Sultan Abdülmecid's 1846 Tour of Rumelia and the Trope of Love

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Sultan Abdülmecid'in 1846 Rumeli Seyahati ve Sultana Yazılan Bulgarca Kasideler

Öz ■ Bu çalışmada Sultan Abdülmecid'in 1846 senesindeki Rumeli seyahatinin gerçekleşmesinin farklı veçheleri analiz edilmekte, bu seyahatin Ortodoks Bulgar halkı üzerinde yarattığı etki değerlendirilmekte ve Bulgar toplumunun kendini algılama biçimini şekillendirmesi bakımından uzun vadedeki büyük etkisinin izleri sürülmektedir. Makalede, Abdülmecid'in Rumeli'ye yaptığı seyahat, selefi II. Mahmud'un 1830'larda yaptığı memleket gezilerinin önemi de hesaba katılarak, geniş bir bağlamda ele alınmıştır. Abdülmecid'in 1846'daki Rumeli gezisi, II. Mahmud'un 1826'da Yeniçeri ocağını kaldırmasının ardından "hükümdarın görünürlüğünü" daha da arttırmak için benimsediği yeni "seyahat siyaseti" bağlamında incelenmektedir. Osmanlı başkentinde, vilayetlerde ve ilki 1836'da olmak üzere yurtdışında da yapılan, özellikle yıllık *veladet* ve *cülus* günü kutlamalarıyla kendini gösteren bu yeni süreç, görüşümüze göre, özellikle gayrimüslim tebaanın sadakatini kazanmayı hedefleyen yeni bir tarz merkezileşme metodunun tezahürüydü. Bu süreç, Osmanlı hükümdarı ve tebaası, toplumunun merkezi ve çevresi arasında (Gayr-i Müslimleri de kapsayan) inanç ve evrensel hükümranlık kavramları ve pratiklerine dayanan yeni etkileşim imkanlarını da beraberinde getirdi. Temelinde tanzim edilebilir simgeler üzerinden anlamlanan bu etkileşim imkanlarının daha önce pek de eşi benzeri yoktu. Merkezin yerele getirdiği ve gittikçe çeşitlenen kutlamalarla, gayrimüslimler ve hükümdar arasında dikey sadakat bağları yaratıldı. Söz konusu bağlar, 19. yüzyılın ortalarında en az yirmi otuz yıl kadar gayet başarılı bir şekilde kurulmaya devam etti. Yine bu bağlar ortak çıkarların dile getirilmesi ve cemaate ilişkin taleplerin billurlaştırılmasında hayati bir zemin teşkil etti. Son tahlilde bu çalışma, 19. yüzyılın ortalarında Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda modernitenin doğası ve gelişimi ile halk düzeyindeki etnik milliyetçi düşünce zihniyeti üzerine yapılan çalışmalar için yeni bir çerçeve çizmeye çalışacaktır.

Keywords: Abdülmecid, hükümdarın görünürlüğü, Bulgarca kasideler, modernite, milliyetçilik

Conceptual Overview and Historical Background

This paper relies on two premises in tackling a theme common to all papers in this volume. First, *modernity* is a complex, historically salient phenomenon, which consists of a 'bundle' of parallel economic, political, and sociocultural processes. Second, *nationalism* and *modernity* are intimately related and very recent phenomena. In terms of setting a mass-scale sociocultural precedent which permanently altered the notion of public space and the discourse and practices of power, both nationalism and modernity in Europe can be traced no earlier than the French Revolution. Within the Ottoman realms, these phenomena were announced in a most lasting, implication-rich manner by the Greek Revolution of 1821-1829. Of central importance then is the process of extension of long-standing localized *micro* forms of belonging and their linkage to the center for a *macro* form of belonging. This is a universal and continuous process of formation of modern public space and, over time, modern rules of politics. Among its core vehicles, the annual secular pan-imperial ruler celebrations, a global mass-scale nineteenth-century phenomenon, constitute a largely under-researched and extremely fruitful area of focus. Within the Ottoman realms, these festivities – the sultan's birthday (*veladet*) and accession day (*cülus*) – commenced by order of Mahmud II in the capital, the provinces, and abroad in 1836, a fact which remains almost completely unknown and has until today received hardly any scholarly attention.[1] Under Mahmud II's successors, the sultanic celebrations gained tremendous momentum, and were among the key factors, which ushered in a new era of *ruler visibility*. For the purposes of this paper, ruler visibility in the pre-modern period is a combination of direct and indirect components. The former include the sultan's physical presence at public ceremonies and the degree of his personal exposure to the public gaze. The latter consist of a set of symbolic markers of the ruler, such as his cypher (*tuğra*) on the one hand and the architectural monuments, such as fountains, mosques, and tombs, constructed or restored by him, on the other. In the absence of a consistent, genuine effort on the part of the ruler to reach out past elite circles and the confines of the capital and due to the lack of a periodical press and mass culture to popularize his 'good works', both types of visibility are quite limited in the pre-modern period. The first major vehicle for the new era of *ruler visibility*

1 This statement pertains to the royal birthday and accession-day celebrations as recurring events within a given sultan's reign (see Stephanov, "Minorities, Majorities, and the Monarch: Nationalizing Effects of the Late Ottoman Royal Public Ceremonies, 1808 – 1908," PhD Dissertation, University of Memphis, 2012). In contrast, such celebrations treated as one-time events in the capital within a given sultan's reign have received ample coverage (see Hakan Karateke, *Padişahım Çok Yaşa! Osmanlı Devletinin Son Yüz Yılında Merasimler*, Istanbul, 2004.)

was the sultan's personal touring of the imperial domains, introduced by Mahmud II in the aftermath of the 1826 destruction of the Janissaries, after a century or so of prevailing sultanic seclusion. Over a period of seven years (1830-1837), Mahmud II made no fewer than five imperial tours of the provinces.[2] The first trip was to Tekfurdağ, in the vicinity of Istanbul, and it lasted a day. The sultan went there by steamship on January 28, 1830 and personally supervised the transportation of a shipload of cargo waiting in the port to be sent to Şumnu (Shumen in present-day Bulgaria). The sultan's next tour, starting on June 3, 1831 and lasting for 33 days, was to Edirne and the provinces around the Dardanelles. As Cengiz Kırlı insightfully points out, each tour went farther away from the capital, and the majority of them were clearly designed with the Empire's non-Muslim population in mind.[3] Despite the official purpose of the tours – to examine the living conditions of his subjects and provide charity to the poor – Kırlı convincingly argues that Mahmud II's real purpose was "to be seen rather than to see his subjects."[4] During these tours, Mahmud II indeed consistently provided funding for churches, synagogues and other historic sacred sites. His attitude set an example for high ranking Ottoman officials to follow.[5] The sultan also distributed monetary payments along the way (51 kuruş to each Muslim and 31 kuruş to each non-Muslim). He even went to small villages and distributed gifts to their inhabitants. While not unprecedented, such engaged benevolent treatment of Ottoman non-Muslims was certainly rare, especially over a period of just a few years. It was clearly outside the norm of previous Ottoman practices.[6] According to Kırlı, "in an attempt to captivate the sentiments of his subjects Mahmud constantly downplayed his godlike figure and

2 This section is based on Cengiz Kırlı, *The Struggle over Space: Coffeehouses of Ottoman Istanbul, 1780-1845*, (PhD Dissertation, SUNY-Binghamton, 2001), who also drew on Abdulkadir Özcan, "II. Mahmud'un Memleket Gezileri," in *Prof. Dr. Bekir Kütukoglu'na Armagan* (İstanbul: Edebiyat Fakültesi Basımevi, 1991).

