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**THE IMAGE OF SULTAN MEHMED THE CONQUEROR  
IN THE *TURKISH CHRONICLE (MEMOIRS OF A JANISSARY)*  
OF KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ**

**Abstract:** At the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century Konstantin Mihailović, former janissary, wrote his *Memoirs* dedicated to Polish King John I Albert (1492–1501). It can be assumed that Konstantin became a janissary after the Sultan's conquest of the Serbian town of Novo Brdo in 1455. From 1456 to 1463 he participated in the Sultan's campaigns against Belgrade, the Despotate of Morea, the Empire of Trebizond, Wallachia and Bosnia. Therefore, his work represents important primary source on military actions and court of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror (1444–1446; 1451–1481). Author testified that the Ottomans had efficient military organization and that Sultan showed respect for his warriors. On the other hand, he stressed that Mehmed II achieved success through various frauds and stratagems. Also, Konstantin noted that Sultan was rather cruel to his enemies.

**Keywords:** Konstantin Mihailović, Sultan Mehmed II, janissary, army, frauds, righteousness, cruelty.

The Ottoman danger has become a constant threat for the Serbian lands after the battle of Maritsa in 1371. That is the reason why a phenomenon of the “fear of the Turks” was widespread in Serbian contemporary sources. Ottomans were portrayed as unscrupulous conquerors who were looting and killing inhabitants of Serbian territories.<sup>1</sup> However, their

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<sup>1</sup> See J. КАЛИЋ, „Страх турски“ после Косова, *Свети кнез Лазар. Споменница о шестој стогодишњици Косовског боја 1389–1989*, ур. ЕПИСКОП ПАВЛЕ, Београд 1989, 185–191 [J. KALIĆ, „Strah turski“ posle Kosova, *Sveti knez Lazar. Spomenica o šestoj stogodišnjici Kosovskog boja 1389–1989*, ur. EPISKOP PAVLE, Beograd 1989, 185–191]; P. РАДИЋ, *Страх у позној Византији, 1180–1453*, Том II, Београд 2000, 201–240 [R. RADIĆ, *Strah u poznoj Vizantiji, 1180–1453*, Том II, Beograd 2000]; M. ШУИЦА, Приповест о српско-турским окршајима и „страх од

image has become more complex over time. The work of Konstantin Mihailović, *Turkish Chronicle (Memoirs of a Janissary)*,<sup>2</sup> is a good example for such an assertion.

Personality of the author is known to us only through his work. It is assumed that he was born around 1435 in Ostrovica, near famous mining city of Novo Brdo.<sup>3</sup> As a member of auxiliary troops of the Serbian Despot Đurađ Branković (1427–1456), he was a witness of the Turkish siege of Constantinople in 1453.<sup>4</sup> Two years later, Konstantin, along with his two brothers, was captured when Sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror occupied Novo Brdo.<sup>5</sup> Next year, Konstantin participated in Sultan's campaigns against Belgrade,<sup>6</sup> but it is not certain that he was already a janissary at that time.<sup>7</sup> Also, it should be pointed out that Konstantin doesn't mention his conversion to Islam. Therefore, there is a possibility that he remained a Christian.<sup>8</sup> From 1458 to 1463 he was part of the Sultan's troops in the wars against the Despotate of the Morea, the Empire of Trebizond, Wallachia and Bosnia.<sup>9</sup> In the fall of 1463 Hungarian army

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Турака“ 1386. године, *Историјски часопис* 53 (2006) 93–122 [M. ŠUIČA, Pripovest o srpsko-turskim okršajima i „strah od Turaka“ 1386. godine, *Istorijski časopis* 53 (2006) 93–122].

<sup>2</sup> Angiolo Danti has proved that the correct title was *Turkish Chronicle*. The title *Memoirs of a Janissary* was derived from the Polish edition of 1828: A. DANTI, Ani janczar, ani autor Kroniki Tureckiej? (W sprawie Konstantego Michaiłowicia z Ostrowicy), *Pamiętnik Słowiński* 19 (1968) 101–113, p. 104.

<sup>3</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина Михаиловића из Остро-вице*, Београд 2006, 64 [Ђ. ŽIVANOVIĆ, *Život i delo Konstantina Mihailovića iz Ostrovice*, Beograd 2006].

<sup>4</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, trans. B. STOLZ, Ann Arbor 1975, 86–95; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ ИЗ ОСТРОВИЦЕ, *Јаничарење успомене или Турска хроника*, Београд 1959, 32–35 [KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ IZ OSTROVICE, *Janičareve uspomene ili Turska hronika*, Beograd 1959] (hereinafter: КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*). Stephen Turnbull expressed doubt that Konstantin participated in the siege of Constantinople: S. TURNBULL, *The Ottoman Empire 1326–1699*, New York – London 2006, 68.

<sup>5</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 99–100; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 36–37.

<sup>6</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 106–109; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 39–40.

<sup>7</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 71, 76; S. TURNBULL, *The Ottoman Empire*, 69. Angiolo Danti has even considered that Konstantin was not a janissary at all: A. DANTI, *Ani janczar*, 101–113.

<sup>8</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 71.

<sup>9</sup> B. STOLZ, Introduction, in: KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, XXVIII–XXIX.

seized Bosnian small fortress of Zvečaj and captured its commander Konstantin.<sup>10</sup> After describing this event he no longer writes directly about himself. Certainly, Konstantin lived in Hungary for some time.<sup>11</sup> According to some researchers, he even remained there until his death.<sup>12</sup> His negative attitude towards John Hunyadi and King Matthias Corvinus (1458–1490) testifies in favor of the opinion that at some point he left Hungary.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, Đorđe Živanović made an assumption that Konstantin lived in Bohemia from 1464 to 1468, and then in Poland for the rest of his life.<sup>14</sup>

Between 1497 and 1501 Konstantin Mihailović wrote his work, *Turkish Chronicle*, and dedicated it to the Polish King John I Albert (1492–1501).<sup>15</sup> A different interpretation was expounded by Angiolo Danti who thought that Konstantin had composed his chronicle before 1464, while the preserved version was the work of an unknown editor from the end of 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup> The text of this chronicle is preserved in a number of manuscripts in Polish and Czech language.<sup>17</sup> It can not be determined on which language the original was written.<sup>18</sup> The first redaction was probably in Czech language.<sup>19</sup> The author's main aim was to

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<sup>10</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 140–141; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомена*, 51.

<sup>11</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 87; В. STOLZ, *Introduction*, XXII.

<sup>12</sup> В. ЃИРИЉИЋ, *Próba nowego spojrzenia na „Pamiętniki Janczara“*, *Pamiętnik Literacki* 43/1–2 (1952) 140–170; М. КАШАНИН, *Српска књижевност у средњем веку*, Београд 1975, 477 [М. КАШАНИН, *Srpska književnost u srednjem веку*, Београд 1975].

<sup>13</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 88.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, 112–128.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, 125–126.

<sup>16</sup> А. DANTI, *Ani janczar*, 101–113; ИДЕМ, *Старо и ново о Турској хроници*, *Зборник Матице српске за књижевност и језик* 26/1 (1978) 89–97, pp. 90–91 [А. DANTI, *Staro i novo o Turskoj hronici*, *Zbornik Matice srpske za književnost i jezik* 26/1 (1978) 89–97].

<sup>17</sup> В. STOLZ, *Introduction*, XXIII–XXIV; Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 37–48.

<sup>18</sup> Г. ЈОВАНОВИЋ, *Константин Михаиловић из новобрдске Островице и његов спис Турска хроника или тзв. Јаничарева успомена (крај XV века)*, *Косовско-метохијски зборник* 6 (2015) 135–149, pp. 139–145 [Г. ЈОВАНОВИЋ, *Konstantin Mihailović iz novobrdске Ostrovice i njegov spis Turska hronika ili tzv. Janičareve успомена (крај XV века)*, *Kosovsko-metohijski zbornik* 6 (2015) 135–149].

