

ARAřTIRMA MAKALESİ – RESEARCH ARTICLE

**THE ISSUE THAT BORDERS COULD NOT SOLVE:
THE DISPUTE OVER NATIONALITY BETWEEN THE
OTTOMAN EMPIRE AND MONTENEGRO**

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ABSTRACT

The independence of Balkan states is considered to be the partition of the Ottoman Empire in Turkish historiography. However, as can be seen in the example of Montenegro, Balkan states established an administration separate from the Ottoman Empire and defined their people as Montenegrins. On the other hand, Ottomans considered the Montenegrins, who were not the subject of any dispute, as Ottoman citizens; they did not restrain their property rights or prevent them from working. This situation continued until the Treaty of Berlin which was signed in 1878. The official independence of Montenegro after the Treaty of Berlin changed the lives of Montenegrins and the Ottomans living in Montenegro. The nationality of which state would the people whose lands were on the other side of the border prefer? How would they decide about their nationality? Would their choice of nationality lead to denial of their property rights? Or was it an obligation to choose nationality? In the face of these questions to which the public sought answers, both states' rulers prioritized protecting their sovereignty and did not want to behave unjustly towards their citizens. For this reason, they sometimes ignored border violations. Just as the Ottomans refrained from interfering with the Montenegrins in areas such as property, taxation, and work-life unless there were extraordinary situations, Montenegrins also did not interfere with the Ottoman subjects living in their lands.

This article focuses on the issues of nationality between the two states in the period from the independence of Montenegro with the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 until the end of World War I. The article shows that in a period when people mostly preferred nationality within the framework of religious affiliations, property, taxation, and economic conditions were also effective in choosing nationality.

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Keywords: Ottoman Empire, Montenegro, Nationality, Citizenship, Abdülhamid II.

SINIRLARIN ÇÖZEMEDİĞİ SORUN: OSMANLI İMPARATORLUĞU VE KARADAĞ ARASINDAKİ VATANDAŞLIK ANLAŞMAZLIĞI

ÖZ

Balkan devletlerinin bağımsızlığı, Türk tarih yazımında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun bölünmesi olarak kabul edilir. Ancak, Karadağ örneğinde görüldüğü gibi, Balkan devletleri Osmanlı Devleti'nden ayrı bir yönetim kurdular ve halklarını Karadağlılar olarak tanımladılar. Öte yandan, Osmanlılar, herhangi bir anlaşmazlık konusu olmayan Karadağlıları Osmanlı vatandaşı olarak kabul ettiler; mülkiyet haklarını kısıtlamadılar veya çalışmalarını engellemediler. Bu durum, 1878'de Berlin Antlaşması imzalanana kadar devam etti. Berlin Antlaşması'ndan sonra resmi olarak Karadağ'ın bağımsızlığı, Karadağlıların ve Karadağ'da yaşayan Osmanlıların hayatlarını değiştirdi. Sınırın diğer tarafındaki topraklara sahip olan insanlar hangi devletin tabiiyetini tercih ederdi? Tabiiyet konusunda nasıl karar vereceklerdi? Tabiiyet tercihleri mülkiyet haklarının reddine mi yol açacaktı yoksa tabiiyet seçmek bir zorunluluk muydu? Halkın cevap aradığı bu sorular karşısında, her iki devletin yöneticileri de egemenliklerini korumayı öncelikli hale getirdiler ve vatandaşlarına haksızlık yapmak istemediler. Bu nedenle bazen sınır ihlallerini görmezden geldiler. Osmanlılar, olağanüstü durumlar olmadıkça Karadağlılara mülkiyet, vergilendirme ve çalışma hayatı gibi konularda müdahale etmekten kaçındıkları gibi, Karadağlılar da kendi topraklarında yaşayan Osmanlı vatandaşlarına müdahale etmediler.

Bu makale, 1878'de Berlin Antlaşması ile Karadağ'ın bağımsızlığından I. Dünya Savaşı'nın sonuna kadar olan dönemde iki devlet arasındaki tabiiyet konularına odaklanmaktadır. Makale, insanların genellikle dinî bağlılıklar çerçevesinde tabiiyet tercih ettiği bir dönemde, mülkiyet, vergilendirme ve ekonomik koşulların da vatandaşlık seçiminde etkili olduğunu göstermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Devleti, Karadağ, Milliyet, Tabiiyet, II. Abdülhamid.

Introduction

When Montenegro was a part of the Ottoman Empire, Muslim aghas of the Gusinje district of Shkodër bordering Montenegro complained that for several years, they had not been paid the triple revenue of their properties in Vasovik and Velika districts by the Christian inhabitants who were inclined towards the Montenegrins. In the negotiations with the parties, conflict was

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avoided through counselling, and about 150 peasants switched to the Ottoman side. There was a similar situation among the inhabitants of Foça district in Podgorica who were of Montenegrin nationality. Those who converted to the Ottoman nationality were supported financially and also granted some exemptions.¹

What should we understand by the expression Montenegrin and Ottoman nationality when no Montenegrin state is recognized by the Ottoman Empire and no modern citizenship law on who the Ottomans are? Who are the citizens of Montenegrin state, officially recognized as an independent state by the Ottomans after the Treaty of Berlin? Who were the Ottomans for Montenegrins? Our study will try to reveal the relations between Montenegro, a newly established Balkan state, and the Ottomans, who ruled the region for centuries through citizenship disputes.

1. Defining The Human Remains: Who is Ottoman and Montenegrin?

Human history woke up to a new world after long struggles. Renaissance, Reforms, geographical discoveries, and the Age of Enlightenment transformed Western societies and the world. As the source of legitimacy was taken from God and given to man, the world began to be defined from a secular perspective. Religious references were being replaced by rational definitions. Globalisation of trade and the emergence of the rich, besides the aristocratic class, necessitated defining a citizen. While the relationship between the state and the nation was being redefined, there was an emphasis on mutual rights and duties and solidarity of interests and feelings. Nationality made the individual an element of the state.²

Following the treaty of Westphalia, states moved towards a new definition of the nation encompassing the whole society with equal rights and responsibilities above local and religious ties. In defining citizen, which was a part of the emergence of nation-states, some states accepted blood ties, while others accepted birth and residence as the determining factors.³ After the

¹ Republic of Turkey Presidential State Archives–Ottoman Archives (BOA), *A.MKT.MHM.*, 158/80.

² İbrahim Serbestoğlu, *Osmanlı Kimdir? Osmanlı Devleti'nde Tabiiyet Sorunu*, Yeditepe Yayınları, İstanbul 2014, p. 17-19.

³ Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge 1994, p. 21-34.