3 "Although he travelled extensively in the Rumelian provinces where Greeks and Jews lived predominantly, the only Anatolian province that he [Mahmud II] visited where Muslims constituted the majority of the population was the imperial seat's neighboring town of Izmit." (Kırlı, *Struggle*, 266).

4 Kırlı, *Struggle*, 263-64.

5 Bernard Lory analyzed the case of an 1830 charitable donation by the Grand Vizier for the repairs of a Christian Church in Manastir (Bitola). See Bernard Lory, "The Vizier's Dream: 'Seeing St. Dimitar' in Ottoman Bitola," *History and Anthropology*, 20/3, (2009), 309-316.

6 For a detailed discussion of the circumstances of church construction and repair in the Ottoman Empire over the previous centuries, see Rossitsa Gradeva, "Ottoman Policy towards Christian Church Building," *Etudes Balkaniques*, 4 (1994), 14-36. See also Hakan Karateke, "Opium for the Subjects? Religiosity as a Legitimizing Factor for

presented the image of an invincible yet human and earthly ruler."[7] True to the clothing regulation he had issued only two years earlier, the sultan wore the new style headgear (fez) and trousers as he was walking among his subjects. Mahmud II continued to reproduce the new image of the Ottoman ruler on his third and fourth tours of Istanbul's neighboring town of Izmit, in 1833 and 1836, respectively. The former lasted a week and the latter – two weeks.[8]

The last tour was the longest and best documented. It commenced on April 29, 1837 at Varna (in present-day Bulgaria) on the Black Sea coast of Ottoman Rumelia. Over the course of 39 days, Mahmud II visited more than a dozen towns on or near the Danube. Helmuth von Moltke, a Prussian officer who accompanied the sultan on this trip noted how the people who did not believe that the sultan was visiting their town crowded town squares to see him.[9] In a speech Mahmud II had Vassaf Efendi read[10] at Şumnu, the sultan declared: "I distinguish the Muslims among my subjects only in the mosque, the Christians in the church, the Jews in the synagogue; there is no other difference among them. My *love* and justice are strong for all, and all are my true sons."[11] This statement took up the theme of equality between religious groups in the Empire, first touched upon in July 1829, towards the end of the Greek Revolution, when Mahmud II had addressed the Orthodox Christians (*Rum*) of the Morea (the Peloponnese peninsula in present-day Greece) in a ferman in the following terms: "There will be in the future no distinctions made between Muslims and *re'aya*[12] and everybody will be ensured the inviolability of his property, life and honor by a sacred law (*Şeriat*) and my sublime patronage."[13] It also presented the relations between ruler and

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the Ottoman Sultan," in *Legitimizing the Order: the Ottoman Rhetoric of State Power,* (ed.) Hakan Karateke, Maurus Reinkowski (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 126.

7 Kırlı, *Struggle*, 265.

8 Ibid.

9 See Helmuth von Moltke, *Lettres du Marechal de Moltke sur L'Orient* (Paris: Sandoz et Fischbacher, 1872), 139.

10 This act of delegation seems to have been a deliberate nod to the sultan's past invisibility and inaccessibility, especially vis-à-vis provincial crowds who were utterly unaccustomed to experiencing the sultan's physical presence in any way whatsoever.

11 Maria Todorova, *Anglia, Rossia i Tanzimat. Vtoraya Chetvert' XIX Veka* [England, Russia and the Tanzimat: The Second Quarter of the 19th Century (in Russian)] (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), 46, with reference to Enver Ziya Karal, "Gülhane Hatt-ı Hümayununda Batının Etkisi," *Belleten*, XXVIII/112 (1964), 595.

12 Literally, "flock." At the time, this was a loose term referring to Ottoman non-Muslims as a whole.

13 Ruben Safrastjian, "Ottomanism in Turkey in the Epoch of Reforms in XIX C.:

subjects through a universalizing *father-children* metaphor of society, common to all contemporary empires. Such a metaphor had been employed by Ottoman rulers in the past, as with the metaphors used concerning the Janissaries, but in Mahmud II's time it gained a new meaning and urgency to it. Its use reflected the sultan's attempt to pre-empt the rise of ethnoreligious claims, inspired by novel notions of popular sovereignty, maintain unity irrespective of cultural affinities, and re-orient weakened subject loyalties back to the center in the aftermath of the disastrous 1828-29 Russo-Ottoman War. In fact, the whole 1837 tour was timed around the Russian withdrawal from the fortress of Silistre (Silistra in present-day Bulgaria) in late 1836. The familial metaphor and its mutations would play a key role later under a number of Mahmud II's successors as a symbolic buffer against all attempts to invoke principles of constitutionalism and self-determination. The trope of love expressed towards a ruler's subjects, regardless of their faith, predated by about two decades a similar development in the Russian Empire.[14]

The speech further announced: "You Greeks,[15] Armenians, Jews, you are all servants of God, and you are all my subjects -- just as good as the Muslims. Your beliefs are different, but you all obey the laws and my imperial orders." Apparently, at the end of the speech the sultan inquired whether anybody among the non-Muslims had any complaints or whether their churches needed repairs. In another village, he actually donated money for church repairs.[16] In another speech during the same tour, the sultan addressed the leaders of non-Muslim communities directly:

"It is our wish to ensure the peace and security of all inhabitants of our God-protected great state, both Muslim and *re'aya*. In spite of all difficulties we are determined to secure the flourishing of the state and the population under our

Ideology and Policy I," *Etudes Balkaniques*, 4 (1988), with reference to Anton von Prokesch-Osten, *Geschichte des Abfalls der Griechen vom türkischen Reiche in Jahre 1821 und der Gründung des hellenischen Königreiches: Aus diplomatischen Standpunkte* (Wien: Carl Gerold's Sohn, 1867), Bd. 6, 57.

14 See Richard Wortman, *Scenarios of Power: Myth and Ceremony in Russian Monarchy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), vol. II, Part I, "Alexander II and the Scenario of Love," 17-157.

15 The word Moltke used in German is "Griechen." See Helmuth von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835-1839* (Berlin: Ernst Siegfried Mittler und Sohn, 1876), 130. The original word in Ottoman was most likely "Rum."

16 Karateke, "Opium," 126, with reference to Helmut von Moltke, *Briefe über Zustände und Begebenheiten in der Türkei aus den Jahren 1835-1839* (Berlin: Posen, Bromberg, Mittler, 1841) 131, 142.

protection. You [the leaders of non-Muslim communities] bearing in mind our wish, ought to believe us in this deed."[17]

The repeated invocation of God and faith in all of the above passages, with the stress falling on their universal and authority-upholding, rather than specific and potentially divisive functions, constituted the single most important thread in the sultan's legitimating strategies throughout his late reign. It was religion, in the form of a carefully composed set of integrative messages and practices, which underwrote Mahmud II's attempts at ceremonial penetration, consolidation and centralization of the Ottoman domains. His eldest son and successor, Abdülmecid (1839-1861), whose personal character differed in many respects from his father's, nevertheless would stay the course politically so that the earlier policies could strike roots.

