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## THE POLITICS OF KARA MAHMUD PASHA BUSHATI TOWARDS MONTENEGRO IN THE 1780s

*1780'li Yıllarda Buşatlı Kara Mahmut Paşa'nın Karadağ Siyaseti*

**Aleksandar STAMATOVIĆ**

**Abstract:** Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati was the son of the Vizier of Shkodra, Mehmed Pasha, from whom he inherited the title of Vizier of Scutari. The second half of the eighteenth century and the first decade of the nineteenth century was a period of weakening of the Ottoman state because of the appearance of renegades rebelling against the state. During the last two decades of the eighteenth century, one of the most famous renegades was Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati. The centre of his movement was in the north of modern-day Albania. This movement spread to parts of modern-day Macedonia, Kosovo, Bosnia and Montenegro. It was logical that his desire was to gain control over eternally rebellious Montenegro where elements of statehood were already beginning to be formed. Since Montenegro was territorially closest to him, he wanted to have the Lake Shkodra basin under his control. His first attack on Montenegro in 1785 was successful, when he broke through to the capital Cetinje and burnt down the seat of the Metropolitanate, the Cetinje Monastery. However, he did not consolidate his power in Montenegro. The politics of Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati towards Montenegro involved his relations with the central government in Constantinople, with Austria, Russia and the Venetian and Dubrovnik Republics.

**Key Words:** Cetinje, Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati, Montenegro, politics, Shkodra

**Öz:** İşkodra veziri Mehmet Paşa'nın oğlu olan Buşatlı Kara Mahmut Paşa vezirlik makamını da babasından devralmıştır. Osmanlı Devleti'nin gerileme dönemi olan XVIII. yüzyılın sonu ile XIX. yüzyılın başı, gerilemenin de nedenlerinden biri olan isyanlarla geçmiştir. XVIII. yüzyılın son yirmi senesinde Balkanlarda en büyük isyanları çıkaran vezir Buşatlı Kara Mahmut Paşa'dır. Kuvvetlerinin büyük bölümü bugünkü Kuzey Arnavutluk bölgesinde olmasına rağmen Makedonya, Kosova, Bosna ve Karadağ'ın bazı bölgelerine kadar yayılmıştır. Bu nedenle daha o dönemde bağımsızlık yolunu inşa etmeye başladığı için öteden beri gerçek anlamda kontrolü sağlanamayan Karadağ bölgesini fethetmeye kalkışması tabii görülmektedir. Karadağ, Mahmut Paşa kuvvetlerinin bulunduğu yere yakın olduğu için İşkodra'ya tamamen hâkim olmak istiyordu. 1785 yılında çıktığı ve Çetine'ye (Cetinje) kadar gelip oradaki manastırı yıktığı ilk sefer onun için gayet başarılı geçmiştir. Her ne kadar Karadağ'ı kontrol altına almayı başaramamış olsa da Buşatlı Kara Mahmut Paşa'nın Karadağ politikası aynı zamanda İstanbul, Avusturya, Rusya, Venedik ve Dubrovnik devletleri ile ilgili politikaları ile örtüşmekte idi.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Buşatlı Kara Mahmut Paşa, Çetine (Cetinje), İşkodra, Karadağ, siyaset

### Introduction

There are opposite opinions in historical sources and literature regarding how Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati became Vizier (provincial governor) of Scutari (modern-day Shkodra). During his time as vizier, the Ottoman Empire had already weakened, and its administrative character began to change. Thus, the former *sanjaks* (smaller Ottoman provinces) became *pashaliks* (Ottoman administrative territories) and the *sanjak-beys* (governors of the *sanjaks*) became *pashas* (title of high Ottoman landowners), also called viziers. It is hard to say when Mahmud Pasha Bushati became the Vizier of Scutari. Whatever the case, he appeared during the Russo-Turkish war as the Vizier of Scutari and Pasha of Ohrid in 1771. He was also a commandant of the Ottoman attack against renegades rebelling against Sultan Ali Bey from Cairo. An entire diplomatic incident arose when ships from Dubrovnik were meant to be used

to transport Ottoman troops to Cairo. In accounts of these events, Mustafa and Mahmud, the sons of Mehmed Pasha, were mentioned. In the meantime, the problems in Cairo were solved, so the Sublime Porte (the Ottoman government) asked for frigate (ships) from the Dubrovnik Republic to transport troops in to quell an uprising in Syria. Mahmud's older brother Mustafa, as Pasha of Vlore, was the commander of that attack. At that time Mahmud was only about eighteen years old, and instead of him, Mustafa sent his *cehaja* (the governor's assistant). The fleet of ships, among which were ten from Dubrovnik, crewed by people from Dulcigno (modern-day Ulcinj), however, was defeated in a naval battle in the Gulf of Patras by Russian ships in October 1772.<sup>1</sup>

Selim Islami and Kristo Frashëri – Albanian historians of the socialist period and among the pioneers of Albanian historiography – believed that Kara Mahmud Pasha's father, Mehmed Pasha, died in 1775. After him, the Porte appointed Mehmed Pasha Justendil as the Vizier of Scutari, but the people of the Scutari region refused to accept him, instead choosing the eldest son of Mehmed Pasha Bushati, Mustafa. The Porte did not admit this and appointed Mehmed Pasha's other son, Mahmud. Mustafa did not oppose this decision, so there was no conflict between the brothers.<sup>2</sup>

Johann Hahn, an Austrian diplomat and consul in Greece, travelled to the region of Albania several times in the 1840s and authored several anthropogeographical and historical works about the area. In his work he claims that people from Scutari wanted Kara Mahmud to become the Vizier of Scutari after the death of his brother Mustafa.<sup>3</sup> Johann Zinkeisen, a German historian from the first half of the nineteenth century, also claims that Kara Mahmud inherited Mustafa's position.<sup>4</sup> One disadvantage when researching about the way Kara Mahmud succeeded to the position of Vizier of Scutari is the fact that the mentioned authors do not cite sources for their claims. Nevertheless, all these works should be understood in the context of the time and capacity of the scientific apparatus in which they were created. In any case, from the beginning of the development of Albanian historiography, Kara Mahmud Pasha and his family in general are connected to the context of the development of the idea of an Albanian state.

During his political career, Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati showed an interest and was active in conquering Montenegro and the Highlands (the historical tribes of Brda, or the Hills) which were the closest regions to Scutari. There were two main reasons for this. The first reason relates to older Serbian historiography and that he was under the impression of a folk myth, aware of his own origins. This myth relates to him being a descendant of the youngest son of the Montenegrin feudal lord Ivan Crnojević-Staniša, who converted to Islam and became a *sanjak-bey* (governor of a *sanjak*) known as Skenderbeg Crnojević. At the end of 1513, he was appointed *sanjak-bey* in place of his father at Žabljak by Lake Scutari. His *sanjak* was separated from that of Scutari to facilitate the integration of Montenegro into the Ottoman state as soon as possible. In place of his father, he behaved as relict of a Christian independent feudal lord. He had his own court, and the officials were both Muslims and Christians. Two of his aunts, Ivan's sisters, were married to nobles in Venetian Cattaro (modern-day Kotor). The Ottoman state used this to create relations with the Venetian Republic that ruled the Bay of Kotor and the town of Cattaro.<sup>5</sup> This myth-related approach, however, has no concrete confirmation in historical sources.

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<sup>1</sup> Jovan Radonić, *Dubrovačka akta i povelje*, No. V (Beograd: Srpska Akademija Nauka, 1951), 411, 418–419, 422, 424, 428, 469, 478.

<sup>2</sup> Selim Islami and Kristo Frashëri, *Historiae e Shqiperise, Velimi pare* (Tirane: Universiteti Shtetorori, 1959), 459.

