sultan. In the next year, Pope Nicolas V freed him from a promise made to the Serbian ruler. In the second battle at Kosovo Polye, Muhammed II, son of Murad II, experienced his first major battle against infidels in Europe.

In the Albanian mountains, Christian chieftain Skanderberg Kastriota, another of the pope's "champions of Christ" (*Athlete Christi*), waged a vicious guerrilla warfare against Turks and new Muslim Serbs, but twenty years later the majority of Albanians accepted Islam.

In 1456, Muslim troops led by Hassan Aga suffered a defeat in the besieged Serbian town of Beograd (Belgrade). Hungarian and Serbian Christian troops from Krajina agitated by a fanatical Franciscan monk Giovanni da Capistrano and led by "Yanko" Hunyadi defeated the almost invincible Janissaries. The city of Belgrade (Slavic, "White City") won fame among the European Christians as "The Wall of Christendom" (*murus Christianitatis*). After the battle a plague decimated the victorious Christians, and both Hunyadi and Capistrano died from typhoid. Hunyadi's war crimes and his paranoid anti-Muslim ardor made his name a synonym of *furor Christianicus* among the Muslims of Eastern Europe. In contrast to Christian warfare, the Osmanlı Turks observed strict Islamic discipline in their war campaigns. Even the slightest damage to orchards, gardens and farms along the warpath was punished by the Turkish beys and agas with merciless severity. In his diary, the Caliph Sulaiman Kanuni (the Magnificent) wrote:

May 10, 1526. A soldier is decapitated for trampling down the harvest, near the village of Kamal... *May 11.* Two soldiers accused of stealing horses have their heads cut off... *June 5,* Two *silihdars* (sword-bearers) are decapitated for pasturing their horses in unharvested fields.¹⁹

The Osmanlis, as a medieval Muslim superpower, were obligated to protect their own co-religionists and *dhimmis* organized into *millets*. There was only one way to deal with men like Hunyadi, Kastriota or Dracula the Impaler: the creation of military security zones (*thughur*) in the Danubian frontline principalities, and northward military augmentation. On Christmas Eve, a few months after the setback in Beograd (Belgrade), the last despot of Christian Serbia, George Brankovic, died suddenly, and Muhammad II Fatih annexed his domain. The Serbian Christian warlords themselves became divided between the pro-Osmanlı

and the pro-Hungarian parties. The capture of the Serbian capital Smederevo (Semendire) by the Turks in 1459 marked the end of the chimera of medieval Greater Serbia.²⁰

One year earlier, Sultan Muhammad II Fatih invaded the two Greek despotates of Morea, the last refuge of the Byzantine elite who had collaborated closely with the Republic of St. Marc. In Athens, the sultan, impressed by its ancient relics, affirmed Greek Orthodox civil liberties and exemption from taxes. The last Paleologus, despot Demetrius, expressed his full support for Muslim supremacy in Greece, but his rebellious brother Thomas called the pope's navy for help. In 1460, once more, Sultan Muhammad II moved his troops into Greece. Despot Thomas fled to Rome. Pax Osmanica "replaced the feuds of Franks, and the Greek people were treated with reasonable tolerance, — unburdened from excessive taxation, exempted from the tribute of children, and permitted freedom to trade and to elect their own local government."²¹

With the fall of Paleologues, the last Byzantine dynasty of Comnenes renounced its sovereignty, and the "emperor of Trebizond," John IV, declared himself a vassal of Muhammad II. After the ill-fated conspiracy of "Emperor David" (John IV's brother), Trebizond was incorporated into the Ottoman *devlet*.

In 1461, the monstrous Vallachian, son of Vlad "Dracul" the Devil, Vlad III Tepesh "the Impaler" (1456-1462) formed a new anti-Muslim coalition led by the Hungarian King Mathias Corvinus. Vlad the Impaler's army crossed the Danube river and invaded the Ottoman Bulgaria (Rumelia). Vallachian sentenced more than 20,000 Muslim and Christian Bulgars to be impaled by burning stakes and to be crucified. Sultan Muhammad II Fatih drove back the savage hordes to Vallachia, and his gallant irregular militia (*bashi-buzouks*) finally overcame the horror of Vlad Tepesh's rule. In the course of the liberation, the Muslim troops marched in a "horrible forest of rotted human remains of some twenty thousand tortured Muslims—a grim example of the mass execution which Dracula liked to stage for his pleasure and for the edification of his neighbors."²²

Vlad Tepesh who escaped to Moldavia (Turkish, *Kara Boghdan*) was succeeded in Vallachia by his brother Radu cel Frumos "the Handsome," a loyal vassal of the Islamic State. But in 1463, the ruler of Moldavia, Prince Stephen invaded Vallachia, and the Turks were again forced to intervene in the Danubian protectorate. Stephen was decisively defeated by the united armies of Turks and Crimean Tatars

under the command of Sultan Muhammad II Fatih. In 26 November 1462, Vlad Tepesh the Impaler was captured by Hungarians and he spent twelve years in Buda as a hostage of King Matthias Corvinus, the son of Yanos Hunyadi. Released to fight the new crusade against the Muslims, the Vallachian Dracula in league with the Transylvanian warlord Stephen Bathory, the Moldavian ruler Stephen, and Serbian rebel Vuk Brankovic, launched a vicious assault against the Turks in 1476. However, after a siege of Bucaresti (Bucharest), in December of 1476, he was killed probably by Turkish scouts. His head was sent to Istanbul, and his terrible life passed from history into a horror story.²³