Sultan Abdülmecid's Public Image on the Eve of His 1846 Tour of Rumelia

The trope of love by and for the ruler was spelled out and immensely popularized by Abdülmecid himself during his tour of Rumelia in 1846. A year before that tour, an imperial decree (*hatt-i şerif*) announced a few key features of the sultan's intended public image. A translation of this decree and an address-commentary, inspired by it, were printed side by side in Bulgar Slavic[18] on a leaflet meant for domestic distribution. This decree reveals what soon became the two cornerstones of Abdülmecid's *scenario* of power – education and public health. In its penultimate paragraph, the edict specifically addressed the need for more schools and "popular Enlightenment (*narodno prosveshtenie*)." In addition, it envisioned the opening of a large hospital for poor people and strangers, "as a pious creation (*kato edno blagochestivo sozidanie*)."

17 Safrastjian, "Ottomanism," 74-75, with reference to Halil Inalcık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi, 1943), 28.

18 This umbrella term encompasses a set of regional South Slavic dialects of the mid-nineteenth century. In my view, it better reflects contemporary linguistic realities and respective mentalities. To use the term 'Bulgarian' would be to suppose the existence of a standardized literary language and a corresponding prevalent (macro) group consciousness, neither of which was a fact until decades later. Therefore, I use the term 'Bulgar' (the Ottoman designation) and 'Bulgarian' (the modern nation-state designation) as group designators with the dividing mark being the year 1878 when the modern nation-state of Bulgaria was founded. Similarly, I use the terms (Hellene-minded) Rum and Greek to denote group identifications before and after modern nation-state formation, as well as without and within state borders where the frame of reference is centered on the modern nation-state of Greece set up in 1832.

Significantly, the decree presented both policies, as originating from the sultan. The text portrayed him as intimately involved and emotionally invested in their success. Abdülmecid was concerned about institutions "useful to the common good (*polezni za obshtoto dobro*) (1);" he cared about "the well being of Our subjects (*dobroto byitie na Nashyite poddannyi*) (3)."[19] Apparently, the alleged failure of his subordinates to turn these intentions into realities filled the sultan's heart with "pity and grief" leaving him in peace "neither during the day nor at night (*ne denya ni noshtya*)." This is a major departure from the aloof image of the ruler, which had been the norm prior to Mahmud II's late reign. Moreover, this edict, dated January 1/13, 1845,[20] contains the earliest evidence I have encountered to date of the sultan's title of 'tsar,' deployed with respect to his Bulgar subjects.[21] In fact, this title is invoked, in some fashion or other, no fewer than eight times in the space of a single page of text, whereas 'sultan' does not appear even once. Paradoxically, just when it creates the impression upon the reader of this being a Christian monarch, the tsarist reference is paired with a reference to "the intercession of our St. Prophet (*hodataystvoto na nashego sv. Proroka*) (2)."[22] This stunning choice is an early indication of what quickly unfolded as a consistent policy of presenting the sultan as a rightful ruler to various non-Muslim communities along lines and with symbols familiar to them. Even though this article focuses on a particular (Bulgar Slavic) subset of the largest (Christian) such grouping, there is evidence to suggest that this deliberate strategy cut across all non-Muslim faith-based communities of the empire.

The theme of the caring ruler, with his priorities in education and public health is much expanded and complicated in the address-commentary attached to it. This rich and strongly suggestive text, entitled "Dear Bulgars of the same kin (*Lyubeznii mi edinorodtsi Bulgare*)!"[23] opens as follows:

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19 Numbers in parentheses hereafter refer to the frequency with which certain words and phrases appear in the original text.

20 The texts of the edict and the address-commentary can be found in Ivan Georgov, *Sbornik za Narodni Umotvoreniya* [A Collection of Popular Adages (in Bulgarian)] (Sofia, 1908) kn. 24, ch. I.

21 Andreas Lyberatos has demonstrated the use of a very similar sultanic title – '*anax gen. anaktos* (king)' – in the case of the (Hellene-minded) Rum of *Filibe* (Plovdiv in present-day Bulgaria) as early as 1841. See Andreas Lyberatos, "The Application of the Tanzimat and Its Political Effects: Glances from Plovdiv and Its Rum *Millet*," in *Power and Influence in South-Eastern Europe, 16th-19th C.*, (ed.) Maria Baramova et al. (Berlin: LiT Verlag, 2012).

22 The abbreviation "*sv.*", which stands for "*sveti* (holy)" is identical to the one preceding the names of Christian saints in modern Bulgarian.

23 Unless otherwise specified, capitalization/punctuation in primary source excerpts is kept in accordance with the originals.

"The generous and most merciful love, which today His Majesty, our Brightest Tsar, Sultan Abdul Medzhid pours fatherly on his faithful subjects through this beneficient *Hatti Sherif*[24] of his hand, awoke my zeal (*revnost*) to popularize its translation in Bulgar so that you may not remain without merriment and gladness of the universal joy, which this Tsarist course produces; you, I mean, who have dedicated your faithful hearts to His Tsarist love."[25]

This programmatic sentence opens and closes with direct references to the trope of the sultan's love for his subjects. It thus picks up the thread of the fatherly metaphor Mahmud II deployed on his 1837 tour of Rumelia. There are further traits of Abdülmecid's moral portrait, such as generosity and mercy, which will soon become defining characteristics of his attitude to his subjects. The mention of the subjects' hearts, filled with a joy, expressed via a repetitive, typically Ottoman phrasing is not new, but the strength and trajectory of enhancement of their bond to the object of their love – the ruler – is. So is the complexity of paternal-filial exchange between the two parties. The author reiterates the constancy ("day and night") of the sultan's interaction with and care for his subjects, comparing it to that of "a natural father for his progeny (*kato edin prirodnyiy otets za svoyata rozhba*)." This organic metaphor functions bilaterally. On the one hand, the father aims to give his progeny "good upbringing, a development of the mental faculties, a moral education;" on the other, the child is thus "good and useful, not only to itself, but capable of every aid to its father." Therefore, if at the start of this address the subjects' hearts are "dedicated" to the sultan's love, by its conclusion, they are "perfectly dedicated" as well as being encouraged to "strive in order to become already more deserving of His most generous mercy." Several aspects of the relationship between the people and the ruler are particularly worthy of note. First, this call for a popular exertion in the name of the sultan is unequivocally a matter of duty (*niy sme dluzhni*). So is the act of prayer to God for the sultan's long life, prosperity, and a peaceful "tsardom." Interestingly, this duty of supplication is invoked by way of an injunction to "always pray to the almighty God with diligent hands (*vinagi s rutse blagoserdnyi da molim vsevyishnyago Boga*)." In return, the subjects would have the hope of living quietly and prosperously "under His mighty wing." This metaphor would become permanently etched onto the public mind, re-appearing time and again over the years in various texts of similarly emotional, propagandizing and mass mobilizing nature.

24 Worthy of note is the larger font of the decree's title, which is superior to any other in the text, including the sultan's.

