

Adventurers, Agents, and Soldiers: British Travel Writers in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1844 – 1856)

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British travel writers and their observations about the nineteenth-century Bosnia and Herzegovina have been the topic of interest for historians, Anglo-scholars, and writers for a long time.² Research has proved that the first travellers from the British Isles came to the territory of modern-day Bosnia and Herzegovina in the second half of the sixteenth century. In August 1585, Henry Austell travelled to Foča from Dubrovnik and then went through Novi Pazar and Niš towards Istanbul. Four years later, that same route was crossed by a person only known as Fox. After three years of service in Istanbul, Peter Mundy (1600–1667) returned home in 1620 by travelling through modern-day Bulgaria to Belgrade, after which he chose the route that went through Valjevo, Sarajevo, and Konjic all the way to Split. From Split, he sailed to Venice. Henry Blount (1602–1682) travelled in the opposite direction in 1634. He reached Istanbul following the route that went through Split, Sarajevo, and

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² N. Berber, *Unveiling Bosnia-Herzegovina in British travel literature (1844-1912)* (Pisa: Pisa University Press, 2010). This PhD is the latest example of scientific research on a larger scale. Its focus is the deconstruction of stereotypes on Bosnia and Herzegovina and the reconstruction of discourse which is labelled by the author as “orientalism with a Balkan origin.” The focus of the book is the British perception of Muslims, especially Muslim women in these predominantly Christian provinces. The timeframe that overlaps with the topic of this paper is viewed as the “geographical discovery of Bosnia and Herzegovina” and takes a rather small part of the book. Special attention is given to the political context of travelogues and the conclusion is not contradictory to the conclusion of our paper. James Skene, one of the authors analysed in this paper, is not mentioned in the book.

Belgrade. These four travellers left more or less precise observations about the regions they travelled through.³

There were no travelogues about Bosnia and Herzegovina in the next two hundred years. In the meantime, the Kingdom of England went through a period of civil wars, the union with Scotland, the conquest of Ireland, and the establishment of the colonial empire. In 1801, it officially became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Its position as a leading world power was cemented by rapid industrialisation. In 1815, the UK achieved victory over France, its most significant obstacle in establishing a leading role in the world. The Congress of Vienna confirmed this status. The preservation of the established system and the prevention of any changes in this status quo became the British priority. British politicians saw a new potential threat in their former ally – Russia. The expansion of the Russian influence on the Ottoman Empire was regarded as especially dangerous. The Ottomans were in decline at that time but they still controlled Bosphorus and Dardanelles, which were essential as a gateway between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. After the establishment of independent Greece, Great Britain sought to prevent the further dissolution of the Ottoman Empire whose Orthodox subjects in the Balkans sought Russian support.⁴

Taking advantage of the internal Ottoman weaknesses, Russia forced them to sign the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi, which obligated Ottomans to close the Dardanelles to any power hostile towards Russia. This degree of Russian domination was not acceptable to the other European powers, especially to Great Britain, where Russophobia started to be felt around the 1830s and was fully formed in the 1840s.⁵ Soon, the Treaty of the Dardanelles was signed in London in 13 July 1841. It verified the Ottoman policy of closing the straits for warships when it was not participating in war.⁶ At that time, the Ottoman Empire already started

³ O. Hadžiselimović, *Na vratima istoka. Engleski putnici o Bosni i Hercegovini od 16. to 20. Vjeka* [At the gates of the East. English travellers on Bosnia and Herzegovina from 16th to 20th century] (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1989), 27-39.

⁴ We will not talk about the actions of Miloš Obrenović (1780–1860) who tried to get autonomy for Serbia in this period since it steps out of our topic.

⁵ J. Gleason, *The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain. A Study of the Interaction of Policy and Opinion* (London: Cambridge, 1950), 278-280.

⁶ Muhammad Ali (1769–1849), the governor of Egypt, expanded his rule to Crete and Syria and demanded the rule over Damascus from the Ottoman government. The Ottomans found support in the Russian Empire which deployed its fleet and sent an

its period of reforms – Tanzimat – which sought to modernize state institutions and society, as well as to centralize administration.⁷ The tensions between Britain and Russia were soon relaxed by a secret but ultimately insignificant treaty from 1844. The Russian tsar visited London in early June 1844 and met with the British Prime Minister and the Minister of foreign affairs. The product of this meeting was an agreement on cooperation in case of Ottoman collapse or in case another great power attacks the UK and Russia. In the meantime, Britain and Russia would strive to preserve the Ottoman Empire and agree upon measures to be taken in case the Ottoman downfall becomes imminent. “The agreement was purely verbal and remarkably vague.”⁸ They disagreed on the severity of the threat required for them to intervene. The draft of the agreement was made in September, but it became meaningless in the meantime because Britain lost the main cause for the pursuit of this agreement. The French threat to the British naval interests, which was the main motive behind the agreement with Russia, was removed by signing the treaty with France. Simultaneously, Bosnia and Herzegovina were rediscovered by British authors. These provinces encompassed modern-day Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar. They consisted of two eyalets, or pashaliks, each with three sanjaks. According to an estimation from 1840, they were inhabited by 1.100.000 people.⁹ After 210 years of lack of interest, they once more

army on the Asian side of the straits. At that moment, Great Britain and France decided to intervene and they influenced Muhammad Ali to sign a treaty with the sultan. Russia used its aid in war as a leverage for signing the Treaty of Hünkâr İskelesi. V. Popović, *Istočno pitanje. Istorijski pregled borbe oko opstanaka osmanlijske carevine u Levantu i na Balkanu* [The Eastern Question, Historical Review on struggle for survival of the Ottoman Empire in Levant and Balkans] (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1965), 143-146.; M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923. A Study in International Relations* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1966), 77-87 and 100-106.

⁷ Tanzimat originated in Mustafa Resid Pasha's (1800–1858) endeavour to reform the legislation, state and society with a group of Ottoman ministers and bureaucrats. Apart from the administrative centralization, the Tanzimat era (1839–1876) was characterised by a stronger involvement of the state in the society as a whole. S. J. Shaw and E. K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey Vol II, Reform, Revolutions and Republic. The Rise of the Modern Turkey 1808-1975* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 55, 61-69.

⁸ The Russian Tsar Nicholas I (1825–1855) met the Prime Minister Robert Peel (1788–1850) and Lord Aberdeen (1784–1860) on 4th and 5th of June 1844. M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*, 110-112.

