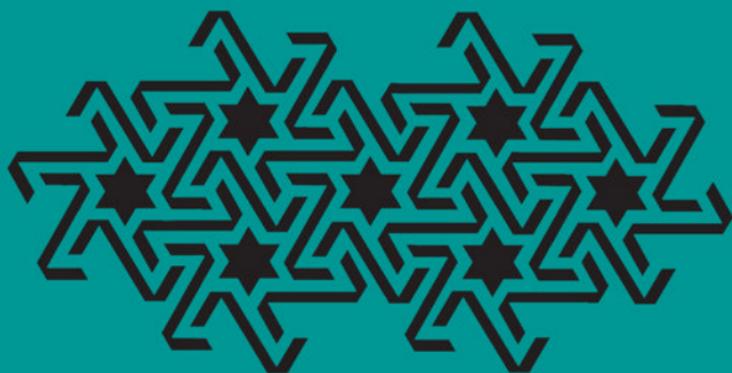


Living in the Ottoman Ecumenical Community

ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF SURAIYA FAROQHI



EDITED BY

VERA COSTANTINI AND MARKUS KOLLER

BRILL

Living in the Ottoman
Ecumenical Community

The Ottoman Empire and its Heritage

Politics, Society and Economy

Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

OTTOMAN ECUMENICAL COMMUNITIES—AN APPROACH TO OTTOMAN HISTORY

Ottoman political history was the first topic to interest in Christian Europe and within the borders of the Ottoman Empire since the seventeenth century. Authors such as Paul Rychart, Mouradgea d'Ohsson or Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall were primarily interested in the military and administrative structures, which seemed to have been so different from those known in Western Europe. But they contextualized Ottoman history by referring to military matters which gave produced the idea of a state in decline after the sixteenth century. This sentiment was shared by writers such as Demetrius Cantemir, who spent long periods of time in the Ottoman Empire where chroniclers and political authors expressed the same view.¹ The paradigm of decline has become subject to criticism only in the last few decades.² However, the rejection of the “rise and fall pattern” required a new framework for writing Ottoman history. Suraiya Faroqhi proposed a concept that did more justice to the economic, political and military developments than the “paradigm of decline” did. She divided up Ottoman history into a “stage of foundation” (until 1453) followed by “expansion” (1453–1575), “crisis and stabilizations” (1575–1768), “new crisis” (1768–ca. 1830) and “contraction” (1830–1918).³ This structure reflected a transformation in Ottoman studies where social, cultural and provincial history restrained political

¹ V. Aksan, *Ottoman Political Writing, 1768–1808*, in “*International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*”, 25/1 (1993), pp. 53–69; C. Kafadar, *Les troubles monétaires de la fin du XVI^e s. et la conscience ottomane du déclin*, in “*Annales. Economies, Sociétés, Civilisations*”, 43 (1991), pp. 381–400.

² Ch. K. Neumann, *Political and diplomatic developments*, in S. Faroqhi (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Turkey* Vol. 3: *The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839*, Cambridge 2006, pp. 44–62, p. 44.

³ S. Faroqhi, *Formen historischen Verständnisses in der Türkei. Politische und wirtschaftliche Krisen in der “Frühen Neuzeit”*, in R. Dürr; G. Engel; J. Süßmann (eds.), *Eigene und fremde Fühe Neuzeiten. Genese und Geltung eines Epochenbegriffs*, Munich 2003 (= *Historische Zeitschrift*, Beiheft 35), pp. 107–122, pp. 117–122.

history.⁴ New topics became the focus of attention and required multi-perspective approaches to Ottoman history.

*The Ottoman Empire—From an “Object of History” to a
“Subject of History”*

Until the twentieth century the majority of studies on Ottoman history had treated the sultan's empire only as a political unit and regarded it as an “object of history”. This idea had its origin in the Eurocentric worldview of the nineteenth century when the Ottoman Empire was seen as a state belonging to the Middle East rather than to Europe. Consequently the overwhelming number of West European authors who wrote studies on European history left Ottoman history aside.⁵ However, Suraiya Faroqhi has shown convincingly in her monograph *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It* that there was no “iron curtain” between the Ottoman and “other” worlds. She emphasised the idea that in the early modern period the reality was “one world” characterized by manifold contacts between cultured and pragmatic elites as well as pilgrimage and close artistic contact with the European Renaissance. Her book is based on diplomatic records, travel and geographical writing as well as personal accounts.⁶