<sup>19</sup> А. DANTI, *Od Kroniky Turecké k Pamiętnikom Janczara*, *Slavia* 38 (1969) 351–372; G. JOVANOVIĆ, *Studia nad językiem Pamiętników Janczara*, Kraków 1972,

emphasize the need of a common Christian war front against the Turks. He pointed out that the royal brothers, Hungarian and Czech King Vladislaus II (1471–1516) and Polish King John I Albert, should attack the Turkish Emperor in order to avenge the shedding of Christian blood.<sup>20</sup> That was the reason why Konstantin decided to present the history of the Ottomans, their state organization, the way they waged war, as well as their religion and customs.<sup>21</sup> *Turkish Chronicle* is a typical representative of contemporary literary production about the Turks and Muslims.<sup>22</sup> Renaissance authors considered the Turkish treat as the last stage of Muslim attacks on Christianity.<sup>23</sup> Pope Pius II (1458–1464) also complained that the Christians were fighting among themselves, while the Turks could do what they wanted.<sup>24</sup> Turks were the most important “Others” for the Latin

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92–108. Đorđe Živanović gave priority to the Polish redaction: Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, На ком језику је Константин из Островице писао своју хронику, *Прилози за књижевност, језик, историју и фолклор* 14/1–2 (1934) 174–180 [Đ. ŽIVANOVIĆ, Na kom jeziku је Константин из Ostrovice писао своју hroniku, *Prilozi za književnost, jezik, istoriju i folklor* 14/1–2 (1934) 174–180]; ИДЕМ, Предговор, in: КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомена*, XIX, XLII–XLV. Benjamin Stolz used Czech redaction for his edition with English translation (KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*). Polish text was the base of Živanović’s editions: КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомена*; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ ИЗ ОСТРОВИЦЕ, *Јаничарева успомена или турска хроника*, прир. Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, Београд 1966 [KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ IZ OSTROVICE, *Janičareve uspomene ili turska hronika*, прир. Ђ. ŽIVANOVIĆ, Beograd 1966]; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ ИЗ ОСТРОВИЦЕ, *Јаничарева успомена или турска хроника*, пр. Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, Београд 1986 [KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ IZ OSTROVICE, *Janičareve uspomene ili turska hronika*, пр. Ђ. ŽIVANOVIĆ, Beograd 1986]. Italian translation: KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ DI OSTROVICA, *Cronaca turca ovvero Memorie di un giannizzero*, trans. A. DANTI, Palermo 2001.

<sup>20</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 196–197; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомена*, 71–72; Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 121–126; В. STOLZ, Introduction, xxviii–xxix.

<sup>21</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, Предговор, xxxviii–xxxix; В. STOLZ, Introduction, xxvii–xxix; Д. ИЛИЋ, Имаголошко читање Турске хронике Константина Михаиловића, *Годишњак Катедре за српску књижевност са јужнословенским књижевностима* 13 (2018) 145–159, p. 146 [D. ILIĆ, Imagološko čitanje Turske hronike Konstantina Mihailovića, *Godišnjak Katedre za srpsku književnost sa južnoslovenskim književnostima* 13 (2018) 145–159].

<sup>22</sup> Д. ИЛИЋ, Имаголошко читање Турске хронике, 146.

<sup>23</sup> В. JEZERNIK, Uvod: Stereotipizacija „Turčina“, *Imaginarni Turčin*, ur. В. JEZERNIK, Beograd 2010, 9–29, p. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Ž. DELIMO, *Strah na Zapadu (od XIV do XVIII veka)*. *Opsednuti grad*, Sremski Karlovci – Novi Sad 2003, 369.

Christianity of the late middle Ages.<sup>25</sup> The image of the Turks as the “Others” was already formed at the time when Konstantin wrote his work.<sup>26</sup> Unlike many other writers, he did not exclusively depict the negative image of the Ottomans. Consequently, Konstantin stressed some of their virtues in comparison with those of the Christians.<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless, the position of the “Others” was to remain unchanged. Only the threatening aspects of Turkish character were shown, those that endangered the most author’s community, i.e. Christian world.<sup>28</sup> At the beginning of *Chronicle*, he expressed a very negative attitude towards Muhammad and Islamic religion. Muslims were designated as a *heathens*.<sup>29</sup> Also, he used this term to mark the Turks. The Sultan’s administration was described as righteous and strict. Konstantin points out that the Sultan was particularly concerned about the protection of the poor. Allegedly, the Turkish army was not allowed to take anything by force from anyone.<sup>30</sup> However, according to the author, the Ottomans achieved successes through the frauds and ruses. The Christians suffered because of such actions. It is suggested that this behavior is natural for the Turks and part of their character.<sup>31</sup> For him the main causes of Christian defeats were treason and disunity which made the Turks brave.<sup>32</sup> Although Konstantin stressed the power and efficient military organization of the Ottomans, he noted that “there was great fear among them when they heard that Christians intended to march in great strength against them, for they feared they might lose”.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> А. ГАЛИЋ, *Огледало владара – Константин Михаиловић и Макијавели*, Београд 2014, 22 [А. ГАЛИЋ, *Ogledalo vladara – Konstantin Mihailović i Makijaveli*, Београд 2014]; Д. ИЛИЋ, Имаголошко читање Турске хронике, 146.

<sup>26</sup> Д. ИЛИЋ, Имаголошко читање Турске хронике, 147.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibidem*, 147.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*, 148.

<sup>29</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 3–9; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 3–6; Д. ИЛИЋ, Имаголошко читање Турске хронике, 149–150.

<sup>30</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 150–155, 188–189; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 55–56, 69–70; А. ГАЛИЋ, *Огледало владара*, 116, 118; Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 144–146.

<sup>31</sup> Д. ИЛИЋ, Имаголошко читање Турске хронике, 150, 156.

<sup>32</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 104–105; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 39; Д. ИЛИЋ, Имаголошко читање Турске хронике, 151, 154, 157.

<sup>33</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 168–169; Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 155.

The researchers offered various opinions about the nature of Konstantine's work. It is clear that this text is neither a chronicle nor memoirs.<sup>34</sup> Some of them considered that this *Chronicle* is a memoir about Turkish issue.<sup>35</sup> Recently, Aleksandar Gajić classified this work into a category of *mirror for princes* (*specula principum*), due to Konstantin's desire to advise the Polish King how to fight against the Ottomans.<sup>36</sup> Author's information on Turkish history were derived from various sources. Data about early Ottoman history have legendary character.<sup>37</sup> It was noticed that Konstantin's work had a similar structure as the Ottoman chronicles from the second half of 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>38</sup> The most important part of the *Chronicle* are descriptions of the events where Konstantin himself was present. This part represents his memoirs.<sup>39</sup> There is also a third layer of facts based on hearsay and it refers to a period after 1463 and to some events before 1453.<sup>40</sup> Thus, I decide to analyze the image of Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror in the *Turkish Chronicle*. It is certain that Mehmed is the main hero (or antihero) of this writing.<sup>41</sup> The aim of this paper is not to determine the accuracy of all Konstantin's data on Mehmed II, but to draw attention to the Sultan's personal characteristics in author's work.

The personality of Mehmed was mentioned for the first time in the chapter 22 of the *Chronicle* titled "Concerning the Turkish Emperor Murad: How He Fared Later". This section contains the story of first reign of Mehmed II (1444–1446). According to Konstantin, Murad II (1421–1444, 1446–1451) entrusted the throne and the Empire to his son Mehmed and he himself entered into an order of the dervishes, Muslim ascetics similar

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<sup>34</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, Предговор, XXXVIII.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>36</sup> А. ГАЛИЋ, *Огледало владара*, 61.