⁹ The Eyalet or pashalik was the largest territorial unit in the Ottoman Empire. In 1832, Herzegovina became an eyalet as a reward for loyalty during Husein Gradašević's

became attractive to British travellers, who were themselves quite interesting characters.

The first of them was John Gardner Wilkinson (1797–1875).¹⁰ This famous Egyptologist travelled through Dalmatia and Montenegro in the fall of 1844 and he also made a short tour of Mostar, the capital of the Herzegovina pashalik. His descriptions of the customs in Montenegro, where he met Bishop Petar Petrović Njegoš (1813–1851), the antiquities in Dalmatia, and the stećak tombstones in Herzegovina are fascinating. He received a visa for Mostar in Dubrovnik from where he boarded a steamship to Korčula; upon reaching the delta of the river Neretva, he took a boat upstream to Mostar. He spent the later part October and the early November in Metković waiting for a letter from the vezir of Herzegovina who eventually welcomed him and gave him permission to observe and study the city. On his journey to Mostar, he was accompanied by a large Turkish caravan. One of the merchants spent a long time in Cairo where he learned Arabic in order to communicate with him without a translator. Through conversation, he discovered that the territorial organisation of Herzegovina and Bosnia was different and that Herzegovina had its own vezir but that the population belonged to the same tribe or kin. This claim was backed by the fact that the merchant's family originated in Travnik. Wilkinson noticed that his interviewee had a completely distorted understanding of the political reality and ratio of

rebellion (1831–1832). The Eyalet of Bosnia was comprised of the sanjaks of Zvornik, Bosnia, and Klis, while the eyalet of Herzegovina consisted of the sanjaks of Foča, Trebinje, and Mostar. V. Stojančević, *Из историје Срба у Босни и Херцеговини* [From the History of Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina] (Belgrade: Gutenbergs Galaxy, 2002), 57–71; Đ. Pejanović, *Становништво Босне и Херцеговине* [The Population of Bosnia and Herzegovina] (Belgrade: Serbian Academy of Sciences, 1955), 29. Taking note of this division, we will clearly state if the travellers are in Herzegovina or Bosnia. The terms eyalet and pashalik, as well as Ottoman and Turkish will be used as synonyms.

¹⁰ Wilkinson dedicated his career to the exploration of Ancient Egypt. He spent almost twelve years (1821–1833) exploring the valley of the Nile river and traveling across Egypt. He published his findings in a three-volume work titled “Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians,” including their private life, government, laws, arts, manufactures, religion, agriculture, and early history, derived from a comparison of still existing paintings, sculptures, and monuments, with the accounts of ancient authors (6 volumes, 1837–41). He was knighted for this work in 1839 and he went on to publish numerous other works. He returned to Egypt in 1842, in 1848–1849, and finally in 1855. Between his second and third expedition, he visited Dalmatia, Montenegro and Herzegovina.

global forces, which is, according to Wilkinson, a feature of a larger part of the Muslim population throughout the Ottoman Empire.¹¹

Wilkinson's description of Mostar is the first description of a town in Herzegovina by a British author in the nineteenth century. He noted that Mostar was not fortified and that there were no remnants of larger fortifications. The author estimated that there were 7300 people living in Mostar. Of that number, he believed, 2000 were Turks, 3560 Greeks, 1440 Roman Catholics, including 300 Roma and only 3 Jews. In his description, he stated that the air was good and clean while the climate was healthy. The town itself took up more space than necessary since there was a lot of space between houses and gardens. The centre of the town consisted of two streets with shops. The streets were not paved except for the ones which led to the vezir's palace. The supply of goods was slim since the demand for them was relatively limited. Houses were mostly made of stone or bricks with roofs made of stone plates. Wood was used to a lesser extent compared to the rest of the Ottoman Empire. The main export products of Herzegovina were leather, wool, fruits, wax, livestock, and tallow. Tobacco grown in Herzegovina was highlighted as pretty good and cheap. The author stated that the Austrian currency was widely used throughout Herzegovina. Wilkinson took a different route on the way back to Austria from the capital of Herzegovina, which led him through Čapljina, where he stayed overnight.¹²

During his stay in Mostar, Wilkinson noted that almost everyone in the city spoke Slavonic and that some of the Mostar Turks did not speak any other language. Few of them understood Arabic and he encountered only two Muslims who were foreigners. One of them was from Baghdad and the other from Damascus. He concluded that the dialect spoken in Herzegovina and Bosnia (he reached this conclusion although he did not visit Bosnia – author's note) was almost the same as the dialect spoken in Dalmatia and Montenegro, with the exception that it included numerous Turkish words. Since he had the vezir's permission and was accompanied by his men, Wilkinson did not face any nuisances. However, he noticed that not a single Turk responded to his salutations. He believed that this was a consequence of their disapproval of him

¹¹ O. Hadžiselimović, *At the gates of the East*, 46-47, 251-253.

¹² J. G. Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro: with a journey to Mostar in Herzegovina and Remarks on the Slavonic Nations, the History of Dalmatia and Ragusa, and the Uscoqs*, Vol. II, (London: John Murray, 1848), 57, 62, 88, 90.

riding a horse which they considered a Muslim privilege. He concluded that the good behaviour of Turks of Herzegovina was the consequence of the vezir's rule because he heard that, before his arrival, the foreigners used to be insulted and sometimes even attacked. He faced much prejudice towards Christians. He noted that Muslims still treat Christian commoners with disdain despite the sultan's order that forbade the abuse of Christians. A "true believer" could make the life of "infidels" miserable without any fear of justice. Wilkinson wrote that the Turkish landowners were despotic towards Christian peasants and that it was uncertain if the Turks were truly becoming civilised before their rule in Europe was undone. It was visible that their power was declining rapidly and that it affected their behaviour. He predicted that they would lose their position of arrogant overlords and become passive and harmless subjects once they encounter a force they cannot resist. A prerequisite for this scenario would be a peaceful solution since violent actions would lead to the resistance of the Muslim population. Forceful expulsion from Europe would lead to massacres of the Christian population.¹³

During his time in Mostar, Wilkinson met the vezir of Herzegovina, Ali-pasha Rizvanbegović-Stočević (1783–1851).¹⁴ He noticed four or five heads on stakes placed on top of the vezir's tower. Due to gout or another disease, the vezir appeared to be older than 60. He was kind to Wilkinson, who still failed to fulfil the goal of his visit. His wish was to mediate between the vezir of Herzegovina and the bishop of Montenegro in order to sign a treaty that would end their long-standing conflict. He particularly wanted them to abandon the custom of beheading the enemies who died in battle, but he did not receive the approval of the vezir. The vezir pointed out that the previous attempt to achieve such a treaty failed due to the Montenegrin refusal; furthermore, it was them who started this custom in the first place. He pointed out

¹³ J. G. Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro: with a Journey to Mostar in Herzegovina*, 62-63, 67-68.