After the fall of the Serbian "empire," the Kingdom of Bosnia was ruled by Roman Catholic kings, who supported the pope's anti-Pateren crusades. The majority of Bosnians were followers of the Bosnian Church or Bosanska Crkva which was declared by the popes as a congregation of "false Christians" (*erat fictus Christianis*). Popes, Hungarian mercenaries, local Catholic kings and Franciscan monks tried to change their mind by a special section of the infamous Spanish Inquisition led by cardinal Juan de Torquemada (relative of the fanatical persecutor of Andalusian Muslims, the Grand Inquisitor Thomas Torquemada). Cardinal Juan Torquemada issued an edict against the "deviationist" teachings of three Bosnian Bogomils: Duro Kucinic, Stojan Trvtkovic and Radomilo Vocinic.²⁴

In 1463, the pope of Rome crowned Prince Stephen Thomas "the Bastard" as a Roman Catholic king of Bosnia (*Dei gratia rex Bossine*), who immediately withheld his tribute to the Sultan Muhammad II. He desired to rule over Serbia with an iron fist in the purple glove of the Catholic cardinals. Stephen Thomas was a nephew of Stephen VI Trvtkovic. After the papal consecration of Bosnia, many Bogomils worried about their safety and religious liberties, took refuge in the Osmanli *devlet*. Many of them asked for an immediate Turkish rescue expedition. The resistance of the Catholic elite of power against the invading Muslim troops was unusually feeble. When Grand Vizier Mahmud Pasha sent his storm troops to fortress Bobovatz, King Stephen surrendered the whole of Bosnia to the Muslims almost without a fight. In the town of Jajce, in a single day more than 36,000 Bogomils and Catholics accepted Islam.²⁵ Stephen Thomasevic, a son of Stephen Thomas, the last king of the Christian state of Bosnia, was beheaded by the Turks in May 1463. He had actively conspired with the Papacy and the Serinissima (Venice) against Muhammed II Fatih. Three years before his death he married Helena, the only daughter of

Lazar. This marriage validated the dynastic union of Bosnia and Serbia, but Sultan Muhammed II did not accept it; and in July, after a short war campaign in Danubian Serbia, Tomasevic's idea of the Serbo-Bosnian Catholic kingdom collapsed. Helena Brankovic fled via Hungary to Rome, where she died as a nun in 1474. Tomasevic's stepmother, Bosnian Catholic queen Catherine, escaped to the Dalmatian city of Ragusa (Republic of Dubrovnik), and later she lived in Rome under the personal protection of the pope. Her son, Bosnian prince Sigismund, embraced Islam and joined the military service of the Osmanlı Caliphate.

The Bosnian peasantry received the promised freedom and land from the Turks. Three years later, Sultan Muhammad II led his troops into the mountains of Albania, where the Turks captured Croia, the stronghold of Skanderbeg Kastrioti. The Muslim forces swiftly seized the ports of Durres (Durazzo) and Scutari. In the second year of the Albanian campaign, Turkish *sipahis* invaded Friuli in Italy. They easily defeated the Venetian condottieri (mercenaries) in the battle to the north of Venice. Muslim troops landed on the beaches of Otranto in 1480/875H, shouting: *Allahu Akbar! Muhammad! Muhammad! Rome! Rome!* The pope believed that the Muslim marines and cavalry would attack Brindisi, another port of the Italian Peninsula. He considered an escape from Rome, but Sultan Muhammad II changed his mind and the Turkish troops returned to Bosnia. The sultan sent his navy to the strategically important island of Rhodes, the sea-fortress of the Hospitallers (St. John Order) and a key to the defence of Asia Minor against these crusading Christian corsaires. On May 4, 1481, the sultan was seized with violent pains in his stomach. He led his army into Asia, and as usual, the military objectives of his march were kept secret. His Jewish physician Jacopo de Gaete alias Messer Jacomo Medego vel Yakup Pasha was hired by the Venetians to poison him. The valiant sultan died shortly after performing his *ʿAsr* prayer. He was forty nine-years old. The assassin Jacopo was immediately executed. Sultan Muhammad II was fluent in Greek, Arabic, Latin, Persian and Hebrew, and had studied ancient philosophy and architecture. With the help of international scholars, Sultan Muhammad collected in his Topkapi Serai's library a large number of ancient manuscripts.

The grand vizier Ahmed Pasha Hersek-Zade or Hercegovic (860-932H/ 1456-1517) was the youngest and favorite son of the duke (*herceg*) Stephen Vukic-Kosaca, a great Bosnian warlord of Hum. His mother Barbara was a French baroness. Ahmed Pasha studied in

Raguza (Dubrovnik) under the name Prince Stephen. In 1472, he went to Istanbul and embraced Islam. In 1477, the former prince Stephen was mentioned in a *firman* of Muhammad II as "the servant of my kingdom, Ahmed Beg." Ten years after his conversion to Islam, he was married to the daughter of Sultan Bayezid II, Khundi Khatun. In 1488 he had become *kapudan pasha*, head of Turkish navy. Having spent forty years in the service of three powerful sultans, Ahmad Pasha from Hercegovina played an important role in the Sublime Porte (Turkish, *bāb-i ʿālī*). During his life a large number of Humian Bosniaks accepted Islam, and in 1482 (887 H), the Duchy of Hercegovina joined the Osmanlı state.