French Revolution, the concern of states to close their borders accelerated the legal answers to the question of who were citizens. Citizenship laws designed on a universal scale were put into practice.⁴

Population movements on a global scale, the foundation of independent states from the Ottoman Empire, and the seizure of Ottoman land by the Western states, as in the case of Algeria, forced the Ottomans to go beyond the Islamic perspective and implement a secular citizenship law. As a result, the Ottoman Nationality Law, inspired by the 1851 French Citizenship Law, came into force in 1869.⁵

According to the Ottoman Citizenship Law, the acquisition of nationality was based on blood ties (*jus sanguinis*). Later, acquiring nationality required five years of residence in Ottoman territory. Renouncing Ottoman citizenship was subject to permission. It was up to the Ottoman administration to accept or reject the actions of those who changed their nationality without the approval of the Sultan. Those who renounced their Ottoman citizenship also renounced the right to use real estate and land.⁶

Who was a Montenegrin when the Ottoman Nationality Law came into force? Pre-Ottoman Montenegrin legal structure was influenced by the norms of Roman law. With the Ottoman rule, a legal system based on unwritten customs and traditions started.⁷ This situation continued until the end of the 18th century. Montenegrin society was governed until the end of the 18th century with verbal laws, mostly valid in wars and blood feuds. Montenegro's first written legislation movement coincides with Petar Petrović Njegoš I (1782-1830). In 1796, Vladika Petar I. enacted a 16-article law and had it adopted by the tribe chiefs.⁸ This law, referred to as *Stega*, is considered the first written law of Montenegro. Montenegro and Brda's territorial and political unity was declared with the law, and the basic principles regarding the duty of tribes and individuals to fight together to establish the national

⁴ Serbestoğlu, *op.cit.*, p. 20-22.

⁵ Rona Aybay, *Vatandaşlık Hukuku*, İstanbul Üniversitesi Yayınları, İstanbul 2004, p. 65-66.

⁶ Mahmud Fuad, *Tabiiyet*, Nişan Berberyan Matbaası, İstanbul hijri 1312, p. 19-83.

⁷ Mladen Vukčević, Miloš – Bošković, “Judicial System in Montenegro (Historical Development, Basic Principles, and Organisation)”, *Law & Justice Review*, vol. 13, 2016, p. 1.

⁸ Zafer Gölen, “Karadağ Emâreti'nin Kânûn-ı Medenîsi”, in *Sosyal ve Beşerî Bilimlerde Araştırmalar Kavramlar, Araştırmalar ve Uygulama*, (ed.) Zafer Gölen and Şükrü Ünar, Livre de Lyon, Lyon 2022, p. 31.

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state were determined.⁹ Revenge was prohibited in the law to ensure the country's unity.¹⁰ Although not fully implemented, it can be said that with the law of 1796, Petar I laid the foundations of the early modern state and increased the legal consciousness in the country, which showed its effect in the 1803 law.

On August 17, 1803, Petar Petrović Njegoš I had a 33-article law adopted at a meeting with all tribal and district leaders. 16 articles of the law were the ones from the year 1796, while 17 were new. The law was about public order and punishments for manslaughter and theft. For the first time, there was no article on civil law in this law. According to the relevant article, a person who wanted to sell his property would first offer to his relatives and then to his neighbours, and if there were no buyers, he could sell it to whomever he wanted.¹¹

The third written law of Montenegro was issued by Danilo Petrović Njegoš II (1852-1860) on April 23, 1855. The law had 95 articles. This law covers political, civil, criminal, and financial issues and stipulates the equality of all citizens before the law and the inviolability of their laws.¹² Starting from the introduction, the code of Danilo II mentions the freedom of Montenegro and Brda. This aspect is a kind of declaration of independence rather than a code of law.¹³ Many articles in the law were related to issues such as blood feuds, public order, and deserters. Including provisions such as family, inheritance and marriage in the code of law can be considered an important step in terms of civil law.¹⁴

The law enacted by Danilo II was far from meeting the needs when Montenegro expanded its borders with the Treaty of Berlin (1878).¹⁵ This is because the country had an increasing Muslim and Catholic population in

⁹ Vukčević and Bošković, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

¹⁰ Gölen, "Karadağ Emâreti'nin Kânûn-ı Medenîsi", p. 31.

¹¹ Gölen, "Karadağ Emâreti'nin Kânûn-ı Medenîsi", p. 31; Vukčević and Bošković, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

¹² *The Constitutions of the States at War, 1914-1918*, (ed.) Herbert Francis Wright, Government Printing Office, Washington 1919, p. 407; for more details see Jovan Bojović, *Zakonik knjaza Danila*, Istorijski institut Crne Gore, Titograd 1982.

¹³ Gölen, "Karadağ Emâreti'nin Kânûn-ı Medenîsi", p. 32-34.

¹⁴ Saša Brajović, "Knjaz Danilo I Petrović Njegoš: Kultura sjećanja", *MATICA*, vol. 78, 2019, p. 134; Petar Stojanović, "Preljuba Kao Povreda Bračne Vjernosti u Propisima i Običajnom Pravu Grne Gore", *Studia Juridica Montenegrina*, vol. 2, 2021, p. 125.

¹⁵ Vukčević and Bošković, *op.cit.*, p. 2.

addition to the Orthodox population, with its expanding borders.¹⁶ Therefore, the first civil code of Montenegro was adopted on March 25, 1888. The law, which was put into force on July 1, 1888, consists of 1031 articles. 1888 Law regulated issues related to property, inheritance, contracts, and liabilities and provided a legal framework for civil transactions in the country.¹⁷ However, this law was also far from meeting the needs of minorities living in the country and failed to meet expectations. The pressures from inside and outside the country forced the Montenegrin government to issue the first constitution of Montenegro at the beginning of the 20th century.

The first constitution of Montenegro dates back to December 19, 1905. The definition of Montenegrin citizenship was included in detail in the 1905 Constitution. According to the 1905 Constitution, Montenegrin citizenship is acquired primarily through birth on Montenegrin land or through descent from a Montenegrin parent. The law also enables citizens to gain citizenship by living in the country for a certain period and fulfilling other conditions. The law does not allow for dual citizenship and states that foreign nationals must renounce Montenegrin citizenship. Montenegrin Constitution remained in force until the end of World War I when Montenegro joined the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.¹⁸

2. The Source of Nationality Problems: Montenegro State and Changing Borders

The rule of the Ottoman Empire in Montenegro, which started in 1479, continued until 1878. After Danilo I Petrović-Njegoš came into power in 1697 with the title of Vladika,¹⁹ he did not recognize the sovereignty of the Ottoman Empire in Montenegro and acted as an independent state.²⁰ This led to many unsuccessful military interventions from the Ottoman Empire. The struggle for independence started by Danilo I Petrović-Njegoš was taken one

¹⁶ Šerbo Rastoder, “A Short Review of the History of Montenegro”, in *Montenegro in Transition Problems of Identity and Statehood*, (ed.) Florian Bieber, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden 2003, p. 124.