¹⁴ The captain of Stolac, who was one of the most respected persons of his time. During the rebellion of Husein Gradašević (1831–1832), he remained loyal to the central authorities. In the aftermath of the rebellion, he received the title of "vizier of Herzegovina" as a reward for his loyalty. He held this title from 1833 until the merge of the eyalet of Bosnia and the eyalet of Herzegovina in 1851. He collaborated with the enemies of Omer-pasha Latas who decided to make an example of him during his campaign against the local beys who opposed the sultan. The arrested and humiliated vizier of Herzegovina died in "an accident" near Banja Luka.

that he wanted peace but that there was little hope that it would be reached with Montenegro. The vezir added: "Besides, who could trust a Greek? They are all alike." He then stated that he did not refer to the Greeks as a nation but to those who belonged to their "religious sect."¹⁵

Wilkinson did not believe the vezir's claims, but he avoided further discussion. He backed his attitude by the fact that the stronger side, the Ottoman Empire in this case, should lead by example and that only civilised war can lead to civilised peace. He stated that he had no personal interest in this as he was a foreigner and would be far away in a few months. However, the Turks and Montenegrins would continue to fight, and heads of the fallen would still be displayed in both Mostar and Cetinje.¹⁶

Upon his return to Dalmatia, he sent the letter to the bishop of Montenegro, dated 17 November 1844, in which he described his talks with the vezir and advised him to continue his correspondence with the vezir. Twelve days later, he received a letter from the bishop who thanked him for his effort and "noble and humane intention," but he also stated that talking to the vezir was pointless since he was "a wolf in lambskin" who not only decapitated people but also impaled them on stakes. Wilkinson himself described the Turks as a rare example of a nation that reached their zenith and declined to become civilised. However, he tried to realize his idea persistently because he believed that there was awareness in the higher spheres of the Ottoman Empire about the benefits of the "consent with the customs of civilisation." He tried to achieve this by contacting the Ottoman Ministry of foreign affairs through the British consul in Istanbul, but they did not see his reasons.¹⁷ His sincere wish for the abolition of this cruel custom was not realised and thirty years later, during the Great Eastern Crisis (1875–1878), Turkish and Montenegrin heads were still mounted on stakes. Since he spent less than two weeks in Herzegovina, Wilkinson could not get a more in-depth insight into the real state of matters in eyalet.

¹⁵ J. G. Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro: with a Journey to Mostar in Herzegovina*, 69, 74-77. It is worth mentioning that several months earlier (May-July 1844), while the Austrian diplomat was in Herzegovina, the bishop's emissary was imprisoned in Stolac. That same diplomat noted that Ali-pasha was better towards Christians than the vizier of Bosnia. V. Stojančević, *From the History of Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 56, 72.

¹⁶ J. G. Wilkinson, *Dalmatia and Montenegro: with a Journey to Mostar in Herzegovina*, 77-80.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, 82-87.

Nevertheless, his contribution to informing British readers about the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina was enormous, especially when compared to the next author discussed below.

After Wilkinson, the delta of the Neretva river was visited by the writer, diplomat, and experienced traveller Andrew Archibald Paton (1811–1874).¹⁸ In November 1846, he arrived in Dalmatia to visit the Austrian ports and to write a report about them at the order of the British consul in Vienna. He took a coach from Karlovac to the capital of Dalmatia, Zadar. Afterwards, he visited Kotor, climbed on top of Lovćen, and shortly visited Cetinje. He wrote that Dubrovnik was still the main port of Herzegovina. He visited several places along the border, but he did not cross onto the territory of the eyalet of Herzegovina. In June 1847, he travelled across Lika and reached the borders of the eyalet of Bosnia through Plitvice Lakes and Zavalje. He crossed the border and visited the picturesque town of Bihać in the Una valley.¹⁹

Paton wrote that Bihać was made of older Hungarian buildings and more recently-built houses in Turkish manner which looked as they were about to fall apart. While he witnessed religious tolerance in the far corners of the Ottoman Empire, he found none at the very border of one of the largest European monarchies. One Christian community, who were Roman-Catholics based on his description, did not have a church. On Sunday morning, the priest set up an altar in the place where a church once stood and covered it with a roof from a carriage. This ceremony was attended by around one hundred and fifty believers who revered this patch of land as consecrated and prayed where their ancestors prayed.

Paton noted that in Tunisia, Syria, and Egypt, Protestants, Catholics, or Greeks (in this case, the members of the Orthodox Christian Church

¹⁸ Paton walked from Napoli to Vienna with nothing but a backpack and a walking cane when he was twenty five years old. From there, he travelled to Fruška Gora in the summer of 1838 and then to Belgrade. Thanks to his acquaintance with the British consul in Serbia he became his secretary in Egypt. He was transferred to a new post in Syria later. He used his job to travel across the Ottoman Empire and publish a series of newspaper articles. He visited Serbia twice, in 1843 and 1844. He described his experiences from Serbia in a book titled *Serbia, the youngest member of the European family*. In his later years he became an official member of the British diplomatic core once again. He was a consul in Dubrovnik in 1863 during the crisis and Serbian uprising in Herzegovina. He published books about Syria, Egypt, Bulgaria, and various historical topics in the Balkans and the Middle East.

¹⁹ A. A. Paton, *Highlands and Islands of the Adriatic, Including Dalmatia, Croatia, and the Southern Provinces of Austrian Empire*, vol 2 (London: Chapman and Hall, 1849), 153-154.