25 This and all subsequent underlinings are the author's own.

The close textual analysis of this address-commentary, composed by Ivan Stoyanov,[26] and published with the financial support of Nikola Tupchileshtov,[27] would be much less relevant and telling, if this text remained an isolated act, the expression of a subjective individual attitude. However, there are a number of thematic links and striking similarities with another, formal text of state, which undeniably contains the sultan's own position. The text in question is the speech, read by Mustafa Reşid Paşa in the sultan's presence to representatives of the various local Ottoman communities in the courtyard of the government building in Edirne on May 6/18, 1846. It explains early on the sultan's motif for the tour – "to see with his own eyes and get to know the important needs of his various peoples, and thus complement all that is necessary for their happiness."[28] This clarification comes on the heels of a fatherly metaphor laid out at the very beginning of the text – "as a good father constantly caring for the well being of his children." The text then lists a number of immediate economic improvements, based on the royal inspection in and around Edirne, before returning to familiar topics, such as the social pact, the trope of love, and the importance of duty. In most of these subjects, the speech starts off with concepts, already expounded by Stoyanov, before charting new territory. For example, the recognition of the sultan's constant and extensive care for his subjects leads to the observation that "such signs of magnanimity are very rare in the annals of the State." In return, the popular end of the social pact reads as follows:

"Let all of us, subjects of all ranks, dedicated to our Venerable Tsar get to know them [the signs of magnanimity]! Let us thank God for having the best and most righteous Monarch, and let us work to show ourselves grateful and worthy of such superior abundance (of goodness)! Let us unite our hearts with love for the fatherland, and let us hasten, in accordance with the will of our most kind Tsar in the development and prosperity of our fatherly place (*otechestvennoto ni mesto*) where we first saw the sun."

26 Ivan Stoyanov (1817-?) was a Bulgar teacher and poet. Very little is known about his life.

27 Nikola Tupchileshtov (1817-1895) was an affluent Bulgar merchant and leader of the Bulgar community in Istanbul.

28 Apparently, this was also a central motif behind the sultan's tour of Crete that same year. See Hakan Karateke, "From Divine Ruler to Modern Monarch: The Ideal of the Ottoman Sultan in the Nineteenth Century," in *Comparing Empires: Encounters and Transfers in the Long Nineteenth Century*, (eds.) Jörn Leonhard and Ulrike von Hirschhausen (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 293.

This highly charged appeal reiterates the subjects' dedication to their ruler before taking their commitment to a higher level in a number of ways. First, there is a quick progression in the sultan's moral outlook. From a starting point of generosity and mercy [here, 'most kind (*preblag*)'], traits noted before – the sultan is portrayed as 'venerable (*pochitaem*),' 'most righteous (*nay-pravednyiat*),' and a source of 'superior abundance of goodness (*prevoshodna blagodat*).' All of these divine/saintly attributes and prerogatives add an air of sanctity to the sultan's persona. As a result, the previously stated importance of duty to the ruler is here transformed into an imperative; the striving to please him is accelerated ("let us hasten") and intensified ("let us work to show ourselves grateful and worthy"). This escalating sense of urgency culminates in a profoundly new and quintessentially modern call for unification ("let us unite our hearts") and totalization ("all of us"; "all ranks"). Unlike Stoyanov's address to the Bulgars, this call is much wider: it targets Muslims, Christians and Jews, as subsequent passages explicitly point out. The decree goes even further, however, in stating that "the difference of faith and its law is a matter of everyone's simple conscience." Perhaps even more astonishing is the re-arrangement of the metaphors of 'love' and 'father' – what had heretofore been the sultan's fatherly love for his subjects – into the subjects' "love for the fatherland" – a newly found basis for subject mobilization. Paradoxically, the notion of fatherland in this text has not one, but two meanings. The above passage contains a clear definition of the first, *micro* sense, which must have had an instant resonance with the decree's target listeners in Edirne or elsewhere – "our fatherly place where we first saw the sun." The second, *macro* meaning, as well as the final articulation of the relationship between ruler and subjects can be found in the following passage near the decree's end:

"All of us are subjects of the same State (*istata Derzhava*), compatriots (*sootechestvennitsyi*), and children of the one and same fatherland! When this is so, it does not become us at all to scorn each other! But let us follow the same path which our Tsar has drawn for us. Let us imitate His respectable example! As you see, H.M. does not discriminate among any of his subjects in the distribution of his acts of mercy. Is it not then a sacred duty for us (*sveshtenna za nas dolzhnost*) to live in accord and to hasten with all our strength to everything which serves the well being of our common fatherland (*obshtoto nashe otechestvo*)?"

Here, finally, we have the complete transformation of the father-children metaphor of Ottoman society and the trope of love binding its two components into an appeal for a mass popular territorial bond to and love for an abstract *macropatria*. Since this conceptual novelty is far removed from the everyday lives of most people, however, it needs to be qualified. Therefore, it is constructed on the basis

of the instantly recognizable and emotionally binding *micropatria*, the primary contemporary meaning of 'fatherland.' By a process of magnification capped by the boundaries of the Ottoman state, the new concept becomes "a common fatherland." The principles of uniformity ("the same path", "let us imitate") and totality ("all of us," all our strength") get further confirmation and elaboration. As a result, this passage takes the imperative of duty a step further – to the realm of a sacred obligation.

In conclusion, the speech expressed hope that the sultan's subjects would rely on help from "the Divine providence (*Bozhiy promisal*)" to be able to reckon with "His [the sultan's] Autocratic will (*Negovata Samoderzhavna volya*)." The first reference comes through as a clear concession, considering the Prophet's intercession of the previous year's decree, to the non-Muslim populace. This is a step towards crafting a composite heterogeneous image of the ruler in conjunction with the multiplicity of different religio-communal angles of viewing him. So is his title of "autocrat (*samoderzhets*)" whose derivative forms appear no fewer than six times throughout the speech. Given that this text is shorter than the decree its saturation with tsarist references (8) is even higher.

II. The Sultan's 1846 Tour of Rumelia

From Edirne, Abdülmecid proceeded to *Eski Zağra* (Stara Zagora), *Kızanlık* (Kazanluk), *Gabrova* (Gabrovo), *Tırnova* (Turnovo), *Rusçuk* (Ruse), *Silistre* (Silistra), and Varna.[29] The route of the 1846 tour followed closely, except in reverse order, Mahmud II's tour of 1837. According to witness accounts, along the way, the sultan was greeted everywhere with poetic recitations and songs of praise and prayer, both in Ottoman and Bulgar.[30] The pride of place among welcoming parties invariably fell on students, of all creeds, most clad in white uniforms, some in solemn church-going attire, with flowers and green branches in their hands. At every stop, ceremonial cannon salvos were fired during the day and elaborate firework illuminations were performed at night. In the town of Kızanlık, known then as now for the most fragrant roses and the best rose oil, the sultan's visit coincided, possibly by design, with the rose harvesting season. So the locals

29 All of these towns are situated in present-day Bulgaria.

30 In *Gabrova,* the rehearsals, led by the Metropolitan of *Tırnova*'s chief cantor, lasted for several days prior to the sultan's arrival. See Todor Burmov, *Spomenite Mi. Dnevnik. Avtobiografia*. [My Recollections. A Diary. Autobiography.] (Sofia: Liubomudrie, 1994), 22. Todor Burmov (1834-1906) was a Bulgar teacher, journalist and intellectual, later a Bulgarian politician and the first Prime Minister of Bulgaria.

sprinkled rose water and poured rose oil before the sultan's cavalcade. According to Hristo Stambolski, in the three days of the sultan's stay in town no rose harvesting was done so that the whole area would be exquisitely scented in his honor.[31]

For his part, the sultan had doctors vaccinate all children against smallpox in public before sending each one off with a small gift of money.[32] Even people with rare diseases were, on occasion, summoned to the sultan's presence so his doctors could cure them.[33] Needless to say, the sublime visit caused the locals, who were unaccustomed to direct contact with the center of power, quite a stir. The fact that they were completely unaware of the sultan's looks produced at least in one instance, a comical episode. In *Gabrova*, where the twelve-year-old Todor Burmov was in the welcoming party of students lined up along the road several kilometers outside of town, the children once commenced their solemn singing upon cue that the sultan was in the group passing by them, only to abruptly cut it after being told it was not him. In the end, Burmov sang without knowing who within the group of passing dignitaries the sultan actually was. Apparently, the sultan's departing ceremony the following day did not help resolve the issue either.[34] Such ignorance of the sultan's visage would soon be ameliorated, with the officially condoned wide proliferation of royal portraits across the imperial domains, as well as abroad.

