



## Conquest of Bosnia in the Light of Ottoman Chronicles

*Osmanlı Kroniklerinin Işığında Bosna'nın Fethi*

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### Abstract

Fatih Sultan Mehmed adopted the understanding of dominance in the world which is an old Turkish tradition. Fatih Sultan's aim was to collect both Christian and Islam civilization under his hegemony so that he can establish a global empire. Following the conquest of Istanbul, Sultan Mehmed's first initiative was to build a great and rich center for his state that became an imperial force. Then, he wanted to abolish the factors which might lay a claim on Istanbul. Furthermore, his political agenda was to abandon the regional principalities system; and he wanted to conquest all principalities directly so that he can establish a central empire. The Balkan Peninsula was a region that should be under control against the western threats and at the same time it was a gate to transfer the Turkish-Islam civilization to the west. He followed the way of abolishing the principalities till Tuna so as to establish his dominance over the region; and he combined all Balkan Peninsula in one entity. The besieging of Bosnia was one of the initiatives towards this aim. In this research, conquest of Bosnia in the period of the Mehmet II (1480), will be evaluated through the works of classical Ottoman history writers such as Tursun Bey, Oruç Bey, İbn Kemal, Solak-Zade Mehmed Hemdemî Çelebi.

*Keywords:* Bosnian conquest, Fatih Sultan Mehmed, Mahmud Pasha, Aşıkpaşazade, Neşri.

### Öz

Fatih Sultan Mehmed, eski bir Türk geleneği olan cihan hakimiyeti fikri doğrultusunda Hıristiyan ve İslam dünyasını hakimiyeti altında toplamayı ve cihan devleti kurmayı amaçlamıştı. İstanbul'u fethederek devletini imparatorluk payesine çıkararak Sultan Mehmed ilk olarak burası üzerinde hak iddia edebilecek unsurları ortadan kaldırmayı ve burayı büyük, zengin bir merkez haline getirmeyi hedeflemişti. Ayrıca onun bir diğer siyaseti de Anadolu ve Rumeli'de bağlı beylikler sistemini bırakarak doğrudan ilhak suretiyle merkeziyetçi bir imparatorluk kurmaktı. Nitekim Balkan yarımadası Osmanlı Devleti'ne batıdan gelebilecek olan tehlikeler için kontrol altında tutulması gereken bir bölge aynı zamanda Türk İslam kültürünü batıya taşıyabilecekleri bir kapıydı. Bosna'nın kuşatılması da bu amaca yönelik girişimlerden biriydi. Bu çalışmada, Bosna'nın Sultan II. Mehmed döneminde fethi, Tursun Bey, Oruç Bey, İbn Kemal, Kritovulos, Neşri gibi klasik dönem Osmanlı tarih yazarlarının eserlerinin ışığında değerlendirilecektir.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Bosna'nın fethi, Fatih Sultan Mehmed, Mahmud Paşa, Aşıkpaşazade, Neşri.

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## Introduction

Fatih Sultan Mehmed adopted the understanding of dominance in the world which is an old Turkish tradition. Based on his faith, he wanted to be sword of the God, and propagated the notion that his authority in this world will be his fate.<sup>1</sup> Fatih's point of view was presented in Kemalpaşazade as "*his opinion was to rule the world*".<sup>2</sup> Fatih Sultan's aim was to collect both Christian and Islam civilization under his hegemony so that he can establish a global empire. Following the conquest of Istanbul, Sultan Mehmed's first initiative was to build a great and rich center for his state that became an imperial force. Then, he wanted to abolish the factors which might lay a claim on Istanbul. He occupied the islands in close proximity to the straits and established his dominance on the Black Sea and Mediterranean Sea along with this purpose. Furthermore, his political agenda was to abandon the regional principalities system; and he wanted to occupy all principalities directly so that he can establish a central empire.<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Reasons for the Campaign