– author’s note) were free to pray in the places they considered holy. In a free interpretation of geography, he wrote that at the foothills of the Julian Alps, one cannot raise a roof over a place of worship in order to protect it from rain. Hinting at the process of Islamisation, he stated that the descendants of Christians had become the fiercest persecutors of their ancestral faith. He met the local pasha, a short, fifty-five-year old man with sharp facial features who wore traditional clothes instead of regular army uniform. However, it seems that he did not learn anything useful from his conversation with the pasha. Paton gave a short historical overview from the fall of medieval Bosnia to his time and mentioned “Turkish Croatia”²⁰ but gave the reader no explanation of the term and failed to understand the local use of this term.²¹

Paton did not undertake any deeper analysis but noticed that the local population was resisting the army reform and that the people threatened the local pasha for trying to implement orders from the capital. The pasha consequently started to be guarded by “several Arnauts.” As a proof of the weak central government, Paton highlighted that the vezir resides in Travnik, the second city by size, and not in Sarajevo, the province’s largest city. Due to the intolerance of the “aristocracy,” he was allowed to spend only three days a year in Sarajevo.²² Paton then informed his less-versed readers that the Ottoman Empire paid special attention to this part of the empire after it suppressed numerous rebellions throughout the country. They did it by sending energetic pashas who beheaded almost all influential local Muslims. However, they did not achieve their final goal as the reforms were accepted very slowly. Paton stated that the resistance towards the “European reforms” was strongest among those who later embraced Islam. The Sublime Porte did

²⁰ A. A. Paton, *Highlands and Islands of the Adriatic*, 162.

²¹ By expanding the territorial extent of “Turkish Croatia,” the ideologists of Greater Croatia moved its borders all the way to the Drina River. One of the latest paper concerning this topic concluded that the term “Turkish Croatia” from the age of Croatian romanticism became an argument in the expansion of the Croatian territorial aspirations towards the East and that it went from a “historical myth to office euphemism to virtual territorial right.” B. Teinović, “Turska Hrvatska” (“Lapsus calami” u istoriji Bosne i Hercegovine XIX vijeka) [Turkish Croatia (“Lapsus calami” in the 19th century history of Bosnia and Herzegovina)], in *Proceedings – Culture and education – Determinants of social progress (achievements, ranges, perspectives)*, book. 11, Banja Luka, 03-04 December 2010, Banja Luka: Faculty of Philosophy, 2010.)

²² A. A. Paton, *Highlands and Islands of the Adriatic*, 163-164.

not eradicate the local aristocracy but it appeased it. The turbulent character of the local population in these mountainous provinces forced the Porte to govern them by appreciating the local ways that were not known in the other parts of the “Turkish Europe.”²³ Paton only resided in Bihać and in the north western part of the eyelet; furthermore, he only stayed for several days, therefore he could not gain any deeper insight into the situation of the eyalets.

A year before Paton’s book was published, Europe was shaken by a wave of revolutions that alerted great powers. The integrity of the Habsburg Monarchy, the neighbours of the Ottomans, was endangered by the events on the Apennine peninsula and the political decisions of Hungary which proclaimed itself a republic. The Russian intervention had stopped this process, as well as the endeavour of Valachia and Moldavia to proclaim independent Romania. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire was stopped by the swift reaction of the Ottoman and Russian troops. Their alliance was soon dissolved due to the Ottoman refusal to extradite the Hungarian and Polish revolutionaries who took refuge on its territory. The Habsburg Monarchy severed all ties with the Ottoman Empire and the Russo-Ottoman alliance was dissolved. Great Britain gave its support to the Ottoman Empire, but the crisis was evaded through compromise.²⁴

Edmund Spencer, who wrote about South Slavs in almost all of his books, arrived in the Balkan Peninsula soon after this situation was defused.²⁵ He travelled from Belgrade to Vranje where the local pasha was preparing his detachment to Bosnia. With his approval, Spencer joined his detachment and travelled to Sarajevo through Kosovo and Novi Pazar. In Novi Pazar, he discovered that Bosnian Muslims resisted reforms and that they even endangered the life of the local Pasha.

²³ Ibidem, 167-169.

²⁴ M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question 1774-1923*. 113; S. J. Shaw & E. K. Shaw, *The History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, Vol II, 135-136; R. Mantran, ed., *Историја Османског царства* [The History of the Ottoman Empire], (Belgrade: Clio, 2002), 608-609.

²⁵ E. Spencer, *Sketches of Germany and Germans, with a glance at Poland, Hungary, Switzerland in 1834, 1835 and 1836, by an English resident at Germany* (London 1836); *Travels in Circassia, Krim-Tartary, etc., including a Steam Voyage down the Danube, from Vienna to Constantinople and round the Black Sea in 1836*, 2 Vols. (London, 1837); *Turkey, Russia, the Black Sea, and Circassia* (London, 1854); *Travels in France and Germany in 1865 and 1866: including a Steam voyage down the Danube, and a ride across the mountains of European Turkey from Belgrade to Montenegro*, 2 Vols. (London, 1866); *Germany from the Baltic to the Adriatic* (London, 1867).

According to Spencer, the resistance was created by several local chiefs who instigated a revolt against the sultan's reforms among the local population with the support of fanatical priests.²⁶

These chiefs were the most influential Muslim feudal lords, while the fanatical priests were local imams. At the time, Sultan Abdulmejid I (1839–1861) was reigning. The Bosnian agas and beys were adamant in their resistance to the reforms by which the Porte was trying to save the Ottoman Empire from dissolution and transform it into a modern state. Their resistance sometimes turned into armed rebellion against central authorities. The last of those rebellions started with the arrival of Omer-pasha Latas (1808–1871).²⁷ During Spencer's stay in Bosnia, this Ottoman general undertook military action that finally broke the local Muslim elite will for armed resistance. This, however, did nothing to improve the situation for the Christian population. After three days of riding through inaccessible mountains, Spencer arrived in Sarajevo, "the centre of the always turbulent Bosnia." In "one of the most beautiful cities in Turkey," he noticed a large number of hans. He said that Sarajevo was the "central station" of all caravans that go from one end of the empire to the other. He wrote that developed trade and craftsmanship offer cheap and quality products: wool clothes, weapons, sabres, jewellery, and leather goods. According to him, there were 30000 Muslims in Sarajevo and around 10000 Christians. However, within the total population of the eyelet, the number of Muslims and Christians was roughly equal. He divided the Muslim population of Bosnia on pashas and feudals on one side and city officials, merchants, and craftsmen on the other. He believed that the first group were fanatics and the second group consisted of democratic opponents of feudal lords.