<sup>3</sup> Johann Georg von Hahn, *Albaneisih Studien* (Jena: Verlag von Friedrich Muke Druck der Kaiserlich-Koniglichen Hof-und Staats drickerei in Wien, 1854), 100–102.

<sup>4</sup> Johann Wilhelm Zinkeisen, *Gescihte des osmanihen Reich in Europa* (Hamburg und Gota, 1840), 64.

<sup>5</sup> Franz Miklosich, *Die Serbischen Dynasten Crnojević* (Wien: c. Gerold's, 1886), 22.

Obviously, a less sentimental reason for his political activity and desire is more likely. Montenegro and the closest highland tribes to the Lake Scutari basin formed a unique geographical area. By ruling this area, Kara Mahmud Pasha would gain a greater area for feudal exploitation and increase his resistance to the central government and the sultan. With Montenegro, he could also join up the coastal area of the Adriatic towards the Venetian territory stretching from Antivari (modern-day Bar) to Cattaro. This context perhaps gives the best explanation for his attack on the coastal Paštrovići tribe, which covered an area from Antivari to Cattaro, and which belonged to the Venetian Republic. For a third reason, the Albanian historians have mentioned his intention to constitute a state out of a quite similar ethnic group: Albanians and Montenegrins. Relevant historical sources have never proved whether Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati was a descendant of the Islamised Skanderbeg Crnojević or whether Kara Mahmud had any kind of awareness about an Albanian state.

Historians Selim Islami and Kristo Frashëri have stated that, shortly before Kara Mahmud was appointed Vizier of Scutari, the Porte separated Montenegro from the *Sanjak* of Scutari and annexed it to the *Eyalet* (a larger Ottoman administrative territory) of Bosnia. This was justified by the fact that the people in Montenegro were of Slavic origin, just like those in Bosnia. After being appointed vizier, Kara Mahmud asked the *Wali* (governor of the *Eyalet*) of Bosnia to return Montenegro to his *sanjak*, but the governor and the Porte refused this requested. Mahmud then turned to a military solution and attacked Podgorica and Spuž, which were part of the *Eyalet* of Bosnia, but he did not manage to capture them. The Porte reacted to that by warning that if he continued with such an action, he would be removed from his position.<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, Kara Mahmud first wanted to weaken the structure of the Ottoman government that surrounded his *pashalik* (the area governed by a *pasha*). He encouraged conflicts between local Ottoman dignitaries. Hussein Pasha, an *eskiya* (renegade rebelling against the government), from Podgorica, who was Kara Mahmud's man, appeared in 1778 (1192 AH). It is difficult to find what his real title was in the Ottoman administration of this *sheher* (Ottoman town). Encouraged by Kara Mahmud, he raided all the plunder from the captain of the town, Suleyman Aga, set fire to his houses, and took all the harvest from the farmland around Podgorica. Unable to oppose him, because Hussein Pasha was protected by Kara Mahmud, Suleyman Aga complained to the *Wali* of Bosnia, Silahdar Pasha, and to the *naib* (judge) of the *kadiluk* (area of Ottoman jurisdiction) in Podgorica. Together with Suleyman Aga, Hail Aga and his brother Mehmed signed this appeal. It was also signed by Omer Aga.<sup>7</sup>

Sultan Abdul Hamid, I issued a *ferman* (Ottoman decree) to the *Wali* of Rumelia and the provincial *mutasarrifs* (the *wali*'s subordinates) dating from the second half of October 1784, to prevent attacks by Kara Mahmud Pasha on the surrounding areas. In the decree, the sultan described the activities of Kara Mahmud Pasha. In the name of the sultan, the Porte ordered Podgorica *mütesellim* Ibrahim Pasha to prevent any incursions by Mahmud into this area. The *Wali* of Bosnia informed that action was being undertaken according to these orders to protect Podgorica and the nearby fortification of Spuž.<sup>8</sup> These activities obviously did not yield any results, so Kara Mahmud led violent attacks from Scutari into the interior of modern-day Albania. During the period from 6 to 15 October, the sultan issued decrees to the *mutasarrifs* of Valona and Devlin and to the *beys* of Albania to unite against Kara Mahmud and his brother Ahmed. An order was also issued to the *Wali* of Bosnia, who forwarded it to Ibrahim Pasha again, as well as to the commanders of the fortresses in Podgorica, Spuž, Žabljak and Bar. It can be seen from the decree that Kara Mahmud had committed acts of violence against the

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<sup>6</sup> Selim Islami and Kristo Frashëri, *Historiae e Shqiperise*, 437.

<sup>7</sup> Gazi Husrev-begova biblioteka (GHb), Turska dokumenta-3, Maliye Defteri, 38 (the date is illegible).

<sup>8</sup> Orjentalni institut (OI), arhivski odjel (a.o), Sidžil 16, p. 58, mjesec zulkade 1198/ 16 Sep.–15 Oct. 1784.

population of Debar and was sending an army to Podgorica and Spuž, so a *fatwa* was issued to prevent him from doing this. But, on the other hand, it can be seen from this set of sources that Kara Mahmud was being helped by renegades from Elbasan and Montenegrin bandits. Attention is also directed to a certain Osman, probably a local official in Podgorica, saying that he should not help the rebels, but unite with Ibrahim Pasha.<sup>9</sup>

Kara Mahmud was obviously pursuing a cunning political strategy. On 1 January 1785, the Porte sent a *bujuruldi* (a written order from a *pasha*) to the *kadi* in Ljubinje, and to the captain, officers and *agas* of the Trebinje fortress in Herzegovina, in which it warned that they could not trust Kara Mahmud. When his life was threatened, he expressed remorse and asked for forgiveness. Shortly afterwards he attacked again. Therefore, an imperial decree was issued to punish him most severely. The *Wali* of Bosnia was ordered to form an army in Bosnia under the command of a capable *mirmiran* and lead it in an attack against Kara Mahmud. The *wali* was to keep a watch on traders from Scutari, Dulcigno, Antivari and other parts of the *Sanjak* of Scutari. The traders should be stopped with their caravans until they were ready to fight against Kara Mahmud. There was a suspicion that they were supplying him with livestock for his army. Acting on this order, the *Wali* of Bosnia sent his *bujuruldi* to the Podgorica *mütesellim* Ibrahim Pasha and the commander of the fortress in Spuž, Jaafar Pasha.<sup>10</sup>

Kara Mahmud became so strong that he entered territory that was not his. He came to Prijepolje with about a thousand soldiers and took the hills around it. He wanted to stop the arrival of the *Wali* of Bosnia. Because of this, the Bosnian *kaymakam* (the vizier's representative in the area) sent an army that defeated Kara Mahmud's troops. On 7 May 1785, the *Wali* of Bosnia, Seyd Mehmed Pasha, issued a *bujuruldi* in which he praised the troops and regional bodies which had defeated Mahmud's group. He sent a notice from the *Divan* (Council) of Bosnia to all dignitaries of Sarajevo, muftis, janissary *agas* and officials. He warned them that they should fight against dishonest people such as Kara Mahmud, who was fighting against the religion and the state.<sup>11</sup>

However, the chronicler Mullah Mustafa (Ševki) Bašeskija from Sarajevo offers a different excuse for Kara Mahmud in this whole process. During the period from 14 November 1784 to 3 November 1785 (1199 AH) he recorded that Kara Mahmud was an enemy of the Pasha of Spuž, and that he wanted to set up his own mayors in Spuž and other places. He sent his army along the road from Constantinople to Prijepolje demanding obedience from those areas. Even the newly appointed *Wali* of Bosnia, Mehmed Pasha Ajdosli Karehaseki, avoided travelling via his road to Sarajevo, arriving in Sarajevo via Rogatica instead. Thus, his reputation amongst the people of Sarajevo suffered. According to Mullah Mustafa Bašeskija, the people of Sarajevo loved Kara Mahmud because he was honest, and they supported his movement. Some residents of Sarajevo started to spread rumours about him, claiming that he was a renegade rebelling against the sultan and gathering an army against the sultan. They stopped spreading these rumours about him when they heard the news that he had been released and appointed leader of the attack against Montenegro.<sup>12</sup> Throughout his chronicle, Mullah Mustafa Bašeskija shows that he was extremely fond of Kara Mahmud. He even wrote an ode to Kara Mahmud in one part of it. However, there is no explanation for this admiration, because Mullah Mustafa was from Sarajevo and had no connection to Kara Mahmud.