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31 See Hristo Stambolski, *Avtobiografiya, Dnevnitsi, Spomeni.* [Autobiography. Diaries. Memories.] *1852-1879* (Sofia, 1972) 31. Hristo Stambolski (1843-1932) later became a professor of anatomy and histology at the Imperial Medical School in Istanbul, as well as an important figure in the affairs of the Bulgar community of Istanbul. After 1878, he settled in Eastern Rumelia (present-day South Bulgaria), where he became a successful politician.

32 This took place in Kızanlık, Gabrova, Tırnova, Rusçuk and probably elsewhere. See Stambolski, *Autobiography*, 31; Burmov, *My Recollections*, 23; Nayden Gerov, "Diaries" in *Vuzrozhdenski Putepisi* [Travelogues from the Bulgarian Revival Period], (ed.) Svetla Gyurova (Sofia: Bulgarski Pisatel, 1969) 72. Nayden Gerov (1823-1900) was a Bulgar teacher, ethnographer, writer, book publisher, and later, Bulgarian lexicographer. He was a widely traveled, foreign-educated individual, who at the time of the sultan's visit had just returned from his favorite Russian Empire. Gerov's views, therefore, were very much not representative of the majority of Ottoman non-Muslim subjects he hereby named. I have heretofore come across extremely few Bulgar references dating from 1846. All of them can be traced to distinguished rather than ordinary people.

33 See Gerov, "Diaries," 72.

34 Burmov, *My Recollections*, 23.

The most detailed account, albeit from a hostile source, relates the sultan's visit to Rusçuk, which, at four days, may have also been the longest. According to Nayden Gerov, the greeting ceremonies proceeded on a communal basis, with the Jews being placed closest to the town walls, next to them the Armenians, then the Bulgars, and finally, the Muslims, situated the farthest from town, yet being the first to see and welcome the sultan. The front of each non-Muslim group consisted of school children, with candles and willow twigs, and priests in liturgical attire. Behind them stood other townsmen, some holding placards with words of praise for the sultan. The Muslim school children were also dressed in white, the difference being that some of them held green flags with white writing on them. A dervish presided over the Muslim group, holding a large green flag with a text in gold. Apparently, there was also spatial separation based on gender – women remained behind the town walls, while men formed two lines stretching for about two kilometers along the road outside. As the sultan approached, each group of youngsters would in turn sing for him, everyone else bowing profusely. Based on Gerov's description, it seems that Abdülmecid was dressed in a slightly more luxurious fashion than during state ceremonies in Istanbul, his military coat sewn with gold, and diamonds around his neck hearkening back to olden times. If so, this may have been an attempt to meet provincial expectations, which were yet much less in tune with the fast changing realities of sultanic power in the capital. As the sultan proceeded quietly, however, he showed none of his ancestors' restrained head movements and fixed sideway gaze, avoiding eye contact. Instead he chose to constantly turn his head around.[35]

Regardless of the memoirists' personal dispositions towards the unfolding sultanic spectacle – be it solemn (Stambolski), enthusiastic (Burmov) or sardonic (Gerov), all of them employed in their accounts the same titles of 'autocrat (*samodurzhets*)' and 'tsar,' contained in the period documents analyzed above.[36] In Rusçuk, the Bulgar students even sang to the sultan an anthem, entitled "The Most Autocratic tsar of ours (*Samoderzhavneyshiy tsar nash*)."[37] This is a testament to the wider relevance and popularity, which these titles must have quickly gained among the non-Muslim Ottomans.

35 This description is based on Gerov, "Diaries," 67-70.

36 The word '*samodurzhets*' at that time had little if any of the negative associations the word 'autocrat' instantly conjures up today. Instead, as its constituent morphemes suggest, it signified a ruler of an independent state.

37 Gerov, "Diaries," 70.

The Discourse of Reform and Bulgar Songs of Praise and Prayer for the Sultan

What provincial non-Muslim populations very quickly embraced, enriched, and employed to their advantage was the discourse of the Tanzimat. Even though in substance, the Tanzimat reforms began at least a decade prior to November 3, 1839, the phrase *'Tanzimat-ı Hayriye* (the Auspicious Tanzimat)' promoted widely, both at home and abroad, after this date found resonance with the population, and created a substance of its own. Based on a Bulgar songbook, published in 1851 in Serbia, this process seems already well under way during Abdülmecid's 1846 tour of Rumelia. This book opens with the texts of two prayers, recited by Bulgar school children to the sultan on his arrival at *Tırnova* on May 14/26, 1846. The first prayer appears in a highly formulaic cyrillicized Ottoman, a rare and fascinating occurrence in print. It seems identical to the one read at *Kızanlık*.[38] This may have been a standard reading at all schools across the imperial domains at the time, regardless of faith and denomination. Such was indeed the case with the second prayer, in Bulgar. Its title – "A Hymn for many years (*Mnogoletstvenno vospevanie*)" – unmistakably points to its Orthodox liturgical origins – a familiar and comfortable zone for Orthodox Christian believers; hence, an ideal platform for appealing to their sensitivities and directing their praises to the ruler. The author, Hadzhi Nayden Yoannovich, who witnessed the event, explicitly indicated that the hymn was "used in the Turnovo school (*supotreblaemoe v Ternovskoto uchilishte*)."[39] This hymn, as well as the author's lengthy dedication to the sultan printed on the book's first page, contains an unusually high number of references to the ongoing reform process in the empire. The dedication summarizes in substantial detail, according to the author's understanding, the reform measures, broached by the *Gülhane Rescript*, twice mentioning it by name (*Hatt-ı Şerif*).[40] This seems an unusual subject matter for a songbook, especially in its opening lines. It must reflect the decree's profound impression on and popularity among Ottoman non-Muslims. Judging by the hymn's text, this was indeed so. In it, the Bulgars collectively thank the sultan for the "acts of goodness (*dobrini*)" they received and continue to "incessantly

38 See Stambolski, *Autobiography*, 31.

39 Hadzhi Nayden Yoannovich, *Novi bulgarski pesni s tsarski i drugi novi pesni ili pohvali…* [New Bulgar Songs along with Tsarist Songs and Other New Songs or Eulogies] (Belgrade, 1851). Hadzhi Nayden Yoannovich (1805-1862) was a Bulgar teacher, poet, publisher and book vendor.