When Beshara Doumani used court records (*sicil*)⁷ for her study on Palestine, she distinguished between two kinds of documents included in the *sicils*. Orders from the central- and provincial administration reflect the view of the government and treat the people as “objects”. In contrast to this group of historical sources human beings appear as “subjects” in probate inventories, cases of dispute or complains.⁸ The latter texts are Ego-documents,⁹ used extensively by Suraiya Faroqhi in her book *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around It*. By basing the study mainly on this corpus of source material she made a valuable contribu-

⁴ Neumann, *Political and diplomatic developments*... cit., p. 45.

⁵ Among many other examples see G. A. Craig, *Europe since 1815*, New York 1974.

⁶ S. Faroqhi, *The Ottoman Empire and the World Around it*, London 2004.

⁷ “Sidjill” (S. Faroqhi ed.), in *EI*² Vol IX., pp. 538–545.

⁸ B. Doumani, *Rediscovering Palestine: Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700–1900*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1995, p. 9

⁹ W. Schulze, *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte? Vorüberlegungen für die Tagung “Ego-Dokumente”*, in idem. (ed.), *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte*, Berlin 1996, pp. 11–30 (= Selbstzeugnisse der Neuzeit; Vol. 2).

tion to the transformation of the Ottoman Empire from an “object of history” into a “subject of history”. This approach makes it necessary to write Ottoman history “from the bottom” by giving a voice to people who stayed for a certain period of time or always lived in the Ottoman Empire. Studies on culture, daily life¹⁰ or the world-view of people¹¹ living in different parts of the empire demonstrate that the treatment of the Ottoman Empire primarily as a political unit limits our understanding of its heterogeneous character in terms of politics and culture, as well as social and religious life. By way of example some religious communities had their political and spiritual centres outside the Ottoman borders¹² and Ottoman merchants built up networks crossing political boundaries.¹³ This raises the question of the role borders played in the “one world” described by Suraiya Faroqhi.

The Ottoman Ecumenical community—Borders in a Common World

The Ottomans used different terms for frontier. *Hudud* or *sınır* designated the demarcated or recognised boundary and *uç* meant the frontier zone, which, according to Islamic law, separated the “House of War” (*dar ül-harb*) from the “House of Islam” (*dar ül-Islam*).¹⁴ Classical Muslim legal theory stressed a permanent state of war between both “houses” which could be interrupted by the Muslim ruler. His duty was to push forward the borders of the *dar ül-Islam* into the territories of the infidels, but he could agree with a temporary peace treaty.

In the historiography there is an ongoing discussion about the character of *hudud/sınır*, which was sparked by the question of whether the Ottomans had accepted the idea of a demarcated borderline. Rifa’at Abou-el-Haj regards the peace treaty of Sremski Karlovci (1699) as

¹⁰ For an overview see S. Faroqhi, *Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich. Vom Mittelalter bis zum Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts*, Munich 1995.

¹¹ For medieval Europe see A. J. Gurjewitsch, *Das Weltbild des mittelalterlichen Menschen*, Munich 1997.

¹² A. Molnár, *Le sait-siège, Raguse et les missions catholiques de la Hongrie ottomane 1572–1647*, Rome, Budapest 2007.

¹³ K. Kévonian, *Marchands arméniens au XVII^e s., à propos d’un livre arménien publié à Amsterdam en 1699*, in “*Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique*”, 16/2 (1975), pp. 199–244.

¹⁴ M. P. Pedani, *Dalla frontiera al confine*. Venice 2002; C. Heywood, *The Frontier in Ottoman History: Old Ideas and New Myths*, in D. Power; N. Standen (eds.), *Frontiers in Question. Eurasian Borderlands, 700–1700*, New York 1999, pp. 228–250, p. 235.

