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# Ottoman Attempts to Define the Rebels During the Greek War of Independence

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## Abstract

This article uses tools developed by conceptual history to examine what it might have meant for Ottoman officials in Istanbul to use the term *Rum milletı* during the Greek War of Independence. The revolution that started in 1821 has been seen as the first successful national uprising in Europe. It has long been ascertained that the Ottomans did not understand the national undertones that was seen in the declarations of the leaders of the Greek Revolution. Moreover, the Ottoman response to the eruption of this revolution has generally been examined in the context of Istanbul, Morea and the Danubian Principalities.

The goal of this paper is to broaden our understanding of the intellectual and spatial limits of the Ottoman response to the Greek War of Independence. It starts with an examination of the Ottoman response to the French Revolution and to the Serbian revolt of 1804 to follow the trajectories of the term *millet*. It points out to the limitations of the Islamic understanding of the revolts of subject populations by testing some intellectual tools that were used to surpass such limitations.

## Keywords

Greek War of Independence – nation – millet – Ottoman – Rum – fetva

## Résumé

Cet article utilise des outils développés par l'histoire conceptuelle pour examiner ce que cela aurait pu signifier pour les responsables ottomans à Istanbul d'utiliser le terme Rum milletı pendant la guerre d'Indépendance grecque. La révolution qui a

commencé en 1821 a été considérée comme le premier soulèvement national réussi en Europe. Il a longtemps été établi que les Ottomans n'ont pas compris les nuances nationales que l'on observait dans les déclarations des dirigeants de la révolution grecque. De surcroît, la réponse ottomane à l'irruption de cette révolution a généralement été examinée dans le contexte d'Istanbul, de Morée et des Principautés danubiennes.

Le but de cet article est d'élargir notre compréhension des limites intellectuelles et spatiales de la réponse ottomane à la guerre d'Indépendance grecque. Il commence par un examen de la réponse ottomane à la Révolution française et à la révolte serbe de 1804 avant de suivre les trajectoires du terme *millet*. Il souligne les limites de la compréhension islamique des révoltes des populations soumises en se servant de certains outils intellectuels qui ont été utilisés pour dépasser ces limites.

### Mots-clés

Guerre d'Indépendance grecque – nation – millet – Ottoman – Rum – Ftva

One of the first occasions Alexandros Ypsilantis is mentioned in an Ottoman document about the revolt in the Danubian Principalities is an order (*hüküm*) to el-Hac Mustafa Pasha, appointing him as the guardian of the Black Sea entrance to the Bosphorus.<sup>1</sup> The document offers minor details about a revolt that started right after the prince of Wallachia, Alexandros Soutsos died. According to it, Ypsilantis took advantage of the situation and entered Wallachia with his followers. He was also “disseminating papers that consisted of lies and nonsensical words claiming that their action was supposedly taking place as a *millet*, with the malicious intention of inciting a chain of sedition.”<sup>2</sup> Mustafa Pasha was ordered to “show utmost care for guarding the *reaya* in the said region in order not to allow them to be seduced from outside.”<sup>3</sup>

From very early on, Ottoman officials in the capital feared that the revolts in the Principalities might be generalized. They took precautionary measures as

1 Mustafa Pasha was residing in Edirne at the time. He was re-promoted as a vizier with this order. See: Ziya Yılmaz (ed.), Şânîzâde Mehmed Atâ'ullah Efendi, *Şânîzâde Tarihi II* (1223-1237 / 1808-1821), (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2008), 1077.

2 “ve güya bu hareketleri milletçe vuku' bulmuş olduğuna dâ'ir erâcif ve türrehâtdan 'ibâret taraf taraf kağıtlar dahi neşriyle tahrîk-i silsile-i fitne da'iyeye-i fâsidesine düşmüş oldukları” BOA, A. DVNSMHH (Mühimme Defteri) 239, p. 5, n.29, (Evasit Cemaziyelahir 1236 / 16-26 March 1821).

3 “ve havâli-i merkûmede bulunan re'âyânın hâricden ifsâd olunmayacak vechile muhâreseleri emrine mezîd-i ihtimâm” Ibid.

can be seen in Mustafa Pasha's appointment, but they continued to treat the first news from Wallachia as a local revolt. Therefore, Mustafa Pasha's order adds the qualifier "supposedly" (*güya*) to the possibility that this was a revolt that could be considered *millet-wide* (*milletçe*). But what exactly does *milletçe* mean in this context? Is this the oikumene of the Orthodox Church centered in Constantinople covering all the Orthodox populations in the Empire or is there any reason to see the more modern meaning of nation in *millet* in this context?

Focusing on the concept of *millet*, my aim in this paper is to broaden our understanding of the intellectual and spatial limits of the Ottoman response to the Greek War of Independence. I will argue that the term *millet* as used in Ottoman documents during the Greek War of Independence included both meanings mentioned above. By focusing on this term, I hope to contribute to the debate on the concept of *millet* and its transformation into the modern idea of the nation. This paper is theoretically inspired by conceptual history, especially the literature on *Begriffsgeschichte*. It is centered around a concept, *millet*; at a time of crisis for the Ottoman government, the start of the Greek War of Independence in 1821. As Koselleck argued "*Begriffsgeschichte* reminds us – even when it becomes involved with ideologies – that in politics, words and their usage are more important than any other weapon."<sup>4</sup> Without going so far as to say that the use of the concept of *millet* was the most important weapon in the Ottoman arsenal in its efforts to suppress the rebellion, I will argue that it was nonetheless an important weapon. The discussion is based on the ambiguity of the concept of *millet* and how Ottoman policy-makers tried to benefit from said ambiguity. As Koselleck puts forward "a concept must remain ambiguous in order to be a concept. The concept is connected to a word but is at the same time more than a word: a word becomes a concept only when the entirety of meaning and experience within a sociopolitical context within which and for which a word is used can be condensed into one word."<sup>5</sup>

This ambiguity was the result not only of processes that transformed the concept of *millet* within the Ottoman Empire, but also in relation to comparable, perhaps untranslatable,<sup>6</sup> concepts in European vocabularies, primary among them *nation*. So when it was used in the specific cases under discussion

4 Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, transl. Keith Tribe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 57.