Princdoms of Walachia, Moldova, Albanian, Serbian, Bosnia which previously acquired by the Ottomans were cooperating with the enemies of Ottomans and betraying by not paying their tribute to Ottomans when they find an opportunity such as weakness in the authority of Ottomans. This situation required them to be occupied by Ottomans. Hence, the Balkan Peninsula was a region that should be under control against the western threats and at the same time it was a gate to transfer the Turkish-Islam civilization to the west. Moreover, the Balkan soils have quite significance due to their size and fertility for Ottomans. Fatih Sultan followed a policy to continue policy of conquest which started in the periods of former sultans. Consequently, he followed the way of abolishing the principalities till Tuna so as to establish his dominance over the region; and he combined all Balkan Peninsula in one entity.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the necessity for the Bosnia occupation arose because this place will provide an important campaign route in possible Ottoman – Venetian war.<sup>5</sup> Beside the economical and strategic reasons mentioned above, there were additional reasons to acquire Bosnia Kingdom. Successful campaigns of Fatih Sultan perturbed the Christian Western states that also include Bosnia Kingdom; as a result, under the leadership Pope, they were united against the Ottoman threat. Spokesmen of the Bosnia King were to visit Rome and demand support against Turks in 1461. During this period, the biggest threat in the region against Ottomans was Hungarians. The new Bosnian king was presenting hostile attitude toward Ottomans since he was relying on Hungarians.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Halil İnalçık, "Mehmed II", *İA*, Istanbul, 1957, p. 512.

<sup>2</sup> İbn Kemal, *Tevarih-i Al-i Osman*, Vol. VII., Edited by Şerafettin Turan, 3rd Edition, Ankara, 1991, p. 186.

<sup>3</sup> İnalçık, *Ibid.*, pp. 515-516.

<sup>4</sup> İnalçık, *Ibid.*, p. 517.

<sup>5</sup> İ. Hakkı Uzunçarşılı, *Osmanlı Tarihi*, II. Vol., 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, Ankara 2006, p. 82; İnalçık, *Ibid.*, p. 522; İsmet Miroğlu, "Fetret Devrinden II. Bayezid'e Kadar Osmanlı Siyasi Tarihi", *Doğuştan Günümüze Büyük İslam Tarihi*, 10<sup>th</sup> Vol., Istanbul, 1993, p. 225.

<sup>6</sup> SelahattinTansel, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed'in Siyasi ve Askeri Faaliyetleri*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Ankara, 1999, p. 114-120; Franz Babinger, *Fatih Sultan Mehmed ve Zamani*, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition, Translated by Dost Körpe, Istanbul, 2003, pp. 195-196. Just before the Bosnian king came to the throne, the king told to Pope that "*Turkish Emperor was about to attack himself on the next year; and Turkish army and their cannons were already arranged*" at the beginning of November 1461. He demanded help from Pius the II and he stated that he did not intended to ask for to much help, he only need to propagate that the Pope was with him to his citizens and his enemy. This attempt affected the Hungarian King deeply and he joined the war next to Stjepan. Kritovulos, *Sultan Mehmed Han-ı Sani*, Translated by Muzaffer Gökman, Istanbul, 1967, pp. 214-215.