He was particularly interested in religious intolerance. He stated that Islam was strong in Bosnia and that this was cause by the conflicts between the Orthodox and the Roman-Catholic Christians. The religious division was obvious but it was more pronounced in the Christian population. He wrote that Muslim benevolence towards Christians was

²⁶ E. Spencer, *Travels in European Turkey in 1850, through Bosnia, Servia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thrace, Albania and Epirus, with a visit to Greece and Ionian Isles, and a homeward tour through Hungary and the Slavonian provinces of Austria on the lower Danube*, Vol. II (London: Colburn and Co. Publishers, 1851), 295.

²⁷ G. Šljivo, *Omer-Paša Latas u Bosni i Hercegovini 1850–1852* [Omer-pasha Latas in Bosnia and Herzegovina 1850–1852] (Sarajevo: Veselin Masleša, 1977).

more common than inter-Christian benevolence. The population was divided geographically in a way that Orthodox Christians lived between Novi Pazar and Zvornik, while Sarajevo with its surrounding districts was a “stronghold of Islam,” whereas Latins lived in “Turkish Croatia.” He noted that Roman-Catholics would support the possible Austrian occupation of the Bosnian eyalet. Spencer never referred to Orthodox Christians as Serb but as Greek-Slavs. However, he noted that the population of Bosnia had the same origin as the Serbs and that they were once part of the “Serbian Empire.” He estimated that there were around three hundred thousand Roman-Catholics, whom he called Latins and who make up around one third of the population according to his findings. He overestimated their numbers as they did not make up even one-fifth of the population, and most of them lived in the central parts of Bosnia and the western parts of Herzegovina. Muslims made up one-third of the population while the Orthodox Christians made up the relative majority of the population.²⁸

In his description of the population, he noticed similarities with the population of Serbia in their manners, customs, and language. He also noted that their clothes were very similar and that they still wore turbans. Peasants were tied to their land and worked in agriculture and animal husbandry. Spencer described Slavs as hardworking and talented people who could easily master several foreign languages, unlike the indigenous Turks. He also wrote that the peasants were more intelligent than the peasants in Western and Eastern Europe and that out of all Muslims, those from Bosnia were the most moral ones. He stated that Muslims were allowed to marry Christian women while Christians were under threat of excommunication if they married Muslim women. The author noted that suicide was extremely rare in the eyalet and then he further described funeral customs. Medical care was very difficult to obtain and lifespan was very short, especially for women. There were many charlatans in the country who cured “all sorts of diseases” but larger settlements and the residencies of pashas always had doctors and pharmacists. They were usually Germans, Italians, or Greeks. Spencer

²⁸ E. Spencer, *Travels in European Turkey in 1850*, 298-304; Đ. Pejanović, *The Population of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 30-31. The tables and maps in the appendix confirm our statements.

also wrote that in Bosnia, the barber was also a surgeon because “he has the necessary tools to perform amputation.”²⁹

In his historical overview, Spencer described events prior and following the Turkish conquests as well as events prior to the arrival of Omer-pasha Latas – although he did not mention him. He then explained how the local population was impoverished by the economic situation in the neighbouring countries. He noted that Austria had monopolised trading and that their currency was more frequently used in Bosnia than the Ottoman currency. Since it surrounded Bosnia from three sides, Austria filled it with its agents “disguised as monks and merchants.” This was done in order to prepare the commoners and Mohammedans for the great change – “the transition under the wings of the Austrian eagle.” According to Spencer, the local population would benefit from connections with more prosperous and developed areas. The Austrian annexation of these provinces would lead to their economic development.³⁰

Pondering upon the idea of an Austrian invasion into the provinces, Spencer concluded that it would be a task difficult to achieve. Bad roads would limit the movements of the army and their supply lines would be hard to maintain. He also noted that only the Roman-Catholic part of the population was friendly towards Austrians. In his description of the Bosnian Muslims’ resistance to reforms, Spencer wrote that rebels intended to take over important forts, Mostar in Herzegovina and Jajce and Banja Luka in Bosnia; furthermore, they intended to head to Novi Pazar in order to establish a connection with the Albanians “who were equally hostile towards the Turkish government.”³¹ He did not state whether that has already happened neither does he further explain the events of the rebellion or the situation in the provinces. The readers are denied any further explanation since the author stopped writing about

²⁹ In his description of the population, he noted that most of them had black hair. Every Muslim had a moustache while a beard was a signature of Hajjis (a person who visited Mecca and Medina in pilgrimage) and of wise old men. In the description of the towns and villages, he noticed many similarities with those in Serbia. He also noted an abundance of forests that allowed anyone to use wood for heating. The main branches of the economy were nomadic animal husbandry, beekeeping, and agriculture, although agriculture was less developed. E. Spencer, *Travels in European Turkey in 1850*, 343-385.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 310-316.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 329-331.

the Bosnian eyalet. After Bosnia, Spencer went to Montenegro, Albania, and numerous Greek locations.

Through careful examination, we can conclude that Spencer did not travel through the entire eyalet of Bosnia and that he did not set foot in Herzegovina. It seems that he wrote according to the stories he had heard. Although he stayed in Bosnia during the campaign of Omer-pasha Latas against the Bosnian beys, he only wrote about earlier antireform movements. His book is a mixture of correct, semi correct, and incorrect information, as well as his own thoughts about the future of the provinces. He gave correct data about the religious differences among the local population whom he divided into Muslim Slavs, Catholics, and Greek-Slavs – Orthodox Christians. When he wrote about the borders with the Habsburg Monarchy, he mentioned the rivers Una and Sava as borders but he did not mention the north-western land border – although he did mention Dalmatia later, outside of context. He did not mention sanjaks. On the contrary, he stated that the eyalet of Bosnia was divided into nahijas like the Principality of Serbia and that there was an even smaller territorial unit – the knežina. He argued that the knežina was predominantly or completely inhabited by Christians led by a knez.³² He stated that the eyalet consisted of Bosnia, Turkish Croatia (Krajina), and Herzegovina, which is incorrect. Discussing Krajina, he falsely stated that the majority of the population there is Roman-Catholic.³³ Spencer considers “Turkish Croatia” which he sometimes calls Krajina, to be the entire north-western part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, all the way to the river Vrbas – when in reality it is the area around the river Una. Since he used the work of earlier authors without criticism, Spencer is counted among the writers who “stretch Turkish Croatia all the way to the banks of Vrbas,” as stated by Ivo Franjo Jukić (1817–1857).³⁴

Besides the above-mentioned issues, most disputed one is Edmund Spencer, the author himself. His biography is entirely unknown to us. Despite his productivity, the multiple editions of his books, and the fact that his works were translated into other languages, he was a great enigma to his contemporaries. The English magazine for the cooperation and

³² He insists that this proves continuity of self-government. He concluded that this “perfect patriarchal republic” showed that the Slavic population of the Ottoman Empire wanted a “federal system.”