the very first agreement in Ottoman history forcing the government in Istanbul to consent to such a policy.¹⁵ However, other historians reject this concept and refer to the numerous *smirnames* that had already been conducted since the fifteenth century.¹⁶ In these documents the borders between the Ottoman Empire and its neighbouring states were fixed in writing. But this debate must be integrated into discussions about developments occurring in the other parts of the “one world”. In his study of the Cerdanya, Peter Sahlin denies the idea that after the peace treaty between France and Spain (1659) a fixed borderline crossed this area. Quite the contrary, clerical and secular elites continued to exercise jurisdiction and power over the population in the border areas without respecting the political border.¹⁷ A similar phenomenon was the frontier zone between the Ottoman Empire and the Habsburg Monarchy. After the conquest of Hungarian territories by the Ottoman armies in the sixteenth century, the majority of the local aristocracy left the new Ottoman province for Habsburg territories. But they continued to try collecting taxes from the peasants living on their former country estates and insisted on their judicial rights over them. But the Ottomans seemed to have had the same attitude towards the political border and collected taxes from villages situated on the Habsburg side.¹⁸

It is to be assumed that in Early Modern Europe there was a concept of borders, which influenced border societies in Western Europe as well as in the Ottoman Empire. Jeremy Black argues that there was a traditional concept of sovereignty based on the extension of jurisdiction rather than of direct rule over territories.¹⁹ But this attitude changed in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when the emerging territorial states began to regard the frontier as the most remote periphery of the country, which had to be defended by force of arms.²⁰ They erected a large number of fortresses to protect their countries and tried to “close”

¹⁵ R. Abou-el-Haj, *The formal closure of the Ottoman frontier in Europe: 1699–1703*, in “*Journal of Asian and Oriental Studies*”, LXXXIX (1969), pp. 467–475.

¹⁶ D. Kołodziejczyk, *Ottoman-Polish Diplomatic Relations (15th–18th Century)*. An Annotated Edition of *Ahdnames and Other Documents*, Leiden 1999, pp. 57–67.

¹⁷ P. Sahlin, *Boundaries. The Making of France and Spain in the Pyrenees*, Berkeley 1989.

¹⁸ F. Szakály, *Magyar adóztatás a török hódoltságban*, Budapest 1981.

¹⁹ J. Black, *Maps and Politics*, Chicago 1997.

²⁰ A. Franke, *Franzosen, Spanier oder Katalanen? Die Pyrenäengrenze in der Frühen Neuzeit: Die Ausbildung nationaler Identitäten in einer Grenzregion*, in W. Schmale; R. Stauber (eds.), *Menschen und Grenzen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin 1998, pp. 187–208.

their frontiers. In this context the peace treaty of 1699 integrated the Ottoman Empire into this policy, which became dominant in the “one world”.

In Early Modern Western Europe this change in the political understanding of frontiers could have been caused by new ideas of possession and property. Ownership became the basic right of each individual to be upheld by the state and consequently the state included this idea in its concept of state integrity. This development intensified in the seventeenth century when—in contrast to the Middle Ages—political borders were visualized by cartography.²¹ However, the process of strengthening individual rights shows some similarities to the process of individualization taking place in the Ottoman Empire since the late sixteenth century. The establishment of tax-farms, the increasing engagement of the Janissary corps in trade and commerce, the rise of local notables as well as the emergence of wealthy urban upper classes appearing in the eighteenth century at the latest, were indications²² of a process which transformed Ottoman society from a military society into a “civil” one. In a long-term perspective, the rights of individuals were strengthened and the law of citizenship (1864) can be regarded as the final result of that process. The changes in Ottoman society could also have influenced the attitude towards the border. In the “official” Ottoman mind the *gazi* state mentality had endured until 1699²³ and disappeared more and more after the peace treaty of Sremski Karlovci. In the eighteenth century Ottoman political writers abandoned the idea of the “ever-victorious frontier” as well.²⁴ The historiographical mainstream holds the military defeats and the political problems responsible for these changes in the Ottoman state concept.²⁵ But the transformation of Ottoman society and the long-term process that strengthened the interests and rights of individuals must also be taken into account. The integration of the Ottoman Empire into the policy of closed frontiers might have been

²¹ W. Schmale, „Grenze“ in der deutschen und französischen Frühen Neuzeit, in W. Schmale; R. Stauber (eds.), *Menschen und Grenzen in der Frühen Neuzeit*, Berlin 1998, pp. 50–75, p. 56f.

²² The indications mentioned are described in S. Faroqhi, *The Cambridge History of Turkey*. Vol. 3: The Later Ottoman Empire, 1603–1839, Cambridge 2006.

²³ Heywood, *The Frontier in Ottoman History*... cit., p. 242.