Since town of Semendire was seized in the exchange of Bosnia Kingdom's accumulated debts, the Bosnian King was using all his means to betray Ottomans.<sup>7</sup> According to the information revealed by Neşri, the Bosnian king had fight against the commander Mihaloğlu Ali Bey and cause several uprisings.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, since he was married with the daughter of Semendire seigneur, he was claiming his rights over Semendire.<sup>9</sup> Bosnian King Stefan Tomaşeviç refused to pay fifty thousand duka gold tributes which were previously paid by his father to Ottomans.<sup>10</sup> Aşık Paşazade narrated that "upon the seizure of Semendire, Bosnian king refused to pay his tribute to the Fatih Sultan's envoy. He arrested the envoy and even intended to kill him. Following the warnings of his vizier about what sorts of consequences might have arisen, he released the envoy. When the envoy returned to Istanbul, he explained what he had experienced in Bosnia. Then, Sultan Mehmed's reaction was so harsh that he marched toward Bosnia for purpose of conquest".<sup>11</sup> Since Neşri uses Aşık Paşazade as a main reference source, he presented this information in the same way.<sup>12</sup> Kemalpaşazade said that Bosnian king showed his revolt by refusing to pay his tribute. However, after a while he understood his mistake and released him even after conciliating him.<sup>13</sup> According to Kritovulos, Bosnian king relied on the agreement that he made with Hungarians thus he ignored the peace offerings from Ottomans and refused to pay annual tribute like Serbians and Albanians.<sup>14</sup> Another reason for the campaign was the unrest of the society because of the pressure of Bosnian king to convert them into catholic sect. the society, even elites demanding for the Turkish rule.<sup>15</sup> Tursun Bey stated that rich gold and silver mines in the region were other reason for the campaign; and the Sultan Mehmed set off for the campaign to invite the people to Islam and bring peace to the region.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, Bosnian king's ignorant attitude toward the order of Sultan Mehmed and scaring the envoy with the death and presenting revolt against the Ottomans caused frustration in the Ottoman capital and he planned a military expedition toward Bosnia. This situation illustrated with the words of narrator as "*Horses of the warriors entered into Bosnia at full speed*".<sup>17</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Aşık Paşazade, *Osmanoğullarının Tarihi*, Edited by Kemal Yavuz - M. A." Yekta Saraç, Istanbul, 2003, p. 151; Hoca Saadettin, *Tacü't-Tevarih*, Vol. 3, Simplified by İsmet Parmaksızoğlu, Istanbul 1979, p. 70.

<sup>8</sup> Mehmed Neşri, *Kitab-ı Cihannüma Neşri Tarihi II*. Vol., Published by F. Reşit Unat-M. Altay Köymen, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, Ankara, 1995, p. 761.

<sup>9</sup> *Tursun Bey, Tarih-i Ebü'l-Feth*, Edited by A. Mertol Tulum, Istanbul, 1977, p. 122.

<sup>10</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Ibid.*, p. 81; İnalçık, *Ibid.*, p. 522, Finally, Sultan Mehmed received information about the agreement between Bosnia and Hungary Kings through his spies and Bogomil elites. He decided to know that whether this is true or not by himself. Then, he sent an envoy to the Bosnian King in Yayça to ask for a tribute in the same amount that the king's father had paid. Babinger, *Ibid.*, p. 197; J. Von Hammer, *Büyük Osmanlı Tarihi*, III Vol, Edited by Mümin Çevik- Erol Kılıç, Üçdal Neşriyat, İstanbul, 1992, p. 73.

<sup>11</sup> Aşık Paşazade, *Ibid.*, p. 516.

<sup>12</sup> It was narrated that upon the seizure of Semendire, the Sultan Mehmed sent a man to convey message of "pay your tribute, or else get ready for war. I am fed up" ... *Sultan Mehmed sent an envoy, envoy reached the king and showed the rule of the Sultan to the King. When King read the letter, after he understands what is written in it; he said that: "hold this Turk and kill him right away". There was a vizier with wisdom next to him. The vizier said that: "Oh, my lord, what are you doing? You devastate yourself with your own hands, you brake down your own house, now you kill this Turk, then will you be able to compete with the Sultan of this Turk?* Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 761.

<sup>13</sup> İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 224.

<sup>14</sup> Kritovulos, *Ibid.*, pp. 214-215.

<sup>15</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 122; *Anonim Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân* (Kuruluştan 892/1487'ye kadar), Edited by Cihan Çimen, Istanbul, 2006, p. 127; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>16</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>17</sup> Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 70.