### **Kara Mahmud Pasha's attack on Montenegro in 1785**

The genesis of Kara Mahmud's first attack on Montenegro in 1785 can be tracked back to a year earlier. The coastal Grbalj tribe was under Venetian rule. Its territory was near Cattaro

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, p. 66, treća dekada mjeseca zulkade 1198 AH/ 6–15 Oct. 1784.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, p. 75, 19. Sefer 1199/ 1 Jan. 1785.

<sup>11</sup> GHb, Sidžil 24, p. 100, 27. džumadel-ahira 1199/ 7 May 1785.

<sup>12</sup> Mula Mustafa (Ševki) Bašeskija, *Ljetopis* (Sarajevo: Publishing, 1997, treće izdanje), 238–239.

and bordered with Montenegro. On 11 March 1784, the people of Grbalj sent a letter to the Montenegrin Governor Jovan Radonjić and the leaders of Montenegro. It was clear from that letter that they were informing Radonjić that Kara Mahmud had begun preparations for an attack on Montenegro. Part of this letter was in fact a response to a letter that Radonjić had sent them on 26 February. It is assumed from the answer from the residents of Grbalj that Kara Mahmud had threatened the Montenegrins that he would attack them, and that Radonjić had told them that. Radonjić asked them for help to oppose Kara Mahmud together, or at least for the Montenegrins to be able to take refuge in Venetian territory when they were in trouble. The people of Grbalj, however, cunningly replied that they would like to help the Montenegrins, but they could not, because they were Venetian subjects.<sup>13</sup>

At that time, Montenegro was a conglomeration of tribes and *nahiyahs*, which were united only when they were under threat from the Ottomans. Montenegrin tribes attacked the Ottoman region plundering the villages of Podgorica and Scutari, and the fortified towns of Spuž and Nikšić, too. The highland tribes (Brđani) did the same in the direction of the *sheher* of Podgorica and the fortifications in Spuž and Kolašin. This banditry had a patriotic aspect and gave individuals and groups a reputation, because it was the surrounding Ottoman regions and Muslims that were plundered. On the other hand, in the territories along the Ottoman border, local Muslims did the same against Montenegro and the Highlands. They led raids and kidnapped women for personal gain and fame. The process became more complicated, because Montenegrin tribes often raided the surrounding Christian areas in the Venetian and Dubrovnik territories out of sheer poverty. At that time, Montenegrin society was so complex because the Montenegrin and Highland tribes were also fighting between themselves for plunder, pastureland for their cattle, springs and rivers used to water their cattle, and out of blood feuds.

These tribes were aware of the external danger, so they united. Therefore, one procedure was not a surprise. The central and largest administrative region of Montenegro was Katun *Nahiyah*. Cetinje and the Monastery of Cetinje also belonged to it. The Petrović and Radonjić families were also from Katun *Nahiyah*. Thus, members of Katun *Nahiyah* gathered in the area of the Čekliće tribe near Cetinje on 15 May 1784. They guaranteed peace and free passage to every Montenegrin and man from Venetian territory until 8 November (St. Demetrius' Day). The document was signed by Governor Radonjić with a group of leaders from Katun *Nahiyah*. This was apparently done to organise a defence against an attack from Kara Mahmud.<sup>14</sup>

At the same time, Governor Radonjić started diplomatic activities to find allies among the Great Powers. He had no choice but to turn to Austria and Russia because the Venetian Republic had good relations with the Ottoman state, and was in a state of total weakness, and therefore would not put its interests at risk for Montenegro's sake. He apparently sent a letter to Austrian Chancellor Wenzel Kaunitz asking for help. This can be seen in the letter which Kaunitz sent to Radonjić on 6 July. From this letter, Kaunitz found out what kind of danger Montenegro would face from the Pasha of Scutari and his people. He suspected that the sultan knew about the threats made by Kara Mahmud against Montenegro, and even more that these had been carried out on the sultan's orders. Kaunitz stated that the Austrian emperor had agreed to be the protector of all Christian provinces which were in trouble. Therefore, he ordered the Austrian Ambassador at the Porte to stop using violence. Based on the good relations between Austria and the Ottoman Empire, Kaunitz believed that the Porte would react.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Arhiv Istorijškog instituta Crne Gore (AIICG), kutija 295, fascikla 1, material of Governor Radonjić (unregulated documents). There was a dual power structure in Montenegro at that time. There was a Montenegrin metropolitan and the governor family Radonjić, who received a salary from the Venetian Republic. It was a kind of unofficial branch of this country in Montenegro. Both the Petrović metropolitans and the Radonjić governors were from the tribe in Njeguši near Cetinje. Cetinje was the seat of the Montenegrin Metropolitanate.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Vladan Đorđević, *Crna Gora i Rusija 1784–1814* (Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1914), 4.

Besides Governor Radonjić, another important man in Montenegro was the Archimandrite of the Monastery of Cetinje, Petar Petrović. At the time of Kara Mahmud's preparations to attack Montenegro, Petar Petrović was not in the country. In order to be ordained bishop, he had travelled via Cattaro to Trieste and Vienna, en route to Russia. In Vienna, he tried unsuccessfully to get a confirmation from the Russian Ambassador that he could travel to Russia. While he was waiting for confirmation, Petar found himself in Shklow at the house of a general in the Russian service, Simeon Zorić. His stay in Shklow and Petar's continuation to Russia, from where he was expelled, ended with a small incident. Having failed to be ordained in Russia, Petar ended up again in Karlowitz (modern-day Sremski Karlovci), where he was ordained bishop by the Metropolitan of Karlowitz, Mojsije Putnik. On 14 October 1784, Putnik informed Governor Radonjić that the ordination had been carried out. According to Putnik's claim, it would have been done earlier, but while Petar was travelling from Vienna to the Karlowitz district he fell out of his carriage and broke his right arm. Thus, the ordination was postponed until he had recovered.<sup>16</sup>

Governor Radonjić's correspondence with Austria obviously did not go unnoticed by Kara Mahmud. At the beginning of 1785, he sent a letter to Radonjić. It was obvious from this letter that Radonjić had already sent him a letter, in which he discouraged Kara Mahmud from attacking Montenegro, saying he would not find anything there except snow and forest. In that letter, Radonjić tried to convince Kara Mahmud not to believe Latin lies. This referred to the Venetians, who had probably suggested something to Kara Mahmud about the governor's connections with Austria. Kara Mahmud assured Radonjić that he was not attacking Montenegro because of any Latin lies. He was setting out for Montenegro with God's help for the sake of Muhammad's faith with an imperial decree. The Montenegrins were on the sultan's land, and they were cooperating with Moscow and the Germans. Kara Mahmud stated that a man who was an officer with the Germans had recently visited him, and he commanded about 2,000–3,000 people. If this information from Kara Mahmud was true at all, it was probably an Austrian officer of a higher rank, who came to Kara Mahmud under unknown circumstances, maybe even as a mercenary. The officer told him about Radonjić's connections with Austria. In Kara Mahmud's letter Radonjić asked Kara Mahmud if he intended to attack Montenegro. Kara Mahmud replied affirmatively. He threatened to attack Montenegro using all the Arnauts, with God's help and with the sultan's decree. He attacked it two weeks after St. George's Day at the beginning of May.<sup>17</sup> If Kara Mahmud's reference to the sultan and the sultan's decree (*ferman*) for the attack on Montenegro is compared with the data presented at the beginning of this paper, it is clear that he was falsifying the situation. He was attacking the surrounding areas for his own interests, and he was claiming this was from the sultan. It was clear that the attack on Montenegro was the result of his own separate interests.

