

THE CONCEPT OF HISTORICAL NATIONALISM AND THE CASE OF THE BATTLE OF KOSOVA*

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ABSTRACT

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Historical subjects always take a prominent place on the agenda of the Balkan societies, which considerably affected the life of societies living in the region. And certain factors, which are the basis of ethnical problems, are also explicitly affected by historical fact and perceptions. In this point, intersected with the objectivity problem of history, it is evidently seen the effects of ideological understandings and legitimation endeavors of states.

At the last stage of independent movements emanated from the French Revolution in the Ottoman Europe, it is the institution of fictional state heritage fostered by above-mentioned basic defects. By beginning of taking place, especially, of these subjective evaluations in the textbooks constructed with mythos but not nourished by the sources and away from scientific approaches, it was appeared an understanding of fictional history headed by the Serbians.

In this study, we try to evaluate above-mentioned inexact historical perceptions by means of handling the case of the Battle of Kosova (1389).

Key Words: *Balkan, Ideology, Serbian, Kosovo War, History*

The Balkan peoples are always interested in discussing the subjects pertaining to history, which significantly affected the ethnic groups of the Balkans. Besides, the factors that instigated ethnic conflicts have evidently

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influenced by historical "phenomenon" and understanding. Certain misperceptions cause extensive confusion. In addition, the emergence of groupings is abused by some ethnic elements. In this frame, the question is how could be overcome disorders, oppositions and groupings which could be influenced by misinterpretation of history. Understanding and perception of history in the Balkans was immensely influenced by epics and legends. Put another way, these legends namely myths were presented to the societies as if they were historical reality.

Teaching history undertakes crucial function in this point as school textbooks have an active part in legitimization of official state ideologies. Particularly history books become the most effective instrument when it is pursued legitimization by using the past¹. History textbooks written abide by syllabus that prepared due to state policies are a part of this education and in some countries they are the most important materials. Even in some countries it was believed that school textbooks should profoundly be thought without any missing paragraph. Subsequently, significant events, personalities and remarks quite often were memorized by students. Accordingly courses predominantly had to be based on textbooks in preparation and elaboration. Today it is not possible to talk about much change.

It is argued that history textbooks have considerable content problems. Besides there exist fundamental difficulties about literary style. The authors' uncertain styles in the textbooks due to different subjects and explanations constitute considerable dimension of this difficulty. The subject handled as national questions are presented to students as objective and unbiased with sentimental and provocative way that contribute an atmosphere of prejudice and provocation. Seeing the ethnic picture of the Balkans, it is ascertained that the perception of history and analysis of teaching history of the Balkans should be interrogated.

The most appropriate expression for such conception of teaching history could be best conceptualized by the concept of "historical nationalism". This concept was exposed by the endeavor of reinterpretation of the *Balkan History*

¹ Marijana Mirkovic, Graficka Skola, Keith Crawford, Teaching History in Serbian and English Secondary Schools: a Cross-Cultural Analysis of Textbooks, Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung, Braunschweig, Germany, December 2002, p. 1.

and its transfer to the new generation particularly after the Congress of Berlin of 1878. When the Balkan is considered, it is seen that a new historiography growing out of myths, legends and local sources appeared².

In this paper, we aim to examine the Battle of Kosova (1389) in the history textbooks of Kosova, Serbia and Turkey as an example of aforementioned new history perception and to present our opinion about the matter.

An Important Event in the Balkan History: The Battle of Kosova (1389)

Swift expansion by the conquest of Edirne (1361) during the reign of Murat I. was brought to a stand by the Sultan's firman of 1376 and then a settlement project was embarked on the conquests. This standstill period of four years continued till 1380 and afterwards, the possessions of Istip in 1380, Manastır and Pirpele in 1382, Sofia, Nis and Ohri in 1385 were taken in turn.

This fast advancement of the Ottomans intimidated the Balkan states that grappled with their own domestic affairs up to that time. In this context, domestic contests began to change slowly to the alliance towards the common enemy. When the Ottoman army began to advance towards Bosnia in 1388, the Serbian ruler Lazar and the king Tvartko of Bosnia made an alliance and defeated the Ottomans on Plochnik region in the valley of Toplitsa³ in 1387⁴. The participation of John Stratsimir, the ruler of Vidin, to the joined forces undoubtedly carried on great importance in the victory of this army that composed of Serbians and Bosnians⁵.

² Kemal H. Karpat, *Balkanlarda Osmanlı Mirası Ve Ulusçuluk*, Trans. Recep Boztemur, İmge, Nisan 2004, pp. 11-12.

³ İsmail Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarih, I*, TTK, Ankara 2003, p. 250

⁴ Şerif Baştav, *Bizans İmparatorluğu Tarihi, Son Devir 1261-1461 Osmanlı Türk Bizans Münasebetleri*, Ankara 1989, p. 78.

⁵ Peter Sugar, *Southeastern Europe Under Ottoman Rule 1354-1804*, University of Washington Press, 1977, p. 21.