## 2. The Conquest of Bosnia

During the winter, Ottomans organized for the Bosnia campaign and when the spring came they set off the way to Bosnia under the direct order of Sultan Fatih as hundred and fifty thousand-soldier army on May of 1463.<sup>18</sup> First, army marched toward Skopje for camping; then reached toward Vulçetrin through Karadonlu.<sup>19</sup> In the meantime, while Sultan Mehmed established his quarters at Travnik; the dispatcher sent by the Ali Bey, Mihal's son brought the news that the king burned down the town of Ağaçhisarı. A captive was questioned to find out where the king was. It was found that he was in town of Yayça. In addition, since the intelligence was received about the defensive plan of the king, Sultan Mehmed sent the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha on the command of 20 thousand light cavalry before himself.<sup>20</sup> Mahmud Pasha first captured town of Boboca on the Bosnia border.<sup>21</sup> Babinger expressed this invasion in his book as “on the second day of siege, Fatih came and cast cannons; the castle surrendered at the end of three days”.<sup>22</sup> Then, Mahmud Pasha captured town of Visoka and expelled the settlers toward Istanbul. He assigned several castle military deputies for the conquered castles and get the castle walls fixed.<sup>23</sup>

Bosnian king was counting on the defensive strength of Boboca and he was collecting soldier in Yayça for his army; and he was waiting for the help expected from west. Following the news about the fall of Boboca, the king Stefan Tomašević took his family and all treasure with him and retreated to take shelter in the castle of Sokol. When Mahmud Pasha reached the Dirbava River in Yayça, he learnt that the king went to the castle of Sokol. Pasha right away started to siege the castle of Sokol during which the army experienced some difficulties. However, the king Tomašević retreated to the castle of Kılıç located in western territory. By changing his position, the king took quite a bit defensive precautions such as he destroys the only bridge over the river that is hard to cross over located on the way from castle of Sokol to Kılıç. Soldiers under the command of Mahmud Pasha thought that it is not wise to follow the king along with this unknown road without a guide and started to be packed up for return to Yayça. Because they consider Yayça as a safe place for military camp.<sup>24</sup>

Mahmud Pasha did not consent with this return idea and he entered this dangerous gate; and his soldiers followed him. Since the bridge was destroyed by the king, soldiers passed the river by swimming. Tırhala border commander Turahanoğlu Ömer Bey was sent for intelligence before. In the meantime, Bosnian king was feeling safe since he thinks that Sultan Mehmed was far away; and he was considering that it was not possible to pass the gate. Since the king did not find it possible to pass the mountain gate, he thought that the Turkish soldiers walking toward the castle were raiders, thus he sent his troops to battle them. After this battle, the Ottoman soldiers defeated their enemy.<sup>25</sup>

Based on the information provided by Tursun bey, Turahanoğlu Ömer Bey and his soldiers defeated the soldier before Mahmud Pasha came; and after his arrival they besieged the castle.<sup>26</sup> On

<sup>18</sup> Babinger, *Ibid.*, p. 196; İ. Hami Danişmend, *İzahlı Osmanlı Tarihi Kronolojisi*, Vol. I, Istanbul, 1971, p. 300; Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 122; *Anonim Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 127; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>19</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 763; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 70.

<sup>20</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 763; İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 222; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>21</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 763; İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 225; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 71. Published under the nick name Lofça *Anonim Tevarih*, p. 105.

<sup>22</sup> Babinger, *Ibid.*, pp. 199-200.

<sup>23</sup> İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 226; Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, pp. 123-126; Neşri, Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 122; *Anonim Tevârih-i Âl-i Osmân*, p. 127; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 763.

<sup>24</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 126; İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 222; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 71.

<sup>25</sup> İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 229; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 72; Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

<sup>26</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 127.

the other hand, according to Hoca Saadettin, while Turahanoğlu Ömer Bey and his soldiers were fighting against the enemy, Mahmud Pasha had arrived and saw that Ottoman soldiers were besieged by the enemy. Then, Pasha sent his troops over the enemy and they defeated the enemy.<sup>27</sup> Soldier who were managed to escape from the arcade took shelter in the castle; and Ottomans kept the castle under siege. The city was burned down and the castle was captured in a short time by the support of the Mahmud Pasha. Bosnian king surrendered and promised to hand over all of his castles and treasures to save his life.<sup>28</sup>