<sup>37</sup> С. БРЕЗАР, *Историјски слојеви у „Јаничаревим успоменама“ Константина Михаиловића*, Београд 2018 (unpublished MA thesis) 18–21 [S. BREZAR, *Istorijski slojevi u „Janičarevim uspomenama“ Konstantina Mihailovića*, Београд 2018]; Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 143, 150, 170; В. STOLZ, Introduction, XXVII–XXIX.

<sup>38</sup> А. ЈАКОВЉЕВИЋ, *Турска хроника Константина Михаиловића и османски наративни извори, Средњи век у српској науци, историји, књижевности и уметности VII*, ed. Г. ЈОВАНОВИЋ, Деспотовац 2016, 137–150, pp. 145–148 [A. JAKOVljević, *Turska hronika Konstantina Mihailovića i osmanski narativni izvori, Srednji vek u srpskoj nauci, istoriji, književnosti i umetnosti VII*, ed. G. JOVANOVIĆ, Деспотовац 2016, 137–150].

<sup>39</sup> С. БРЕЗАР, *Историјски слојеви*, 7, 22–23.

<sup>40</sup> В. STOLZ, Introduction, XXVII; Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 146, 190–191.

<sup>41</sup> С. БРЕЗАР, *Историјски слојеви*, 24.

to Christian monks. After describing the life of dervishes, author states that young Mehmed left janissaries in Edirne and went to the forest to hunt wild beasts. Because of that, the janissaries did not get a salary for two quarters. Such a situation caused a rebellion during which the janissaries robbed the houses of greatest and richest lords of Imperial council. Further, they sacked the tents of all councilors who were with the young Sultan. All of the Sultan's retinue fled due to the rush of janissaries, only Mehmed stayed and asked them about the reason of their dissatisfaction. Their answer was that they did not want him to rule, as long as his father was alive. Therefore, Mehmed promised them to invite immediately his father and ordered that all their salaries were paid. In addition, the amount of wages was increased. These measures calmed the rebellion. After Murad II came, Mehmed and his men asked him for forgiveness. Sultan forgave them and told his son to protect the janissaries for his sake and for the good of the whole state.<sup>42</sup> Other sources confirm that the janissary insurrection was the Murad II's reason for return to the throne. The insurrection of janissaries broke out probably in April 1446 while Murad arrived to Edirne at the end of August.<sup>43</sup> In this section, Konstantin showed Mehmed as an insecure person who was unable to govern the Empire. On the other hand, the writer indicates that he was ready to face the challenge and to admit mistakes.

The next mention of Mehmed II (1451–1481) is in the chapter 25 where the author describes the beginning of his reign, after the death of Sultan Murad II. In the first section of this chapter, Konstantin characterized the personality of the new Sultan. The author emphasized that the Mehmed was very crafty and that “he deceived under the truce wherever he could; afterward he paid no heed that he had not kept a truce with someone”.<sup>44</sup> If someone criticized him for that he became violent and furious.<sup>45</sup> The headlines of following chapters clearly testify that Konstantin's basic idea was that the Sultan achieved his victories by frauds. In this way, he immediately expressed a negative attitude toward Mehmed. As the first concrete move of new Sultan he noted that

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<sup>42</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 68–73; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарево успомене*, 26–27.

<sup>43</sup> С. IMBER, *The Ottoman Empire 1300–1481*, Istanbul 1990, 137; *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, eds. G. ÁGOSTON – B. MASTERS, New York 2009, 401 (G. ÁGOSTON).

<sup>44</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 86–87.

<sup>45</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 86–87; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарево успомене*, 32.

Mehmed sent to Đurađ Branković his stepmother Mara who was Despot's daughter and a widow of Murad II. Further, Mehmed gave her regions of Toplica and Dubočica and made truce with the Despot. The agreement allegedly contained the provision that the Sultan would not bother the Despot and his son Lazar as long as they were alive. Đurađ Branković undertook to send 1500 cavalymen to the Sultan for his needs and pay him 15.000 gold pieces every year in the name of tribute (*teloss*). The unnamed Despot's subjects were against the agreement with the Sultan and warned their ruler that Mehmed wanted to deceive him to attack someone else. They considered that after that the Sultan would certainly attack him. Nevertheless, the truce was concluded since the Despot explained to his subjects that he had to do so because John Hunyadi could not be trusted. Namely, at that time, King Ladislaus V (1440–1457) still did not take power in Hungary. Then, the Sultan made a truce with the Byzantine Emperor for fifteen years after which he attacked the ruler of Karaman.<sup>46</sup> It can be said that Konstantin's data on the beginning of Mehmed's reign is basically correct.<sup>47</sup> The structure of the author's text indicates that all the information of this chapter should be an introduction to the story of a Sultan who violates the agreements with Christian rulers.

This is clear from the next chapter that has the title "How Emperor Mehmed deceived Greek Emperor under above-mentioned truce"<sup>48</sup> which describes the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. First, the Serbian writer announced that Mehmed II built new fortress near Byzantine capital. In spite of that, Konstantin pointed out that the Greeks thought that the truce should be maintained. Indeed, they wanted to destroy the fortress after the Turkish Emperor's withdrawal. Author's main message was that the Greeks relied on the "heathen truce". Therefore they were not expecting anything. Among the preparations for the siege of the city, the author states that Sultan ordered the construction of thirty fine ships. Mehmed demanded from the Serbian Despot 1500 cavalymen, under the pretext of preparing a campaign against the Karaman land. Konstantine himself was part of that detachment and he stressed that the Turkish Emperor started the siege of Constantinople without canceling the truce. According to the

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<sup>46</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 86–87; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомене*, 32.

<sup>47</sup> For more information see: Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, Београд 2010, 61–67 [F. BABINGER, *Mehmed Osvajač i njegovo doba*, Beograd 2010]; М. СПРЕМИЋ, *Деспот Ђурађ Бранковић и његово доба*, Београд 1994, 358–363 [M. SPREMIĆ, *Despot Đurađ Branković i njegovo doba*, Beograd 1994].

<sup>48</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 88–89.



author the Serbian soldiers wanted to go back home when they heard that the Sultan surrounded the city. However, they did not realize their intention because certain men warned them that in such a case they would be killed by the Turks. As an important moment of the battle Konstantin describes how the Ottomans ferried the ships across the hilly land to the sea. He noted that the janissaries had a key role in storming of the city walls. One of them killed the Byzantine Emperor and brought his head to the Sultan who gave him a rich reward. All citizens were killed except children and females who were distributed among the Turkish soldiers. Also, Genoese colony Galata surrendered to Mehmed who then went to Edirne.<sup>49</sup>

Such a presentation of siege is not quite accurate.<sup>50</sup> First of all it is worth noting that Turks did not kill all male citizens of the city, although it is the fact that they captured a large number of people.<sup>51</sup> The purpose of this allegation was to characterize the Ottomans as the cruel conquerors. In addition, it is noticed that Konstantin omitted to mention that Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI Palaiologos (1448–1453) tried to extort a large sum of money from the Sultan in 1451, under the threat that he would release Prince Orchan, uncle of Mehmed, from captivity in Constantinople. This was the reason why the Sultan severed all relations with the Byzantine Emperor.<sup>52</sup> It is obvious that this information could not fit into the basic idea of Konstantin's work. Really, there is a possibility that the author did not know of this information, but the fact remains that he wanted to point out that Mehmed violated the truce. Although the image of the Sultan was primarily negative, Konstantin noted some of his positive features. Thus it can be perceived that the Sultan was a skilled military commander and organizer. Further, Mehmed showed readiness to reward prominent soldiers.

The chapter 27 is dedicated to Mehmed's war against Despot Đurađ which was conducted during 1454 and 1455. At the beginning of

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<sup>49</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 88–95; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничареве успомене*, 32–35.

<sup>50</sup> For detailed information on this event see: Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 71–93; С. РАНСИМАН, *Пад Цариграда 1453*, Нови Сад 1996, 95–174 [S. RANSIMAN, *Pad Carigrada 1453*, Novi Sad 1996].