After the Plochnik victory of joined forces, the Bosnians with the other troops under Vlatko Vukovic thumb attacked the Ottoman army in Bilecea and Rudnik. Henceforth, all the Slavic people of the Balkans were excited and Serbians, Bulgarians, Wallachians and Albanians, that is, they were all opponents with each other till that date, urgently violated the agreements that had made before with the Ottomans began to gather around the Serb Prince Lazar⁶.

After the formation of this unity of the Balkans, the Ottomans, abstaining from impulsive act, followed a rationalist policy and attempted to weaken it insofar as possible. First of all, the Ottomans sent Ali Pasha with a 30.000 army to Bulgaria in 1388, then subjugated Pravadi, Sumnu and Tırnova⁷ notably by the efforts of the pioneer troops under the command of Dogan Beg⁸. Afterwards, having been done away with a campaign under Murad I., Bulgarian ruler Sishman⁹ was expelled from the unity.

By the Bulgarian expel from the unity, the Ottoman army commenced on a military expedition from Bulgaria in 1389. The army reached the battlefield that situated in the northern part of Skupje, the plain of Kosova, marching through Iltiham, Sofia, Kostendil and Kratova¹⁰. Georges Castellan states that Lazar and Tvartko waited the Ottoman army in Nish but Murad I brought the army to Kosova via Velbuzd¹¹. The armies took up their position around the Lab a tributary of Sitnitsa on the road of Pristine-Vulcetrin¹².

⁶ Baştav, *ibid*, p. 79.

⁷ Münir Aktepe, Article of Kosova, I A / VI, p. 869.

⁸ Uzuncarsili, *ibid*, pp. 192-193.

⁹ Baştav, *ibid*, p. 79.

¹⁰ Baştav, *ibid*, p. 79.

¹¹ Georges Castellan, *History of the Balkans, From Muhammed the Conqueror to Stalin*, Trans. Nicholas Bradley, New York 1992, p. 54.

¹² Aktepe, *ibid*, p. 871.

The two sons of the Sultan were also in the Ottoman army, one was Bayezid who was the beg of Kütahya and Hamideli, the other was Yakup, the beg of Karesi. Along with the Anatolian troops, Konstantin, the beg of Kostendil, Serbian beg Dragas who was bestowed Serez as "Timar" and the sons of Vukashin who was killed in Chirmen were all taken place in the Ottoman army for their interests. Besides, Ali Pasha who was busy with the conquest of Bulgaria joined the Sultan's army¹³. Even if there were disputed information about the numbers of army in the sources, it is generally accepted that the numbers were approximately 60.000¹⁴. Besides, it is stated that the numbers of the Ottoman army were less than the Serbian joined army¹⁵. The Serbian joined army was composed of Serbians, Bosnians, together with the troops of Hungarians, Mircea who was the voivoda of Wallacia, Ulahs, the Albanian Georges Balcha and Demeter Jomina¹⁶. In the sources, it is mentioned that the numbers of this army were about 100.000¹⁷.

¹³ The presence of the Albanians with the Ottoman side in the battle is not clearly put forward in the sources. However, certain myths ingrained particularly in the Albanian culture confirm their presence. According to the hearsay of the Catholic Albanians of Mirdita, the Albanian community attended in the battle by the Ottoman side. Furthermore, it is claimed that when the Ottomans vacillated about the fight due to the condition of the day, whereupon said quidam Albanian community shout at "Mire Dita" (the day is good) and attacked, seeing this the Ottoman army, too, began to fight. After the battle, this community was called as "Miredita". Even, it is alleged that when their privileges wanted to be abolished during the Tanzimat, they objected that "Murad I. gives us these rights". See, Hasan Kaleshi, *Müşterek Türk Arnavud Savaşları Üzerine Söylenen Arnavut Türküleri, I. Uluslararası Türk Folklor Kongresi Bildirileri*, II, Halk Edebiyatı, Ankara Üniversitesi Basımevi, Ankara 1976, pp. 145-152.

¹⁴ Castellan, *ibid*, p. 54.

¹⁵ Aktepe, *ibid.*, p. 870.

¹⁶ Castellan, *ibid*, p. 54.

¹⁷ Karamanlı Nişancı Mehmet Paşa, *Osmanlı Sultanları Tarihi*, Trans. İ. Hakkı Konyalı, *Osmanlı Tarihleri*, I, Türkiye Yay., İstanbul 1947, p. 347; Şükrullah, *Behçetüttevarih*, translated from Persian by Atsız, *Osmanlı Tarihleri*, I, Türkiye Yay., İstanbul 1947, p. 56; Castellan, *ibid*, p. 65.

The battle started on the 15 June¹⁸ which is celebrated by Serbians as Saint Guy's Day (Vidovdan or St. Vitus) in 1389¹⁹. At the beginning of the struggle, though the Serbian joined forces assaulted effectively to the left wing of the Ottoman army commanded by Yakup Beg, the sudden attacks of Bayezid from the right wing ensured the rally of the Ottomans. In the meantime, Sultan Murad was guarded by a secure janissaries circle as a battle tactic²⁰. Moreover, Jorga states that the camels brought from Anatolia lined up the surroundings of the military encampment so as to frighten and demoralize the Balkan forces²¹.