Another letter from Kara Mahmud could be put into the context of the previous one. It was from the first months of 1785. He wrote to the *serdar* (military commander) and priest Milo Martinović from Cetinje to gather representatives of seven principalities and read his letter to them. He stated that they had been praised by a certain Etem Aga. He asked them to pay him tribute, and if they did not do this, they were not good people but bad. Any village from those principalities that did not bring him a severed head from the Paštrovići area no longer had his favour, and showed that it was standing with the Venetians. When he attacked Paštrovići, he would attack those principalities who had not brought him a severed head. He said to let them know that, so they could be guided according to it.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Arhivsko-bibliotečko odjeljenje Narodnog muzeja Crne Gore (ABONMCG), fond mitropolit Petar I, fascikla 1, omot 49.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, omot 50.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, omot 53.

Governor Radonjić unsuccessfully tried to secure any sort of help from the coastal tribes which were under Venetian rule and which bordered with Montenegro, whether this was provision of weapons or shelter for Montenegrins on their territory. It can be seen from the response to Radonjić on 6 June 1785 that he had written to the tribe in Grbalj near Kotor. The residents of Grbalj said that they understood his requests, but they could not meet them, because they only obeyed the one who commanded them, and that was the Venetians, and the people of Grbalj were their subjects. According to Venetian orders, they were not allowed to let anyone into their territory, whether from Montenegro or from the Ottoman state. This was because peace had been established between the Venetian Republic and the Ottoman state. The people from Grbalj would have gladly helped their Montenegrin brothers, but for the abovementioned reasons they could not. They could only pray to God that the Montenegrin knights would resist Kara Mahmud's attack.<sup>19</sup>

Petar Bjeladinović belonged to the group of Bokelians (residents of the Bay of Kotor) under Venetian rule, who worked closely with Governor Radonjić and Archimandrite Petar Petrović. The earliest accounts about Kara Mahmud's attack on Montenegro and Pastrovići in June 1785 can be found with him. It seems that news of the attack reached Bjeladinović. On 2 August, he sent a letter to Governor Radonjić from Trieste. He wrote that he had received the news of the attack with great sadness. It can be seen from the letter that three *nahiyahs* did not want to join up in defence against the attack on the two central Montenegrin *nahiyahs*: Katun and Rijeka. But these two *nahiyahs* showed great courage even without the other three *nahiyahs*.<sup>20</sup>

Besides Crmnica and Lješ *Nahiyahs*, Bjeladinović was obviously thinking about the coastal tribes here: Brajići, Maine, Pobora, Grbljani and Pastrovići. These tribes were situated along the Montenegrin border from Cattaro through Budva to Antivari, which was an Ottoman fortress. They were part of the Venetian Republic. Despite this, they constituted the fifth Montenegrin *nahiyah*. The majority of these tribes were completely liberated from Ottoman rule and annexed to the Venetian Republic after the Turko-Venetian War in 1718.

However, Bjeladinović advised Radonjić to act politically. He should not bitterly criticise these three *nahiyahs*, but he should try to gather them together along with Katun and Rijeka *Nahiyahs*. To soften the betrayal of these three *nahiyahs*, the governor was advised to criticise two tribes in Katun *Nahiyah* – Cetinje and Bjelice – which had not put up any resistance to Kara Mahmud. Radonjić had to act politically also in this case, not criticising the tribespeople, but criticising their leaders instead. Bjeladinović wrote to Radonjić that, if Kara Mahmud attacked Montenegro again, he could not advise him in any way but to trust in God's help. In the letter, Bjeladinović claimed to Radonjić that the Germans had no aspirations towards Montenegro, or that they would not spoil their good relations with Empress Catherine and Russia for Montenegro's sake. If he wanted to represent Montenegro in Vienna, Governor Radonjić would have to send him an authorisation. At the end of the letter, Bjeladinović wrote that he had sent the same letter to Archimandrite Petar Petrović.<sup>21</sup>

Obviously Governor Radonjić did not give up in his diplomatic activity towards Austria, and he got Prince Kaunitz interested in the Montenegrin question, so Kaunitz spoke with Emperor Joseph II on 9 August. He told the emperor that he had received an appeal for help and protection from Radonjić because of Kara Mahmud's attack on Montenegro. In Kaunitz's opinion, Radonjić had not explained to him what form Austrian aid to Montenegro would take, when Kara Mahmud's army passed through Montenegro and burned it down. Austria would not have any reason to help Montenegro and receive Montenegrins onto its territory because it did not border with Montenegro. He was afraid that Austria's intervention against the Porte in

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<sup>19</sup> AIICG, kutija 295, fascikla 1, material of Governor Radonjić (unregulated documents).

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

connection with Montenegro would incite the Ottoman Empire to attack Montenegro even more. In Kaunitz's opinion the best thing would be for the Austrian Ambassador in Constantinople, Baron Herbert, to appear together with the Russian Ambassador at the Porte to prevent the attack on Montenegro. Therefore, Kaunitz asked for instructions from the emperor on how to solve this problem.<sup>22</sup>

Russian diplomacy was also interested in Kara Mahmud's attack on Montenegro. This was evident from the reports that the Russian Consul in Zadar, Anton Paladoklis, sent to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Paladoklis was an ethnic Greek in Russian service. It is a pity that these reports are not dated. But, regardless of that, it can be easily seen when they were written before, during and after Kara Mahmud's attack on Montenegro. He visited the Island of Hvar on the Adriatic and received information about Kara Mahmud's preparations for the attack on Montenegro. According to his reports, the Venetians were also preparing for defence in the event of Kara Mahmud attacking them. Kara Mahmud ordered the Ottoman mayor in Antivari to attack the neighbouring Paštrovići tribe, who were Venetian subjects. When he did not do so, Kara Mahmud threatened that he would do it himself. Although the Porte ordered some Ottoman dignitaries from the neighbouring region to attack Kara Mahmud, but they did not have any desire to do this. The *Wali* of Bosnia had begun to draw up a list of livestock and food for the army that would march against Kara Mahmud, but suddenly stopped.

While he was staying in Herceg Novi, Paladoklis met with Governor Radonjić and *Serdar* Ivan Petrović, the uncle of Bishop Petar Petrović. Both asked for help from Russia and tried to explore the possibility of settling Montenegrins in Russia. Radonjić and Petrović complained about betrayals by some Montenegrins during Kara Mahmud's attack. They claimed that the Venetian authorities in the Bay of Kotor pretty much considered Montenegrins as their enemies. Paladoklis suggested to his ministry that it would be better for the Russian Consulate to move from Zadar to Herceg Novi, so it would be closer to Bosnia, Montenegro and Scutari.