<sup>51</sup> S. SOUCEK, Notes, in: KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 219; Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 86–90; С. РАНСИМАН, *Пад Цариграда 1453*, 175–191.

<sup>52</sup> DOUKAS, *Decline and Fall of Byzantium to the Ottoman Turks. An Annotated Translation of „Historia Turco-Byzantina”*. Translated by H. MAGOULIAS, Detroit 1975, 191–194; S. SOUCEK, Notes, 218; Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 68, 71–72; С. РАНСИМАН, *Пад Цариграда 1453*, 80–82, 85–86.

this section, the author stressed that Mehmed respected the contract with Serbian Despot only until he conquered Constantinople. In subsequent year he undertook a campaign against Serbia, without canceling the truce. The Despot's subjects informed their ruler that the Sultan was marching against them, noting that they had warned him that "Turkish dog" would deceive them. Then, they expressed their desire to fight, before the "heathens" would capture their wives and children. That is why they asked the Despot for the help. The Serbian ruler answered them that he could not quickly gather the troops, because King Ladislaus V was not in Hungary. Therefore he advised them to obey to Turkish Emperor remarking that he would later come to their aid. In the first battle that took place at Banja, near Novo Brdo in September 1454,<sup>53</sup> the Serbian army defeated the Turks. The Serbian forces were defeated in the next clash at mountain Trepanja, near Novo Brdo in November 1454,<sup>54</sup> when the great Ottoman army was led by Sultan Mehmed. The lord Nikola Skobaljić was impaled together with his uncle. These battles announced the siege of famous mining city of Novo Brdo in 1455.<sup>55</sup> The author informs that the Sultan conquered the city by means of agreement that all residents would keep their property. Also, he promised that young women and children would not be taken away. However, after the city's surrender, the Sultan did not observe the agreement. The most distinguished citizens were killed, while Mehmed took 320 youngsters for himself into the order of janissaries. The seventy-four women<sup>56</sup> were assigned to the Turkish soldiers. Among

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<sup>53</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 96–97; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 35–36. For the time and place of this battle see: Љ. СТОЈАНОВИЋ, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, Сремски Карловци 1927, 237 [Л. СТОЈАНОВИЋ, *Stari srpski rodoslovi i letopisi*, Sremski Karlovcı 1927]; М. ДИНИЋ, *За историју рударства у средњовековној Србији и Босни II*, Београд 1962, 62–64 [М. ДИНИЋ, *Za istoriju rudarstva u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji i Bosni II*, Beograd 1962].

<sup>54</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 96–97; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 36. For the time and place of the battle see: Љ. СТОЈАНОВИЋ, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, 238; М. ДИНИЋ, *За историју рударства II*, 63–64.

<sup>55</sup> Konstantin noted that the siege of Novo Brdo followed immediately after the battle at Trepanja: KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 98–99; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 36. In fact, this event took place in the spring of next year: Љ. СТОЈАНОВИЋ, *Стари српски родослови и летописи*, 238; М. ДИНИЋ, *За историју рударства II*, 64–65; М. СПРЕМИЋ, *Деспот Ђурађ Бранковић*, 429–430; S. SOUCEK, Notes, 219.

<sup>56</sup> According to the Polish version there were 704 women: КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 36.

the mentioned young men were Konstantin and two his brothers. All of them were sent to Anatolia. Konstantin states that he tried to escape together with nineteen friends. Their attempt was unsuccessful and they were punished by torture. When the other youngsters guaranteed that they would not do it anymore they were transferred over the sea. In Edirne, Mehmed chose eight Serbian young men for his chamberlains. These youngsters made a plot with the aim to kill the Sultan. At a crucial moment, one of these chamberlains discovered the plot to Mehmed who ordered the conspirators captured. As the reason for their action they pointed out sorrow for their fathers and friends. After a year of sever torture, they were killed. Sultan rewarded the one who discovered the plot, but he died of a serious illness. As the cause of such a fate, the author states that “Lord God deigned to visit that upon him for his ignobility and faithlessness”.<sup>57</sup> From this time Mehmed allegedly did not want to have any Serbian boys in his bedchamber.<sup>58</sup>

All Konstantin’s data in this section can not be verified from the other sources. It was noticed that author’s description of the fall of Novo Brdo deserved special analyses.<sup>59</sup> The main negative attributes that the writer attaches to the Sultan are to be found in this chapter. Thus, Mehmed was depicted as a ruler who violates agreements. Those who believed him were cruelly punished. Such measures were especially aimed at preventing any possibility of rebellion against the Sultan and the Ottoman state.

The first Turkish campaign in which Konstantin took part was the siege of Belgrade in 1456 which was presented in chapter 29. Author’s presentation of this episode has the structure of a popular poem.<sup>60</sup> The whole venture was presented as a sequence of sorrows for Turkish Emperor. As the first, the author mentioned that Sultan did not surround the city from all sides and did not cut it from both rivers. He made the wrong decision under the influence of some his men. The unfortunate death of

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<sup>57</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 98–101; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомене*, 36–37.

<sup>58</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 100–101; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомене*, 37–38.

<sup>59</sup> Г. ЈОВАНОВИЋ, Константин Михаиловић, 146–147.

<sup>60</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 202; Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, Константин Јаничар и српска народна традиција, *Прилози за књижевност језик, историју и фолклор* 42 (1976) 66–85, p. 83 [Ђ. ŽIVANOVIĆ, Konstantin Janičar i srpska narodna tradicija, *Prilozi za književnost jezik, istoriju i folklor* 42 (1976) 66–85].

Dayi Karaca Pasha (beylerbeyi of Rumeli)<sup>61</sup> was marked as Sultan's second sorrow. According to Konstantin, the Sultan prematurely stopped bombarding the walls because he accepted the advice of Smail Agha who was the commander of janissaries. Mehmed's army suffered great damage when the fire caught the equipment that was near the cannons. Smail Agha died trying to atone for his bad advice. The author concluded that the greatest sorrow of Turks was the unsuccessful siege of Belgrade.<sup>62</sup> In this chapter, the Sultan was portrayed as a person who was willing to accept the suggestion of his advisors. Smail Agha's example indicates that his commanders were scared if their recommendation produced bad consequences. It is obvious that Konstantin pointed out that the Sultan possessed a greater military knowledge than his commanders.

The standard approach has chapter 30, titled "How emperor Mehmed Deceived the Morean or Achean Despot Demetrius".<sup>63</sup> In line with his basic idea Konstantin noted that the Despot had a truce of ten years with the Turkish emperor. The contract predicted that he had to pay the Sultan an annual tribute of 20.000 ducats. After returning from Belgrade, Mehmed organized the campaign against Morea. The attempt of Despot to prevent the action by paying tribute remained without result. The Morean emissaries received the answer from the Sultan when he had already sent troops. The Sultan met again with Despot's envoys at the time he arrived at Morea. On that occasion Mehmed took a tribute, but he continued the campaign. His army first occupied the city of Korffo (Corinth)<sup>64</sup> and then defeated Despot's troops near Leontari. Further, the Turks conquered Leontari and the entire garrison was beheaded by Sultan's orders. Near the city of Livadeia, the Sultan met the emissaries of Negroponte who insulted him. That is why the Sultan swore that he would severely punish citizens of Negroponte if he conquered this town.<sup>65</sup>

Konstantin noted that the next spring Turkish Emperor attacked Morea again. During this campaign he occupied the fortresses, killing and breaking bones of people. Notwithstanding, he had to take another

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<sup>61</sup> Konstantin did not mention the title of Karaca. More about Karaca: С. ІМБЕР, *The Ottoman Empire*, 81, 146, 151, 167–168.

<sup>62</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 106–109; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарево успомене*, 39–40.

<sup>63</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 110–111.

<sup>64</sup> It is obvious that Konstantin made a mistake. Presumably, he was thinking of Corfu: S. SOUCEK, *Notes*, 223.