³³ E. Spencer, *Travels in European Turkey in 1850*, 332-336. See note 27.

³⁴ B. Teinović, “Turkish Croatia,” 242. See note 20.

information of researchers of history and literature *Notes & Queries* tried to gather information about him in 1915, but they failed. Since he signed his books as “captain,” we could conclude that he spent some time in the military.³⁵ In his first book, he mentioned that he was English and that he spent part of his life in Prussia. He travelled through Poland, Hungary, and Switzerland. The information that was sitting at one point in the han in Niš while editing his notes and thinking about his publisher who will turn them into “English banknotes” leads us to the conclusion that he was a professional traveller who used public interest in the situation in the East to make his living by writing travelogues. His publisher was Henry Colburn (1785–1855), a skilled businessman who paid his authors abundantly but did not enjoy a good business reputation. He was often described as “disgrace to his profession,” “not a publisher but a manufacturer of books,” with “no personal taste in literature”; but who could, nonetheless, “feel the moment.”³⁶

When we combine the non-existing biographical data, his ability to visit several locations within the same year and maintain his productivity, and the fact that none of his alleged famous acquaintances mentions him, it may be concluded that “Captain Edmund Spencer” was a pseudonym. Only thing that is not yet clear is whether this was one person or several people writing under this name.³⁷ This opens up the question whether the usage of Spencer’s book is justified – even if the British Quarterly Review, at the time of its publishing, recommended it to “all people

³⁵ V. Kostić, *Britanija i Srbija: kontakti, veze i odnosi 1700–1860* [Britain and Serbia, contacts, connections and relations 1700-1860] (Beograd: Arhipelag, 2014), 153-154.

³⁶ V. Kostić, *Britain and Serbia*, 154-155.

³⁷ R. Subić, “Едмунд Спенсер о османској Босни и Херцеговини 1850” [Edmund Spencer on Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1850], in *Гласник удружења архивских радника Републике Српске* [Herald of Association of Archivists of Republic of Srpska] 10 (2018): 123-124. In this paper, the author made the assumption that there were several people writing under this name. It is possible that Neval Berber is right when she states that he was “... a Victorian ... who made his career writing about the Balkans although he never set foot there.” N. Berber, *Unveiling Bosnia-Herzegovina*, 4. Veselin Kostić calls him the “Baron Munchausen of English travel writers.” He pointed out a series of omissions in his books and questions whether he wrote based on personal experience or from his armchair by rephrasing other authors. Kostić stated that “the careful reading of his texts points out that he does not deserve such trust.” V. Kostić, *Britain and Serbia*, 152, 158-170.

interested in the advancement of civilization and freedom among European nations.”³⁸

Unfortunately, we cannot offer an answer since we are not in the position to conduct a research which could prove if “the experienced traveller who was lucky to get permission from the sultan” and the author of “the best book about the East” is in fact a real person or a product of a skilled publisher. We can only hope that future research will solve this riddle. We must emphasize that even at the height of Spencer’s popularity, his critics pointed out the superficiality of his work, the fact that he plagiarised other authors, the massive geographical mistakes, and the usage of lesser known books that were supplemented by his extensive dictionary.³⁹

James Henry Skene (1812–1886) was for certain a real person, an officer who served in the British forces stationed in Malta.⁴⁰ He left military service and settled in Istanbul after he married a girl from a respectable Phanariot family. His connections with the British embassy are unclear, but it seems that he was an “unofficial agent for the British ambassador in Turkey at the beginning.”⁴¹ In mid June 1850, Skene arrived in Rijeka. From there, he went to Sisak where he took a boat to Belgrade. After that, he went to Bucharest and visited the lower Danube area, Valachia, and Moldavia. He spent three weeks in Bulgaria before returning to Bucharest. He crossed the Danube near Kladovo and then headed to Belgrade through Donji Milanovac, Majdanpek, Požarevac, and Smederevo. In mid 1851, he travelled by carriage to Bosnia through Šabac.

During his stay in Bijeljina, he noted that the town had between 6000 and 8000 inhabitants. Accompanied by four companions, he headed to Tuzla across the Majejica Mountains. From Tuzla, he went to Žepče

³⁸ Ibidem, 158.

³⁹ Ibidem, 155-157.

⁴⁰ He was a member of a Scottish noble family who spent several decades in Ottoman provinces where he showed interest in the life customs of the local population. One of his brothers was also an author, as well as his sister who stayed in Serbia and published her notes. We can say that he has an author’s pedigree. At the beginning of the Crimean War, he published two books about the Ottoman Empire. One of them is *Anadol: the Last Home of the Faithfull* London 1853 and the other one is the book analysed in this paper. After the war, he became vice-consul in Istanbul and then a consul in Aleppo. He stayed on that post until 1880.

⁴¹ V. Kostić, *Britain and Serbia*, 140.

through the Spreča river valley. He described Žepče as a small town with old houses, a mosque, and an old fortress.⁴² On the road between Tuzla and Žepče, he found the remains of the battle between the rebels and sultan's army which took place in 1850. He described this battle based on the knowledge of his companions.⁴³

Skene wrote that Upper Tuzla was several miles away from lower Tuzla. It consisted of around five hundred houses scattered on a plateau surrounded by hills. There he saw young women walking unveiled and concluded that Muslim customs in Bosnia are different from Muslim customs in other parts of the world because women kept their Christian customs after they were converted. His later experience proved him wrong since veils were widespread in the eyalet. Upon his arrival in Lower Tuzla, he sent a letter to the kaymakam and received friendly greetings. Lower Tuzla was bigger than Upper Tuzla but he could not determine the precise number of inhabitants. During the visit, he saw large saltworks. Saltworks in Upper Tuzla originated in the time of the Hungarian rule and were wells with saltwater which evaporated. He wrote about the scenery, the people, and even the animals he encountered along the way. He noted that medical care was awful and that the locals do not know much about medicine. Surgeries were performed by barbers whose only tool was a razor used for shaving, bloodletting, cutting, and amputating while healing was reserved for old crones who were considered to be witches. Skene wrote that rebellions against Omer-pasha and the central government were the consequence of the dedication to Islam and the opposition to the abolition of privileges. He concluded that the rebellion was a conflict inside the Muslim community and that Islam and feudalism were inseparable. The local Mohammedans did not thoroughly follow the Quran and they were less tolerant than Ottomans. The chasm between them and the

⁴² J. H. Skene, *The Danubian Principalities. The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk, Comprising Travel in the Regions of the Lower Danube in 1850 and 1851*, Vol. II (London: Richard Bentley 1853), 199-200, 272. It is not possible to determine the exact route he took from Tuzla to Žepče. O. Hadžiselimović, *At the gates of the East*, 104.