¹⁷ Gölen, “Karadağ Emâreti'nin Kânûn-ı Medenîsi”, p. 35-37.

¹⁸ *The Constitutions of the States at War*, p. 407-429; Srđa Pavlović, “Who are Montenegrins? Statehood, identity, and civic society”, in *Montenegro in Transition Problems of Identity and Statehood*, (ed.) Florian Bieber, Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, Baden-Baden 2003, p. 86-87.

¹⁹ Religious and political leader.

²⁰ Abidin Temizer and Marijan Premović, “Montenegro under Ottoman Rule (1497–1697)”, *Hiperboreea*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2021, p. 3-10.

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step further during the reign of Danilo II Petrović-Njegoš. Danilo II renounced the title of Vladika, gave the religious leadership to his uncle, and declared his political leadership and independence with the title of Prince. This led to the 1852-53 Ottoman-Montenegrin military action, which was also unsuccessful.²¹ With the Montenegrin Prince's insistence on independence and annexing Grahovo land to the borders of Montenegro, the Grahovo Wars took place on May 11 and 13, 1858. New borders were determined for Montenegro after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in this war.²² Montenegrin Prince Danilo II Petrović-Njegoš interpreted the negotiations as the approval of the independence of Montenegro and requested support from the Great Powers. Ottoman Empire refused to accept European states' offers because the Empire could not have diplomatic relations with a principality subordinate to it. With the assassination of Danilo II on August 11, 1860, Nikola I succeeded to the throne, and followed the same policy. As one of his first practices, he supported the Herzegovina rebellion. This support of Nikola caused the Ottoman Empire to launch a new military action against Montenegro in 1862. Ottoman Empire was successful in this military action; however, with the intervention of the Great Powers, the Treaty of Shkodër was signed, and the Ottoman Empire returned to the 1858 border.²³ The debates on Montenegro's claims for independence continued until the reign of Abdülhamid II (1878-1909). The support of Montenegro to the 1875 Herzegovina Rebellion caused a war between the Ottoman Empire and Montenegro that started on July 2, 1876. Peace negotiations were held after this war, which ended with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, and the Ottoman-Russian War began in 1877-1878. Finally Montenegro gained its independence with the Treaty of Berlin, which was signed after the end of the war with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire.²⁴

²¹ Zafer Gölen, "1852-53 Karadağ Askerî Harekâtı ve Sonuçları", *History Studies*, vol. 1, issue 1, 2009, p. 217-269; Abidin Temizer, "Karadağ'da Osmanlı Hakimiyetine Dair", *Yeni Türkiye, Rumeli-Balkanlar Özel Sayısı*, vol. III, issue 68, 2025, p. 3010.

²² Vahit Cemil Urhan, "Ayastefanos ve Berlin Antlaşmaları Sürecinde Karadağ'ın Bağımsızlığını Kazanması", *Avrasya Etüdleri*, vol. 2, issue 50, 2016, p. 237.

²³ Zafer Gölen, "1862 Karadağ Askerî Harekâtı ve Sonuçları", *Bellekten*, vol. 75, issue 273, 2011, p. 507-537; Jelena Knežević and Julian Köck, "Theodor Mommsen in Montenegro (1862)", *ACTA Histriae*, vol. 30, 2, 2022, p. 357-362.

²⁴ Uğur Özcan and Abidin Temizer, *Osmanlı'dan Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ne Karadağ'da Türk Sefirleri ve Şehbenderleri*, Bilge Kültür Sanat Yayınları, İstanbul 2015, p. 40-41; Abidin Temizer, *Osmanlı-Karadağ Sınır Anlaşmazlıkları ve Çözümü (1878-1912)*, Ondokuz Mayıs University, Unpublished Master Thesis, Samsun 2007, p. 18-22.

After Montenegro gained its independence, the subject relations with the Ottoman Empire became issues such as changes in border and the problems caused by this, immigration and nationality issues. As required by the Treaty of Berlin, Montenegro had a large geography, including the cities of Berane, Piva, Nikšić, Kolašin, Podgorica, Žabljak, Spuž, Mojkovac, Plav, and Gusinje.²⁵ However, since the predominantly Muslim Albanian population of Plav and Gusinje did not want to be included in the Montenegrin borders, they opposed this decision. They resisted the army sent by the Ottoman Empire to surrender the region to Montenegro. Claiming that the Ottoman Empire was slow in surrendering Plav and Gusinje, the Montenegrin government sent an army to the region. Faced with the people's resistance, the Montenegrin army lost about 3000 soldiers and retreated.²⁶ Fearing that these developments would lead to a new war, European states came together on April 2, 1880, to review the relevant articles of the Treaty of Berlin. Count Corti, the Italian representative in the Congress, proposed giving Hot, Gruda, and Klement, whose inhabitants were mostly Catholic Albanians, to Montenegro instead of Plav and Gusinje. This proposal was accepted since it was thought that Catholic Albanians would not object. However, a resistance similar to the one in Plav and Gusinje also occurred here. The leaders of Catholic Albanians received support from Muslim Albanians for the resistance. They decided on a common defense by taking the *Besa oath*. This defence would be shown to both Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire. After the insurgents killed the Montenegrin officials who came for the border change and the resistance grew, the Great Powers proposed giving the cities Bar and Ulcinj to Montenegro instead of Hot, Gruda, and Klement in July 1880. The whole Ulcinj consisted of Albanians. In that period, the city had a population of 10.100, with 8.400 Muslim Albanians, 1.500 Catholic Albanians, and 200 Orthodox. However, the people of Ulcinj also resisted. When the Ottoman Empire was slow to surrender Ulcinj, the Great Powers threatened to invade İzmir if the Ottoman Empire did not do what they were supposed to do. Upon these reactions, Rıza Pasha, the governor of Shkodër, was sent to Ulcinj with 6 battalions of troops. When Rıza Pasha was unsuccessful, Müşir Derviş İbrahim Pasha was sent to Ulcinj on November 4, 1880, with the ships of İstanbul and Mecidiye and a military force of 1.300 people. Müşir Derviş İbrahim Pasha besieged Ulcinj and entered the city on November 23, 1880.²⁷ With the abandonment of Ulcinj to Montenegro, 413

²⁵ *Berlin Kongresi Protokolleri Tercümesi*, Matbaa-i Amire, İstanbul hijri/1297, p. 262-263.