<sup>65</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 110–113; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарево успомене*, 40–41.

campaign against Despot Demetrius. Turkish forces managed to surround Despot in the city of Mistra. Then, Demetrius had to surrender to the Sultan who sent him with wife and his entire household to Edirne. The whole Morea has fallen under the authority of the Sultan, with the exception of the city of Corinth.<sup>66</sup> Returning to Edirne, Mehmed granted to Demetrius a region in the Greek lands (near the sea) and the wealthy city called Enos.<sup>67</sup> At the end of this section, the author informs about Sultan's successful actions against Ismail Bay, ruler of Sinopa and Karamanid lands. The defeated lord of Sinopa has received one region in Bulgarian lands. Allegedly, Mehmed wanted to subjugate the Sultan of Egypt, but he gave it up because the holy cities were there.<sup>68</sup>

It has already been noted that many of Konstantin's data in this chapter are inaccurate or imprecise. First of all, he did not mention that Morea was divided between brothers, Despot Demetrius (1449–1460) and Despot Thomas (1428–1460), whom the writer does not specify. The Ottoman attacks were directed against both of them.<sup>69</sup> Also, Konstantin's chronology is wrong. Namely, the first Sultan's campaign was in 1458, not immediately after the siege of Belgrade. The Morea was subdued during two Mehmed's campaign from 1458 and 1460. There were no three Sultan's actions against the Despotate of Morea.<sup>70</sup> The castle of Salmenikon offered the longest resistance until the summer of 1461.<sup>71</sup> Withal, the author did not mention that Despots owed the Sultan three-year-tribute in 1458.<sup>72</sup> It is a wrong assertion that Mehmed used the death of a Karaman Prince in 1464 to take over whole of his lands. The conquest of Karamanid lands took place in several stages and was completed in 1474.<sup>73</sup> Finally,

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<sup>66</sup> It is possible that Konstantin confused Corinth with Nauplia, see: S. SOUCEK, Notes, 223.

<sup>67</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 113–115; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 41–42.

<sup>68</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 114–115; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАЙЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 42.

<sup>69</sup> S. RUNCIMAN, *Lost Capital of Byzantium. The History of Mistra and the Peloponnese*, London – New York 2009, 77–78, 80–85; C. IMBER, *The Ottoman Empire*, 170–173; S. SOUCEK, Notes, 222.

<sup>70</sup> S. RUNCIMAN, *Lost Capital of Byzantium*, 80–85; C. IMBER, *The Ottoman Empire*, 170–173; S. SOUCEK, Notes, 222–223.

<sup>71</sup> S. RUNCIMAN, *Lost Capital of Byzantium*, 83.

<sup>72</sup> S. RUNCIMAN, *Lost Capital of Byzantium*, 80; S. SOUCEK, Notes, 222.

<sup>73</sup> C. IMBER, *The Ottoman Empire*, 189, 192–194, 198–200, 204, 208–210, 213–221; Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 210, 242–245, 257–258, 270–278, 284, 286–292, 298–301.

there is no data on the conflicts between Ottoman state and Mamluk Sultanate during the reign of the Sultan Mehmed II.<sup>74</sup> It seems that Konstantin stated incorrect information to keep the image of the Turkish Emperor as a person who utilized frauds to subjugate Christian states. Once again the author emphasized Mehmed's tendency to deal brutally with his opponents. Indeed, destinies of Despot Demetrius and Ismail Bay show that the Sultan was sometimes benevolent towards other rulers.

The chapter thirty-one is dedicated to Sultan's conquest of the Trebizond Empire in 1461. According to Konstantin's testimony, this campaign was extremely difficult. As a reason for this he pointed out great distance to Trebizond, harassment by the local people, hunger and high and harsh mountains. Movement of the Turkish troops was particularly heavily affected by the rain that fell every day and created large mud. For the easier transmission of freight the Sultan ordered that the camels were used instead of wagons. At one point it happened that one of the treasure camels overturned off the road. On that occasion 60.000 gold pieces were spilled from the bags. Then, the janissaries appeared and decided to guard gold until the arrival of treasury administrator. When the Sultan came, he ordered that whoever wanted collect the gold coins, so that the army would not be detained. Because of the slippery land, the janissaries had to carry the Sultan on their arms to the plains, while the treasure camels remained in the mountains. Also, at the request of Emperor, the janissaries lowered the mentioned camels to the plains with a lot of effort. Certainly, as a sign of gratitude, Mehmed gave to the janissaries 50.000 gold pieces to divide among themselves. In addition, he doubled the salary of janissary centurions. In connection with that, Konstantin states that the same amount is paid at the present time and concludes "for whatever the Emperor establishes at his court always remains and lasts without change".<sup>75</sup> From that place, Mehmed sent two thousands cavalymen toward Trebizond. However, they were all killed. Since there was no information from these troops, the Sultan launched his entire army which besieged Trebizond together with 150 great and small ships. After the six weeks of fighting, he took over the city and sent the Trebizond Emperor to Edirne. Mehmed allegedly wanted to go against Georgia with this large army, but he gave up because of the unity in that country. Therefore, he moved toward Edirne picking up young

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<sup>74</sup> S. SOUCEK, Notes, 224.

<sup>75</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 116–119; Константин Михайлович, *Яничареве успомене*, 42–44.

men and girls.<sup>76</sup> On his way back Mehmed got the news that Ali Bey, the Smederevo voivode<sup>77</sup> had defeated Christians and captured Michael Szilágyi, uncle of the Hungarian King Matthias Corvinus.<sup>78</sup> In accordance with Sultan's order Szilágyi was kept in Constantinople. A distinguished prisoner was executed when the Sultan arrived in capital. Ali Bey succeeded to regain Mehmed's favor thanks to this success. Before the mentioned battle, the Sultan planned to kill Ali Bey.<sup>79</sup>

The manner of Konstantin's exposition unambiguously testifies that he was part of janissary troops during the Ottoman campaign against Trebizond Empire. For the earlier period this is not certain.<sup>80</sup> His information in this chapter is in a principle consonant with the data of other sources.<sup>81</sup> By the way of examples, the author clearly showed how much the Sultan was taking care about welfare of his soldiers, especially janissaries. Konstantin's description of campaign against Trebizond indicates that the Ottoman army was well organized and that Mehmed took care of all details. Again, a message appears that the Christians could oppose such an organized army only if they were united. The case of Ali Bey envisages that Ottoman commanders had an opportunity to restore Sultan's confidence through successful actions.

The Sultan's campaign against Uzun Hasan was described in the chapter thirty-two. It is necessary to underline that Mehmed II did not move against Uzun Hasan after the occupation of Trebizond, but in 1473.<sup>82</sup> The author wrote down that the Turkish campaign started from Brusa. Uzun Hasan sent one of his Tatar servanta in Ottoman camp with the aim to harm the Sultan. That man managed to enter the service of

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<sup>76</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 118–121; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 44.

<sup>77</sup> Ali Bey Mihaloglu who was the Subasi of Braničevo in time of the battle against Michael Szilágyi. See: О. ЗИРОЈЕВИЋ, Смедеревски санџакбег Али-бег Михалоглу, *Зборник Матице српске за историју* 3 (1971) 9–27, p. 11 [О. ZIROJEVIĆ, Smederevski sandžakbeg Ali-beg Mihaloglu, *Zbornik Matice srpske za istoriju* 3 (1971) 9–27].

<sup>78</sup> More about him: P. Engel, *The Realm of St. Stephen. A History of Medieval Hungary, 895–1526*. London – New York 2001, 297–299, 311, 314.

<sup>79</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 120–121; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 44.

<sup>80</sup> Ђ. ЖИВАНОВИЋ, *Живот и дело Константина*, 79.

<sup>81</sup> See: Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 175–179, 183; С. ИМБЕР, *The Ottoman Empire*, 178–179.

<sup>82</sup> S. SOUCEK, Notes, 225.