⁴³ Around 1200, the sultan's soldiers were encircled by some 6000 rebels whose numbers grew up to 25000 at one point. Omer-pasha Latas took part in this fierce battle when he force marched around 2000 soldiers from Tuzla and defeated the rebels. J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 260-264 This was the battle of Kameni where the rebels had between 10000 and 15000 men, while Omer-pasha had 5000. G. Šljivo, *Omer-pasha Latas in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 84.

Christians was greater here than in any other part of the empire. Skene then gave an extensive review of repressing the rebellion in Krajina and mentioned that Omer-pasha returned to Travnik at the same time that he arrived in Tuzla.⁴⁴

He mentioned the rebel actions once again when he arrived in the valley of the river Bosna, stating that small boats were the only way to cross the river since the ferry was destroyed in an attempt to slow down Omer-pasha's troops. He visited the small town of Vranduk near which two battles between the rebels and the army took place in October 1850. He described it as a small town of around 2000 inhabitants with miserable houses, which is a key to control the long valley that is an important link between the northern and the southern part of the province. He passed by Zenica in which "there is nothing that could catch one's attention."⁴⁵

He arrived in Travnik, where Omer-pasha and his troops were stationed, during night, so his first impression consisted of long, narrow, and dirty streets. After two hours of trying to find beds in a town full of soldiers, they asked the town mayor for help. During his stay in the capital city of the provinces,⁴⁶ Skene met numerous officers who arrived with Omer-pasha. He spoke with them in German since they spoke it well, and some of them came from the Habsburg Monarchy. He spent three weeks in Travnik, from the end of May to 12 June 1851. According to him, the town had around 10000 inhabitants, mostly Bosnian Muhammedans. There were around 8000 regular soldiers in town at that time. He praised the army organisation, the accommodation, and health care as very good, and he expressed his doubt that the British army hospitals were better than the Turkish ones.⁴⁷

He spoke with Omer-pasha Latas on several occasions and described him as a middle-aged man, tall and lean with a fair face, with a mild and natural character and a strictly military posture. They spoke in German and Italian, mainly about the events from Omer-pasha's recent

⁴⁴ J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 209-210, 221, 223-224, 241-255, 267-268, 278.

⁴⁵ J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 234, 269-270, 285-286; G. Šljivo, *Omer-pasha Latas in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 83.

⁴⁶ Omer-pasha transferred the capital to Sarajevo, after the rebellion, as part of his reforms.

⁴⁷ J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 287-293, 296.

campaign. He also met members of his family and household. He often saw his daughter Emina whom he described as a fair nine-year-old child that seemed dear and smart and spoke German and French quite well. She sometimes dressed in a Turkish style and other times in European style, but she also wore a uniform on several occasions. She usually appeared with a small pouch filled with money by her father used to help invalids. Skene also described Omer-pasha's meeting with the representatives of different religions. He wrote that he spoke with the Christian archbishop, a servile old man with long beard, in "Croatian" but he spoke with two Franciscans in German. According to Skene, the the Franciscans were the "friendliest of them all towards the Porte" and Latas explained them the Turkish intentions towards Bosnia and advised them on how to use their influence on their compatriots in Turkish Croatia. He obviously thought of Roman-Catholics over a territory larger than the actual Turkish Croatia.⁴⁸

Skene frequently met with an Austrian painter, whom he considered to be a spy, since he arrived soon after him. He also heard "from a reliable source" that his task was to report about everything that Skene does. This "spy" sought Skene's company and appeared when he went to visit someone or accompanied those that visited Skene. During his travels, Skene was an object of suspicion, surveillance, and espionage. However, he was wrong. His movements in Travnik were monitored by an interpreter of the Austrian consulate who reported directly to the Austrian consul in Sarajevo.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Latas also spoke with a rabbi. J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 293, 303-304, 311-316.

⁴⁹ He was questioned in Karlovac and a Hungarian officer told him that Englishmen did not come to Croatia and Slavonia for fun. Next time he was accused of being a spy by the Austrian custom officers because he had sketches of forts and castles. Judging by his book, it is no wonder they were suspicious. Not only did he know more about the situation and recent events in the Balkans than the average traveller but he also started political discussions with every opportunity he had. V. Kostić, *Britain and Serbia*, 143-144. The Austrian Minister of foreign affairs received a report from the Austrian consul on the 5th of June 1851 stating that the painter in Travnik was Vjekoslav Karas (1821-1858) who intended to make a portrait of the "Slavic hero" Omer-pasha for the magazine "Hirska Matica." F. Šišić, *Bosna u Hercegovina za vreme vezirovanja Omer-paše Latasa (1850-1852)*, Исправе из Бечког архива [*Bosnia and Herzegovina during reign of Omer-pasha Latas (1850-1852)*, Document from the Wiener Archive] (Subotica: Serbian Royal Academy, 1938), 317, 321, 324-325; O. Hadžiselimović, *At the gates of the East*, 322.