The dazzling victory in the battle of Mohacs (1526) added a new Christian land to the Osmanlı realm. Caliph Sulaiman Kanūnī's decision to intervene in the Hungarian civil war was influenced by the defeat and imprisonment of the French King Francis I by Emperor Charles Habsburg in 1525, after the battle of Pavia. Francis I sent a secret message from his prison in Madrid to Istanbul. In his letter hidden in the soles of an envoy's shoe, the French monarch begged the Caliph for help by declaration of war against the Habsburgs in Hungary, where the "National Party" of Janos Zapolya from Eflak (Transylvania) and tyrannized Protestant peasants saw the Turks as liberators. The Hungarian Calvinists and the Unitarians of Transylvania preferred the rule of Muslim Turks rather than the fanatical tyranny of the Austrian House of Habsburg.²⁶ Additionally, the Habsburgs waged a war of proxies against "Frontier *agās*" and *pashaliks* near the Sava river. Croatian freebooters and Austrian mercenaries harassed Muslim peasants in northern Bosnia. In 1526, Sultan Sulaiman and his army crossed the Sava river chasing the Hungarians westward. The Hungarian army led by King Louis II Luxemburg challenged the Turks on the plain of Mohacs on August 29. After ferocious hand-to-hand battle, the Hungarian army was defeated and Louis II attempting to escape from battlefield died in the swamp. His eight Catholic bishops, two thousand Hungarian nobles and 25,000 Christian troops perished in two hours. The Hungarian kingdom died with him as he was childless.²⁷ Twelve days later, the Muslim army captured the city of Buda on the Danube bank. Hungary was added to the Islamic state as a *pashalik* of Madjaristan, or Magyar. On September 27, 1529; Janos Zapolya was crowned by his new Muslim overlord as the king of Hungary. The sultan crowned him with the venerated old crown of St. Stephen. Simultaneously, the Turkish *akindji* and *Yeniceri* reached the

six-foot thick walls of Vienna. The Turkish musketeers were skilled enough to shoot every Christian soldier who appeared on these walls of the new *antemurale Christianitatis*; but the coming winter was a greater problem than the endurance of the Viennians. The first *hizar* (the siege) of Vienna was recalled in an amazingly democratic way. After the *Isha* prayer, on October 12, a *divan* voted for the withdrawal of a lightly clothed army before the first snow of the long and harsh European winter. By the end of cold October, the church bells of Vienna tolled the deliverance from the Grand Turk. Suleiman offered to Austrians Pax Islamica and armistice to Hungary, which had been divided into the Turkish protectorate and the Habsburg's dominion. The first siege of Vienna was not a turning point in the history of Muslim-Christian relationship, but Europe's fear of the Turkish peril had been reinforced through hard experience of warfare and by a proper respect for Turkish arms. Here were no barbaric hordes from the steppes of Asia, but a highly organized modern army, such as the West, in that age, had not before encountered. Of its soldiers an Italian commentator observed:

Their military discipline has such justice and severity as easily to surpass the ancient Greeks and Romans; the Turks surpass our soldiers for three reasons: they obey their commanders promptly; they never show the least concern for their lives in battle; they can live a long time without bread and wine, content with barley and water.²⁸

For the next one hundred fifty years the Caliphate and the Habsburg Empire faced each other in Hungary. This standoff was not resolved until the second siege of Vienna in 1683, when Kara Mustapha's army was defeated by the surprising attack of the Polish hussaries, the "winged heavy cavalry" led by King Jan Sobieski, a veteran of Polish-Turkish war in the Ukraine. The hussar tactics can be traced to Serbia at the end of the 14th century, and the Polish term *husaria* is derived from the Slavic word *gussari* (bandits)—an allusion to a way of fighting that involved scouting and attacking the enemy's rears. Following the Hungarian defeat at the hands of the Osmanlı at Mohacs in 1526, the Magyar hussars harassed the small garrisons of Muslims in southern Hungary. In Poland, the *husaria* was an ethnic melting-pot of foreign mercenaries, including Hungarians, Serbs, Albanians, Vlach, Cossacks, Lipka Tatars, Transylvanians, Moldavians, and also Germans, Wallons, French, Swedes, Italians, Dutch and Scots. By the

late 17th century, the Polish *husaria* were dominated by Polish *szlachta* or gentry. Ironically, Poland had rescued the Habsburg monarchy from almost successful *hisar*. A hundred year later, Poland was divided between Austro-Hungarian Habsburg, Prussian Hohenzollerns and Russian Romanovs. The Osmanlı Turks never recognized the partition of Lehistan (Poland).

Muhtadeen: The New Muslims among Greeks and Serbs

During the Turkish expansion of Islam, Christian Europe was in a state of political anarchy precipitated by sectarian as well as dynastical conflicts. Serious non-Muslim historians have viewed the Turkish *devlet-i Osmanlye's* policy of Islamization in eastern Europe as essentially peaceful and very lenient. Only a small fraction of new Muslim converts can be said to have accepted Islam for personal gains, or under the fear of repression. Mass conversion to Islam among the Balkan Christians was so rapid that the popes and monarchs lived with a sense of doom. Their fear is well reflected in diplomatic reports and chronicles. The conversion experience that fundamentally changed the cultural history of the Balkans by uniting the Slavs, Albanians, Greeks and Bulgars (Pomaks) in the world community of Islam has had few medieval chroniclers. Medieval Islam produced no missionaries, priests, baptismal rites, or other evidences of conversion that could be recorded by the Muslim annals. Ironically, we know much more about the rapid conversion to Islam among the Christians from the medieval Christian anti-Islamic propoganda against Turks and "Saracens" (so-called Turcica), than from Muslim sources.

Name-analysis of the medieval Balkans for the purpose of evaluating the growth of the new Muslims directly depends upon a significant number of the indigenous Muslim genealogies which begin with a Christian (mostly Slavic) name. The occurrence of the Christian names is most frequent in the period of Turkish military interventions, but later, the genealogies beginning with non-Muslim names were followed by a chain of Arabic names and Turkish titles, which clearly indicates the conversion of the generations to Islam. The native population of eastern Europe at the time of the Turkish expansion of Islam contained Slavic, Greek, Romanized Vlach, Turkic (Magyars or Hungarians, Slavonized Bulgars) and German ethnic components, so that it is very easy to identify with confidence many new Muslims. In the late medieval period, almost all Muslim names and surnames in Bosnia, Serbia and Macedonia were Slavicized by adding the suffixes -ic and

-ski.