Aşık Paşazade and Neşri explained the situation in this way: “Mahmud Pasha besieged the castle and sent a spokesman to the king; then as a result of the negotiations made with the king’s delegate, king was asked for his surrender. Since King was already trapped in the castle, and he had nothing to do, he asked for the forgiveness of Sultan Mehmed. Then, upon the Mahmud Pasha’s acceptance of the king’s terms and he took over the control of the castle and promised the king that he will be pardoned”.<sup>29</sup> Kritovulos stated that Bosnians were in danger since they know that if Pasha captures Yayça through a battle, they would be destroyed therefore they sent a spokesman declaring that they want to surrender. Then, King understood the Bosnian’s this attempt and run away. Eventually, Ottoman soldiers captured him after a chase.<sup>30</sup> In the meantime, Mahmud Pasha found out that younger brother of the king was in the castle of İzveçay. After the siege of the castle, residents of the castle realized that it was not possible to resist the enemy; finally, they surrendered and handed over the brother of the king.<sup>31</sup> According to Hammer, when castle of Kiluç was besieged, king was to sign the surrender accord with Mahmud Pasha; in the meantime, was separated into three points of views. The king was brought to the presence of the Sultan Mehmed with his nephew.<sup>32</sup>

While these incidents were happening, Sultan Mehmed was keeping castle of Yayça under his blockade. Mahmud Pasha came to the Sultan Mehmed while he was in Yayça. Upon exhibiting the Bosnian king and his nephew under the capture, leaders of Yayça delivered the castle and the city to the Sultan Mehmed.<sup>33</sup> When Mahmud Pasha met with Sultan Mehmed in Yayça, Sultan Mehmed was angry at Pasha because he resolved the battle through an agreement and forgave the king and took him to Sultan Mehmed while he was in the winner position in the battle. Hence, the target of the Sultan Mehmed was to abolish the king and occupy Bosnia.

Aşıkpaşazade explained this incident as following:

*“Mahmud, you agreement with the king was not pleasant. Sultan’s heart was broken for this act. Hence, Sultan’s wish was that he wanted to conquer all of the castles by himself. Now that upon giving some castle back to the king may cause corruption. And even raiders went to battle. The Sultan asked who did order? “Mahmud! This region can be conquered by brute force. Why did you send raiders who destroy this city”? The Sultan’s anger toward Mahmud was because of this reason.”*<sup>34</sup>

Mahmud Pasha’s pardon for the king and thus giving hard time to the Sultan Mehmed was criticized seriously by Hoca Saadettin.<sup>35</sup> In one tale, according to Aşıkpaşazade, Neşri and

<sup>27</sup> Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>28</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, pp. 127-128; İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 231; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 72

<sup>29</sup> Aşık Paşazade, *Ibid.*, p. 516; Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 765.

<sup>30</sup> Kritovulos, *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>31</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 122; Aşık Paşazade, *Ibid.*, p. 516; İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>32</sup> Hammer, *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>33</sup> İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 232, Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 765; Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>34</sup> Aşık Paşazade, *Ibid.*, p. 516.

<sup>35</sup> Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 74.



Kemalpashazade, the reason for the anger of the Sultan toward Mahmud Pasha was because of this pardon.<sup>36</sup> Tursun Bey did not give any information about this issue. When we investigate the reasons for this conquest, we see that Bosnian king cooperated with the enemies of Ottoman Empire who prevent its conquest policy; and he did not to pay tribute and attempted to kill the Ottoman envoy, upon his vizier's warning he changed his mind. Leaving such a king who had used every chance of betrayal against Ottomans alive and even giving him some castles in Bosnia means that a great waste and economic burden for Sultan Mehmed after such a huge spending for army and effort. Therefore, Sultan Mehmed searched for a legal base for the execution of Bosnian king. Thus, he asked the Sheikh Ali Bistami who were in the Ottoman army whether to execute the king is acceptable or not? Sheikh Ali Bistami not only gave the fatwa, he also said that the execution is a holy war. The initial action made by him. Together with the king, leaders of Kovaç and Pavli cities were also executed.<sup>37</sup>