Due to his good relations with Latas and his co-workers, Skene was given a chance to witness the “Turkish justice,” in other words, to be present at the trial held against some rebels. He found twelve staff officers and a mufti sitting in two rows under a large tent. This court had the task of finding out if prisoners were guilty and to pardon them if they were not. However, they could not sentence them. That was the duty of Omer-pasha, the vezir, and several advisors.⁵⁰

Skene gave an idealistic description of the Ottoman military units. He wrote that “until now,” recruits were exclusively Muslims with an explanation that it “was considered suitable” since the sultan’s troops often had to put down Muslim rebellions. If Christians were part of the army, these conflicts would become fanatical and would deepen the chasm between the two religions. He expected that new circumstances would change this practice and optimistically concluded that “former slavery has practically ceased to exist” but that the Christians were wary of closer ties with former oppressors.⁵¹

His judgement was incorrect since a Serb rebellion broke out in Herzegovina just after his departure; it lasted for the next ten years with occasional breaks. Skene had a special affection for Ottoman authorities but we cannot be certain if this was tied with some agreement between the governments. The authorities in Belgrade believed that he was sent to inform about the situation in Serbia.⁵² However, that is the prism through which we should view his attitude towards the relations between the Ottoman authorities and their Christian subjects. After he left Travnik, he visited the picturesque cities of Vitez, Busovača, and Kiseljak which did not impress him much.⁵³

After that, he arrived in Sarajevo, which had around 60000 inhabitants and 122 mosques. It was situated at the entrance of the narrow Miljacka river valley crossed by four stone bridges. Many large and beautiful houses surrounded by trees “gave it the look of a fresh garden ... the Damascus of the North.” There were many stores in the

⁵⁰ J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 326-330.

⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 330-332.

⁵² V. Kostić, *Britain and Serbia*, 142.

⁵³ Under the influence of his companions, he wrote that hundreds of people build roads in the eyalet voluntarily. He also wrote that the attempts of the Austrian spies to cause discontent among the population were futile. J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 333-341.

city but most of their goods were German made. The only notable domestic products were imaginative bowls, cups, and lanterns, as well as “excellent knives.” On the second day of his stay, he visited the only foreign dignitary in the city – the Austrian consul. He described him as a polite man of diplomatic posture who said a few things about important topics trying to gain information but to give none back. He complained about loneliness, but he hoped that other great powers would soon open their consulates in the city.⁵⁴ The consul sent the report about Skene, his stay in Sarajevo, and his further intentions to Vienna. Skene did not manage to persuade him that his journey was not motivated by politics. The consul believed that he was sent to establish trade connections with Herzegovina and Bosnia.⁵⁵

Skene travelled eastwards from Sarajevo over the Romanija Mountains and found himself in a landscape different from anything he saw until that point. It was waterless and sparsely populated. Sometimes one could encounter miserable wooden cottages. “Everything there was bigger – endless meadows sometimes disrupted with pine forests and rocky mountaintops that seemed to support this large plateau itself.” He came to Zvornik following the flow of the rivers Jadar and Drina. The town, with 5000 or 6000 inhabitants, was built on such a narrow strip of land that it seemed like a tall and steep hill leaning over the town was pushing it into the Drina River. He was cordially welcomed as the first Englishman who visited the town. He described one-tenth of the population as being Christian and their priest as a typical “servile, shifty Greek.” He assessed that one day Zvornik could have an important military role because a small number of defenders could hold back a more numerous army trying to cross the Drina, which would force the attackers to make long detours north or south. He left Bosnia, a “medieval country with all feudal customs” on a small boat.⁵⁶ He travelled through Valjevo and Obrenovac towards Belgrade after which he took the land route to Istanbul.

⁵⁴ During dinner, Skene met the Greek Christian bishop who was, according to Skene, “an intelligent man but servile towards the kaymakam” and “not suitable for such an important position.” He also met the Austrian consul who told them that both Christian and Muslim morality in the city is completely twisted. J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 346-347.

⁵⁵ The Austrian consul in Sarajevo was Dimitrije Atanasković, the former consul in Serbia. F. Šišić, *Bosnia and Herzegovina during reign of Omer-pasha Latas (1850–1852)*, 332-333.

⁵⁶ J. H. Skene, *The Frontier Land of the Christian and the Turk*, 364-370.

During his visit to the Bosnian eyelet, Skene moved through its north-eastern part, crossing the described routes. He gave us second-hand information about other parts of the eyalet. Skene's book should be assessed through a fact that has already been pointed out in the literature. His complex journey across the Balkans points out that he was not only driven by curiosity and a wish to explore distant lands but that he was most likely on an intelligence-gathering mission. This should be taken into consideration because he was mainly interested in panslavic ideas during his stay in Serbia and because he wrote that the Bulgarian metropolitan was surely a Russian spy just like most of the Orthodox priests. His stance towards the Orthodox priests in Bosnia is not much better. On the other hand, his description of the Turks, their administration, and army is very positive and he hinted at a bright future of the eyalet under their rule. The status of the Christians was presented in such a manner that the readers could not find out about the hardships they endured while being treated as second class citizens. This book, which is an "overview of systematically planned journeys across the Balkans," is riddled with Russophobia, political speculations, and suspicion towards anything that could endanger the Ottoman Empire and therefore the British interests.⁵⁷ A showdown between Russia and Britain was imminent and the Crimean war broke out soon after. Russia's defeat did not stop their rivalry, but the theatre shifted towards east. The two empires began their fifty-year long great game for geostrategic domination over Central and Eastern Asia.⁵⁸

The contemporary readers of these books could only get fragmented descriptions of the situation in Herzegovina and Bosnia due to several reasons. None of these authors stayed for long enough in the provinces or toured them thoroughly. Wilkinson stayed in parts of the Herzegovina eyelet, while Paton stayed in a single town in the north-western part of Bosnia. Spencer gave the broadest picture of the Bosnian eyalet but he, just like Skene, did not tour it completely. The Bosnian Krajina, which they wrongly call Turkish Croatia, remained completely unknown to them, as well as the implications of the wrong name later used by ideologists of the Greater Croatian ideas. They make a difference between the local and foreign "Turks" whom they sometimes call

⁵⁷ V. Kostić, *Britain and Serbia*, 142, 148.

⁵⁸ E. Sergeev, *The Great Game 1856–1907: Russo-British Relations in Central and East Asia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

Mohammedans. The Ottoman rule was presented as positive which is the consequence of the connections between these writers and the British government. Wilkinson's activity in Istanbul and the support he received from British diplomats are one example of this. Paton was a professional diplomat, while Spencer wrote that he was a captain. Skene served his country for decades as a soldier and diplomat. All this suggests that their books were in accordance with the political interests of their government and that they cannot be interpreted as neutral observers. These adventurers, whether they were soldiers or agents, announced the forthcoming interest of Britain in the westernmost provinces of the Ottoman Empire that will become institutionalized after the Crimean war through the appointment of the first consul. Since then, the British Foreign minister started to receive official reports about the situation in the provinces. In the coming decades, Bosnia and Herzegovina will be visited by many travel writers, some of them inclined towards the Ottoman rule, others towards the Balkan Christians, but all of them Russophobic. But that is the story for another paper.

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