40 Here is an excerpt: " . . . May trade be free everywhere . . . and the tax with good measure; may life be lived with a fear of God, without difference among persons and faiths, and may all people be equal before the law . . . may everyone keep his father's faith, without changing it by force . . ."

(*neprestanno*)" receive, as well as for the persistent service of justice in "the time of the most resplendent, most serene, most peace-loving and most merciful … Tsar and Autocrat." The latter titular phrase bears uncanny resemblance to medieval Bulgar and broader Slavic formulae. So does the prayer's repetitive, incantatory solicitation of peaceful and prosperous "many years (*mnogaya leta*)." It seems that the whole set of such notions was recently dusted off old books and brought back to public usage in the Ottoman Empire of the mid-nineteenth century.[41] It was then married to the discourse of reform. As a curious 1849 newspaper announcement shows, on the interface of these two main narratives, there was substantial room for improvisation, the expression of local sentiment and the advancement of local objectives. In this posting, the townspeople of *Tırnova* expressed their gratitude to the sultan for the dispatch of a certain Cemaali Paşa to govern the affairs of their town. The text starts off with an exact reproduction of the hymn discussed above, before launching a praise of the above-mentioned bureaucrat's beneficial actions in *Tırnova*. Through him, the posting focuses on the ruler's upholding of justice, in line with "divine justice (*bozhya pravda*)." In the process, it twice refers to the Tanzimat and once to the decree itself.[42] This posting helps place Yoannovich's book in perspective. It serves as a preliminary indication that prayer texts, such as this one were influential in a number of ways, going beyond the direct, short-term encounter with the ruler, into the realm of the long-term symbolic, with profound inculcating effects on the populace. Among them, the trope of love was central. The above-mentioned hymn calls the sultan "the most peace-loving (*mirolyubiveyshago*)." Yoannovich's book dedication reiterates this assessment and expands it to incorporate the sultan's subjects by referring to Abdülmecid's motivation for reform in the following terms – "out of affection and a burning [literally, 'hot'] desire for peace and the good livelihood of his subjects."[43]

What is most remarkable about this book is that it also contains songs, which Yoannovich, inspired by the sultan's visit, composed in its aftermath for the purpose of creatively re-enacting and symbolically framing the encounter. Three of

41 The exact circumstances of this major transformation have yet to be clarified. It remains unclear whether there was an explicit order to this effect from the Ottoman center or whether the initiative came from below in the aftermath of the *Gülhane Decree*. One way or another, this new discourse of the ruler gained prominence in the mid-1840s and lasted for several decades.

42 *Tsarigradski Vestnik* (literally, "Tsar City Newspaper") 72 (05.11.1849). The posting is signed « P.D. ». 'Tsar City' (*Tsarigrad*) is still a widespread nickname for Istanbul in modern Bulgarian and other Slavic languages. Ironically, it seems to have outlived its Ottoman counterparts – *Dersaadet*, *Asitane*, and others.

43 "… *ot obich i goreshto zhelanie za mirut i dobriy pominok na poddannitsite si* …"

them merit closer attention and add important new dimensions to the symbolic interaction between the ruler and the ruled. Two of these songs appeared shortly after Abdülmecid's Rumelian tour in the 1847 Almanac also composed and published by Yoannovich in Wallachia.[44] They contain what seems a largely factual account (with occasional metaphoric touches) of the sultan's visit. The first song explains to the people the purpose of the sultan's tour in the following terms:

"May there be peace and love
And no violence
Whoever has a need
May tell him
Give him a complaint
And hope
That somehow he will receive [it]
In his time
Whatever one begs
The tsar carries in his pocket
Ready to bestow
And to make good
For this reason
He passed here [Tırnova] too
To see his reaya
To go around his land"

These poetic lines reveal a close direct emotional connection between the (Muslim) ruler and the (non-Muslim) ruled, a radical novelty in Ottoman history. This excerpt focuses on the top-down part of the relationship, painting the picture of a sensitive, highly accessible, benevolent, and generous ruler, who is also omnipotent. The song continues with first-hand account particulars of the sultan's visit to Tırnova, which largely fall in line with the memoirs covering other such visits from the tour. In the process, the motif of the sultan's larger-than-life stature gets a new dimension with the reverence Christian clergymen display for him. With a gospel in hand, they bow to the ground and stretch their hands up in a

44 Hadzhi Nayden Yoannovich, *Almanac or Calendar for the Year 1847* (Bucharest: I. Copaynig, 1846?). Perhaps in an intended gesture of added solemnity, both this publication and the 1851 songbook were printed in old Church Slavonic letters, as if these were liturgical texts. Such was also the case with Stoyanov's 1845 edict translation and address-commentary.

prayer to God for "[his] long life (*mnogaya leta*)." The clergymen then accompany the sultan into town singing "a song for many years (*mnogoletna pesen*)" along the way. Their enthusiasm infects the popular masses. That evening, everyone prays to God and performs animal sacrifice for the sultan's health.[45] In gratitude, the sultan bestows money gifts to all, ranging in value from five piasters (to boys) to twenty piasters (to clergymen).

The second song paints the whole encounter with the brush of folk fairy tales:

> "We reached golden years
> We saw Sultan Midzhit [sic]
> Our fathers have not seen
> Our grandfathers have not heard
> Such a serene tsar (*hrisimo tsarche*)46
> Such a merciful Sultan (*milostivno Sultanche*)"

The choice of such expressive medium, the mythic tone of the narrator's voice may perhaps be attributed to a combination of, on the one hand, the improbability of the above sequence of occurrences and, on the other, the high degree of common fervor it generated. Along these lines, the shift from third person singular to first person plural seems highly significant. So is the introduction of a temporal component via the blood connection to fathers (*bashti*) and grandfathers/ancestors (*dedi*), and the exponential hyperbolizing deep into the past – the length of time during which the fathers have not seen anything like this pales in comparison to the length of time the grandfathers/ancestors have not heard anything like it. In its natural flow, this extreme popular excitement bridges divides based on strict interpretations of faith, and leads to paradoxical, from our present-day point of view, results. The indications, more or less subtle, for a trajectory of religious and

45 The Balkan folk practice of '*kurban*' [in Bulgar(ian)] and '*kourbania*' (in Greek), from the Hebrew '*qorban*,' survives until today. Its roots remain contentious. Whether it originated in pagan times or not, this ritual was shared by Muslims and Christians alike, perhaps with overlapping justification. For a lengthy discussion on this topic, see Bruce McClelland, "Sacrifice, Scapegoat, Vampire. The Social and Religious Origins of the Bulgarian Folkloric Vampire" (PhD Dissertation: University of Virginia, 1999).

46 The diminutive forms '*tsarch*e' and '*sultanche*' can be literally rendered as 'tsarlet'/'little tsar' and 'little sultan', respectively. One might think these derogatory terms, yet the author's intention here is clearly different. These diminutive forms were probably justified by the sultan's young age (twenty-three in 1846) and they show fondness for the ruler, the sort of gentle attitude one would normally exhibit to a youngster.

cultural syncretism are interspersed throughout the song.[47] At its very outset, the sultan is compared with a serene newborn lamb as well as a mighty lion.[48] Then in the above passage, another word for 'serene' is used (*hrisim*). However, neither these, nor the outbursts of ecclesiastic reverence for the sultan, detailed above, seem to adequately prepare the reader for the song's closing lines. They convey a popular rapture which can be qualified as nothing less than a personality cult:

"Wherever he stepped and sat
And whichever way he looked
We kiss that place
And commemorate him
With joy we were all weeping
And on the trees we were climbing
And for the sultan we watch
Whence will we see him again
Oh, will we prove worthy
For him to twice appear to us
In the year of 1846,
He passed through Ternovo [Tırnova]
Most merciful he appeared to us
Inaugurated the land customs
God [gave to] us to lord over."