According to Aşık Paşazade: *“Even the Sultan present his issue to ulama whether their blood and belongings are halal or not? Even in this campaign, there was a scholar with wisdom; he was being called as Mevlana Sheikh Ali-yi Bestamî. This person said that: “I am from the descendents of Sultan Bayezîd-i Bestamî.” And my nick name is Musannifek, he gave a fatwa that: “It is a sacred war to execute such profanes.” Also, he swung the sword to the king first himself; and they killed the king and also those two profanes were killed in the servants' room.”*<sup>38</sup>

Babinger reported additionally that king's young brother Ban Radijov and his young son were executed.<sup>39</sup> Following these incidents, Mahmud pasha was sent to Herzegovina and king of Herzegovina fled the area.<sup>40</sup> But then, he sent his son to present several bounties to the Sultan to gain his forgiveness; and he succeeded. Sultan Mehmed left some of the Herzegovina soils to the king and he adds the remainings to Ottoman territory.<sup>41</sup> Oruç Bey did not report much information about the conquest of Bosnia. He presented following brief information: Sultan Mehmed and his companions Anadolu Rumeli soldiers went to Bosnia. He captured the castle of Yayça and killed the king. He conquered Herzegovina and Kovaç. When the winter season came, Hungarians came and captured the castle of Yayça. Then, Sultan Mehmed found the soldiers of castle who betrayed to himself; and executed them all in Edirne.<sup>42</sup>

Kritovulos reported that the Sultan had captured more than 300 castles in this area. According to Hammer, following the conquest of Bosnia, three minor princes of Bosnia came to report to grand vizier.<sup>43</sup> After conquering Bosnia wholly, Sultan Mehmed assigned Minnetoğlu Mehmed Bey in charge of here and claimed this country as a border state.<sup>44</sup> Sultan assigned several *Kadis* to Bosnia; *Emin* officers were put in charge over the mines and salinas. Community of the area were subject to

<sup>36</sup> Aşık Paşazade, *Ibid.*, p. 517; Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 765; İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 232.

<sup>37</sup> Aşık Paşazade, *Ibid.*, p. 518; Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 767; İbn Kemal, *Ibid.*, p. 233; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 74.

<sup>38</sup> Aşık Paşazade, *Ibid.*, p. 518.

<sup>39</sup> Babinger, *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>40</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 128.

<sup>41</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 765.

<sup>42</sup> Oruç Bey, *Osmanlı Tarihi, (1288-1502); Uç Beyliğinden Dünya Devletine*, Simplified by Necdet Öztürk, İstanbul, 2009, p. 98.

<sup>43</sup> Hammer, *Ibid.*, p. 73.

<sup>44</sup> According to Aşık Paşazade (p.518), Within all of these castles, the Sultan left his subjects. According to Neşri (p. 767), it was narrated that Sultan Hüdavendigâr left the Bosnia to his Minnet son and leave some of his man in Yayça.

pay *Cizye* tax. Then, Sultan Mehmed presented several bounties and gifts to his commanders and soldiers and returned to Istanbul.<sup>45</sup>

### 3. The Second Campaign for Bosnia

After the return of the Ottoman forces from the Bosnia campaign, Venetians and Hungarians established an alliance against Ottomans. Later, king of Albania participated to this alliance and they finally attacked Ottoman territory from two different fronts. While Venetians attacked Mora, Hungarians marched over Bosnia. Hungarian king Matthias Corvinus invaded in Bosnia in the winter of 1463;<sup>46</sup> and convincing the community by threatening, he received their assistance, commander of the castle of Yayçe and guards handed the castle over to the Hungarian king without any warfare.<sup>47</sup>