²⁶ Süleyman Külçe, *Osmanlı Tarihinde Arnavutluk*, Ticaret Basımevi, İzmir 1944, p. 247-261.

²⁷ Temizer, *Osmanlı-Karadağ Sınır Anlaşmazlıkları*, p. 44-58.

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families and about 3.000 Ulcinj people left the city. Most were settled in Northern Albania. Montenegrin fighter units settled in the depopulated Ulcinj around the town and on the land left by the migrated families. During 10 years, 142 Montenegrin families started to live in Ulcinj. While the Muslim population expressed loyalty to the Montenegrin state, they opposed their children's doing military service. Prince Nikola acted with tolerance to Muslims because of the need to avoid further destabilization of the region and the need for a workforce to clean Lake Zoga.²⁸ Montenegro needed a population. The people were poor. They went to neighbouring countries and even to North America to work.²⁹ Nikola succeeded to some extent in bringing back his people with his policies.³⁰

In the following years, when the commissions established to determine border lines started to work, conflicts broke out between Albanians and Montenegrins. The disputes over the sharing of fertile lands that formed the border between Albania and Montenegro continued until the Balkan Wars. While this situation caused the death of thousands of people, it also caused Montenegrins and Ottomans, who had land on both sides, to experience problems.³¹

3. Nationality Issues

3.1. Stuck Between Property and Nationality

After the battle of Grahovo, Montenegrins started to oppress Muslims. Muslim population, whose properties were confiscated, were transferred from Aşağı Kolašin to Yukarı Kolašin with the help of soldiers sent to the region by the Ottoman Empire. Soldiers were stationed in places such as Bijelo Polje to ensure their security. Fearing international pressures and the reactions of the Ottoman Empire, Prince Danilo II claimed that he did

²⁸ Zuzana Polackova and Pieter Van Duin, "Montenegro Old and New: History, Politics, Culture, and the People", *Studia Politica Slovaca*, vol. 6, no.1, 2023, p. 80-81.

²⁹ Elizabeth Roberts, *Realm of the Black Mountain, A History of Montenegro*, Hurst & Company, London 2007, p. 23-24.

³⁰ Kenneth Morrison, *Montenegro A Modern History*, I. B. Tauris. London 2009, p. 32-33; Abidin Temizer, "Karadağ'da Öteki Sorunu: Müslümanlar (1878-1913)", *History Studies*, vol. 5, issue 3, 2013, p. 226.

³¹ Temizer, *Osmanlı-Karadağ Sınır Anlaşmazlıkları*, p. 58-61.

not know what had happened and returned the confiscated properties.³² In this process, approximately a thousand Muslims lost their lives. Muslims who wanted to get rid of the attacks and looting of the Montenegrins resorted to various means. The most tragic one was forced conversion. An example of this occurred in Vasovik. Montenegrins forcibly Christianized 19 people from 20 Muslim households and changed their names in Vasovik village of Gusinje district.³³

The tension between Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire following the Grahovo War also manifested in the Herzegovina Rebellion in 1875. Prince Nikola I Petrović-Njegoš of Montenegro, who wanted to establish an independent national state, tried to take advantage of the rebellion in Herzegovina. He negotiated with the Ottoman Empire for the readmission of 160 Ottoman citizen Christians from the Nevesinje district of Herzegovina Sanjak who had taken refuge in Montenegro due to the drought in 1874 and even persuaded the Porte by intervening the Russian Ambassador of İstanbul Nikolay Pavlovich Ignatyev.³⁴ The refugees who returned to Nevesinje, however, fuelled the rebellion there. There were two reasons for Nikola I's endeavours for refugees to return to their homeland. Firstly, the refugees were an economic burden. Secondly, Nikola I, together with the Russian consul and Serbian Omladinist³⁵ agents, prepared the refugees for the rebellion and triggered the rebellion by ensuring the return of the refugees to the Ottoman Empire after the plans had been prepared.³⁶

Prince Nikola I, known as the most religiously tolerant leader in the Balkans before Montenegro's independence, supported the rebellions in Herzegovina and made moderate appeals to Muslims. During the Herzegovina Rebellion, in his call "Proclamation to the people of Herzegovina," the Prince assured Muslims of equality, justice, tolerance, and

³² Abidin Temizer, *Karadağ'ın Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapısı (1853-1913)*, Ondokuz Mayıs University, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Samsun 2013, p. 50-51.

³³ BOA, *HR.SFR.3*, 40/6, 30.

³⁴ Zafer Çakmak, "1875 Hersek İsyanı", *Fırat Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi*, vol. 8, 2003, p. 246-247.

³⁵ It is an organisation that aimed to revive the Serbian Kingdom.

³⁶ Mithat Aydın, *Balkanlar'da İsyân ve Osmanlı- İngiliz Rekabeti- Bosna-Hersek ve Bulgaristan'daki Ayaklanmalar (1875- 1876)*, Selenge Yayınları, İstanbul 2005, p. 48; Tufan Turan, "İspanya Elçilik Raporlarında 1875 Hersek İsyanı", *Belleten*, vol. 82, issue 294, 2018, p. 246.

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security of life and property.³⁷ This proclamation of Nikola I to the people of Herzegovina is shown as one of the proofs of his tolerance.³⁸ However, the Muslim population was relatively small within the borders of Montenegro during this period.

With the Treaty of Berlin, Nikola I broke loose from the influence of the liberal nationalism model based on tolerance and got under the influence of conservative German nationalism that was shaped in the mid-19th century. The Prince wanted to establish the German-type, conservative national state model. This model allowed people of different religions and sects to live together and try to form a uniform human model.³⁹ In this context, everyone who lived in the country was expected to obey the government's political, economic, cultural, and military rules. These demands drew reactions from the Muslims and Catholics living in the country.

The economic, cultural, and social problems of the Muslims who migrated from Montenegro or who stayed there after independence and the issues of Montenegrin Christians living in the Ottoman Empire constituted the main theme of relations between the Ottoman Empire and Montenegro. The Ottoman Empire followed Muslims' economic, religious, and cultural problems in the Montenegrin borders through its embassy in Cetinje, consuls in Podgorica, Bar-Ulcinj, and Mufti's Office in Montenegro. The Treaty of Berlin was the basis that brought the Ottoman Empire into dialogue with Montenegro over the problems of Muslims both in Montenegro and those who migrated from Montenegro. Articles 27 and 30 of the treaty directly concerned the beliefs and properties of people with different beliefs in the newly founded Montenegro.