The theme of visibility, the act of visual exchange between the ruler and the ruled, unobtrusively present in all of the above excerpts from this song and elsewhere, carries the gradually unfolding stages of popular embrace of the ruler as the people's own to such an intense conclusion.[49] As the poem makes clear, the cult of the monarch is centered on the space inscribed by the sultan's movement and vision. Perhaps most indicative of a cult is the shift from past to present tense in tune with the shift from the account of the sultan's visit to an account of popular behavior afterwards. Whereas the visit is a one-time event, the response is a re-

47 For the purposes of this paper, I define *syncretic* as follows – of a mixed nature, combining heterogeneous, potentially conflicting elements into a seamless harmonious whole.

48 Serene (*krotuk*) as a lamb
Upon its birth
Strong as an aslant [a profanation of the Ottoman Turkish word '*aslan*' = lion.]

49 Interestingly, throughout the song, there are more references to Abdülmecid as 'tsar' (7) than 'sultan' (6, including the title).

petitive occurrence, unbounded in time – "we kiss that place and commemorate him." Based on this evidence, poetically enhanced, yet largely grounded in reality, it may not be far fetched to state that the people treat the sultan as they would a saint. This impression is only made stronger by the use of the verb "*da se yavya* (to appear)" with reference to the sultan. This verb has a mystic, otherworldly connotation, and is often employed in relating supernatural, dream- or vision-like experiences. Thus, this song ends on a high point of ruler sanctity.

The same two songs appeared in Yoannovich's 1851 songbook, with some highly suggestive changes, including an entirely new segment. The changes concerned several aspects of the relationship between the sultan and his subjects. Whereas in the 1846 version of the first song the sultan carried that which his subjects needed in his pocket, in 1851 he held it in his "bosom (*pazva*)". Thus, the ruler seems to be holding his subjects' needs in greater esteem in 1851. After all, the bosom is next to one's heart, where one would also carry a love letter. This sultanic gesture is then matched by a concession on the part of people – "Only we should beg and implore him" – another novel addition. The subtle evolution of the social pact towards a shorter distance between the two parties and a more pronounced popular reverence for the ruler is manifested in other ways as well. For example, the students welcoming the sultan in the 1851 text "were sitting dutifully (*chinno sedyaha*)," a remark absent from the earlier version. Whereas the clergymen "were bowing to the ground" in 1846, in 1851 they were "all falling to the ground (*vsi na zemla padat*)." The list of animals sacrificed for the ruler's health is longer in 1851. In addition to oxen, cows, lambs, kids, and calves, it includes "birds and sparrows, little pigeons." That such an extensive description (a total of six poetic lines) should be included attests not only to the reality of the event of animal sacrifice (*kurban*), but possibly also to the wide range of social strata involved, with everyone contributing what they could afford. Perhaps in recognition of such a broad spectrum of devotion, an 1846 line – "[the tsar] Bestowed gifts on all of them (*Sichkite dari*)" – was sung twice in the 1851 version. More importantly, the first song received an entirely new ending, consisting of two parts. The first relates the sultan's didactic words to a gathering of local notables before his departure from Tırnova:

"From the saray he looked at them,
And ordered them,
To look after the re'aya
And not harm it
To guide it,
To instruct it
From the saray he descends,

And says to all:
Turks of Muslim faith
Christian reaya
I recognize alike
And equal honor give
Both Muslim faith
And Christian
Both Armenian
And Jewish
I recognize alike
And equal honor give."[50]

Once again, the visual exchange is prominent. It is a key element in the process of conveying the will of the ruler to his proxies, and ensuring the enforcement of that same autonomous omniscient will for the benefit of the masses. What is surprising, however, is the protagonist's choice to segment this heretofore faceless, malleable "flock (*reaya*)" of non-Muslims, based on religious denomination. The text is deliberately repetitive in listing communities and insisting on their equal rights. It reveals an intense preoccupation with the Tanzimat's focus on equality. Since Yoannovich was not only an author, but also a publisher and a bookseller, what he wrote was more likely than not in tune with what people thought, felt, wanted to hear/read, and were willing to pay for. In all likelihood, the act of naming in this excerpt reflects processes of acceleration of communal events and gradual crystallization of the communal frame of mind twelve years after the *Gülhane Rescript*. As the passage immediately following demonstrates, this choice in no way contradicts the overarching paternalistic role of the sultan in the familial metaphor of Ottoman society:

"In the coach he sat,
To the reaya he turned his eyes,
As a father to [his] children,
That is how he looked,
Outside of town he came,
And told all of them:
I hereby depart,

50 It is interesting to note the lack of any Bulgar references whatsoever. Whoever intellectuals like Gerov may have considered Bulgar seems to still blend into the "Christian" and "re'aya" categories by the time this passage was written (1851). The latter two markers thus seem much more credible self-referents at the popular level.

To God I thee entrust,
To God I thee entrust,
My shadow I leave here,
So you may not be sad
And of me grievous"

The last four poetic lines contain references to a universalized God, and just as striking – the invocation of the shadow of God (*zillü'llah*), a profoundly Muslim title of the sultan, in order to keep his Christian subjects from grieving his departure. One would be hard pressed to find a passage, which better illustrates the syncretic nature of the integrationist project and the inclusive notion of faith on which it largely rested. This symbolic separation of the shadow of the ruler from his body is an early signal for a trajectory of abstraction in the terms of glorification of the sultan, which would gradually lead to a full blown personality cult by the end of the nineteenth century under Abdülhamid II.

Despite the protagonist-sultan's call, a final segment of the first song, not quoted here, captures in great detail the shared common sorrow accompanying his departure. Allegedly, the sultan's sheer physical presence gave people joy and allowed them to share their needs with him. Since the same segment also relates factual details of the sultan's departure from Tırnova and the people's return to town after seeing him off, it cannot be easily dismissed as a figment of Yoannovich's imagination.

The second song also displays changes along the path of ruler glorification. Whereas in the 1846 version the sultan, aged 23, is treated lovingly as a youngster, the 1851 version casts the image of the older (aged 28) Abdülmecid with corresponding respect, in a more mature light. There is no trace of the diminutive forms "little tsar/sultan," his mercy is further emphasized ("merciful" becomes "most merciful") and the designation "serene (*hrisim*)" is replaced by the image of a ruler with some experience, "a good master (*dobar gospodar*)." At its end, the second song has two new lines which serve as a thematic prelude to the entirely new third song.[51] The first of these lines replaces an earlier line – "God [gave to] us to lord over." This change acts to soften the notion of the sultan's control over his subjects, as imposed from above (by God), and instead shifts the emphasis to the theme of the ruler's reception by the people as their gift. Therefore, it serves as a perfect transition to the last song dedicated to Abdülmecid.

51 "May God continue [his] days
And upon us bestow him."