Tursun Bey explains this development as following: “... *Commander and guards of the castle of Yayçe betrayed, they left what is given to their security, and dare to do this ignominy; they gave this great castle to the Hungarians with no warfare...*”<sup>48</sup> Babinger who made different conclusion from the Turkish references explains the incident in this way: the castle of Yayçe was being defended by the garrison consisting of 430 soldiers and there was Harambaşı İlyas Bey on charge. Although the cold weather made it harder to defend the castle, they resist three months against the siege. Due to the hunger caused by the lack of sufficient supplies, when the garrison was not able to continue to defend the castle, they had to surrender on 16<sup>th</sup> December 1463.<sup>49</sup>

Mihailoviç said that “*After the Sultan left the country, king Matyas came to Bosnia in a hurry. He besieged the castle of Yayça and Zveçay where I was residing.*”<sup>50</sup> *Turks and their subjects Bosnians started to resistance in everywhere the Turk flag was still flying. Following the offence of Hungarians Turks fled to the castle. King Matyas besieged them for eight weeks. He sent the second army with heavy weapons to Zveçay; and we continue to resist till the fall of Yayça. Since Matyas take over the castle by an agreement, he joined to the forces besieging the castle of Zveçay, and then we had to surrender.*”<sup>51</sup> Hungarian king fortified the castles in Yayça and returned to his country.<sup>52</sup>

Meanwhile, since Venetians assaulted to Lesbos, Sultan Mehmed sent Mahmud Pasha to there. Mahmud Pasha reached to Lesbos on time to help and defeated the enemy. Then, he came to Edirne join the Sultan Mehmed’s forces. Since Bosnia had crucial importance for Ottomans, Sultan Mehmed’s desire was to prevent occupation of Hungarian king. Along with this point of view, he campaigned toward Bosnia for the second time in the spring of 1464.<sup>53</sup> However, this time his duty will not come to an end with punishing the castles uprising; Ottoman army will march till the Hungarian territory. Babinger and Hammer reports that the army of Sultan Mehmed consisted of 30

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<sup>45</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 128. Please look the agreement that is given to the Bosnia church after the conquest by the Fatih Sultan Mehmed to save them and their assets beside their religious freedom. Osmanlı Arşiv Belgelerinde Avrasya (Eurasia in the Ottoman Achieve Documents), Edited by Ahmet Zeki İzgöer, Türk Dünyası Belediyeler Birliği, İstanbul, 2008. pp. 87-88.

<sup>46</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 130.

<sup>47</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 767; Kritovulos *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>48</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 133.

<sup>49</sup> Babinger, *Ibid.*, p. 206.

<sup>50</sup> After the Bosnia campaign, Sultan Mehmet left Mihailoviç to the castle of Zveçay as a guard. Upon the capture of the castle by the Hungarian king, he returned to his country; Konstantin Mihailoviç, *Bir Yeniçerinin Hatıratı*, Translated and Edited by Kemal Beydilli, İstanbul, 2003, p. 86-87.

<sup>51</sup> Mihailoviç, *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

<sup>52</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 767; Kritovulos, *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>53</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, 131; Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 769; Kritovulos, *Ibid.*, p. 229; Hoca Saadetin, *Ibid.*, p. 87.

thousand soldiers and it was equipped with all type besieging tools.<sup>54</sup> Then they define the incident as following: The Sultan besieged the castle of Yayça; cannons were cast; trench holes were dug; and tunnels under the castle walls were dug. Although, one side of the castle was torn down, the defenders of the castle resisted strongly.

While the siege was continuing, the rumors that the Hungarian King was approaching to Yayça were spread among the army. Aim of the king was to save the Yayça castle from the siege or to separate the Ottoman Army into two sects: one for siege and another one for attack so as to weaken Ottomans. Before the arrival of the Hungarian king, Sultan Mehmed gave an assault one more time, but he was failed to capture the castle. Neşri reported the situation as “*Because God did not want him to capture the castle, the Sultan returned to Skopje again.*”<sup>55</sup> Sultan Mehmed assigned Minnetoğlu Mehmed Bey for the siege of Yayça castle. He wanted to besiege the castle for a long time to capture.