At the beginning of the battle, the abandonment of the battlefield of Vuk Brankovitch who was the son-in-law of Lazar²² or his participation to the Ottoman army²³ appalled the Crusaders. In addition, the flight of Bosnian ruler Tvartko from the battlefield who realized that the defeat was impending²⁴

¹⁸ Castellan, *ibid*, p. 54. It is very interesting that the date, surprisingly, coincides with the important events of the Serbian history. The First World War was sparked by the murder of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand on the St. Vitus day of 1914 by a Serbian student Gavrilo Princip. After the establishment of the New Yugoslavian Kingdom, the first central constitution under the sovereignty of Serbians was approved the same day. Again, Stalin, separating Yugoslavia from the Eastern Block the same day in 1948, accelerated the development of communist Yugoslavia. The wars of Yugoslavia in 1991 broke out a few days ago from the same day. Finally, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic was surrendered to the International War Criminals Court on the Vidovdin day of 2001. Florian Bieber, *Nationalist Mobilization and Stories of Serb Suffering, Rethking History*, 6.1 (2002) p. 96. In addition, the Orthodox Church of Serbia proclaimed the day of the battle as official religious holiday in 1892. Bieber, *ibid*, p. 99.

¹⁹ One of the ambiguities of the battle is also about its date. 15 June 1389 is generally accepted by the scholars with one accord. Some of them agree with the month but abstain about the day. See. Maria Todorova, *Balkanları Tahayyül Etmek*, Trans. Dilek Şendil, İletişim Yay., İstanbul 2003, p. 368; The others changed the day, such as, Lynda E. Boose gives the date as 28 June. Crossing the River Drina: Bosnian Rape Camps, Turkish Implement, and Serb Cultural Memory, *Sings*, Vol. 28, no.1, *Gender and Cultural Memory*, Autumn 2002, p.79. Munir Aktepe states that the dispute about the date of the battle grows out of calendar disaccord giving the date as 4 Ramadan 791, that is, 27 August 1389. See, Aktepe, *ibid*, p. 871. The principle difference is in the work of Sukrullah. It is because he put the date on the battle by giving the death of Murad I as 1388. See., *Behcetuttevarih*, p. 56.

²⁰ Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi, *Atsız Neşri*, MEB, İstanbul 1992, p. 57.

²¹ Nicolae Jorga, *Osmanlı İmparatorluğu Tarihi*, I, Trans. Nilüfer Epçeli, Yeditepe Yay., İstanbul 2005, p. 242.

²² Baştav, *ibid*, p. 80; Michael A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed Religion and Genocide in Bosnia*, University of California Press, California 1996, p. 31.

²³ Some sources record that Vuk Brankovic just left Lazar in the lurch withdrawing from the battlefield, the others state that he betrayed his own nation by changing sides; Castellan, *ibid*, p. 54.

²⁴ Baştav, *ibid*. p. 80.

brought about a great victory for the Ottomans. As a result of the battle, the Serbian Kingdom was completely collapsed and the Ottoman army advanced to the Hungarian frontier. However, the martyrdom of Murad I on the battlefield who ruled 30 years was a great disadvantage. This victory was the third grand victory after the battles of I. and II. Cirmen (Cernomen) for the mission of the conquest of Rumelia.

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When it is evaluated the works of both chroniclers of that period and modern scholars about the Battle of Kosova, it is seen that there were certain points of such an important event which could not profoundly be clarified. Especially, once both sides of the battle are in question, several historians state the contradiction of reciprocal information about the event²⁵. The concept of historiography which gained momentum especially in the 19th century and conceptualized as "historical nationalism" was seen as evidence of this contradiction and ambiguity²⁶. Myths and local cultural elements have considerable influence in this concept which could be thought as the endeavors of construction of not the existing but the needed history for the sake of the legitimization of the past in the formation of nation state. On the one hand, this understanding provides certain advantages to the nation by means of glorifying its past, on the other; it harms history with its contradiction. In this context, the Battle of Kosova carries on such kinds of pattern. Actually, it was seen certain ambiguities of almost all the points, such as, the date²⁷ and the result of the battle.

At the end of the battle, it was seen that the plain of Kosova experienced one of the bloodiest battles of history that was depicted by both the local and foreign scholars with different aspects²⁸. For this dimension of the battle was the single topic that was generally accepted by the sources as a concurrent matter. Right along with this question, the most important question that could not entirely be enlightened was the death of Lazar and Murad I.

²⁵ Ferdinand Schevill, *A History of Balkans*, Dorset Press, New York, 1991, p. 188.

²⁶ Karpat, *ibid*, p. 7.

²⁷ For various explanations about the date of the battle, see. Footnote 19.