Mahmud Pasha who was the highest lord after the Emperor.<sup>83</sup> One evening when Mahmud Pasha came out of his tent, he hit him with an arrow at the forehead. Shortly after that, he was captured. Because of this event, the Sultan was very sad and ordered the assassin subjected to severe torture. His torments lasted for a week. Then, Mehmed marched to Uzun Hasan's land, while foot-soldiers carried Mahmud Pasha until he recovered. The Ottoman troops conquered several towns while chasing for Uzun Hasan who avoided a pitched battle. In this way the army has penetrated all the way to the river Euphrates. When the Sultan realized that he could not encounter Uzun Hasan, he sent him a buffoon. The task of this person was to persuade Uzun Hasan that Mehmed took flight with all his army. The buffoon's task was successful and led to the battle which lasted for two days. Owing to the janissaries the Sultan took the victory, even though his cavalry was defeated. On return from the battle, the Turkish Emperor occupied the town of Misistra on an island of the Black Sea.<sup>84</sup> At the end of chapter Konstantin noted that near Ankara the Sultan expressed his admiration for the janissaries and wished that he had 10.000 such soldiers. One of the foot-soldiers who marched nearest to the Emperor told the Sultan that it would be good to have not only thousands, but twenty thousand janissaries. For these words, Mehmed rewarded him with a hundred gold pieces.<sup>85</sup> The entire Konstantin's presentation in this chapter contains many mistakes and illogicalities.<sup>86</sup> It is worthy noting that in the decisive battle at Otlukbeli the Ottomans inflicted a heavy defeat on Uzun Hasan's troops.<sup>87</sup> The attempted assassination of Mahmud Pasha was also mentioned in Kritoboulos's work, but he linked that incident to a Turkish campaign against Trebizond.<sup>88</sup> The way Mehmed defeated Uzun Hasan testified that he was a cunning military commander. The janissaries were again presented as Sultan's best military unit which had a key role in Mehmed's conquests. A feeling of mutual trust developed between Sultan and his janissaries.

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<sup>83</sup> Mahmud Pasha was a Grand Vizier on two occasions. More about him: T. STAVRIDES, *The Sultan of Vizirs. The Life and Times of the Ottoman Grand Vizir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453–1474)*, Leiden – Boston – Köln 2001.

<sup>84</sup> The name of that city does not fit into this campaign: S. SOUCEK, Notes, 226.

<sup>85</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 122–127; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 44–46.

<sup>86</sup> S. SOUCEK, Notes, 225.

<sup>87</sup> Read more about this campaign in: Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 279–283; С. ИМБЕР, *The Ottoman Empire*, 213–218.

<sup>88</sup> S. SOUCEK, Notes, 225–226.



Ottoman campaign against Vlad III Dracul (1456–1462), Voivode of Wallachia, in 1462, is the topic of chapter 33. Konstantin states that Voivode Dracul<sup>89</sup> had two sons, Vlad and Radul. He was forced to send them to the court of Emperor Mehmed to serve him. After the death of Dracul, the Sultan sent his elder son to Wallachia to take the power with the condition that he would come to him every year and pay a tribute, as his father did it previously. Vlad III came twice to Sultan's court, but afterwards he did not want to come for several years. That was the reason why Mehmed had sent Hamza Bey with the task of bringing him in. While Dracul's servants detained Emperor's emissary in Brăila, Wallachian ruler gathered the army with which he crossed Danube and attacked Ottoman territory. Hamza Bey did not know what had happened. Upon returning to Brăila, Dracul ordered the capture of Turkish envoy along with his thirty servants. All of them were sent to the fortress Kurissta<sup>90</sup> where they were impaled. Having learned about this, the Sultan called younger Dracul (Radul) to come to the court. Two of the highest lords of the Emperor's council, Mahmud Pasha and Ishak Pasha<sup>91</sup> took Dracul when he arrived to the court and led him to the Sultan who posted him alongside himself on the right side in a lower chair. Then, Mehmed gave him blue garment with gold, money, horses, tents and 4.000 cavalymen. They were supposed to wait for him in Nicopolis. Soon after that, the Sultan gathered the army and marched after him, but troops of Vlad III were on the other bank of the Danube in order to prevent the Turks from crossing river. According to the advice of janissaries, Mehmed ordered the construction of eighty large and well-rigged boats. The janissaries used these boats to cross the river at night. On the other bank, they first solidified their position and then attacked Wallachian army. With the great losses, the janissaries managed to push the opponent. Thanks to that, the Emperor transferred his entire army and rewarded the janissaries with 30.000 gold pieces. Also, the Sultan allowed to the janissaries to leave their property after death to whomever they wanted. During the march through Wallachia, the Ottoman army was attacked at night. Several thousand Turks were killed. On the other hand, Mehmed ordered several hundred captured Wallachians to be cut in half. The Wallachians were realizing their position, abandoned Vlad III and joined his brother. The former ruler went to Hungary where King Matthias detained him for

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<sup>89</sup> Vlad II Drakul (1436–1442, 1443–1447).

<sup>90</sup> Stolz considered that Kurissta was actually Târgoviște: KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 129.

<sup>91</sup> Ishak Pasha was the second vizier at that time: S. SOUCEK, Notes, 227.

his cruel deeds. Some Turks told the Sultan that because of big losses, he should consider further actions against Wallachia. Mehmed answered them that they could not win until the Wallachians hold Kiliya and Bilhorod (Akkerman) and the Hungarians were in Belgrade.<sup>92</sup>

After returning to Edirne the Sultan organized campaign against the island of Mytilene (Lesbos). Konstantin emphasized that Mehmed conquered the island through a false oath, although he mentioned the important role of Turkish artillery in this action. Namely, the ruler and all servants were beheaded.<sup>93</sup> Thereafter, the Emperor concluded the truce with Hungarian King Matthias and turned against Albanian Princes whom he easily subjugated. The exception was Skender Ivanović<sup>94</sup> who, as a young man, was janissary in the time of Emperor Murad II. Allegedly, Skender got his father's land from the Sultan whom he did not mention that he was the son of Ivan. Using cunning he took control over whole land. The attempts of Murad II and Mehmed to conquer his region remained without results. As a reason for his successful resistance the author states that it is easy for someone who knows their customs well.<sup>95</sup>

The presentation of Mehmed's campaign against Vlad III is generally in agreement with other known facts.<sup>96</sup> Indeed, it is incorrect that Vlad III took the power immediately after the death of his father in 1447. He succeeded to overthrow Vladislav II (1447–1448; 1448–1456) from the throne for the short period during 1448, but he finally pushed him out in August 1456.<sup>97</sup> The main role was again attributed to the janissaries. In this section, the Sultan's cruelty appeared as a response to the brutality of other side. For the first time, one Christian ruler was depicted as a negative person. It can also be noticed that some Turks doubted in the correctness of Sultan's intentions. His answer to them testifies that Mehmed well understood the strategic importance of certain cities.

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<sup>92</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 128–133; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 46–49.

<sup>93</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 132–135; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 46–49.

<sup>94</sup> Apparently, the author thinks of Skanderbeg.

<sup>95</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 134–135; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарење успомене*, 49.

<sup>96</sup> M. CAZACU, *Dracula*, Leiden – Boston 2017, 136–163; О. ПЕЧИКАН, *Историја Румуна*, Београд 2015, 234–235 [О. РЕЏИКАН, *Istoriја Rumuna*, Београд 2015]; Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 183–188; С. ИМБЕР, *The Ottoman Empire*, 179–181.

<sup>97</sup> M. CAZACU, *Dracula*, 66–69, 76–78; О. ПЕЧИКАН, *Историја Румуна*, 233–234.