In many parts of the Balkans, the Osmanlı conquerors were welcomed by the Greeks as their deliverers from the rapacious and tyrannical rule of the Franks and the Venetians... the Turk was infinitely to be preferred to the heretical Catholics.²⁹ The Russian Slavophile historian Karamsin described the blessing of the Turkish conquest of Constantinople:

Emperor Constantine and his ancestors allowed their grandees to oppress the people, there was no more justice in their courts, no more courage in their hearts, their judges amassed treasures from the tears and blood of the innocent, the Greek soldiers were proud only of the magnificence of their dress, their citizens did not blush at being traitors, the soldiers were not ashamed to fly. At the length the Lord poured out His thunder on these unworthy rulers, and raised up Muhammad, whose warriors delight in battle, and whose judges do not betray their trust.³⁰

German traveller R. Gerlach wrote in 1577 that the Turkish provinces were better governed and more affluent than most parts of the Christian west, and the Christian *dhimmis* enjoyed more personal and economic freedom under the sultān than under Christian kings.³¹

The persecuted sect of the Moravian Brethren from Silesia and Bohemia considered submitting to the Muslim rule of Turks,³² and in Italy numerous men "turned Turks" (i.e., became Muslims) in the hope of greater liberty and tolerance.³³

There many who turned from a Church whose spiritual life had sunk so low, and weary of interminable discussions on such subtle points of doctrine as the Double Procession of the Holy Spirit, and such trivialities as the use of leavened and unleavened bread in the Blessed Sacrament, gladly accepted the clear and intelligible theistic teaching of Islam.³⁴

A large number of Greek Christian priests and monks embraced Islam, when the Turks made the city of Adrianopol (Edirne) the capital of their Muslim state.³⁵ The so-called "renegades" or the former Christians among Greek noblemen formed the majority in Edirne. One of the earliest conversions to Islam among the Byzantine elite of power dates from 1140, when a nephew of Emperor John Comnenes embraced Islam and married a daughter of Mas'ūd, the Seldjuk sultan of Rūm (Konya).³⁶

After the fall of Constantinople, several members of the formerly ruling dynasty of Paleologus and the humanist George Amirozes from Trabizond accepted Islam.³⁷ Leonardo de Scio, an archbishop of Chios, who witnessed the victory of Sultan Muhammad II, wrote that among the besieging Turkish troops were Greek, Frankish, German, Hungarian and other European "renegades of Christ "

According to the testimony, the Greeks, the Italians, the Germans, and also the Hungarians, and other numerous Christian kinsmen... O cursed betrayers of Christ! O damned followers of Antichrist, all of you will suffer eternal punishment in hour of the judgement...³⁸

Michael Baudier reported that in 1595, on the occasion of the circumcision of Muhammad III, "more than 4000 woeful Greeks turned Mahometans."³⁹ On a similar occasion of the circumcision of Mustapha, a son of the Sultan Muhammad IV *Avcı* (Hunter) in 1675, about 200 Christians, some of them monks, embraced Islam.⁴⁰

In 1676, many Christians of Corinth accepted Islam, among them three Orthodox clerics.⁴¹ Even the highest clergymen of the Church, such as Metropolitan of the Rhodes, embraced Islam without coercion.⁴²

English Protestant, Thomas Smith, who visited Istanbul in 1669, reported on "the great number of wretched people who turned Turks... they renounce their Savior and their Christianity and soon forget their original country, and are no longer looked upon as strangers."⁴³

Jobless Christian craftsmen, political fugitives, refugees and runaways from urban and rural areas of western Europe who came wandering to Edirne, Istanbul and Uskub, also embraced Islam easily.

The Islamization of Serbia began after the battle of Kosovo Polye, when a majority of Serbian gentry decided to embrace Islam in order to stay in power. The Turks unexpectedly found among the Serbian elite of power the most ardent followers of Islam. The highest number of conversions took place in Sandjak and Rashka (Old Serbia).⁴⁴ But a vast majority of Serbs adhered fanatically to their Orthodox Christian belief. After the anti-Muslim revolts instigated by Hungarian kings and the Habsburgs, several thousand Serbian families emigrated to Hungary. One of the biggest Serbian emigration took place in 1690, when about 100,000 Serbs crossed the Sava river into Hungary, led by the Patriarch Arsenius II Tzardoievic. Many of the young Christian Serbs joined later the anti-Muslim bands of outlaws (*uskoki*, *haiduki*) and harassed the Muslim Bosniaks from their bases in Krajina. Against

them, the Osmanlı *pashas* from Sarajevo and Travnik organized a special crack unit of Slavic "Frontier *Agas*" and "Kapetans" in the northern Bosnia.

A significant number of Serbian highlanders (*Crnogorcy*) from Montenegro (Crnagora or Black Mountain) embraced Islam in the XVIIth century but a terrible pogrom annihilated them almost totally. In 1703, Daniel Petrovic, Vladika-Bishop of Montenegro ordered the mass murder of all Montenegrins who embraced Islam. Since 1389, when the Serbian army was defeated on the "Fields of Blackbirds," Montenegro became the last mountainous citadel of those Serbian clans who preferred their own tribal power in the Black Hills to a "Turkish yoke." Their fierce tribal nationalism shaped by oral tradition and war-songs resembles rather the primitive solidarity of the ancient Doric *phylae* than the medieval Greek Orthodox *koinonia agapes*. The Serb clans of medieval Montenegro lived in a self-imposed Greek Orthodox theocracy. Their country became known as the Duchy of Zeta or Zenta. During the reign of Stephen Dushan, Zeta was ruled by a man called Balsha, who claimed to be a member of the royal dynasty of Anjou from Baux. His son, George Balsha II, married the daughter of executed Prince Lazar of Serbia (she was also a widow of Sisman, a ruler of Bulgaria). Under his rule, Montenegro became the *clipeus Christianorum* (the Buckler of Christians) against the Islamic State.⁴⁵