²⁸ For example see., Maria Todorova, *Balkanları Tahayyül Etmek*, Trans. Dilek Şendil, İletişim Yay., İstanbul 2003, p. 368; Aktepe, *ibid*, p. 870.

The sources focused on the battle, while confirming the deaths of both Murad I and Lazar, did not clearly put forward how and in which state of the battle, the deaths of both rulers came into being. When the incident is taken into consideration, it is perceived as an unimportant detail. As a matter of fact, it constitutes the main theme of a myth which is still alive.

The most well-known story is that while Murad I. was wandering among the wounded and corpses, he was assassinated and killed by either a Serbian noble or a soldier. But right here the sources give different information that exposes certain questions which have to be answered:

- 1- Was the Sultan murdered during or after the battle?
- 2- Did his murder happen on account of a planned assassination or during the battle?
- 3- How did Milosh Obilich who was recorded as the murderer in the sources approach the Sultan?
- 4- If the sultan was really assassinated, was he murdered in the course of the assassination or as recorded several sources was he survive till his approval of the sultanate of his son Bayezid or capturing of Lazar and his companions?

The exposition of the battle of Kosova and its succeeding events in the proper sense could be accomplished by the answer of four questions mentioned above. First of all, it is necessary to focus on how and in which stage that the Sultan was murdered. The Ottoman sources of 14th century recorded that, towards the final stage of the battle, while the Serbian army was scattering and deserting from the battlefield, the Ottoman army followed them. In the meantime, while Murad I was watching the occurrences from a high location, one of the soldiers among the casualties wanted to tell his request by coming near him. *Ahmedi* expresses that this wounded soldier (Milos Kobile, Kobilich or Obilich) stabbed the sultan right there with a sudden attack²⁹. *Sukrullah* states that while a wounded soldier among the corpses came near by the Sultan requesting a submission, the guards of the sultan warded off him. Meanwhile, upon the order of the Sultan, he was allowed to release and by then he injured

²⁹ Ahmedi, *Tevarih-i Mülûk-i Osman*, ed: Atsız, *Osmanlı Tarihleri*, I, Türkiye Yayınevi, İstanbul, 1947, p. 21.

the sultan with a dagger. Then the Sultan at once passed away³⁰. *Neshri* also records that he died immediately³¹. In his book, Nisancı Mehmet Pasha of Karaman gives parallel information with *Sukrullah* adding that the dagger was poisonous³². *Hoca Saadettin* gives also the same data of previous historians to the event that the Sultan was stabbed by Milosh Obilich. But he is dissent with them stating that the Sultan was not died at once but alive till his son Bayezid arrival in order to approve his sultanate³³. *Asıkpasazade* does not agree with the other chroniclers in Milosh's approach to the Sultan stating that he approached the Sultan under the pretext of telling the news of the arrest of Lazar and his son. He adds that Milosh stabbed the Sultan who was not died at once but alive till Milosh and his companion's arrival in his presence³⁴. *Uzuncarsili* states that there is a record in a firman, which was sent to the *Kadi* of Bursa by Bayezid the Thunderbolt, informing that while the Sultan was returning his marquee after the battle, a Serbian nobleman approached under the pretext of conversion and martyred him with a dagger³⁵. *Hammer* generally gives the same accounts of *Uzuncarsili* except he states that Milosh was not murdered at once even he killed lots of soldiers fighting valiantly and eventually was murdered while he tried to reach his horse³⁶.

In brief, the Ottoman chroniclers of this period and modern Ottoman sources portray the situation as follow: towards the end of the battle or the outcome of the battle was evident, Milosh Obilich, one of the Serbian nobleman, secretly or evidently, approached the Sultan and injured him with a dagger or bayonet –most probably poisonous- and the Sultan passed away in a few minutes. On the other hand, some of the western sources about the battle affected by epics and myths, while accepting his presence, consider him as one of the members of a unit that was composed of the best twelve soldiers of Lazar. According to these sources, two brave Serbian soldiers, in spite of all the interventions, could be able to approach the tent of the Sultan and murder him³⁷.

³⁰ Şükrullah, *ibid*, p. 56.

³¹ Mehmet Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihannüma, Neşri Tarihi, II*, ed. F.R. Unat - M.A.Köymen, TTK, Ankara, 1995, p. 305.

³² Nisancı Mehmet Paşa, *ibid*, . 347.

³³ Hoca Saadettin Efendi, *Tacü't Tevarih, I*, ed. İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, Kültür Bak. Yay., Ankara 1999, p. 188.

³⁴ Aşıkpaşaoğlu Tarihi, *ibid*, p. 58.

³⁵ *Uzunçarşılı*, *ibid*, p. 257.

³⁶ Baron Joseph V. Hammer P., *Osmanlı Devleti Tarihi, I*, Üçdal Neşriyat, Undated, p. 188.

³⁷ Aktepe, *ibid*, p. 871; Jorga, *ibid*, pp. 242-243.