Article 27 of the Treaty of Berlin stated that people of different religions and sects in Montenegro could freely worship and form their

³⁷ Uğur Özcan, *II. Abdülhamid Dönemi Osmanlı-Karadağ Siyasi İlişkileri*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, Ankara 2012, p. 361-362.

³⁸ Šerbo Rastoder, *Bošnjaci/Muslimani Crne Gore Između Prošlosti i Sadašnjosti*, Almanah, Podgorica 2010, p. 32.

³⁹ For details see: Abidin Temizer, "Nikola'nın Millî Devlet Kurma Çalışmaları ve Karadağ Müftülüğü (1878-1912)", *History Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2022, p. 609-625; Tamer Balci, "Ottoman Balkan Heritage and The Construction of Turkish National Identity", *Osmanlı Mirası Araştırmaları Dergisi (OMAD)*, vol. 1, issue 1, p. 63; M. Fatih Sansar, "Romanian Immigrant Jews Settled in Ankara Province During the Period of Sultan Abdulhamit II", *Osmanlı Mirası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, vol. 8, issue 21, 2021, p. 335.

religious communities.⁴⁰ In other words, people of different faiths and sects in Montenegro could form their communities, and they would not be prevented from communicating with their religious leaders. From this perspective, Muslims living in Montenegro were subject to Sultan Abdülhamid II, who had the title “İslamic Caliph”.⁴¹

All of the 20 Muslim households in Nikšik, 30 Muslim households in Kolašin, 20 Muslims in Bar, 8.000 Muslims in Podgorica, and 8.500 Muslims in Ulcinj who did not migrate after independence and chose to stay in Montenegro declared their allegiance to Sultan Abdülhamid II and chose their religious leaders.⁴² Therefore, Abdülhamid II was Montenegro’s direct interlocutor about the problems Muslims faced.

Implementing the Treaty of Berlin brought the Montenegrin and Ottoman authorities into further confrontation in determining the status of persons within the context of nationality and legal responsibilities. Both states considered it important to protect the people’s property rights so they could carry out their transactions without pressure. In the negotiations concerning the inhabitants who had left their homes during the independence process of Montenegro, it was decided that they could return to their village until the end of June 1886 on condition that they accepted Montenegrin nationality, while those who wanted to leave retained the right to use their property left in Montenegro. Those with goods and supplies left in their houses could also transfer these. Both Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire were to appoint an officer to follow up on the process of immigration and applications for nationality. The refugees would be informed, and soldiers would ensure their safety.⁴³

Implementation of the decisions taken was undoubtedly not easy. There were long-standing problems and property and nationality discussions. The Ottoman Empire wanted to carry out the process based on the Nationality Law, which it had implemented in 1869. This inevitably led to the

⁴⁰ *Berlin Kongresi Protokollerinin Tercümesi*, p. 261. For the formation of Muslim communities in other Balkan states see: Ayşe Zişan Furat, “Berlin Antlaşması Sonrasında Balkanlar’da Cemaat-i İslamiyelerin Teşekkülü (1878-1918)”, OTAM, vol. 33, Spring 2013, p. 64-88.

⁴¹ Zvezdan Folić, *Istorija Muslimana Crne Gore 1455 – 1918 Knjiga I*, Ivpe, Podgorica, 2013, p. 263; Temizer, “Nikola’nın Millî Devlet...”, p. 611.

⁴² BOA, *Y.PRK.EŞA.*, 4/31.

⁴³ BOA, *DH.ŞFR.*, 129/129.

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continuation of a conflict environment. The Ottomans claimed that the lands of those who left their country and declared that they had become Montenegrin subjects before the Citizenship Law came into existence, those who did their military service in Montenegro and received a rank were confiscated by court order. They had no right to use these since their lands were handed over to their new owners.⁴⁴

The Porte's decision that those who abandoned their Ottoman nationality without authorisation would lose their property rights confused the provinces. The governorate of Kosovo reported that the people who left without permission but had not been stripped of Ottoman nationality had applied to them and demanded their abandoned estate to be given to them based on the law on the Right of Expropriation of Foreigners. However, Montenegro was not a party to this law. Therefore, the demands were rejected.⁴⁵

Malisors from the region, who lived an active life between spring and winter, showed that the solution would not be easy. Some Malisors who lived in Ulcinj in winter, although from Shkodër, had accepted Montenegrin nationality. It was expected that they would want to move to their plateau in the Ottoman land with the approach of summer. However, it was a mystery how Malisors would be treated.⁴⁶ Legal Counselling Office of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs resolved the problem with its interpretation based on the Treaty of Berlin and reciprocity. According to the Legal Counselling Office of the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs, if Malisors of Montenegrin nationality resided in Ulcinj in winter and wanted to go to plateaus in summer, the place where they lived in winter would be considered as their prominent place of residence. After Ulcinj was left to Montenegro, they had the right to accept Montenegrin nationality and to graze their animals in their old pastures in the Ottoman land. However, the Ottoman Empire had the right to denaturalize and confiscate the property of those Malisors who, before the Treaty of Berlin, did not reside in Ulcinj during the winter but lived in the mountains of Shkodër and became Montenegrin subjects without permission.⁴⁷ In practice, both states followed each other cautiously and waited for the other party to take action first.⁴⁸ However, the people did not

⁴⁴ BOA, *Y.PRK.DH.*, 2/41.

⁴⁵ BOA, *DH.MKT.*, 1642/40.

⁴⁶ BOA, *DH.MKT.*, 1834/119.

⁴⁷ BOA, *HR.HMŞ.İŞO.*, 176/34; BOA, *HR.HMŞ.İŞO.*, 48/10.

⁴⁸ BOA, *DH.MKT.*, 1843/26.

have the opportunity and time to wait for the rulers' decision. Besides, during the days of cholera, the Ottomans had established a sanitary cordon on the border to prevent the spread of the disease. Despite this, neither Montenegrin nor Ottoman subjects paid attention to the restrictions. As a result, it was decided to establish a mixed commission and examine the state of the land.⁴⁹

Although the Montenegro-Ottoman Mixed Commission was established, the decision-making process was prolonged. It was forbidden for Ottoman subjects whose lands were on Montenegrin soil to cross the border until the commission made a decision. An urgent solution was needed with the approach of harvesting season. The news that the Montenegrins were harvesting the lands spread among the Ottoman subjects. The government promised the people that the treasury would compensate their losses in this case. Shkodër governorate was in constant dialogue with the landowners to ensure they did not resort to illegal means. Despite the attempts of the Ottoman embassy in Cetinje, the Montenegro government did not make any explanations. Inspector Osman Rifat Bey, one of the Ottoman Minister of War district governors, brought up the necessity of taking measures by the governments of both sides to ensure that the people harvested their crops and to negotiate with the Montenegrin government through the Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Ottoman side stated that crops being taken by the Montenegrins would bring along new problems, and it was proposed that the Ottomans harvest their lands with an official appointed by the Montenegrin government. After the negotiations, Ottomans could go to Montenegro, and Montenegrins could freely go to Ottoman land. Both states were to provide security.⁵⁰

As the process of solution regarding the use of lands took a long time, the inhabitants could easily change their nationality to solve the problem of land use. They considered agriculture the primary source of livelihood, so national and religious affiliations could be rendered in the face of the family economy. Although the rulers of both states tried to justify themselves in the interests of their countries, people focused on solving the problems as soon as possible. In this context, the cases of land and pasture that belonged to Ottomans in Karatoprak are noteworthy. The parties' representatives were heard about the lands on the two countries' border. Ottoman military authorities offered Montenegrin inspectors to solve the problem by making

⁴⁹ BOA, *HR.TO.*, 50/43.