William Miller, British historian of the Balkans and a staunch supporter of the anti-Muslim rebellion of the Montenegrins, wrote in 1896:

Every Montenegrin looks back to the great disaster of Kosovo with the same keen regret as if it had happened last year. Every rising of the Serb race is justified by their national bards as revenge for Kosovo, and more striking still, the headgear of the mountaineers bears even in our own days the traces of their national grief. The crimson pork-pie cap, or *capa*, which the Montenegrins wear, female as well as male, has a broad border of black silk as a token of mourning for that defeat; the crimson center signifies the sea of blood with which the Black Mountain has been washed since then.⁴⁶

The tribal orthodox Montenegro was a very valuable *perro de guerra* (war dog) of the pope and Venice in the Machiavellian war of proxies against the Muslim Turks, Bosniaks and Albanians. Western Montenegro under the rule of Vladika or "shepherd" Ivan Corneyvic (the Black), with Cetinje as capital, became the kernel of the anti-

Turkish guerrillas. After his death in 1490, during the tribal war between Montenegrin clans, one of the influential warriors Stanicha killed a warlord Djuro. Later he went to Istanbul and embraced Islam. As the Pasha of the Albanian Skoder, Stanicha settled his whole clan in the Albanian village Bouchati. In the XVIIIth century, Kara Mustapha Bouchatlia, one of Stanicha's scions, established a large Muslim Montenegrin community near Cetinje.

Since 1516, every elected ruler of Montenegro was simultaneously ordained the Bishop of the Orthodox Church. That is why the Turks called those vladikas the Black Monks. In the beginning of the seventh century one of the ruling Carnoyevic clan embraced Islam. In 1623, the "invincible" Montenegrin capital Cetinje was taken after the twenty-day long invasion of Sulaiman Pasha's Turko-Albanian troops. In 1687, the Montenegrin Catholic clans of Kuchice and Clementice aided by the Venetians attacked Bosnia. The Turks punished Venice by the counter-attack of the Martolosi, inside Italy. Landing Muslim troops on the shores of the Bocche die Cattaro forced the Venetians to make peace with the Sublime Porte.

The sultan's *akindjilar* once more occupied Cetinje, while the Montenegrin Serbs promised to support the Austrian emperor Leopold I in his invasion of Bosnia and Serbia. The Turks, preoccupied with the defending of Bosnia and the war on the Lower Danube, were unable to protect the Montenegrin Muslims against the fanatical Vladika-Bishop Danilo II Petrovic. In the war-song called *Sve Oslobod* (Serbian, all free), the Christians of Montenegro graphically describe the horror of "the Montenegrin Vespers." The Martinovic clan offered to carry out the massacre of "the Montenegrin apostates" in memory of the battle on the Kosovo Polye. Christmas Eve was chosen as the night for killing the Muslims. Five brothers of Martinovic intoxicated with wine "to the glory of Christ, and seizing their consecrated clubs, rushed off through the darkness... all who refused baptism were massacred without pity, those who embraced the cross were presented as brothers to the Vladika. These Montenegrin Vespers as the massacre of Christmas Eve in 1703 has been called, cleared the land of the Turkish renegades for some time to come. But in 1707, the survivors returned to attack."⁴⁷

Miller's narration is a very interesting example of western historical sensitivity to and sympathy for the brutal murderers of Muslims. His anti-Islamic book about the Balkans was reprinted four times (1896, 1899, 1901, 1908) as a textbook for students in the United Kingdom.

William Miller was an influential professor of history in British schools at Athens and Rome, and probably the first who used the term "clearing of Turkish renegades," which corresponds with the latest expression of the Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic on "ethnic cleansing" of non-Serbs in Bosnia, Sandjak and Kosovo.

The Hungarian-backed Serb banditry in Krajina possessed a history of their own. The kings of medieval Hungary empowered them to occupy the area between the Sava and Drava rivers, under their chieftains called "despots." The Serb emigrants in Banat Temesvar, led by the brothers of Bakye formed the "Black Legion" against the army of Sultan Muhammad II Fatih. Austrian Prince Eugene de Savoy (1663-1736) described the Serb *chetniks* as his best scouts and his most trusted garrisons in the war of attrition against the Muslims. In 1740; 100,000 Austro-Hungarian Serbs from Krajina emigrated to Russia, and the czar settled them on the banks of the Dniepr river. They were forced to leave Krajina, due to the resistance of the Muslim Slavs in northern Bosnia.

The Hungarian senator J.de Aboth wrote in the 19th century that the Muslim Bosniaks:

... are far more strict than any others; perhaps the result of the enthusiastic religious emotions of the Southern Slavonic races. They even rose once to defend the Qur'ān against the sultan*. The Muslim women of Bosnia strictly obey the command of Qur'ān, and are so heavy veiled, that they can only just draw their breath and see to guide their steps along the way; their eyes and eyelids are concealed, and they hide even their hands under their mantle... They are heavier veiled than any I have seen anywhere else in the East... the women's faces are more concealed, the mask which cover even the eyes is not made here of the same soft material as the veil of face, but as a firm shield, frequently covered with velvet.⁴⁸

De Aboth compared the Bosnian Muslim town of Jajce to Homer's ancient Troy. According to him, it was "the bulwark of Christianity" during Sultan Muhammad II's siege in 1464, when the Magyar (Hungarian) defender of the fortress, Emerick Zarolya, effectively halted the Turks.⁴⁹

The importance of this town on top of a picturesque mountain was so well-understood by the Christians that the pope of Rome appealed to all Christian kings and dukes of the west not to allow this *muris Christianitatis* (the wall of Christendom) to fall. In 1520, the Sandjak-

Begs of Serbia and Bosnia captured the strategically important Zvornik on the bank of the Drina river and marched into Hungarian-occupied Kraijna. Ferhat Pasha, the Beglerbeg of Bosnia, was killed in the battle against Hungarian troops led by captains Paul Tomori, Jacob Banffi, Francis Rado and Janos Kallay. He turned the small town of Vrhnbosna (modern Sarajevo) into a beautiful "Damascus of the West." His successor Chusrev Beg continued the siege of Jajce, but in 1525 the Hungarian commander of the castle, Peter Keglevic, was rescued by 16,000 Hungarian horsemen led by Christopher Frangepan.