In fact, this evaluation came on the scene with the recognition of Turks and Muslim Slavs as the killer of Lazar identified with the personality of Christ by the Serbian nationalists endeavored to establish their nation state in the 19th century.

In this century, the Serbian writers transformed Prince Lazar into a figure of Christ in the full acceptance of the word. Even the last dinner of Lazar with his best soldiers before the Battle of Kosovo was presented as the last dinner of Christ with his apostles before the crucifixion³⁸. At the dinner among twelve soldiers who were next to Lazar, would be Vuk Brankovitch who was the son-in-law of Lazar and betrayed him at the battle, Milosh Obilich who would kill Sultan Murad. In the history perception, it was shown as Lazar was killed in the Kosovo plain and the Ottoman Turks were Christ Killers. Vuk Karadzich was certainly one of the writers who made Milosh and Brankovitch an apostle in that way. The poems which were written in the format of a curse or imploring were particularly with religious motifs, and these made great effects right after the Tanzimat among the Serbian people in 1845 right before the autonomy which was given especially to the Serbians with the Edirne agreement. The verse which was published in 1814; "Whoever will not fight at Kosovo/ my nothing grow that his hand sows/ neither the white wheat in the field / nor the vine of grapes on his mountains", goes on such statements. Somehow like this verse, but in a different version which was published "Whoever is a Serb of Serbian blood/ Whoever shares with me this heritage/ and he comes not to fight at Kosovo/ May he never have the progeny / His heart desires, neither son nor daughter/ Beneath his hand let nothing decent grow/ Neither purple grapes nor wholesome wheat / Let him rust away like dripping iron / Until his name be extinguished." Such kind of his poems and Milosh Obilich with the legendary struggle in the Battle of Troy with the comparison of Achilles who was a crucial mythological figure took the place among his other works³⁹.

After Vuk Karadzich, one of the people who play an important role with the reconstruction which includes a new format of Lazar's death event is Petar II Petrovich, or as well-known is Njesos. Depicting Lazar as a Jesus figure, describing Kosovo as a Serbian Golgotha and expressing Muslims as the seed of the evil was a situation which was rather frequently encountered. In this

³⁸ Sells, *ibid*, p. 31.

³⁹ Sells, *ibid*, p. 39.

meaning, Njesos' work *The Mountain Wreath* (Gorski Vijenac) published in 1847 is accepted as an important work which affects the formation of Serbian nationalism⁴⁰. The work is a verse drama which glorifies Muslim Serbians who were murdered in Noel Eve in the 18th century. This drama which has completely symbolical content starts with Kosovo tragedy and Bishop Danilo who brooded on Vuk Brankovich's treachery. Danilo's warriors offered to glorify the Holy Day by cleaning non-Christians from their lands. The Divine chorus reads a couplet like, "Non-Christians' carcass scent surrounds the high mountain." One of Danilo's men cried: "Our fight will not come to an end unless we or Turks (Muslim Slavs) were done away." According to the view which expresses Serbian Muslims as Turki (Turkifier) or describes Turks as converted to Islam from Christianity; Muslims, with changing their own ethnic structure, joined into Turks' race that was the murder of Christian Prince Lazar. Primarily Vuk Karadzich and Njesos, the 19th century Serbian elites' main purpose of maturing the results of an event which took place in the past such as the Battle of Kosovo, in the meaning of historical nationalism. Dubrovnik writers' works which were especially headed by Dositej Obredovich, and two works which we mentioned above are thought as trilogy which forms the roots of this effort⁴¹.

Meanwhile, there are certain western sources abstaining that in which point of the stage in the battle Murad was killed⁴², but general impression in the West is that he was killed during the battle. The truth under this claim, in fact, brought up the idea that one should also think about this death; it could be different from the information which was told in the Ottoman sources. The most important mainstay of the writers, who claim that the death of Sultan Murad could not be as a result of the sudden attack of Milosh, is undoubtedly the rigidity of the Ottoman Palace ceremonies. The historians who thought that it was impossible to pass especially the soldiers who had the duty of guarding the Sultan and approach him within a dagger distance, express that this assassination must have been in a different way at least this must have been during the battle⁴³. Moreover, there are works which attract the attention to the extremely low possibility of the approach of Milosh to the Sultan for a

⁴⁰ Sells, *ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴¹ Sugar, *ibid.*, p. 181.

⁴² L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans Since 1453*, London, 2000, p. 45.