⁵⁰ BOA, *A.MKT.MHM.*, 602/7.

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Grudans prove their claims or swear an oath, but this offer was not accepted. The Ottoman command in Shkodër argued that the Montenegrins' delay in solving the problem was based on their intention to subjugate the people of Gruda and Hod to Montenegrin rule.⁵¹

Montenegrin rulers' slow progress in solving land problems may have been influenced by the previous decisions made by the Ottoman administration on poverty. One of the decisions was a very recent decision. The decision was taken based on the inheritance of Meryem bint-i Meçovik from her husband. Meryem, originally from Ulcinj in the Montenegrin emirate, married Abdullah in Shkodër. After the death of Abdullah, Meryem renounced her Ottoman nationality, returned to Ulcinj in 1886, and died there. Meryem owned 16.5 acres of land in Shkodër. According to Ottoman laws, this land could not be transferred to her Montenegrin heirs and had to be sold at an auction. In response to the interpretation of the Shkodër Registry Official based on the law in force, the Ministry of Internal Affairs brought up a fatwa issued by the Shaykh al-Islam on the succession of Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire and Montenegro to each other. The fatwa stated that in case of the death of Muslim, Muslim heirs, even if they were foreigners, could not be deprived of the inheritance. Besides, the Montenegrin state did not impose any obstacles to the inheritance of Muslim heirs of Muslim subjects who were citizens of other countries.

The focus here is once again on the Treaty of Berlin. Serbian, Romanian, and Montenegrins who owned real estate in the Ottoman land before the Treaty of Berlin were to be treated as Ottoman subjects who had left their nationality with permission, and their real estate was not to be confiscated. However, after the Treaty of Berlin, as these three states had not yet signed the Protocol on the Appropriation of Real Estate, their citizens could not own property or be heirs to Ottoman lands. However, interfering with Maryam's heirs of Montenegrin nationality could victimise Muslims who had emigrated from Montenegro in terms of reciprocity. Since migrations were considered, the Ottoman subjects who could be victimised were expressed in *thousands*, while Montenegrin citizens were described as "*rarely*".⁵²

⁵¹ BOA, Y.MTV., 97/22.

⁵² BOA, ŞD., 2608/2. M. Fatih Sansar, II. *Abdülhamit Döneminde Osmanlı - Romanya İlişkileri*, Akademisyen Kitabevi, Ankara 2023, p. 98-102.

The case of Maryam was first discussed in the Tanzimat Department of the Council of State in the Ottoman Empire, and then it was brought to the agenda of the Council of Ministers. Noting that Muslims who lived in Ottoman territories and owned land in Montenegro would suffer greater damage, the Council of State decided that their taxes would be collected with “exceptional” treatment and that their properties would not be confiscated.⁵³

Property problems and proposals for solutions have been discussed in Montenegro since the beginning of the 1880s. Even though the Montenegrin Government initially gave the lands abandoned by the Muslims to its soldiers and Christian peasants as booty, and upon the reaction of the Ottoman Empire, a commission was established in 1881 to determine the value of the lands. This commission was established only to determine the property values of Podgorica Muslims. The Commission completed its work in 1882, determined the land price to be 50.000 liras, and decided to pay it in three installments. However, the Government of Montenegro did not pay this amount.⁵⁴ After the Muslim Muhajirs from Podgorica, another commission was established to determine the property value of Bar and Ulcinj Muhajirs. This commission also resorted to several ways to buy the Muslim Muhajirs of Bar and Ulcinj properties for less than their value. Firstly, it underpriced the lands and then gave two months to the Muhajirs, who owed tax debts to Montenegro to pay the debt. Those who did not pay were summoned to court, and the properties of those who did not come to court were confiscated. The rent payments of those who rented their land were not transferred to the Muhajirs and were confiscated by the Montenegrin Government. Similar practices occurred throughout Montenegro, especially in Pola, Podihke, and Nikšik.⁵⁵

At the end of the futile negotiations, the Ottoman Government negotiated with the Government of Montenegro and decided in 1894 with the “Quadrilateral Revenue” method. The commission, which convened in 1895 to determine the value of the lands of Berane, Gusinje, Plav, Polje, and Kolašin refugees, was to make payments with the “Quadrilateral Revenue” method. According to this system, the government of Montenegro collected

⁵³ BOA, *MV.*, 73/93.

⁵⁴ Bilal N. Şimşir, *Rumeli'den Türk Göçleri: Belgeler*, III. Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara 1989, p. 449; Michael Palaret, *Balkan Ekonomileri 1800-1914 / Kalkınmasız Evrim*, Sabancı Üniversitesi, İstanbul 2000, p. 242; Temizer, *Osmanlı-Karadağ Sınır Anlaşmazlıkları*, p. 74-84.

⁵⁵ Temizer, *Osmanlı-Karadağ Sınır Anlaşmazlıkları*, p. 84-85.

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one-fourth of the income from the products harvested from the lands and transferred it to the Ottoman Empire to be given to the land owner.⁵⁶ However, although this money was initially sent by the Government of Montenegro several times, it was not sent afterward.⁵⁷

In the early 1900s, the tense global environment was also reflected in Montenegro's relations with the Ottomans. Montenegro started to implement harsher policies regarding property. Those who migrated from Ulcinj to Ottoman lands were especially obliged to inform the Montenegrin authorities. Otherwise, they were considered deserters, and the sale of their property was prevented. In the case of Ulcinj, the change in attitude was explained because this area had been annexed to Montenegro after the Treaty of Berlin; therefore, the treaty articles could not be applied here. Although the Muslim Muhajirs claimed they had informed the authorities, the Montenegrins claimed otherwise. They could confiscate the property of those who left the country and converted to Ottoman nationality. It was a legal obligation for those who changed their nationality to dispose of their properties in Montenegro, and the refugees were advised to sell their properties voluntarily or through an agreement with their fellow countrymen. At the same time, Montenegrin authorities were causing problems for the Muhajirs when they traveled to Ulcinj to carry out the sale transactions.