One year later, Graf Frangepan died in the battle against the Habsburg's party. In 1528, Chusrev-beg and Serbian Pasha Mehmed Galligly stormed Jajce and captured it. Banjaluka was surrendered without a battle. The surrender of the egg-shaped mountain (in the Slavic language "Jajce" means egg), ended the long Hungarian occupation of northern Bosnia.

Balkanization of the *Antemurale Christianitatis*

The concept of *antemurale Christianitatis* was more a geopolitical expression than a religious one. It is a chimera in which very few of the important religious features have had a major role in determining frontiers between believers, "infidels," and nations. It is not surprising, therefore, that there were many conflicting national identifications of exactly what comprised the "bulwark of Christendom." Perhaps the only definition that could approach support of the medieval Christians is one that simply points out the Venetian, Hungarian, Austrian, Polish and Spanish lands were not a part of the Osmanlı Islamic State. Whatever one's definition of "the bulwark of Christendom"—whether it is the Christianized ancient Roman empire, or the modern concept of the European Community—there can be no dispute that *antemurale Christianitatis* always marked the western boundaries of Islam in Europe. In the 14th century the Hungarian kingdom, and in the 15th century, the Habsburg empire was declared the "bulwark of Christendom against the Turks."

"Who shielded the throat of Christendom from the Turkish arrows?" Asked the Austro-Hungarian ambassador Hieronymus Balbus, appealing to the Diet at Worms for immediate help in a passionate *oratio*, on April 3, 1521. And he answered: Hungarians. He warned the German electors of the "Holy Roman Empire" that if Hungary were to be a Turkish *pashalik*, the whole of Europe would be open to Islam. The

fall of Belgrade was a blow to the whole of Christian Europe.⁵⁰

Before 1453, several European countries pretended to the role of *antemurale*, among them Byzantium, Spain, Portugal, Venice, Hungary, Austria, Transylvania, Albanian rebels led by Kastrioti, and even the primitive Orthodox Montenegro.

In the 16th century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth joined the league of defenders of *antemurale Christianitatis*. However, the defensive concept of the "Bulwark" in the age of western colonial expansion made the Polish *antemurale* an outdated myth, even after the bliss of Sobieski's victory in 1683. In the 19th century, Poland disappeared from the map of Europe.

In Spenglerian terms, the medieval Turkish power was an "Appolonian" stage of Euro-Asiatic post-Hellenistic civilization. The static force of Islam intervened in the "Faustian" world of Christian cultures.

In the clash of religions, the Turks represented the coercive state of stabilization, and the Christian powers responded to the challenge of Islam with a new Machiavellian *arte della guerra*. When Raimondo Montecuccoli wrote his *Della guerra col Turco in Ungheria* ("On the war against the Turks in Hungary," better known under the title *Aforismi dell'arte bellica*), the Turks were able to brush aside the weak Hungarian army and to besiege Vienna. However, laying siege to the powerful and well designed bulwarks of the major cities of Europe proved to be a great strategic mistake for the Muslims. At the end of the long and exhausting siege, Vienna managed to stand until the rescue operation of international Christian troops.⁵¹

After the Peace Treaty of Carlovac (Karlovitx) signed by the Sublime Porte in 1699, the continuous military expansion of Islam in Europe was halted. In 1717, during a successful crusade led by Prince Eugene de Savoy (1663-1736), who captured Belgrade, the religio-military concept of *antemurale Christianitatis* was replaced by a new doctrine: the concept of rolling-back the Turkish state to Asia. In the 19th century, Russian armies with the help of Serbian, Bulgar and Greek nationalist insurgents, Balkanized the European realm of the Turkish reformists. Three major European wars were ignited or inflamed by Serbian nationalists, who since 1389, have continuously mourned the martyrdom of Knaz St. Lazar Hrebeljanovic and his lost Serboslavia.