The new, third song grabs the reader's attention from its very title – "Love for the Sultan by his subjects (*Lyubov k sultanu ot poddannicite mu*)." It carries in a most overt and intense form yet the call for individual mobilization in the name of the ruler:

"Whoever loves the sultan,
Runs to him,
Loves him from the heart,
Expends labor for him,
Exhausts life,
Does not leave the Tsar,
Does not spare one's health,
Always praises the Sultan,
For the smallest need
Summons all the strength
Serves him faithfully,
And remembers him.
Prays for the Tsar,
And slaughters kurban,
Rams and rams,
And fattened oxen
So good-loving
He is God-loving,
As he does not reject [the tsar]
So the tsar loves him,
(And) whoever hates the sultan,
He enters into sin
(And) whoever thinks ill of him
May God destroy him."

Unprecedentedly, mobilization unfolds in both prescriptive ("runs to," "expends labor," "exhausts life," "always praises," "serves," "remembers") and proscriptive ("does not leave," "does not spare one's health") lines of reasoning. Therefore, it inscribes a complete moral universe. As before, the individual behavioral model is still based on love, though a love which is unequal. Of the five references to love in this segment, four originate with the individual and flow towards the sultan, and only one proceeds in the opposite direction. Moreover, the roots for 'love' in the original – '*obich*' and '*lyub*,' a duality which the English translation does not reflect, are also employed in an asymmetric manner. For example, all of the '*lyub*' forms, the root carrying the more passionate type of

love, are centered on the sultan. However, the most remarkable aspect of this song is that it goes beyond love. The extreme call of popular duty to the sultan transforms what would otherwise be irrational behavior into a normal regularity, thus creating a higher plane of activity ("for the smallest need summons all the strength"). Here, for the first time, the notion of *duty to* the ruler, traced above through a series of texts, enters the territory of *sacrifice for* the ruler. Once outlined with unusual detail, this higher plane is then taken a step further into the realm of the divine, which seals its legitimacy – the good-loving (*dobrolyubiv*) becomes God-loving (*Bogolyubiv*). Since Abdülmecid is both sultan (3) and tsar (3), the two terms being employed here on an alternating basis, he enters seamlessly into a Christian theological reference frame regarding the rightful universal ruler.[52] Therefore, actions against the tsar-sultan invoke notions of sin, with the ruler claiming divine protection.

The Tour's *Ripple* Effects and the Beginnings of a Bulgar 'Feeling'

Abdülmecid's 1846 tour of Rumelia stimulated local cultural production and inspired local ceremonial practices in many more ways than can be detailed here.[53] The mental connection of provincial Bulgar populations to the sultan, forged single-handedly and vividly by the tour, was afterwards perpetuated not only by the expanding royal birthday and accession day celebrations but also by a nascent Bulgar periodical press and a rising number of newly minted annual communal celebrations (annual school examination ceremonies, celebrations of St. Cyril and St. Methodius, etc.). The 1850s marked progressively higher points in the popularity of sultanic authority, whose mainstay remained the songs of praise and prayer.[54] The close communal relationship of the Bulgars to the monarch

52 It is worthy of note that this text lacks explicitly/exclusively Christian or Muslim markers of faith.

53 As evidence of the type evaluated above, long kept under wraps by national(ist) historiographies, resurfaces it will allow a more complex, multi-communal evaluation of this and other notable sultanic events. For a recent publication reflecting firsthand the warm welcome Abdülmecid received by another Ottoman non-Muslim community on another tour, see Aron Rodrigue and Sara Stein, eds., *A Jewish Voice from Ottoman Salonica: The Ladino Memoir of Sa'adi Besalel a-Levi* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

54 As Ivan Vazov, later "the patriarch of Bulgarian literature" put it: "In the school of my native town [Sopot] one would glorify Sultan Abdul Medzhid in Turkish hymns long before one heard about and glorified the [Bulgarian] Enlighteners Cyril and Methodius . . ." (*Speech at the Gala Banquet*, XIX, 355-56)

gradually became the central legitimating component in the increasingly politicized process of voicing communal concerns, in the crystallization and manifestation of communal agendas, and the clash of communal rivalries (in the first instance, between Bulgar-minded and Hellene-minded *Rum*). At the same time, the Bulgars began to develop a more explicit and elaborate sense of communal belonging transcending any particular locale, any familiar zone of microregional, real-life habitation. The new, momentous development in the 1850s was the trend towards the substantiation of an abstract collective entity called 'Bulgaria,' along with its mental geographic mappings, and personification as 'mother.' It strengthened the notion of a blood connection among the Bulgars, and opened the door to a more intense emotional appeal and group mobilization via a) the creation of accompanying images of Bulgaria's victimization and sanctification, and b) the utterance of increasingly credible calls for group unification and sacrifice in her name.[55]

Concluding Overview

This paper provides a glimpse of the kinds of sources and type of analysis that can allow us to peer through the mists of an Ottoman past which has long been unjustly painted in black and white – a fragmented, desiccated, flattened past, whose contours conveniently aligned with the main axes of the nation-state era succeeding it. The goal, as with all articles in this volume, was to recover elements of a *living empire* of (ordinary and not so) people and their fluid syncretic multidimensional attachments within a wider world long vanished. In the process, this paper substantiated to one degree or another two overarching claims. First, the monarch directly engineered and effectively commanded many popular ties of loyalty which a priori seem counter-intuitive or even inconceivable. Second, and perhaps even more perplexing to us today, upon closer inspection, the mode of (individual and group) mental relation to a faraway monarch/center and the symbolic dynamics of this connection seem only very slightly different from the mode of (individual and group) attachment to a putative 'nation.' For a number of reasons then, including the fact that the former is slightly less demanding on the imagination and has precedence in time, it seems that it served as a template and platform for the rise of the latter, both in theory and practice.

55 Interestingly, the notion of 'fatherland' seems to have never been personified.

Sultan Abdülmecid's 1846 Tour of Rumelia and the Trope of Love

Abstract ■ This article analyzes various aspects of the complex staging of Abdülmecid's 1846 tour of Rumelia, evaluates the immediate response it elicits from local Orthodox Christian Bulgars, and traces its momentous long-term impact on the shaping of the Bulgar community's self-conception. The article places Abdülmecid's tour within the larger context of his predecessor's groundbreaking series of imperial tours of the 1830s, and the still larger context of Mahmud II's far-reaching shift towards *ruler visibility* after his destruction of the Janissaries in 1826. This overarching process, which relied crucially on the annual royal birthday (*veladet*) and accession-day (*cülus*) celebrations in the Ottoman capital, the provinces, and abroad (first held in 1836), began, in the author's view, as yet another type of centralization – of subject (especially, non-Muslim) loyalties. It created an unprecedented avenue for direct regularized symbolic interaction between the ruler and the ruled, core and periphery of Ottoman society on the basis of innovative conceptions and practices of (inclusive) faith and (universal) kingship. Among non-Muslims, the broadening range of local celebrations of the center forged vertical ties of loyalty to the monarch, which were quite successful for at least two or three decades in the mid-nineteenth century. At the same time, it provided a vital venue for the expression of communal interests and the crystallization of communal agendas.

In the final analysis, this article lays out in broad strokes a new framework for the study of the advent and nature of modernity and the ethnonational mindset at the popular level in the mid-nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire.

Keywords: Abdülmecid, ruler visibility, trope of love, modernity, nationalism

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