In the petition sent to the Ottoman Grand Vizier on behalf of the Podgorica, Ulcinj, Nikshik, and Ispozi refugees living in Shkodër, the Muslims drew attention to Articles 27 and 30 of the Berlin Treaty, stating that they were subjected to insults and oppression. Article 27 was about freedom of religion and sect in Montenegro. Article 30 guaranteed that the land owners annexed to Montenegro, who wished to reside outside the emirate, could manage their property by giving it to *taxation* or through others. No one's property could be seized unless it was in the public interest and paid for. Muslims complained that the Montenegrin government had failed to honour the terms of the agreement. Their lands in Montenegro were partly seized and confiscated, and their crops were partly interfered with.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Zübeyde Güneş Yağcı, "Berlin Antlaşmasından Sonra Müslümanların Karadağ'da Kalan Arazileri Meselesi", *Bellekten*, vol. LXXX, issue 287, 2016, p. 189.

⁵⁷ BOA, *BEO.*, 2783/208700.

⁵⁸ BOA, *BEO.*, 2878/215794.

The Montenegrin government insisted that the relevant article of the Treaty of Berlin applied to the inhabitants of the land that had been given to Montenegro by that treaty. The Montenegrins labeled the Ulcinj refugees as deserters. They did not recognise the right of Ottoman subjects to administer their property by proxy. They were offered to sell their properties or relinquish them in return. In the face of Montenegro's attitude, the Ottoman government warned that it was in the interests of the refugees to settle their affairs as soon as possible.

In response to Montenegro's harsh and uncompromising attitude, the Ottoman Empire, under the leadership of the Committee of Union and Progress, took the Treaty of Berlin as a basis. They emphasized that they were determined to solve the problems on a legal basis.⁵⁹ They carried out property transactions on legal grounds even though they were sceptical during the Balkan Wars⁶⁰ and World War I. The nationality of Montenegrins living in Ottoman land was controlled more strictly, and they insisted on converting to Ottoman nationality.⁶¹

3.2. Changing Nationality to Evade Taxes and Benefit from Financial Aid

In this process, Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire tried to appear favourable by offering tax exemptions and financial aid to individuals and families who would prefer their nationality. Since the people were also aware of this policy of the states, they listed their demands and sought to gain more benefits. In the process, which dates back to the years when Montenegro had not yet formed as an independent state and which turned into a competition for citizens, Ottomans portrayed the acceptance of Ottomanism as "an indicator of security and peace in the region and a sign of the justice of the state".⁶²

The incentives of the Ottoman Empire were not limited to tax reductions. Those who preferred Ottoman nationality were sometimes granted exemption from military service, and some were given houses and jobs. As seen in Mihal Sadović's case, some were employed in units such as gendarmerie with the rank of lieutenant. In the face of the reactions of

⁵⁹ BOA, *HR.HMŞ.İŞO.*, 111/16.

⁶⁰ BOA, *HR.HMŞ.İŞO.*, 107/25; BOA, *DH.HMŞ.*, 30/23.

⁶¹ BOA, *HR.HMŞ.İŞO.*, 111/17.

⁶² BOA, *İ.MVL.*, 541/24280.

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Ottoman citizens in Berane and Kolašin, who found the property, livestock, and military taxes demanded by the Ottoman Empire too high, the Montenegrin government took advantage of this and invited dissatisfied Christians to Montenegrin citizenship. Likewise, those who did not want to pay taxes often fled to Montenegro. Due to increased Montenegrin citizenship, the Ottoman Empire sometimes refrained from implementing tax increases.⁶³ When it was considered to charge dividend tax to those who had lived in the Ottoman lands for a long time but continued to be citizens of Montenegro, the Council of Ministers could refrain from doing so, taking into account that Ottoman subjects in Montenegro could be treated in the same way.⁶⁴ The same applied to the public works tax collected for constructing quarters, hospitals, and roads.⁶⁵

Notably, citizens crossed the border between the two states without a passport. Some Ottoman citizens took advantage of this situation to reside in Cetinje, Podgorica, and Ulcinj while cultivating their land in Ottoman territory. The Ottoman Ambassador in Cetinje complained that although he had invited dozens of Ottoman citizens living in Montenegro to the embassy or consulates to get a certificate of nationality, only five had turned up. As the population avoided the tax burden, they did not visit the Ottoman diplomatic missions unless they had to. The Ottoman Ministry of Foreign Affairs also asked for a register of Ottoman citizens in Montenegro. Still, the ambassador stated that this could only be possible by demanding a Certificate of Nationality from Ottomans who had come to Montenegro from Kosovo and Shkodër.⁶⁶ Although the examples given above are exceptions, it was found that in the villages in the Liv Valley, Christians generally preferred Montenegrin nationality, and Muslims preferred Ottoman nationality. Therefore, the sense of religious affiliation was one of the determining factors in choosing nationality.⁶⁷

3.3. The Status of Montenegrin Workers in Ottoman Land

Another problem between the Ottoman Empire and Montenegro regarding nationality was the issue of Montenegrin workers. Primarily since the mid-19th century, the need for a workforce in the cities increased due to

⁶³ Abidin Temizer, “Karadağ’da Öteki Sorunu...”, p. 228.

⁶⁴ BOA, *BEO.*, 1286/96396.

⁶⁵ BOA, *HR.İD.*, 2079/85.

⁶⁶ BOA, *HR. İD.*, 2108/98.