Notes

1. See "The Battle of Kosovo, 1389-1989," *Casopis Malice Isiljenica Srbije* 36 (1989): 344. Kosovo, often called by the Serbs "the Jerusalem of Serbia" is today 95 per cent inhabited by the Albanian Muslims; vide, S.P. Ramet, "War in the Balkans," *Foreign Affairs*(Fall 1992): 83.
2. T. Lehr-Splawinski, "Zagadnienie Chorwatów nadwisańskich," *Pamiętnik Słowiański* 2 (1951): 17-32; T. Lewicki, "Najdawniejsza wzmianka źródłowa o Wiślanach," *Przegląd Zachodni*, (1951) 3-7: 488; T. Lewicki, "Litzike Konstantyna Porfirogenety i Biali Serbowie w polnocnej Polsce," *Roczniki Historyczne* 27 (1956): 96. T. Sulimirski, *Sarmaci* (Warsaw: PIW, 1979), 199.
3. T. Lewicki, "Państwo Wislan-Chorwatow w opisie al-Mas'udiego," *Sprawozdania Polskiej Akademii Umiejetnosci*, 49 (1951): 24-34; F. Dvornik, *The Making of Central and Eastern Europe* (London: Bowker, 1949), 270-271.
4. G. Pisidiae, *Bellum Avaricum*, ed. J. Bekker (Bonn: MHG, 1836), 401-412; L.G. Dindorf, ed. *Chronicon Paschale* vol. 1 (Bonn, 1832), 715-725.
5. B. Kuripesic, *Itinerarium der Botschaftsreise des Josepf von Lamberg und Nicas Jurschitz durch Bosnien, Serbien, Bulgarien nach Konstantinopel 1530*, ed. E. Lamberg-Schwarzenberg (Insbruck: Verlag c. Meyer, 1910), 460-462.
6. N. Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 79.
7. N. Boldiceanu, "Sur les valaques des balkans slaves a l'epoque ottomane (1450-1550)," *Revue des etudes islamiques* 34 (1966): 83-132; S. Dragomir, *Vlahii din nordul peninsulei balcanice in evul mediu*, (Bucharest: Librea, 1959), 48-51; also see, B. Gushic, "Wer sind die Morlachen im adriatischen Raum," *Balkanica* 4 (1973): 453-464; M. Gyoni, "La Transhumance des vlaques balkaniques au moyen age," *Byzantinoslavica* 12 (1951): 29-42; E. Naumov, "Balkanskiye vlakhi i formirovanye drevneserbskoi narodnostii," in E. Naumov, ed., *Etnicheskaya istoriya vostochnikh romantzev, Sredniye veyka* (Moscow: Gosizdat, 1979), 18-61; P. Pavlovich, *The Serbians: The History of a People* (Toronto: Slavia, 1983), 70-79; T. Winnifriith, *The Vlachs: The History of a Balkan People* (London: Robert Hale, 1987).
8. D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe 500-1453* (New York: St Vladimir Seminar Press, 1974), 322.
9. A.V. Soloviev, *Odabrani spomenici srpskog prava* (Beograd: St. Sava Izdav, 1926), 128.
10. D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth*, 333.
11. Modern Serbian nationalist historians "cleansed" the horror of Dushan's patricide with a new etymological interpretation of his surname. According to them

the name *Dushan* was originated from Serb word *dusha* or "soul."

12. Lord Eversley, *The Turkish Empire* (Lahore: Premiere Book House, 1959), 29.

13. *Ibid.*, 30.

14. A.S. Atiya, *The Crusade of Nicopolis* (London: Methuen, 1934), 223.

15. J. Demel, *Historia Rumunii* (Wroclaw-Warsaw-Cracov: Ossolineum, 1986), 123.

16. E.S. Piccolomini, "De rebus gestis Friderici III sive Historia Austriaca," in J. Kollar, ed., *Analecta monumentorum omnis aevi Vindobonensia*, vol.2,(Vienna, 1762), 56, vide J. Dabrowski, *Rok 1444. Spor o traktat szegedynski* (Wroclaw: Ossolineum, 1966), 49.

17. I. de Thurocz, "Chronica Hungarorum," in *Scriptores rerum Hungaricarum* (Vindobonae, 1766), 320. Polish chronicler, Jan Dlugosz described the treachery of Cesarini: "Thus, in uncontrolled judgement which breached the oath given to the Turks—what was possible because of the naive, heedless and innocent mind of the king—the apostolic authority terminated (the peace treaty with the Muslim ruler) and incited the king (against peace). It was nullified and decided by cardinal Julian on behalf the papal seat against the name of the Christian king." See, J. Dlugosz, "Historiae Polonicae," ed. A.Przedziecki, in *Opera Omnia*, vol. 13 (Cracov, 1877), 704.

18. J.Thury, *Török történetirol*, vol. 1 (Budapest, 1893),372. About the broken truce of Szeged and the battle of Varna see, A. Prochaska, "Uwagi krytyczne o klesce warnenskiej," *Rozprawy Akademii Umiejetnosci Wydzialu Historii*, vol. 39 (Cracov: AU, 1900), passim; B. Stachon, "Polityka Polski wobec Turcji i akcji antytyreckiej w wieku XV do utraty Kilii i Bialogrodu (1484)," *Archiwum Towarzystwa Nauk*, vol. VII, No. 2, 1930; R. Urbanek, *Vladislav Varnencik. Skutecnost a legenda* (Prague: Bohemia, 1937); O. Halecki, "La croisade de Varna: Legende et realite," *Academie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, vol. 2 (1937); O. Halecki, *The Crusade of Varna: A Discussion of Controversial Problems* (New York: The Polish Institute, 1943); F. Pall, "Un moment decisif du Sud-Est europeen: la croisade de Varna," *Balkanica*. vol.7 (1944):102-120.

19. A. Menavino, in F. Sansovino, *Historia universale de' Turchi*, (Venice, 1573), p.73. Sultan's diary quoted by Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of Turkish Empire* (New York: Morrow Quill, 1977),184-185.

20. The term "chimera" has been coined by the Russian historian L.H. Gumilev for a dangerous political utopia, an impossible idea or wild fancy of the Eurasian medieval rulers. In the ancient Greek mythology, Chimera was a ferocious monster with a serpent's tail, a goat's body, and a lion's head, supposed to breathe-out fire; killed by hero Bellerophon; vide, L.H. Gumilev, *Ritmy Evrasii* (Moscow: Progress-Pnagieya, 1993).

21. Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries*, 128.

22. *Ibid.*, 131.