In one of his reports, Paladoklis wrote from Dubrovnik to the Russian Ambassador in Venice. He explained the complete situation of Kara Mahmud's attack on Montenegro. He claimed that Kara Mahmud had persuaded four Montenegrin *nahiyahs*, with bribes and flattery, to pay tribute and submit without any bloodshed. Only Katun *Nahiyah* resisted the attack that was led by Kara Mahmud's brother. He had 5,000 soldiers under his command. He was forced to withdraw with losses. However, Kara Mahmud succeeded in capturing Cetinje and had burnt down the monastery. He did not stay there long, but descended towards the sea in Paštrovići. For every thousand active soldiers in his army, a thousand cavalry soldiers went as an escort. After occupying Paštrovići along the sea, he crossed the land to Lake Scutari, and by various promises and money, he conquered Crmnica *Nahiyah* without a fight, although its leaders swore that they would offer resistance. The other tribes around it did not offer any resistance when they saw this.

Several other facts were added to the report. Faced by the fact that, of the 8,000 soldiers in Montenegro, 3,000 from Crmnica *Nahiyah* would surrender, and that the same would happen in the other tribes, Governor Radonjić burned down his house and retreated with his supporters into the forest. Only Katun *Nahiyah* resisted. Kara Mahmud announced a reward for the heads of Governor Radonjić and *Serdar* Ivan Petrović. Katun *Nahiyah* offered resistance thanks to the support of inhabitants from the coast. This report from Paladoklis contradicted earlier sources on the behaviour of the inhabitants of the coast. It is possible that, regardless of the Venetian prohibition, they received Montenegrin women and children onto their territory, or in small groups they helped Montenegrins in the fight. Paladoklis claimed that Kara Mahmud's brother

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<sup>22</sup> Vladan Đorđević, *Crna Gora i Rusija 1784–1814*, 20.

or nephew was wounded in these battles, and that he withdrew from Montenegro with great losses.<sup>23</sup>

Governor Radonjić and *Serdar* Nikola Djurašković wrote a letter from Cetinje on 20 November to *serdar* and priest Mojaš Plamenac and Captain Nikola Rajović, who were on a mission in Vienna. Radonjić and Djurašković stated that they were writing the letter next to the ruins of the Cetinje monastery. Obviously, this referred to the remains of the monastery that had been burned down in Kara Mahmud's attack. They explained the causes of the defeat from the attack of Kara Mahmud by the fact that he had found some unfortunates and traitors whom he bribed. In this way, he had passed through most of Montenegro without any resistance. When they saw the confusion and discord among the Montenegrins, they also gave him some money, but Katun *Nahiyah* without that money had put up strong resistance with the help of people from the coast. Now they were much better, with the help of God, and they were working on the harmony of Montenegrins. If Plamenac and Rajović were to see Bishop Petar Petrović somewhere, they should tell him to return to Montenegro immediately because there was a frosty reception waiting for him.<sup>24</sup>

### **An extension of aggressive politics towards Montenegro**

As has been stated earlier, during Kara Mahmud's preparations to attack Montenegro and during the attack, Bishop Petar Petrović was not in Montenegro. On 3 October 1785, he wrote to Governor Radonjić from Minsk in Belarus. At that time, Bishop Petar was already on his way to Russia. He told Radonjić that he had received information about Kara Mahmud's attack on Montenegro. The defeat, as he heard, was the result of discord, malice and betrayal among the Montenegrins. Philosophically and religiously, he explained this by the eternal struggle between the people's greed and their sense of honour and freedom. He compared such a betrayal and such people with Judas and Christ. Petar further stated that he took all this news very hard. He thanked God that the governor was alive. But he wrote that it was not clear to him why the governor had not written to him about all this before, because he would have done something to stop the danger on time.<sup>25</sup>

From this detail, it is obvious that there was already rivalry between him and Governor Radonjić, which would escalate later. The title of governor would be abolished in Montenegro for a short time. It would be later returned to the Radonjić family. But a split was smouldering. It would escalate at the beginning of the reign of Petar's successor, Petar II Petrović-Njegoš (1830–1851). The last Radonjić governor was demoted and expelled with a group of relatives from Montenegro, and their houses were set on fire because he was accused of spying for Austria. Some of the descendants of this family lived in Cattaro, which was under the rule of Austria-Hungary until 1918 and the creation of the Yugoslav state. When he left Montenegro, the last governor Radonjić took with him the archives of this governor's family. This archive was kept in the private ownership of this family until 1952. One of the descendants of that family who lived in Kotor at that time, sold the archive to the State Archives of Montenegro.

By his actions, Kara Mahmud clearly became a figure who was gathering together a rebel movement not only in northern Albania, but also in the *Eyalet* of Bosnia and parts of present-day Macedonia and Kosovo. A successful attack on Montenegro and on the Paštrovići tribe under Venetian rule strengthened his authority. This was because the Venetian Republic did not dare to react militarily against him. It could be stated that in the vicinity of his *sanjak*, the Ottoman administrative apparatus and the feudal layer were divided into supporters of the central government and his supporters.

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<sup>23</sup> ABONMCG, fond Prinovljeni rukopisi, kutija 1796–1809, omot 2 (the reports are not dated and are not signed within the cover).

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, fond mitropolit Petar I, fascikla 1, omot 52.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, omot 52.

The sultan sent a series of decrees against this movement of Kara Mahmud's. The sultan's decree of 4 November 1785, was based on information that Tepedenli Ali Basha, in addition to his previous sins, had also joined Kara Mahmud. The sultan stated that he had asked for an explanation of whether there had been violations of Sharia law by Sheikh-l-Islam Durri Zade Sayyid Muhammad Arif. The question was whether it was permitted to kill Scutari resident Mahmud Pasha and his brothers Ahmed Pasha and Ali Pasha, because they had refused to obey the sultan and had committed numerous crimes. The answer was that this was permitted. Mahmud Pasha of Scutari and his brothers had allied themselves with other renegade leaders, refusing to obey the sultan. So, two more *fatwas* which permitted their killing were confirmed. The sultan deprived them of their rank and their administration of the *sanjaks*.

A decree was also sent to the *Wali* of Rumelia, Abdullah Bashi, all the *mirmirans*, *beys* and other clerks, especially in Elbasan and the *kadiluks* in his vicinity, to destroy Kara Mahmud and his associates by force. If a siege of Scutari was necessary, the *Wali* of Bosnia Ahmed Pasha should take part with the required number of city captains and soldiers from the *Eyalet* of Bosnia. The sultan sent this decree via Aga Hajji Suleyman Zejrekçi. If Kara Mahmud and his brother Ahmed by chance expressed regret, and someone tried to reinterpret the royal decree because of this, he would become a traitor to the faith and the state, just like they were.

The sultan guaranteed freedom and property to the inhabitants of Scutari, Antivari, Dulcigno and the *Sanjak* of Scutari, who were engaged in trade in the *eyalets* of Rumelia and Bosnia, but only if they did not support the renegade Kara Mahmud and his group. If they helped them, they would be considered renegades, and their property would be confiscated in favour of the state. The *Wali* of Bosnia was informed that his obligation was to help the *Wali* of Rumelia Abdullah Bashi if Kara Mahmud attacked Dulcigno and Antivari with his renegades. The *Wali* of Bosnia was to inform his subordinates about all this.<sup>26</sup>

One of the sultan's decrees on this issue was more widely recorded in the *sidjil* (minutes) of Sarajevo. It was sent to the *Wali* of Bosnia, Ahmed Pasha, in December of the same year. It was stated that: Mahmud Pasha from Scutari had shown disobedience and impudence for some time. For that reason a decree was issued that Mahmud Pasha had to be punished. Mahmud Pasha showed remorse and therefore he was forgiven. However, he forgot everything, and again showed disobedience. He went with an army to besiege the *sheher* of Podgorica and the Fortress of Spuž. The *mütesellim* who was appointed by the empire, Abdulah Basich Ibrahim Pasha from Spuž, was forcibly expelled and humiliated. The traitor Mahmud Pasha attacked Christian serfs in Montenegro without permission. When he was returning to Scutari, he attacked some *mahalas* (neighbourhoods) in the possession of the Venetian Republic.<sup>27</sup> He did this even though the empire had a peace agreement with the Venetian Republic. He again visited Tirana, Elbasan, Gorica and other places without permission with his army, looking for food and committing numerous crimes. He was at war with the *buljukbas* (commander of a small detachment of the Ottoman army) of the *mutasarrif* of Olujna (?) Kurd Pasha. Mahmud Pasha, together with his brother Ahmed Pasha, laid siege to the Fortress of Pekin. Therefore, they needed to be stopped without delay.