⁶⁷ BOA, *Y..PRK.HR.*, 28/25.

the modernisation efforts of the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁸ For this reason, labour migration was experienced from many parts of the empire, especially from the Balkans and other countries to Istanbul and other big cities.⁶⁹ Among those who migrated for work were also Montenegrins and most of the Montenegrin citizens of the Ottoman Empire were employed as workers.⁷⁰ Montenegrin workers came from low-income families in rural areas, usually engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry. Jobs in Istanbul and other cities offered workers higher wages and better living conditions than in Montenegro. In Ottoman cities, Montenegrin workers worked in construction, mining, transport, gardening, security, and other fields.⁷¹ It was found that there were 452 Montenegrin workers in İstanbul in 1856, 241 in 1858, 442 in 1869, and 239 in 1874.⁷² Also, in 1887, 296 Montenegrin workers were employed in the Ereğli Company, which was engaged in coal mining in Ereğli⁷³ and 200 Montenegrin workers were employed in constructing the Zonguldak railway.⁷⁴

After the independence of Montenegro, some Montenegrin workers employed in Ottoman cities preferred Ottoman citizenship to avoid losing their jobs. This was influenced by the decisions taken by the Ottoman Empire regarding foreign labourers.⁷⁵ For example, the *Mining Regulation* 1887 prohibited employing foreign workers in mines.⁷⁶ Many reasons compelled the Ottoman Empire to make such decisions. One of these reasons was the deportation of 32 Montenegrin workers due to a fight between the workers,⁷⁷ as in the case of the Montenegrin workers working in the mines in Ereğli, and

⁶⁸ Donald Quataert, *Sanayi Devrimi Çağında Osmanlı İmalat Sektörü*, İletişim, İstanbul 2011; Mustafa Kurt, Baki Çakır, Kemal Demir, “Türkiye’de Modern Yönetimin Erken Dönemleri: Geç-Osmanlı Döneminde Fabrikalar, Sanayi Mektepleri ve Yabancı Uzmanlar”, *Istanbul University Journal of the School of Business*, vol. 45, 2016, p. 162.

⁶⁹ Kadir Yıldırım, *Osmanlı’da İşçiler (1870-1922), Çalışma Hayatı, Örgütler, Grevler*, İletişim, İstanbul 2013, p. 42-47.

⁷⁰ BOA, *HT.TH.*, 90/26.

⁷¹ Uğur Özcan, “Sultan Abdülhamid Dönemi Osmanlı Devleti’nde Yabancı İşçiler: Karadağlılar”, *Motif Akademi Halkbilimi Dergisi*, Balkan Özel Sayısı-II, 2012, p. 86-88.

⁷² Palaret, *Balkan Ekonomileri*, p. 174.

⁷³ Özcan, “Sultan Abdülhamid Dönemi...”, p. 90.

⁷⁴ BOA, *BEO.*, 994/74535; BOA, *DH.MUI.*, 163/67; BOA, *İ.HUS.*, 55/45.

⁷⁵ For developments in the Ottoman Empire regarding foreign labourers, see: Melike Karabacak Yılmaz, “Kafkas Bakır Kumpanyası ve Osmanlı Tebaası İşçiler”, *Osmanlı Mirası Araştırmaları Dergisi*, vol. 10, issue 27, 2023, p. 405-411.

⁷⁶ “Maadin Nizamnamesi”, *Düstur*, Birinci Tertip, 5, Başvekalet Matbaası, Ankara 1937, p. 899-900.

⁷⁷ BOA, *BEO.*, 657/49205 1895.

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as a result of the international dimension of this incident.⁷⁸ There were also many economic and political reasons, such as the difficulty of Ottoman citizens to find a job due to the employment of foreign workers by privileged companies⁷⁹ and Montenegro's declaration of war against the Ottoman Empire on October 8, 1912.⁸⁰ In the first place, Prince Nikola I of Montenegro reacted to the dismissal of Montenegrin workers. In August 1897, 200 Montenegrin workers who had quarrelled with Kurdish workers working on the construction of the railway in Zonguldak and were to be deported for this reason were saved from deportation after the intervention of the Montenegrin ambassador to Istanbul with the reaction that if the workers were deported, the Ottoman citizen workers in Montenegro would also be deported.⁸¹ Some of the Montenegrins, who did not want to lose their jobs due to these and similar reasons, converted to Ottoman nationality. Marković Emilyo, who worked in constructing the Hejaz Railway and had Montenegrin nationality, was one of the Montenegrin workers who converted to Ottoman nationality in order not to lose his job due to the developments.⁸²

Conclusion

In general, the policies of Montenegro and the Ottoman Empire in changing nationality had a negative view of dual citizenship status. Nevertheless, in order not to harm their citizens, they avoided tensions in terms of reciprocity. Those who wished to change their nationality were supported and accepted, provided they did not 'cause problems'. However, the Ottoman Government followed a stricter policy than Montenegro regarding the naturalisation of its citizens into Montenegrin nationality. The Ottomans accepted the Law on Nationality, which they put into force in 1869, and the relevant articles of the Treaty of Berlin as the primary criterion when necessary. Those who took Montenegrin nationality without permission were deprived of citizenship and expelled from their lands. The lands and houses of those denaturalised were confiscated.

The problems faced by the Muslims who stayed or migrated to Montenegro and the Montenegrin citizens in the Ottoman Empire remained

⁷⁸ Özcan, "Sultan Abdülhamid Dönemi...", p. 44-46.

⁷⁹ Yıldırım, *Osmanlı'da İşçiler*, p. 45.

⁸⁰ Abidin Temizer, "Montenegro in the First Balkan War", *Annals Series on History and Archaeology*, vol. 5, issue 1, 2013, p. 70.

⁸¹ BOA, *BEO.*, 994/74535, 1987.

⁸² BOA, *BEO.*, 994/74535; BOA, *DH.MUI.*, 163/67; BOA, *İ..HUS.*, 55/45.

on the agenda between the two countries. Within this framework, a discussion on the question of nationality emerged naturally. The most frequently encountered problems were the fate of the emigrated Muslims in Montenegro, the properties of foundations, the issue of education and military service, and the difficulties experienced by Montenegrins working as labourers in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire followed the problems of the Muslims through the embassy, consulate, and mufti offices established in Montenegro. The Ottoman Empire also tried to solve the problems of the citizens of Montenegro, who were affected by the laws enacted by the Ottoman Empire for foreigners, through the Montenegrin Embassy in Istanbul.

Moreover, although Montenegro gained its independence in 1878 and enacted its first citizenship law in 1905, it did not remain indifferent to the developments in the West in the field of citizenship. The reasons that forced the Government of Montenegro to change in this regard were international treaties and changes in the demographic and economic structure of the country. During the reign of Nikola I (1860-1918), who gave Montenegro its independence, Montenegro underwent significant political and social changes. During the reign of Nikola I, the Muslim population in Montenegro was a minority community representing a significant part of the country's population, and the Ottoman Empire was their interlocutor in this regard. Nikola I was a strong supporter of Montenegrin independence and national identity and made efforts to promote the Montenegrin language, culture, and religion. However, it should be noted that the relationship between Nikola I and the Muslim population of Montenegro was complex and full of difficulties. Nikola I's initial efforts to promote tolerance and respect for diversity at times turned into unfavourable practices for the Muslim and Catholic populations. The Muslim population of the country was subjected to discrimination in educational, economic, and cultural matters. Regarding nationality, both countries imposed some sanctions on those who converted to the other country's nationality. These problems continued until Montenegro was united with the Kingdom of Serbs-Croats and Slovenes in 1918.

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