23. L. Rogalski, *Dzieje ksiestw naddunajskich to jest; Multan i Woloszczyzny, podlug dziel Cagalniceana, Vaillantana, Ubiciniego i Palauzowa... pomnozone dodatkami z dziejow polskich i tureckich* (Warsaw, 1861), 34-41.
24. D. Kamber, quoted by H.M.Handzic, *Islamizacja Bosne i Hercegovine* (Sarajevo: Islamska Domicka Stamparija, 1940), 8.
25. *Ibid.*, 20.
26. T. Gasztowtt, *La Pologne et l'Islam* (Paris: J. Lumiere, 1907), 51.
27. Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries*, 186.
28. *Ibid.*, 196.
29. G. Finley, *A History of Greece from its Conquest by the Romans to the Present Time* vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1877), 502; T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam: The Propagation of the Muslim Faith* (Karachi: Muhammad Ashraf, 1979), 149.
30. N.M. Karamsin, *Histoire de l'Empire de Russie*, vol. 5 (Paris, 1819-1829), 437.
31. S. Gerlach, *Tage-Buch der von zween... Romischen Kaysern an die Ottomanische Pforte abgefertigten Gesandtschaft* (Frankfurt, 1674), 413.
32. G.F. Hertzberg, *Geschichte der Byzantiner und des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1883), 650.
33. T. Ludovicus, *Ioannis Ludovici Vivis De Conditione Vitae Christianorum sub Turca, et Othonis Brui felsii ad Principes et Christianos omnes Oratio* (Basilae, 1538), 133, 225.
34. T.W. Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, 161.
35. *Turchica Spurcitiae et Perfidiae Suggillatio et Confutatio* (Turkish filth and insulting perfidy and its rejection) (Paris, 1516) foliculus XVII, p.1. The report of an anonymous Christian author, who spent twelve years (1436-1458) in the Osmanlı state as a war-prisoner. Despite the author's anti-Islamic invectives and tongue-lashings against the Turks, his pugnacious *antiturchica* is an excellent source of information about the rapid Islamization of Greek intellectual elite.
36. Hertzberg, *Geschichte der Byzantiner*, 616; Arnold, *The Preaching of Islam*, 162; Finley, *A History of Greece*, vol. 5, 118.
37. Hertzberg, *Geschichte der Byzantiner*, 616.
38. F. Sansovino, *Historia Universale dell Origine et Imperio de Turchi* (Venice, 1573), 258.
39. M. Baudier, *Histoire generale du Serrail et de la Cour du Grand Seigneur, Empereur des Turcs* (Paris, 1631), 89-90.
40. J. T. Bent (ed.) *Voyages and Travels in the Levant* (London, 1893), 210.
41. J. Spons, *Reisen durch Italien, Dalmatien, Griechenland und die Morgenlander*, vol. 2 (Nuremberg, 1713), 57.

42. J. von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, vol. 6 (Pesth 1833), 94.
43. T. Smith, *An Account of the Greek Church* (London, 1680), 15.
44. F. Kanitz, *Die fortschreitende Arnautisirung und Muhamedanisirung Alt-Serbien* (Vienna, 1888), 37-40.
45. Vide, the leaflet written by Pope Pious II, *Aeneas Silvius de Piccolomini*, in the collection of manuscripts, *Europam, absque nota* in the National Library (BN) at Warsaw, ante-1491.
46. W. Miller, *The Balkans* (London: T. Fischer-Unwin, 1896), 362.
47. *Ibid.*, 398; also see E.L. Clark, *The Races of European Turkey* (New York: Goldberg & Sons, 1878), 362-363. In 1710, the Russian Emperor-Modernizer Peter I sent a letter to the Montenegrin "Prince and Lord of Free Montenegro" i Berda or Kniaz saying, "I place my trust above all, in the stalwart arms of the Montenegrin braves, who assuredly will help me to deliver Christendom, to rise up temples of the true faith and to add splendor to the Slav name. Warriors of the Black Mountain, you are of the same creed, the same language as ourselves." Quoted by W. Miller, *The Balkans*, 397.

The British poet Tennyson praised the Montenegrins in his poem "Nineteenth Century":

O... warriors beating back the swarm
Of Turkish Islam for five hundred years...

The British Prime Minister Gladstone, who coined the term "Turkey—The Sicilian Man of Europe," compared the Montenegrins to the ancient 300 Spartans led by King Leonidas, and the Athenian Strategoi Miltiades, who fought against the Persian King Xerxes's Asian armies. In his statement of October 18, 1895, he said, "In my deliberate opinion the tradition of Montenegro, now committed to His Highness Prince Nicholas as a sacred trust, exceed in glory those of Marathon and Thermopylae, and all the war-traditions of the world." Quoted by W. Miller, *The Balkans*, 353.

48. J. de Asboth, *An Official Tour through Bosnia and Hercegovina* (London 1890), 11, 261. During the Islamic Revolution of Kapetan Hussein Aga Berberli called "Zmaj Bosnaski" or "The Bosnian Dragon," the Bosnian Muslim rose up against the Sultan Mahmud II's reform of dress (they refused to wear the new military uniforms, fashioned on the Western army outfits, with musket-belts crossed upon the breast). They rejected the *Nizām Jadīd* of "Sultān-Kafir," and they waged guerrilla warfare against the pro-sultan army in 1821-1827. The Islamic Revolution in Bosnia was crushed by the Djalaledin Pasha, the follower of the Bektashiya cult and Vizier of Mahmūd II. The Bosnian Muslim revolutionaries from Foca, Banjaluka, Mostar and Sarajevo were beheaded. Kapetan Hussein Aga declared Jihad against reformism under the flag of the Prophet "for the restoration of true Islam." He was overthrown by the Kapetan of Stolac, Ali Beg Rizvanbegovic, who

continued the Bosnian Islamic uprising against the "Sultan-Gaur." He was defeated by the sultan's army led by the Croatian convert Omar Pasha in 1850.

49. *Ibid.*, 412.

50. A. Bridge, *Suleiman the Magnificent: Scourge of Heaven* (London: Granada, 1984), 49.

51. T.M. Barker, *Double Eagle and Crescent* (Albany: Georgia University Press, 1967), 235.