Mahmud Pasha expropriated food and other necessities on several occasions. He attacked Kimak Beg in the vicinity of Elbasan. News arrived that Tepedenli Ali Pasha had joined forces with Mahmud Pasha. Therefore, an interpretation of Shariah law was requested from Sheikh-l-Islam Durri Zade Muhammed Arif. He issued a *fatwa* which permitted the killing of Mahmud Pasha and Tepedenli Ali Pasha because they had stolen the property of a large number of Muslims and committed acts of disobedience. This *fatwa* was confirmed once again, to deprive them of their rank and their administration of the *sanjaks*. The *Wali* of Rumelia, Abdullah

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<sup>26</sup> GHb, Turko-Ottoman documents (TO), A-228, 1 Muharrema 1200/ 4 Nov. 1785.

<sup>27</sup> This clearly refers to Kara Mahmud's attack on Montenegro in June and on the Paštrovići tribe, which was part of the Venetian Republic.

Pasha, was to set out via Bitola, and Kurd Pasha via Elbasan with an army to destroy Mahmud Pasha along with his renegades. In the event it was needed during this siege of Scutari, the *Wali* of Bosnia should help them. Whoever helped the traitor Mahmud Pasha should be declared an enemy of the faith and of the state, and should be punished.<sup>28</sup>

Kara Mahmud was obviously not satisfied with his attack on Montenegro and Paštrovići, and at the end of the same year he started threatening them again. Governor Radonjić continued with his diplomatic activity and his search for allies against Kara Mahmud, at least symbolised in the surrounding Ottoman officials and leaders. In a letter from Džafer Pasha Čengić to Radonjić on 13 February 1786, it can be seen that Radonjić had already sent him a letter, in which he mentioned the *Wali* of Bosnia and representative (*mütesellim*) Ibrahim Pasha from Spuž. Čengić assured Radonjić that he understood his letter and difficulties, and had forwarded it immediately to the *Wali* of Bosnia. He claimed that he and the *Wali* of Bosnia had written to the sultan about the torturing carried out by Kara Mahmud, and that he had done this without an imperial decree. The emperor issued a decree to behead Mahmud and his brother Ahmed Pasha.

Later in the letter, Čengić informed the governor that the sultan had ordered that the army be supplied from Bosnia and Rumelia and that the process to behead Mahmud and his brother Ahmed be started. From this letter of Čengić's, one can see that in the previous letter, the governor had asked for an army to be sent against Kara Mahmud as soon as possible. Čengić assured him that he would have done this before now, but his son was getting married. After the wedding ceremony was over, he would be with his Bosnian army in Gacko in a month. He would send to Radonjić a certain Islam Aga, with thirty to forty *agas*, so that the governor would meet them, and together they would attack Kara Mahmud and destroy him.<sup>29</sup> Ibrahim Pasha Čengić's excuses were quite unconvincing. These were similar to a few already presented sources. Many *mutasarrifs* and city captains, despite the sultan's decree and the orders of the *Walıs* of Bosnia and Rumelia, delayed entering a conflict against Kara Mahmud. The commentary of Mullah Mustafa Bašeskija for the period from 4 November 1785 to 23 October 1786 (1200 AH) can be added to this. He states that, rumour had it that Kara Mahmud had been attacked by the Venetians and that the pashas from the region had got involved on the pretext of protecting Scutari. However, the Bosnians were not obeying their governor, because there were tensions among them and they were in bad relations with each other, too.<sup>30</sup> After that, in one of the events, Bašeskija stated that, 41 days before St. George's Day, news had arrived that Kara Mahmud had been released from prison.<sup>31</sup> This information was not correct, because Kara Mahmud had never been in prison. Bašeskija probably thought that Kara Mahmud had received a pardon from the sultan again.

Apparently, all Governor Radonjić's appeals towards Austria and its emperor failed to produce results. Probably, on hearing that Count Janez Coblenzl had come to the position of chancellor on 10 March 1786, the governor sent a letter from Njeguši to Emperor Joseph II and Coblenzl. This time, Radonjić tried to play the card of Montenegro's commitment to Austria, saying that that was the reason why the previous year's attack by Mahmud on Montenegro had been carried out. He said to the emperor that he had information that the sultan had issued a decree to mobilise an army from Rumelia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to attack Montenegro again.<sup>32</sup>

David Nerandžić was a Russian major general and an ethnic Serb. He was born in the Tisza region of Hungary (later Bačka in Vojvodina) as an Austrian citizen. Later, together with his older and certainly more famous brother Simeon, he entered Russian military service. He

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<sup>28</sup> GHb, Sidžil 25, pp. 40–41, kraj muharrema 1200/ Dec. 1785.

<sup>29</sup> ABONMCG, fond Petar I, fascikla 1, omot 54.

<sup>30</sup> Mula Mustafa (Ševki) Bašeskija, *Ljetopis*, 243.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 245.

<sup>32</sup> Vladan Đorđević, *Crna Gora i Austrija u XVIII veku* (Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1912), 67.

was promoted to the rank of general. His older brother Simeon took the surname Zorić from his uncle, who had no descendants, and he was a high-ranking general in the Russian army and provincial governor (*gubernija*). Simeon was more famous as a lover and favourite of the Russian Empress Catherine, who gave him a title of nobility. The brothers Simeon and David had a lot of contact with the Montenegrin leaders, who frequently travelled between Vienna, Moscow and Saint Petersburg. Bishop Petar Petrović had contact with Simeon, before he went to Russia for the last time, from where he was expelled. Petar's stay on Simeon's estate in Shklow, where several compromised figures had appeared, made a significant contribution to his expulsion from Russia.

Certainly, Simeon's younger brother David had a greater level of contact with Montenegrin leaders, who were travelling from Vienna to Russia. He had contact with Governor Radonjić, too. David was undoubtedly both an adventurer and a speculator. After the episode with Šćepan Mali (Stephen the Small) involving Montenegro, by the end of the eighteenth century a series of figures who were adventurous in spirit and in business appeared. All of them, instructed by the deceiver and imposter Šćepan Mali, wanted to impose themselves on the Montenegrins as rulers and mostly tried to present themselves to the Austrian and Russian authorities as genuine figures. They took advantage of the backwardness of the Montenegrin leaders who were asking for help from both Austrian and Russian courts. Besides this, they took advantage of the struggle between Montenegrin leaders for power and material earnings, and their easy acceptance of empty promises because of the difficult situation in Montenegro. Thus, they managed to impress the Montenegrin leaders relatively easily. From this source, it is clear that David Nerandžić also had such ambitions. After all, he openly promoted himself at the Russian court as a person who could become Montenegrin king under Russian patronage.