⁴³ Jorga, *ibid.*, pp. 242-243.

requirement⁴⁴, particularly after the occurrence of this event of a tired and bloody battle. On the other hand, there are historians who claim that the assassination's origin was from such a heedlessness and later this caused new customs in the Ottoman Palace, that is, when an ambassador was received in audience, he was strictly accompanied by guards even kept by his arms while approaching the Sultan.⁴⁵

The final decision, after all of these evaluations, should be the picture which originated from the result and afterwards of the battle. While being looked at the evaluations with a complete point of view, it will be seen that there are two different approaches dealing with the battle. Before all else, while being looked at the battle as profits and losses from technical view, the number of researchers who evaluate this struggle as an equality, are not so few⁴⁶. Furthermore, with the general consideration of the equality in here, it was expressed that it was under consideration for all of the societies, ideologies and states which fight in the region until today⁴⁷. The start point of such kind of approach, which was the result of the death of both sides' ruler at the end of the battle, was a fact. But in the historical process, Serbians had not regain self control for a long time after the death of the ruler such as Lazar, and with a simple expression, they were under the sovereignty of the Ottomans for about 500 years⁴⁸. In response to this, Ottoman side changed the ruler immediately after the death of Sultan Murad, even the battle was lasting, and knowing the ruler such as Beyazıd I became the head were demolishing features of the approach which supported that the battle finished equally.

Some researchers, who evaluate this battle's results a little more factual, evaluate this battle as an inheritance, and also as a "primordial massacre" to the next generations⁴⁹. With this consideration, it would be a normal approach to show the battle in Kosovo in 1389 as one of the legitimate equipments of other war which would occur 600 years later than this battle.

⁴⁴ It was among the low possibilities that Milosh acted to be appeared to the khan as if he betrayed his own army and approached. See, Bieber, *ibid*, p. 96.

⁴⁵ Aktepe, *ibid*, p. 871.

⁴⁶ Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Balkans from Constantinople to Communism*, New York 2002, p. 111; Tim Judah, *Kosovo's Road to War*, *Survival*, vol. 41, no. 2, Summer 1999, p.7.

⁴⁷ Alex Dragnich, Slavko Todorovich, "Saga of Kosovo", *Berkeley Kolo of Serbian-American Sisters*, March 2000, p. 54.

⁴⁸ Georg Ostrogorsky, *Bizans Devleti Tarihi*, trans. Fikret Işıltan, TTK, Ankara, 1995, p. 504.

⁴⁹ Todorova, *ibid*, p. 368.

Serbia which was taken as an inheritance from Dushan at the end of the Battle of Kosovo, was dissolved in a short time; in addition to this, considering the results of this battle, it became the reason for the subject to the different evaluations. The Ottoman management at the end of the battle sees Serbians again as local manager, thus they want to manage within the old system, and some Serbian historians who considered this as a kindness, express that Serbians never fell into this trap, moreover, their obedience to the Ottomans after the defeat was only for the pragmatism⁵⁰ and they considered the battle as "the grave of independence" until the revolts which broke out in the 19th century⁵¹. Moreover, the defeat in this battle was discussed that it happened not because of the skill of Turks in the art of battle, but not regaining the battle power to drive back Turks after the victory of Serbians in Plocnick⁵². Furthermore, while they are evaluating this defeat as an expected one, there are evaluations⁵³ regarding the reason of the defeat that Serbian people did not have a nation to fight for or did not believe the existence of an element of corporation. Besides, there are also Serbian historians who make comments on the result of the battle with negative point of view and certain Serbian works which seek the start of modern Serbian nationality with the Battle of Kosovo and entitled it as "the grave of independence." According to the view which evaluates Kosovo in some sense as a breaking in the continuation of the national history⁵⁴ and sees the Ottoman sovereignty as an element of pressure on Serbian people for centuries, they have never humiliated themselves before this pressure. Some claims that Serbians later on got into the struggle so as to be a nation again with Kara Yorgi or Vuk Karadzich. They described themselves as Europeans, but the Turks were described as "Asian Mohammedans" by attracting attention of their religion in the expressions which were used in the process of being nation state in the 19th century⁵⁵.

⁵⁰ Benda Kalman, "Macar Birliđi ve XV. Asırda Osmanlı İmparatorluđu-Macaristan Münasebetleri", *İÜEF Tarih Dergisi*, no. 28-29, 1974-1975, İstanbul 1975, p. 90.

⁵¹ Schevill, *ibid*, p. 188. Eren, *ibid*, p. 6667.

⁵² Noel Malcolm, *Bosna*, Trans. Aşkıım Karadađlı, Om Yay., December 1999, p., 55.

⁵³ Karpat, *ibid*, p. 22.

⁵⁴ Karpat, *ibid*, p. 44.

⁵⁵ Skender Rızaj, *Kosovo and Albanians Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, Prishtine, İstanbul, Tiran, 1993, p. 119.

The Battle of Kosovo in the History Textbooks

From the aspect of Balkan countries- especially Serbia and Albania- the Battle of Kosovo took place in 1389 and it came to end with evaluating it in its date. However, it was not a historical fact. But, in spite of this, there are lots of legends and myths about the Battle of Kosovo; these legends came to these days and were being tried not to lose its liveliness and still are being tried. The myths about this event were much more talked than the facts, and instead of researching the relations between the myths and the fact, the thought of accepting these myths as a fact became dominant. In Serbian history, it is also seen the subjects which were similar to the myths of the Battle of Kosovo today have an important place among the myths that we have already had. This myth has a complex structure, and the thoughts and comments which include images are structured on a simple event how it was wanted. Kosovo is certainly the most important legend of the Serbian history. This legend which is at the center of Serbian history perceptiveness is known by almost all the Serbian people.