The castle of İzvornik was being defended by Mihaloğlu İskender Bey. Since the Sultan knows that the Hungarian king was going to siege İzvornik, he fortified the defense of Mihaloğlu Ali Bey with five hundred cavalries. As expected, the Hungarian king besieged the İzvornik. The Sultan continued to siege Yayça and marched over the king instead of only going for the Hungarian king. Since the Sultan knows that the Yayça castle would not resist such a large army, he sent the grand vizier Mahmud Pasha toward the castle.<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, he settled in Sofia to pass the winter season. However, steep land and harsh winter conditions were preventing Mahmud Pasha to reach the castle. Moreover, the king cooperated with the local community and took them on his side; he settled cannons on major places; and hold the main gates. Under these circumstances, Mahmud Pasha managed to reach to a place with three-day-long distance to the castle after great effort.

Here, he assessed their current condition by consulting his commanders who were familiar with the area. Commanders did not find it appropriate to pass the soldiers from the region passages; and they emphasized that if they follow the way to Serebrenitza, their destination point will be far from the castle and eventually the enemy would give enormous harm to them.<sup>57</sup> Mahmud Pasha did not agree with the commanders’ opinion. He found a local Christian who is familiar with the area to hire him to carry a message to the people in the castle in the exchange of money and benefice; and he did whatever told.<sup>58</sup> Insurgents in the castle were so delighted upon this news and some of the besiegers heard about this situation. When the news reached the Hungarian king, he got spooked, thus he sent runners around to confirm the news.

According to Neşri and Hoca Saadettin, Mahmud Pasha sent Mihaloğlu Ali Bey together with raiders upfront. When Hungarians saw the raiders, they thought that Mahmud Pasha arrived and they were terrified.<sup>59</sup> When the king thought that Turks were coming for him, he did not succeed on his last insult. Upon realizing that Ottoman forces are coming closer, they gathered all of their equipments and retreated without taking their injured soldiers. Mahmud Pasha followed the Hungarians till Sava; and he captured many prisoners and guns.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Babinger, *Ibid.*, s. 207; Hammer, *Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>55</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 769; Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 131; Kritovulos, *Ibid.*, pp. 231-232.

<sup>56</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, pp. 130-131; Neşri, *Ibid.*, pp. 769; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>57</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, pp. 136-139; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>58</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 771; Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 136-139; Kritovulos, *Ibid.*, p. 232; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 89.

<sup>59</sup> Neşri, *Ibid.*, p. 771; Hoca Saadettin, *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>60</sup> Tursun Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 136; Kritovulos, *Ibid.*, p. 232.



With reference of Oruç Bey, “*Sultan Mehmed again reached to Bosnia in hijri 869 (1464/65). He went to castle of Yayça but failed to capture. He returned from Hungarian territory to Bosnia, Herzegovina and Kovaç areas and conquered there all. Then, he came back to Istanbul.*”<sup>61</sup>

### **Conclusion**

During the Fatih Sultan period, Bosnia was among the countries that was paying tribute to Ottoman Empire. Upon the Fatih’s conquest of Serbian soils, Ottoman borders reached to Bosnia which has great importance for Sultan Mehmed who wanted to see all of the European soils under the Tuna river within his territory. Because, it was inevitable to acquire the Bosnia to be able to threaten the strong naval Venetian Republic. To this end, Sultan Mehmed himself commanded the campaign arranged in 1463. The king of Bosnia first retreated to castle of Yayça for the defense; and later on since he was not able to hold the castle he retreated to the castle of Klyuç. After the fall of castles, he had to surrender; and eventually he was executed. After the return of the army to Istanbul, in the same year, Hungarian king entered into Bosnia. In this second campaign, Ottomans again captured all of castles and cities except Yayçe. In the end, although the castle of Yayça was not taken back from the Hungarians, many castles in the neighbourhood which was captured by the Hungarians were captured back again. Several castles were destroyed and other useful ones fortified with soldiers. Thus, extensive Hungarian occupation in Bosnia was prevented.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Oruç Bey, *Ibid.*, p. 99.

<sup>62</sup> Uzunçarşılı, *Ibid.*, p. 84.

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