The figure of David Nerandžić and the sources of information he left are of interest to the topic that this paper deals with, because in them he deals with Kara Mahmud's attack on Montenegro in 1785. Thus, on 28 October 1785, Nerandžić sent a memorandum to the Russian Chancellor Gregory Potemkin, in which it can be seen that he had information about Mahmud's attack on Montenegro. He convinced Potemkin that the Montenegrins were able to fight against the Ottomans. An example of this was the recent resistance to Kara Mahmud's attack. On 17 June, the Montenegrins clearly showed their great heroism by fighting for eight days against an enemy ten times stronger than they. With this, they showed the Ottomans that they would never be able to rule the Montenegrin land and settle in it.<sup>33</sup>

When Russia declared war on the Ottoman state in 1787, it invited the Montenegrins again to go to war against the Ottoman state. Trying to take advantage of this and hoping to be sent on a mission to Montenegro, Nerandžić again sent a memorandum to Potemkin on 24 April 1788. He claimed that he had serious information that the army of the Vizier of Scutari, Kara Mahmud Pasha, was made up of Christians. The tribes around Podgorica, Kuča, Piper, Kliment and the whole of Montenegro were gathered in that army. The intentions of this *pasha* were already known. They consisted of sowing confusion among the Christians, inflaming

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<sup>33</sup> ABONMCG, Dokumenta iz ostavštine profesora Marka Dragovića, fascikla 1 (1696–1859), omot 13, Prepisi iz arhiva u Petrogradu. Marko Dragović, together with his brother Živko, can be considered a pioneer of Montenegrin historiography. After graduating from the Theological School in Cetinje, he worked briefly as a teacher. Then he was a front-line war correspondent for the newspaper *Glas Crnogorca*, which was published in Cetinje, during the Montenegro-Ottoman war in 1876–1878. After this war, he went to study in Russia at the Theological Academy in St. Petersburg. During his studies, using summer vacations and major holidays, he toured the Russian archives, and copied documents about Montenegro from them. It can truly be said that he was a passionate historical researcher. Upon his return to Montenegro, he became a high state official, as well as a professor and director in various high schools. He published many articles in various Yugoslav magazines. Montenegrin historiography based its sources from Russian archives almost exclusively on his transcripts practically until the 1960s. This dependence only grew when many documents from Russian archives were irredeemably damaged in the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917–1921.

quarrels between them so that they would rebel against the sultan. Then Kara Mahmud Pasha appeared as a self-proclaimed attacker against them in the name of the sultan. He plundered the surrounding territories and illegally exacted taxes from them. The Christians quickly understood this bad situation and made peace with each other, because they saw that only Kara Mahmud Pasha and the Ottomans were benefitting from their quarrel.<sup>34</sup>

### **Kara Mahmud Pasha's and Montenegro's view on the Austro-Russo-Turkish War of 1787–1791**

The war waged by Austria and Russia against the Ottoman state was a consequence of complex relations in South-East Europe, based on the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca of 1774, and the so-called “Greek plan” of the Russian Empress Catherine II, in which Austria was included. According to this, an agreement of alliance between these two states was concluded in 1782. This alliance essentially intended to erase the Ottoman presence in Europe that had lasted several centuries, and the spheres of interest were already divided between Russia and Austria. As this plan did not suit Great Britain, it encouraged the Ottoman state to declare war on Russia and Austria. Following this, the Ottoman state declared war on Russia on 26 July 1787. Early the following year, Austria sided with Russia in the war. This war was complicated by the fact that Sweden wanted to nullify the Russian presence in the Baltic. Again, the strengthening of Austria did not suit Prussia.

Even before the official outbreak of the war, the movements of Ottoman troops in Bosnia and the gathering of the army were evident. This aroused the suspicion of the Montenegrin Bishop Petar Petrović. Although he knew about Kara Mahmud's conflict with the Porte, he assumed that this was about concentrating forces and not just about him. He expressed this suspicion in a letter from Stanjevići Monastery on the Venice-Montenegro border, sent to the Venetian *provedadore* in Cattaro, Giuseppe Diedo, on 20 May 1787.<sup>35</sup> It seems that this letter was received in Cattaro by Diedo on the same day, because it was only about 20 km away. Therefore, Diedo sent a reply to Bishop Petar. The bishop wrote him a new letter the same day. It showed that Petar had been informed by a group of Montenegrin leaders that the Bosnian *pashas* were writing to them to come to Gacko with a Montenegrin army, and there they would meet the *Wali* of Bosnia and then attack Kara Mahmud together. Petar suspected that this was an Ottoman deception. He assured him that he would prevent Montenegrins from fighting for the sultan against Kara Mahmud, and vice versa, for Kara Mahmud against the sultan. Bishop Petar's intention was, at least judging by this letter, to mobilise Montenegrins on the border, to defend themselves from both Kara Mahmud and the Ottoman Army.<sup>36</sup>

Entering a new war with the Ottoman state, Russia, and Austria, as many times before, reached out to mobilise Christians in the Balkans to fight against Turkey, offering them liberation. Both Russia and Austria were seriously counting on Montenegro, as a free and eternally unconquered area. Each of them sent their emissaries to Montenegro separately. For this reason, at the beginning of 1788, Russian Major Sava Mirković, actually an ethnic Serb, arrived in Montenegro. He had the backing of Bishop Petar Petrović. The Austrian delegation landed near Budva on 11 March and continued on to Cetinje. It was led by Captains Filip Vukasović and Ludwig Pernet. Vukasović was an ethnic Serb. Immediately after the arrival of the Austrian delegation, Mirković left Montenegro. The visits of the two delegations pointed to a fissure among the Montenegrins, forming a pro-Russian current led by Bishop Petar Petrović and a pro-Austrian current led by Governor Radonjić.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Državni arhiv Zadar, Filza, lettere di baili, magistrati, prelati, consoli, generali ecc. ,dirette al provveditore astra ordinario Giuseppe Diedo, anni 1787, 1788, 1789, CLII.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Although Montenegro was a base for the war against the Ottoman state in the Balkans, Austria and Russia had serious plans to activate Kara Mahmud onto their side. They were counting on the fact that he was a renegade rebelling against the sultan, and that he had very serious political plans. The Russian and Austrian interests regarding Kara Mahmud were different. Russia was trying to direct him to wage war on the Ottoman state in the direction of Greece and Macedonia. Austria was calculating on directing him towards Bosnia. Shortly after Vukasović's arrival in Cetinje, a special Austrian mission led by Bronjar arrived there. Captain Pernet and Lieutenant Shenflug were with him.

This delegation got in touch with Kara Mahmud in Scutari through intermediaries. Despite the warnings from Governor Radonjić and Bishop Petar that Kara Mahmud should not be trusted, this delegation visited him in Scutari bearing gifts. Delighted by the gifts, Kara Mahmud signed a treaty with Austria, and sent the Austrian Emperor a precious rifle as a gift. He accompanied the delegation with great pomp on the shores of the lake. Soon afterwards, he sent his men to follow the delegation. Kara Mahmud's group caught up with them at a spring by the lake. They suggested that the delegation rest and soon after murdered them when their guard was down. Three days later, the heads of the Austrian delegation were impaled on the walls of the city of Scutari.<sup>37</sup>

After a series of negotiations and a conflict with Bishop Petar Petrović, Vukasović managed to make peace with him. It was greatly influenced by the fact that a smaller Austrian detachment with food and ammunition, which was stationed in Cetinje, landed in Montenegro. This Austrian detachment, together with the Montenegrins, attacked Spuž on 17 June. The members of Rijeka and Crmnica *Nahiyahs* attacked the Fortress of Žabljak on Lake Scutari. Although Vukasović and Bishop Petar personally led the attack on Spuž, neither it nor Žabljak was conquered. The arrival of the Russian delegation led by Major Marko Ivelić, who was a native of the Kotor Bay area, made Vukasović's position in Montenegro even more difficult, and he and his detachment practically fled from Montenegro on 17 September.<sup>38</sup>

During the Russo-Austro-Turkish War, Kara Mahmud had a major conflict with the Ottoman state. For both warring parties (the Russian and Austrians) and for the Ottomans, it was extremely important to attract Kara Mahmud over to their side to fight against the opposing side, or in the worst case, to not fight at all. For the topic that this paper deals with, the priority is a consideration of several lines of communication. The first is how the Austrian delegates from Montenegro, on the orders from their headquarters, tried to get in touch with Kara Mahmud, and how the latter reacted to that. The second was what his attitude towards the Porte was, regarding this entire situation. In between those two lines of communication there was a third – Montenegro – which had special attitude towards him, just as he did towards Montenegro. The attitude of the Venetian Republic regarding the whole war which was in its immediate vicinity should be added to all of this. The beginning of this war marked the last decade of the republic's existence. The republic did not like the presence of Russian and Austrian delegations in Montenegro, nor the landing of the Austrian delegation on its territory in Budva. For this reason, it considered Montenegro as an area of its own interest. Above all, this could be interpreted by the Porte and Kara Mahmud that Montenegro was on the side of Russia and Austria, leading it into war against the Ottoman state and Kara Mahmud. The great complexity of the relationship was supplemented by how Kara Mahmud treated the Ottoman authorities in the immediate surroundings of Montenegrin during the war.