²⁴ Aksan, *Ottoman Political Writing*... cit.

²⁵ Until the eighteenth century in the Ottoman Empire dominated the Near Eastern State Theory, see H. Inalcık, *Kutadgu Bilig'de Türk ve İran Siyaset Nazariye ve Gelenekleri*, in *Reşit Rahmeti Arat İçin*, Ankara 1969, pp. 259–275.

caused by the military pressure of the Christian European powers as well as by social and political developments within the Ottoman society. But Suraiya Faroqhi's studies make clear that the historical reality of the early modern "one world" was not only characterized by its having been split up into states with closed frontiers. Writing history "from the bottom", by treating the Ottoman Empire and other countries as "subjects of history", reduces the importance of political borders for doing historical research. Each social, economic and religious group had its own world-view and in most of the cases the borders of these communities were not identical with the political frontiers. Regarding the Ottoman Empire and the other early modern states as systems of different ecumenical communities rather than only as political units with fixed frontiers can be a useful approach to a better understanding of the various ways in which their subjects interacted. In this context the term ecumenical community designates social, religious and economic groups building up cross-border communities. Different ecumenical communities overlapped within the boundaries of a state or in a specific area and gave them their distinctive characters. This festschrift for Suraiya Faroqhi aims to describe some of the close contacts between various ecumenical communities within and outside the Ottoman borders, and their interaction in the early modern "one world".

Istanbul—Activities of Different Ecumenical Communities in the Ottoman Capital

During the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the Ottoman dynasty was able to extend its rule over Anatolian and South East European territories. The stage of expansion, lasting until the conquest of Constantinople (1453), was interrupted by the military defeat of Bayezid I (1389–1402) in the battle of Ankara (1402) when he was taken prisoner by Timur.²⁶ In historiography there has been a long discussion about the character of the early Ottoman Empire. Paul Wittek emphasized that it depended on the active implementation of the *gazi* or Holy War ideology.²⁷ In his recent book Heath Lowry rejects the assumption that the terms *gazi/gaza* or *akın/akıncı* referred to religious motives for waging

²⁶ For Timur see T. Nagel, *Timur der Eroberer und die islamische Welt des späten Mittelalters*, Munich 1993.

²⁷ P. Wittek, *The Rise of the Ottoman Empire*, London 1938.

war on non-Muslims. He argues that they described the way in which Christians and Muslims went to war together under the Ottoman banner in the fourteenth century.²⁸ Without underestimating the importance of religious motives and propaganda for warfare²⁹ the outstanding character of the Ottoman state was the willingness of its ruling elites to practicize a coopting policy. LINDA DARLING refers to the taxation system, the architecture, and scribal and military recruitment, all indicating that the Ottoman culture was formed from an amalgamation of Turkish/Seljukid/Islamic and Byzantine/Christian influences. Her article shows that the administrative organization became more complex after 1360, but that during the reign of Murad I (1362–1389) especially, the *gazi* mentality seemed to have become more widespread among the common people and soldiers than in the emerging bureaucracy, which was more interested in expanding the governing apparatus and developing the state's direct control over its lands and revenues. The bureaucratic apparatus began to produce a growing number of documents, which form the main basis of historical studies. But, as was the case in medieval West European courts, a large number of administrative documents were also forged in the Ottoman Empire. The article by HANS GEORG MAJER deals with this issue and makes it clear that many of the written sources produced during the reigns of Osman (ca. 1300–1324?), Orhan (1324–1362) und Murad I (1362–1389) must be regarded as falsifications. But when forged historical sources are used carefully they do not provide less information than real documents. For research on the early Ottoman state, our knowledge depends primarily on administrative sources as well as on chronicles, most of which follow the Byzantine style of chronicle writing, describing the rulers with stereotypes such as law-abiding or unselfish. IRÈNE BELDICEANU-STEINHERR's article looks at the ruler as a human being who's decisions are not solely influenced by the criteria of law or belief.

After an interregnum following the military catastrophe of Ankara, the Ottomans continued to expand their power over Anatolia and the Balkans. In 1453 Mehmed II (1451–1481) conquered Constantinople, which became the capital of the new early modern great power. After the conquest Istanbul became a melting pot where different ecumenical

²⁸ H. Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State*, Albany/NY 2003, p. 132.