This legend's historical basement is the battle that was between Serbians who were led by Prince Lazar (1371-1389) and the Ottoman Turks who were led by Sultan Murad I (1362-1389) on June 15, 1389 in Kosovo. There are not so much things to tell about the process of the battle, except it was too violent and two rulers died. After the battle, Lazar's Serbia got under the sovereignty of the Ottoman State; this means the defeat of Serbia. But the news of Sultan's death in the battlefield created a strong impression on Christians, and this was interpreted by Serbians as the defeat of the Ottomans.

As it is seen above, there are lots of different stories about the Battle of Kosovo. Notwithstanding these, there were only a few versions which told the most impressive details of the battle towards the mid of 15th century. The incident of Sultan's death: according to Christian version, Sultan was killed at the time of the battle; according to Turkish version, he was assassinated after the battle. Here, it is also mentioned about the assassin of Murad by Milosh Obilitch. Towards the end of the 16th century the legend of Sultan's death was almost completed; Milosh Obilitch, who was brave chevalier⁵⁶ and the victim of a bad false accusation, got into the tent of Sultan and killed him in an unexpected way.

⁵⁶ Nesri used the expression "a brave soldier" for Milos Oblich, see Neşri Tarihi, II, p. 305.

In this formed story, the main two motifs of the legend, that is, the heroism and self-sacrifice were openly combined, especially, the treachery motifs willingly being improved and was made a ball of wool with religious motifs. The first story mentioned about the section from the treachery in Kosovo battle to the second part in the 15th century. Because, there was not any other certain information about the subject up to this time, except uncertain allusions. The treachery in Kosovo could be an expected incident, but the treachery motif in here could not go far from the effort of showing the defeat logically. In the initial stories which mentioned about the treachery, the names of treacherous were unknown or they were contradicted with each other. Also, until the beginning of the 17th century- if it was- these treacherous' names did not become definite. One of the brilliance ones who joined the battle was Vuk Brankovitch who was feudal lord of Kosovo's ruler Lazar and son-in-law of him. Why was Brankovitch declared as a treacherous? May be, because he got out the battle as a living being and this made such a label absolutely necessary. Except this, when this incident was looked by a totalitarian point of view, the myth which was counted as one of the predecessors of the succeeding battle in Kosovo illustrated the same direct. It was considered that Hungarian king's viceroy; Yanosh Huniadi was defeated by Sultan Murad II because of his army's treachery in this battle which took place in 1448. The Serbian king, at that time, despot Djuradj, the son of Brankovitch refused to help Hunyadi at this battle. It was as if that two battles which took place at the same arena, were combined in the same legend. With the support of church, the religious motifs were added to these, and thus the cult of Saint Prince Lazar was appeared. After a short time of Prince Lazar's death in Kosovo, Serbian Orthodox Church gave him the name "Saint" as he was the inheritor and son of Stephan (Dusan). At the beginning, the cult became widespread and gained popularity in a non-ordinary way because of the changing reasons; even it was seen in Russia.

In fact, the incidents related with the Battle of Kosovo, were neither examined enough, nor even classified. Although the Ottoman army that was the winner of the battle was a fact that was known and accepted, the celebration of its failure was also the result of this myth. It was assumed that even if the Serbians did not win the battle materially, they won it spiritually. According to the myth, at the edge of the battle, a person in a divine kingdom next to Lazar's heroism, with Milosh Obilitch's killing the Sultan Murad helped to shape most

of this picture⁵⁷. Besides these, there was a treacherous that was the other element which completed this picture. The complex structure of the myth which appeared and was mentioned before, thus, is seen to be completed as a whole.

The myths of Kosovo Battle which were mentioned above, especially, come to the agenda in the process of the dissolution of Yugoslavia, and were brought to the one of the points that affected the Serbian, Albania's nationalism which were reconstructed. In the Albanian history textbooks which were thought in Kosovo, were written that the fast moving of Ottomans in Balkans disturbed the Albanians and its neighborhoods' rulers and they formed a coalition against the Ottomans with passing over the disagreements and arguments among the Albanian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Roman princes, kings and nobles who faced with the common enemy. It was expressed that in this coalition there were important people like Gjerji II Blesha, Teodor Muzaka, Gjan Kastroti, and being united on July 15, 1389, they fought with 40.000 Balkan soldiers against the Ottoman forces which consisted of 100.000 soldiers in the battle took place nearby Pristine. Here they fought against the Ottoman forces and in this battle the Balkans had a serious defeat. On the other hand, Milosh Obilitch gained fame by killing Sultan Murad I.⁵⁸ It was written that with the improvements which followed this incident, the serious situation was felt in every fields of the society and a serious occupation period was being lived. In one of the books which was mentioned above; there was also a part which was taken from the Pedigree of Muzaka Family (1510) about the Battle of Kosovo and in this part, following impressions were read: "*Sultan Murad passed Serbia and Bulgaria so fast, but Serbian despot Lazar, Bulgarian king Makro, and our family's second successor Teodor Muzaka and the other rulers of Albania fought against the Ottomans. In there, the Christians were dissolved, and our Teodor who was accompanied by an Albanian soldier, was shot. At the same place, Serbian Lazar who was later killed was taken prisoner. After that, the continuous battle against the Ottomans began in Albania and so many nobles and brave men died*"⁵⁹.