The Ottomans conquest of Lesbos was presented in a similar way in other sources as it was in Konstantin's work.<sup>98</sup> Author's central motif that the Turks achieve victories through frauds is not only Konstantin's construction in this case. However, the story about Skanderbeg contains much unreliable information. Thus, it is necessary to note that Skanderbeg deserted the troops of Murad II at the end of 1443 and then conquered the fortress of Krujë.<sup>99</sup> It can be assumed that Konstantin decided to present warfare of Scanderbeg with Ottomans in this chapter, because he rejected three Turkish attacks in 1462.<sup>100</sup> Also, the aim of the writer was to underline that a successful fight against the Turks is possible. Therefore, he did not mention that Ottomans conquered the most of his territories by the end of 1467.<sup>101</sup>

The next chapter of *Turkish Chronicle* is concerned with the Ottoman conquest of Bosnia in 1463. At the beginning of this section the author announces that the emissaries of Bosnian King Tomaš<sup>102</sup> requested a truce from the Sultan for fifteen years. While the Bosnian envoys waited for an answer, Emperor Mehmed ordered gathering of the army in Edirne. Konstantin managed to find out the Turkish plan by chance. When Konstantin visited his brother who was the Court Treasurer, he heard a conversation between Sultan's councilors, Mahmud Pasha and Ishak Pasha. According to the author Ishak Pasha recommended that they should grant emissaries the truce, but the Ottoman troops would march after them. He considered that they would not otherwise be able to conquer Bosnia, because it is a mountainous land. In addition he stressed that Hungarian King, Croats and other rulers will provide help to Bosnian King. The day after that conversation, on Thursday, the Turks concluded a truce of fifteen years with Bosnian emissaries. On Friday, Konstantin informed the envoys that the truce is false. Further, he explained them that the Ottoman army will head to Bosnia on Wednesday, after they leave Edirne on Saturday. In order to confirm the seriousness of his word, he pointed out that he was a Christian, just like them. Still, they just laughed. The Turkish troops went on Wednesday, while the Emperor of

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<sup>98</sup> Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 189–193; С. ИМБЕР, *The Ottoman Empire*, 181–182.

<sup>99</sup> С. ИМБЕР, *The Ottoman Empire*, 126; П. БАРТЛ, *Албанци: од средњег века до данас*, Београд 2001, 42 [P. BARTL, *Albanci: od srednjeg veka do danas*, Београд 2001].

<sup>100</sup> П. БАРТЛ, *Албанци*, 45.

<sup>101</sup> С. ИМБЕР, *The Ottoman Empire*, 195–197.

<sup>102</sup> It is the Bosnian King Stefan Tomašević (1461–1463).

Trebizond was beheaded on Friday according to information which the author heard during the conversation between Emperor's councilors.<sup>103</sup> The Bosnian Prince Kovačević<sup>104</sup> was first who was attacked by Ottoman army. Surprised by the blow, Kovačević surrendered to the Sultan, but after that he was killed. Then, Mehmed entered into the King's land and besieged the fortress of Bobovac. Thanks to the cannons he seized this town and after that marched towards Jajce. Since the Sultan found out that the King Tomaš had no retinue with him, he sent Mahmud Pasha ahead with 20.000 cavalymen to surprise the Bosnian ruler in some town. The Bosnian King was stopped in the town of Ključ where he was surrounded by Mahmud's army. Allegedly, the information that the King was in town, came to the Turks from a scoundrel who was given the cake as a reward. The next day, Mahmud Pasha convinced Tomaš to come down from the fortress promising him that he would not be hurt. In connection with that Mahmud swore on false books of soap. The city of Jajce was surrendered to the Sultan when the garrison saw that their King was Mehmed's prisoner. After the Emperor occupied the city, he ordered the King Tomaš be killed. Therefore, the whole Bosnia fell under the Turkish rule. The Sultan left Bosnia after the end of campaign. Konstantin himself was left in the fortress of Zvečaj, near the city of Jajce, together with fifty janissaries. For each of them, he received half-year wages from the Sultan. Also, he had thirty other Turks for help.<sup>105</sup>

In the autumn of same year, the Hungarian King Matthias besieged Jajce and Zvečaj where Konstantin was. One part of the Hungarian army attacked Jajce, while the other was sent by the King with canons towards Zvečaj. The King managed to conquer Jajce by agreement after eight weeks of siege. The fortress of Zvečaj surrendered to Hungarians after the King marched towards this town. In this way Konstantin Mihailović got back among the Christians. In addition, the author states that the most of the Turks remained among Hungarians because King Matthias wanted to keep them with him.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> In fact, the Trebizond Emperor David was killed on 1 November 1463. In March 1462, he was thrown into prison in Edirne. It is possible that Konstantin confounded those two events. See more about that in: Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 195–196, 207–208; S. SOUCEK, Notes, 228.

<sup>104</sup> It is Voivode Tvrtko Kovačević: М. ДИНИЋ, *За историју рударства II*, 42–43.

<sup>105</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 136–141; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарево успомене*, 49–51.

<sup>106</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 140–141; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарево успомене*, 51–52.

It can be noticed again that the author had stressed that the Sultan conquered Bosnia by false truce. However, the other sources provide a different view of that issue. Thus, Byzantine historian Laonikos Chalkokondyles noted that the Bosnian King did not want to pay a tribute to the Sultan, even though he collected money for that purpose. This was the reason why Mehmed launched a campaign against Bosnia next year.<sup>107</sup> Further, King Stefan Tomašević concluded the agreement with Hungarian King Matthias in 1462, according to which he ought to be faithful to the King and not to pay tribute to the Sultan.<sup>108</sup> On the other hand, Konstantin's description of campaign itself seems reliable. One other source also confirms that Mahmud Pasha guaranteed life to the Bosnian King, but Emperor Mehmed violated the oath of his vizier.<sup>109</sup> The same can be said about the action of King Matthias against Jajce and Zvečaj in autumn of 1463.<sup>110</sup> On the basis of Konstantin's data it can be noticed that Mehmed took care of defending of even the small fortresses such as Zvečaj. His janissaries were again depicted as brave and persistent warriors who were well paid.

The short chapter 35 concerns with Mehmed's campaign against Jajce in summer of 1464. After fierce fighting the Sultan gave up the siege of the city and ordered the canons thrown into the river Vrbas. On his return he conquered the land of one Bosnian Prince. King Matthias dropped out of campaign against the Turks, when he learned that the Sultan withdrew.<sup>111</sup> Then, the author announced that Emperor Mehmed occupied Negroponte and broke the legs of citizens to fulfill his previous

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<sup>107</sup> LAONIKOS CHALKOKONDYLES, *The Histories*, vol. 2, trans. A. KALDELLIS, Cambridge – London 2014, 422–425; Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 197.

<sup>108</sup> П. ДРАГИЧЕВИЋ, Правци турских напада на Босну 1463. године, *Пад Босанског краљевства 1463*, eds. С. РУДИЋ – Д. ЛОВРЕНОВИЋ – П. ДРАГИЧЕВИЋ, Београд – Сарајево – Бања Лука 2015, 138–168 [P. DRAGIČEVIĆ, Pravci turskih napada na Bosnu 1463. godine, *Pad Bosanskog kraljevstva 1463*, eds. S. RUDIĆ – D. LOVRENOVIĆ – P. DRAGIČEVIĆ, Beograd – Sarajevo – Banja Luka 2015, 138–168]; С. ЋИРКОВИЋ, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, Београд 1964, 325 [S. ĆIRKOVIĆ, *Istorija srednjovekovne bosanske države*, Beograd 1964].

<sup>109</sup> Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 201.

<sup>110</sup> Е. ФИЛІПОВИЋ, Minor est Turchorum potential, quam fama feratur... Contribution to the History of Bosnia in the Second Half of 1463, *Пад Босанског краљевства 1463*, eds. С. РУДИЋ – Д. ЛОВРЕНОВИЋ – П. ДРАГИЧЕВИЋ, Београд – Сарајево – Бања Лука 2015, 206–222; С. ЋИРКОВИЋ, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 331–332.