²⁹ C. Imber, *The Crusade of Varna, 1443–45*, Aldershot 2006 provides many examples.

communities overlapped. The city attracted people from the Mediterranean, Western Europe and other regions, whilst the number of inhabitants rose to several hundred thousand after 1500. The people arriving belonged to various ecumenical communities that gained a foothold in Istanbul shortly after the conquest. Among them there were Jews coming mainly from Spain. Their social and political position in early Istanbul is well known.³⁰ MINNA ROZEN's article focusing on the social structure of the Jewish population of Istanbul in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries offers detailed insight into the heterogeneous character of ecumenical communities. She raises the question of how the social structure of the living is reflected through the cemetery, and how the living used the cemetery as an additional arena in which they construct their own world. The background of many families mentioned in her article and their professional activities demonstrate that the Jewish community was a cross-border ecumenical community of its own, which was closely connected with different early modern states.

Apart from the Jews, who had lost their dominant role in Ottoman foreign trade after 1600, the French *nation* represented another ecumenical community in Istanbul.³¹ The close political and economic relationship between France and the Ottoman Empire began in the sixteenth century when Süleyman I granted an *ahdname* to the French king in 1536. But the authenticity of this document has been subject to discussion and GILLES VEINSTEIN puts forward further arguments underlining the scepticism of other historians.

Apart from the Ottoman and Western European states, the Russian Empire also belonged to the "one world" described by Suraiya Faroqhi. MARKUS KOLLER deals with the fur trade between Russia and Istanbul, carried out by Ottoman merchants who travelled to Moscow to buy these luxury goods. They had the opportunity to stay in this city for some years in a *kervansaray* reserved for the merchants of the Sublime Porte. Fur was also brought to Istanbul via the Crimea or by the "Polish caravan" passing through Lwow on its way to the Bosphorus. This caravan had always been led by an Armenian bearing the title of a *kervanbaşı*. The Armenians formed an important ecumenical community by building up a network linking New Djulfa to India and Tibet,

³⁰ M. Rozen, *A History of the Jewish Community in Istanbul. The Formative Years, 1453–1566*, Leiden 2002.

³¹ For the French *nation* see E. Eldem, *French Trade in Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century*, Leiden 1999.

to Izmir, Aleppo, Marseille and Amsterdam. It was the “private sector” consisting of merchants that brought the bulk of goods to Istanbul, since according to Ottoman principles the state’s role in the economy was one of indirect rather than direct involvement. The government interfered when it anticipated a danger of shortages requiring a number of pre-emptive measures. Indirect state involvement also enforced the official fixed prices (*narh*) in Istanbul, whose function in the nineteenth century is analyzed by MEHMET ALI BEYHAN.

*Economic Cross-border Ecumenical Communities in the
Provinces of the Empire*

In Early Modern Europe cross-border ecumenical communities were often perceived by state authorities as monolithic entities. Venetian documents spoke of “Turkish” merchants who came to Venice and stayed there in the *Fondaco dei Turchi* situated in the very heart of the city. Habsburg sources referred to traders from the Slavic regions in the Ottoman Balkans as “Raitzen”, without being interested in their regional or ethnic origin. However, economic cross-border ecumenical communities were heterogeneous entities whose individual members acted and interacted according to their own interests using the networks of their own and other communities. By way of example, Venetian merchants could fall back on a network of consuls.

Cross-border trade within the “one world” has been the subject of extensive historical research. We are well informed about the trading networks of Indian,³² Russian³³ or Venetian³⁴ merchants in the early modern period. Studies on inter-regional trade are based on a variety of historical sources including account-books, which are also available for Ottoman history. GÉZA DÁVID analyzes the account-book of Becskerek and Becse originating from the sixteenth century. It includes the customs duties and treasury incomes in the *vilayet* of Temesvár. But this kind of source material offers hardly any detail about individual merchants belonging to the cross-border trade communities. NERIMAN ERSOY-HACISALIHOĞLU introduces a family of Bulgarian traders by

³² S. Dale, *Indian Merchants and Eurasian Trade, 1600–1750*, Cambridge 1994.

³³ P. Bushkovitch, *The Merchants of Moscow 1580–1650*, Cambridge 1980.