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<sup>37</sup> Vladan Đorđević, *Ispisi iz bečkih državnih arhiva: dokumenti za delo "Crna Gora i Austrija"* (Beograd: Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, 1913), 156–158; Dušan Lekić, *Spoljna politika Petra I Petrovića (1784–1830)* (Cetinje: Istorijski institut NR Crne Gore, 1950), 80–81.

<sup>38</sup> Vladan Đorđević, *Crna Gora i Austrija u XVIII veku*, 82–83; Dimitrije Milaković, *Istorija Crne Gore* (Zadar: Tipografija braće Battara, 1856), 185–187.

It was interesting that, for the first time, information about Montenegrins, as well as about Kara Mahmud, was appearing in connection with this war. The edition of the Paris newspaper *Moniteur universel* or *Gazette nationale* of 26 November 1790 provided information based on a report from Vienna from 7 November. According to this, the Pasha of Scutari had arrived in Bosnia with 24,000 soldiers, where he joined up with troops from Bosnia near Banja Luka under the command of the Vizier of Travnik.<sup>39</sup> After operations that were not convincingly loyal to the central government, he decided to return to Scutari via Bihać.<sup>40</sup> The newspaper received this information from Croatia via Vienna on 6 December.

The newspaper provided new information about the movements of Kara Mahmud towards Banja Luka in the edition from 2 January 1790. He first arrived in Sarajevo, where he spent 30,000 roubles on a large amount of equipment for his army. He did not commit any violence against the local population. He even executed fourteen of his soldiers when a man from Sarajevo complained that they had destroyed his garden. However, this article also contained completely contradictory information, received from Warsaw on 9 December, that Kara Mahmud's delegation had gone to St. Petersburg to offer the Russian Empress 20,000 soldiers for the war in Bosnia at the expense of Russia and Austria.<sup>41</sup> The newspaper based news of Kara Mahmud's return to Scutari on information from Trieste, in the edition from 17 January. According to this, he remained holed up in the Nikšić area, which belonged to Herzegovina, because his Montenegrin enemies would not let him pass, even though he had offered them twenty bags of ducats. The Vizier of Scutari had only two ways to get past. The first was on Ottoman territory which belonged to his blood enemy Mahmutbegović, and the second was through the Republic of Dubrovnik. That road was held by neighbours of Montenegro, the Bokelji (Kotor Bay residents), subjects of the Venetian Republic, who also would not let him pass.<sup>42</sup>

The French newspaper also focused on Kara Mahmud and Montenegrins in the edition from 17 May. It based its claims on information obtained from Dubrovnik on 12 April. According to them, the Porte was again trying to gather an army that would fight towards Banja Luka. The *Wali* of Rumelia was supposed to gather an army from Rumelia and Macedonia. The Herzegovinian Pasha Emir Ali was to gather the army in Zvornik, and Bosnian Hadži Sali in Prijedor. Kara Mahmud Pasha of Scutari had received large sums of money, and was to move to Novi Pazar. However, those funds were no guarantee of his loyalty, because he had an excuse that he would be endangered by Montenegrins if he left the Scutari region.<sup>43</sup> These claims turned out to be justified. The information obtained from Dubrovnik, that the Montenegrins had attacked Podgorica and Spuž in April and had caused great damage, was published in the edition from 26 June. The son of the commander of Spuž and many Turks lay dead on the battlefield.<sup>44</sup> However, Mullah Mustafa Bašeski assessed the entire campaign of Kara Mahmud's engagement in Bosnia as a complete failure. He did this in a description of the period from 21 September 1789 to 9 September 1790 (1204 AH). According to him, Kara Mahmud should be sent to attack Belgrade immediately, rather than sending him to Bosnia before the winter, when there was no need for that. Earlier, Abdi Pasha and Yusuf Pasha had been in one place around Belgrade all summer. Everyone knew it was a mistake, but kept quiet, otherwise criticism might reach the sultan's ears, and no one wanted that.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Arhiv Srpske Akademije Naka I Umjetnosti (ASANU), Prepisi iz francuske štampe za jugoslovenske zemlje, Book 1, *Moniteur*, No. 96, Nov. 26, 1789, 4.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 131, Dec. 31, 1789, 5.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 2, Jan. 2, 1790, 4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 17, Jan. 17, 1790, 6.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 137, Mai 17, 1790, 5.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 162, Juin 26, 1790, 5.

<sup>45</sup> Mula Mustafa (Ševki) Bašeskija. *Ljetopis*, 283.

## Conclusion

As Vizier of Scutari, Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati inherited the idea of being interested in Montenegro, formed immediately after the establishment of Ottoman rule at the end of the fifteenth century. Except for a short period from 1513 to 1527, when the territories of the former feudal state of Crnojević were separated from the *Sanjak* of Scutari, with its centre in Žabljak, under the leadership of Skenderbeg Crnojević, the *Sanjak* of Scutari mainly had territorial authority over Montenegro. Many Ottoman military expeditions had set out for Montenegro from Scutari via Podgorica, long before Kara Mahmud.

Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushati was an extremely interesting historical figure, who differed in many ways from ordinary renegades rebelling against the Ottoman state throughout its territory. These renegades' plans mostly began and ended with the ambitions of ordinary feudal lords, who were defending their feudal incomes. Undoubtedly Kara Mahmud was taking a significant step beyond this, which, truth be told, did not achieve the level of an official state outside the Ottoman state, but it was certainly not far from that. In terms of this, only Osman Pasvantoğlu of Vidin could be compared with him in the eighteenth century.

Kara Mahmud acted within the complex process of interests of the Great Powers and regional states in the southern Adriatic basin in the Balkans. This primarily relates to Austria, Russia, the Venetian and Dubrovnik Republics, the Ottoman state and, finally, Montenegro. He had his own policies towards each of them, which often intertwined with the others. It is not pretentious to state that the priority of his politics and conquest was Montenegro, as an eternally unconquered area, which in the eighteenth century seriously began to form the infrastructure of a state. At the end of this century, under the rule of Bishop Peter Petrović, Montenegro would make the most significant step in this sense, in connection with Kara Mahmud. The priority of Kara Mahmud's interest in Montenegro was quite understandable. By occupying it, he would join up the basin of Lake Scutari with its hinterland, and he would have dominance over the Venetian estates in the Kotor Bay region. The combination of events, the ambitions of Kara Mahmud and the influence of other countries in the final unfolding of his life and political biography led to him ending his life tragically, actually in Montenegro and at the hands of Montenegrins, in the first half of October 1796, between the Ottoman *sheher* of Podgorica and the Montenegrin capital of Cetinje, in the Battle of Krusi. Unlike in 1785, when he went into Montenegro and set it on fire, this time the luck of the war had turned against him.

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