<sup>111</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 142–143; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарево успомене*, 52.

oath.<sup>112</sup> The Sultan's action against Jajce was shown exactly. Indeed, the author did not mention the campaign of Hungarian King in the northern Bosnia.<sup>113</sup> It remains unknown who is Bosnian Prince which was subjugated by the Sultan. Perhaps this refers to the conflicts between Ottomans and Herceg Stefan Vukčić Kosača during 1464 and 1465.<sup>114</sup> The Turkish conquest of Negroponte on island Euboea occurred in July 1470.<sup>115</sup> Consequently, it can be concluded that the author informed about the fall of Negroponte to point out that the Sultan fulfilled his negative promises.

Konstantin's first-hand testimony ends with 1463 or 1464. The last chapter on the Sultan Mehmed contains anecdote and short note of the end of his reign. According to the first story, before the campaign against Bosnia the Emperor Mehmed ordered Titrek Sinān to count his treasure and tell him how many thousands soldiers he could maintain for cash and for how many years without any incomes from the land. Titrek Sinān answered that he could maintain forty thousands warriors every year during one decade. That is why the Sultan thought that he could not be a tranquil ruler. Namely, Mehmed considered that Christian countries that he had subjugated were alien part of Empire. Next, the author noticed that at that time it was heard that Pope was marching against the Turks with all of Christendom. Therefore he was afraid that the subjugated Christian land could rise up against him. On this occasion the Sultan summoned the most senior lords. When they heard how many soldier he could gather they advised him to attack the Christians. Through the solving of a riddle he showed them that it was better to torment Christians little by little. He pointed out that otherwise there was a danger that in the case of a minor retreat everyone would turn against them. Isa Bey Ewrenosoğlu<sup>116</sup> replied that the Sultan should work as he has started and ignore information about the Papal campaign, because similar news before did not turn to be accurate. The others praised his words and Emperor's example. Finally,

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<sup>112</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 142–143; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарево успомене*, 52.

<sup>113</sup> С. ЋИРКОВИЋ, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 333–334.

<sup>114</sup> С. ЋИРКОВИЋ, *Историја средњовековне босанске државе*, 333–335; ИДЕМ, *Херцег Стефан Вукчић Косача и његово доба*, Београд 1964, 259–265 [S. ČIRKOVIĆ, *Herceg Stefan Vukčić Kosača i njegovo doba*, Beograd 1964].

<sup>115</sup> С. IMBER, *The Ottoman Empire*, 200–204; Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 252–255; S. SOUCEK, Notes, 229.

<sup>116</sup> More about him: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 2 (C–G), eds. B. LEWIS – CH. PELLAT – J. SCHACHT, Leiden 1991, 721 (I. MÉLIKOFF).

at that time the Sultan called Greek Thomas Kirzicze<sup>117</sup> and asked him what he thought about the Roman Pope. He answered that they (Greeks?) thought that all the Popes up to Formosus (891–896) were saints, but after him no one. The Sultan replied him that they were all sinners and that Thomas should accept Islam. Then, the lords were rewarded by Mehmed and went to their homes.<sup>118</sup> As the punch line of this section the author emphasizes that Turkish Emperor is very insecure and that the Turks fear that Christendom might rise up and invade their country. In that case the Christians under Ottoman rule would all revolt against them and would be in coalition with Christendom. Konstantin states that he heard many times that the Turks were afraid of that and for this reason they “prayed God that it happened”.<sup>119</sup> At the end of chapter the author briefly notes that after the above mentioned events Emperor Mehmed died and was buried in Constantinople. He was survived by two sons, Sultan Cem and Bayezid.<sup>120</sup>

It is clear that in the last chapter about Mehmed the author had an aim to stress that the Ottoman forces were great, but that Turks could be defeated if the Christian states attacked them together. Once again the Sultan was presented as cleverer than his commandants. The anecdote of riddle resolving is similar to the challenges posed before the heroes of fairy tales.<sup>121</sup> Mehmed’s idea of the gradual conquest of Christian states can be seen as credo of Turkish politics.<sup>122</sup> It is interesting to note that Konstantin attributes the title of the Sultan only to Cem who was mentioned first among Mehmed’s sons. This error does not seem as a coincidence since Cem was an Anti-Ottoman tool in the hands of Christian states after 1482.<sup>123</sup>

The image of Sultan Mehmed in the *Turkish Chronicle* fits into the most important ideas of Konstantin’s work. It can be said that this person was the best example of the characteristics that the author attributed to the Turks. This is one of the reasons why it is difficult to estimate how

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<sup>117</sup> Maybe it is Thomas Katavolinos, a Greek secretary of Mehmed II: S. SOUCEK, Notes, 230.

<sup>118</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 144–147; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомене*, 52–54.

<sup>119</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 146–147; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомене*, 53–54.

<sup>120</sup> KONSTANTIN MIHAILOVIĆ, *Memoirs of Janissary*, 146–147; КОНСТАНТИН МИХАИЛОВИЋ, *Јаничарева успомене*, 54.

<sup>121</sup> С. БРЕЗАР, *Историјски слојеви*, 29.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibidem*, 29.

<sup>123</sup> See more: *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 2 (C–G), 529–531 (H. İNALCIK).

much this image is objective. The main features that Konstantin assigns to Mehmed can also be found in other contemporary sources. Thus Genoese noble Jacopo de Promontorio testified that the Sultan ordered the implementation of various cruel sentences.<sup>124</sup> On the other hand it is necessary to underline that Mehmed's brutality was not unique among the rulers of that time.<sup>125</sup> The virtues that Niccolò Machiavelli requested from the rulers respond to the personality of Mehmed II.<sup>126</sup> His military skills and talent for organization were also recognized by other authors.<sup>127</sup> The edicts that he proclaimed were really in favor of the poor.<sup>128</sup> Hence it can be concluded that Konstantin Mihailović tried to be objective, but his narration was in the function of launching a war against the Turks.<sup>129</sup> The *Turkish Chronicle* is certainly an indispensable source for the study of Mehmed the Conqueror's personality.

Милош Ивановић

**СЛИКА СУЛТАНА МЕХМЕДА ОСВАЈАЧА  
У ТУРСКОЈ ХРОНИЦИ (СЕЋАЊИМА ЈАНИЧАРА)  
КОНСТАНТИНА МИХАИЛОВИЋА**

Резиме

Крајем XV века Константин Михаиловић, бивши јаничар, написао је своје Мемоаре посвећене пољском краљу Јану I Олбрахту (1492–1501). Може се претпоставити да је Константин постао јаничар након османског освајања Новог Брда 1455. године. Између 1456. и 1463. године учествовао је у султановим походима на Београд, Морејску де-

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<sup>124</sup> Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 391.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibidem*, 382–383, 392–393.

<sup>126</sup> Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 465; А. ГАЛИЋ, *Огледало владара*, 124–125.

<sup>127</sup> Ф. БАБИНГЕР, *Мехмед Освајач и његово доба*, 381–385, 394.

<sup>128</sup> *Encyclopedia of Islam*, vol. 6 (Mahk–Mid), eds. С. Е. BOSWORTH – Е. VAN DONZEL – W. Р. HEINRICHS – СН. PELLAT – J. SCHACHT, Leiden 1991, 980 (Н. ЂАЛЧИК).

<sup>129</sup> Д. ИЛИЋ, *Имаголошко читање Турске хронике*, 147.



спотовину, Трапезунтско царство, Влашку и Босну. Зато је његово дело важан примарни извор за војно деловање и двор султана Мехмеда Освајача (1444–1446; 1451–1481). Аутор сведочи да су Османлије имале ефикасну војну организацију и да је султан својим ратницима исказивао особито поштовање. С друге стране, истицао је и како је Мехмед II не мали део сопствених успеха на бојном пољу дуговао разним преварама и ратним лукавствима. Такође, Константин је приметио да је султан био прилично окрутан према својим пораженим непријатељима.

**Кључне речи:** Константин Михайловић, султан Мехмед II, јаничар, војска, превара, праведност, окрутност.

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