³⁴ B. Arbel, *Trading Nations, Jews and Venetians in the Early Modern Eastern Mediterranean*, Leiden 1995.

the name of Gümüşgerdan. They made their livelihood by buying and selling textiles in the nineteenth century. This family belonged to the community of rich Bulgarian traders who shared the market with Greeks and Ragusans. The Gümüşgerdans established good relations with the Ottoman administration and, with the support of the authorities, started manufacturing and later managed to improve their status in provincial society. Together with Greeks, Jews and agents of the French *nation* in Istanbul as well as merchants from Bulgarian cities, they were engaged in the close commercial relations established between the Ottoman Empire and France after the Crimean War. STOYANKA KENDEROVA's article shows that a large number of goods produced in the Bulgarian territories were also exhibited at the world exhibition in Paris (1867). In the later nineteenth and twentieth centuries new players began to appear in the markets of the "one world". Foreign companies produced consumer goods, which flooded the Ottoman market. These modern and post-modern types of ecumenical communities built up a new style of cross-border economic networks. YAVUZ KÖSE asks about the perception of the companies by Ottoman customers and is interested in the way goods were marketed and distributed. DONALD QUATAERT focuses in his contribution on a company in the coal-mining area of Zonguldak in the early twentieth century. The entrepreneur in question was an Ottoman Greek who established good relations with the authorities and the influential German ambassador. Donald Quataert points out that the richness of entrepreneurial activities in the last stage of the Ottoman Empire reveals a dynamic and kinetic society.

*Social and Religious Ecumenical Communities in the
Ottoman Periphery*

However, the "one world" was more than an economic market where goods were transported from one place to another. It was also a multi-regional market for information in which merchants and traders acted as mediators between different cultures and provided the people with knowledge about remote regions. Another important source of information were travellers and pilgrims who formed other kinds of cross-border communities. Christian pilgrims visited the places traditionally associated with the life of Jesus Christ and his mother Mary. Muslims went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, which was under Ottoman rule until 1918. The Hadj was not only a religious obligation to Muslims, who were supposed to visit the Holy Places of Islam once during their lives.

The legitimization of sultanic rule also depended on the ability of the Ottoman ruler to protect the caravans of pilgrims on their way into the Hijaz and to erect or restore religious buildings in Mecca and Medina.³⁵ The article by SELCUK ESENBEL about Japanese Muslim pilgrimages during the twentieth century shows that the Islamic pilgrimage, though meant for religious purposes, in this case, served as an alternative form of international relations. The Hadj of the Japanese Muslims took place through informal transnational networks of Muslim communities in China, India, or South East Asia, and even Russia, across many different countries.

Informal cross-border networks were also formed by travellers leaving their home countries. Their reports must be approached carefully since their authors were also influenced by the contemporary cultural circumstances in their own countries. This becomes evident when historians work with the travelogue (*seyahatname*) of Evliya Çelebi, the most famous seventeenth-century Ottoman traveller.³⁶ NICOLAS VATIN analyzes his style of writing by referring to Evliya's description of Süleyman I's military campaign in Hungary (1566). The author argues that Evliya Çelebi seemed to have been familiar with the texts of Ottoman historical writers, and that errors in his travelogue might have been caused by the oral tradition. When he was a young man he could have heard the stories of his father and other persons who had taken part in that campaign. Political ideas determined the report of the Croatian Matija Mažuranić who visited Bosnia in 1839. Croatian political life at the time of his journey was strongly marked by the activities of the Illyrian movement of national revival, with Ljudevit Gaj as its leader and the Mažuranić brothers as its fervent adherents. The movement called for the overcoming of Croatian regional particularities and for the cultural union of all South Slavs (who were considered descendants of the Illyrians, hence the movement's name). Bosnia was seen as a part of that Illyrian area, and its liberation from Ottoman rule was one of Gaj's main preoccupations. TATJANA PAIĆ-VUKIĆ and EKREM ČAUŠEVIĆ show that Mažuranić did not head for that country as a mere adventurer, even though his travelogue shows that the journey was not lacking in adventure. His aim was to inquire "into the state of that part of our Illyria", to estimate what could be done for "the national cause", and to evaluate

³⁵ S. Faroqhi, *Herrscher über Mekka. Die Geschichte der Pilgerfahrt*, Munich 1990.

³⁶ R. Dankoff, *An Ottoman Mentality, The World of Evliya Çelebi*, Leiden 2004.