Furthermore, the subject was taken shortly in a history textbook which was written in Serbia contrast to the ones in the early periods. Nevertheless,

⁵⁷ Bieber, *ibid*, p. 96.

⁵⁸ *Historia e Popullit Shqiptar per shkollat e mesme, Libri Shkolor*, (Albanian People History for High Schools), Prishtine, 2002, p. 70.

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 72.

Srdjan Milosevitch who examined deeply how the Ottoman and Turkish image especially in Serbian history textbooks, emphasized on also following points. The historiography in Serbia was used for the formation of a sense of patriotism, and this was reflected in the textbooks. Besides, it was expressed that the arguments of self and other were put forward highly, and also slavery, misery, oppression, payment, and servitude were used as key words. Also it is written that they were the Turks who made and were the responsible for them. The textbooks in which there were no information about the politic and the cultural victories for the Ottoman State were shown that it was an unbalanced state that sank in an immorality which rose highly. There were extremely serious impressions about Turks also in geography textbooks. For instance, while the forests in mountainious regions were being told in the course of saving the nature, the writer showed the students these forests as a shelter for people who escaped from Turkish oppression and had torture⁶⁰. Here, it was also stated that Turks began the threats in Serbian regions after the Battle of Maraca, Vuk Brankovitch and Knez Lazar ruled Kosovo surroundings in this period, in other words, a battle occurred in Kosovo between Turkish and Lazar's soldiers, after it was written that they controlled Danubian tribes inhabited around Belgrade. Finally, Lazar was defeated and killed in this battle.

Conclusion

The Battle of Kosovo can be shown, may be as one of the crucial examples which created a myth and this gave a direction to the fate of a nation, for supporting the battle, it was one of the important examples from the point of teaching history. For having example of the dangerous of such kind of myths, we came across clearly that such kind of documents should be apart from teaching history which carries on an important educational mission.

It is also a fact that commemorative ceremonies and monument which leaned on these myths can be called as the misuse of history. Such kinds of attitudes become a wrong guidance for the societies and these cause the appearance of the sense of chauvinist.

⁶⁰ Srdjan Milosevic, Historical Myth in the Yugoslav Successors States Stolen Development Myth About Five Hundred Years of Turkish Yoke, [http:// folk.vio.no/palk/Dubrovnik/srdjan.milosevic](http://folk.vio.no/palk/Dubrovnik/srdjan.milosevic).

For the reason of the disorder in the Balkan countries, and for having bad experience about such kind of attitudes, it is useful to look over especially once again the education policy of the states about this subject by giving attention to the importance of place and role of students' history textbooks with right information which was against such wrong and directed materials, because they are important teaching materials. At the same time, this should be perceived as the function of education.

One of the duties which should be done quickly is the study which will combine the historians of the Balkan countries for the Battle of Kosovo. The outcome of these studies can provide important utilities in practice, as they can also be used by the history textbooks authors. This is necessary for preventing the troubles which exists in Kosovo and for the contribution to the friendship and peace understanding of the Balkan countries.

ÖZET

TARİHİ MİLLİYETÇİLİK KAVRAMI VE KOSOVA SAVAŞI ÖRNEĞİ

Balkan topluluklarının gündeminde tarihle ilgili konular daima önemli bir yer tutmuştur. Bu durum bölgede bulunan toplumların hayatlarını büyük ölçüde etkilemiş ve etnik problemlerin temelini teşkil eden bir takım faktörler de tarihsel olgu ve anlayışlardan açık bir biçimde etkilenmiştir. Tarihin objektiflik problemi ile kesişen bu noktada, ideolojik yaklaşımların ve devletlerin meşruiyet çabalarının etkisi net bir şekilde görülmektedir. Fransız İhtilali ile Osmanlı Avrupası'nda başlayan bağımsızlık hareketlerinin son aşaması da yukarıdaki temel aksaklıklardan beslenen kurgusal devlet mirası tesisidir. Bilimsel yaklaşımdan uzak ve kaynaklarla beslenemeyen mitler ile kurgulanan bu subjektif değerlendirmelerin özellikle ders kitaplarında da yer almaya başlaması ile Sırp'ların başını çektiği bir kurgusal tarih anlayışı ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışmamız yukarıda ifade edilen yanlış tarih algularını Kosova Savaşı (1389) örneğinden hareketle değerlendirmeye tabi tutmaya çalışacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Balkan, Sırp, Kosova Savaşı, İdeoloji, Tarih