5 Ibid, 85.

6 I have Alexandra Lianeri's conceptualization of translation in mind: "Translation does not belong. Although it is written in a certain language, time, and situation, translation offers itself as outside, at the frontier between different languages and times, neither apparent nor present, but obscure and receding." Alexandra Lianeri, "A Regime of Untranslatables: Temporalities of Translation and Conceptual History," *History and Theory*, 53 (December 2014), 473.

here, it was an amalgamation, parallel to Alexandra Lianeri's understanding: "Concepts are thus to be understood not as universals, but as amalgamations of different meanings, which include the totality of language uses within a certain historical setting, a totality that is encompassed within the concept itself, once it is detached from its context."<sup>7</sup>

This focus, I hope, will contribute to the study of concepts in Ottoman historiography. Ottoman historians have been recently studying certain concepts to further our understanding of the contexts they were employed in and to demonstrate their transformation. Nikos Sigalas focused on the shift in the meaning of the concept of *devlet* in the beginning of the 18th century. He showed how *devlet* slowly came to correspond to *état*. In the beginning, the word was used to define the personal charismatic character of the ruler. After losses in wars that resulted in the treaties of Karlowitz in 1699 and Passarowitz in 1718, Ottoman sultans could no longer claim to be the rulers of the entire world, thus the concept of *devlet* acquired a less personal and more institutional aspect and started to correspond to *état*, state.<sup>8</sup> The sultan's empire became one among the many *devlets* of the world.

Marinos Sariyannis, contributed to this discussion by "exploring how Ottoman elite authors represented society vis-à-vis the sultan."<sup>9</sup> He found that during the seventeenth century more and more Ottoman authors used the term *devlet* to refer to the state apparatus. Thus, he underlined a story that started before the treaty of Karlowitz. He also briefly discussed the development of the term *miri* from the private coffers of the sultan to the public/state treasury.<sup>10</sup>

Hüseyin Yılmaz took up a different concept and followed how different words were used to translate the French concept *liberté* throughout 19th century. The concept was first translated with *serbestiyet*, later with *hürriyet*, both coming with their own histories which resulted in quite different receptions and reactions from the Ottoman elite.<sup>11</sup> Whereas *serbestiyet* was a threat that was associated with sedition and secession, *hürriyet* became a key-word of Ottoman Empire's inclusion into the European state-system.

7 Ibid, 476.

8 Nikos Sigalas, "Devlet et État. Du glissement sémantique d'un ancien concept du pouvoir au début du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle" in *Byzantina et Moderna: mélanges en l'honneur d'Hélène Antoniadis-Bibicou*, (Athens: Alexandria, 2007), 399.

9 Marinos Sariyannis, "Ruler and state, state and society in Ottoman political thought," *Turkish Historical Review* 4 (2013) 86.

10 Ibid, 111-115.

11 Hüseyin Yılmaz, "From Serbestiyet to Hürriyet: Ottoman Statesmen and the Question of Freedom during the Late Enlightenment," *Studia Islamica* 111 (2016), 202-230.

By focusing on *millet*, I aim to contribute to this literature. I will first provide a brief review of the literature on the concept followed by a discussion of how *millet* became modern and took on the meaning of *nation* right after the French Revolution. Then I will focus on the Ottoman response to the Serbian revolts of 1804 and 1815 and to the Greek War of Independence, using bureaucratic documents and *fetvas* from the state archives in Istanbul, and official chronicles from Mahmud II's rule.

### *Millet in Ottoman Historiography*

The word *millet* comes from the Arabic word *milla* meaning religion. In the Quran it occurs fifteen times, always with that meaning.<sup>12</sup> In the Ottoman context, the word was believed to identify a special arrangement the Ottoman state had with three non-Muslim communities, Greek-Orthodox, Armenian and Jewish. According to this perception, Mehmet II institutionalized the *millet* system by recognizing, or instituting, the primacy of the religious leaders of these three communities over their flock after his conquest of Constantinople in 1453.<sup>13</sup>

This perception was successfully challenged by the seminal article of Benjamin Braude who questioned the myths surrounding Mehmed II and the foundations of the three *millets*. Braude defined the most common usage of the word to refer to “the community of Muslims in contradistinction to *dhimmis*.”<sup>14</sup> When it referred to Christians, it was generally referring to rulers of foreign states as leaders of the “Christian *millet*.”<sup>15</sup> A third meaning identified by Braude was its use for rare Jewish favorites, such as Joseph Nasi.<sup>16</sup> Arguing

12 Buhl, F. and Bosworth, C.E., “Milla”, in: *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs (eds.) Consulted online on 23 September 2018 <[http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_5199](http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_5199)>.

13 An example of this perception for the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople is Nikolaos I. Pantazopoulos, *Church and law in the Balkan Peninsula during the Ottoman rule*, (Thessaloniki: Institute for Balkan Studies, 1967). For a modern discussion of the legal situation of the non-Muslim populations of the Ottoman Empire before 1856, subscribing to a similar approach see: M. Macit Kenanoğlu, *Osmanlı Millet Sistemi: Mit ve Gerçek*, (İstanbul: Klasik, 2004).

14 Benjamin Braude, “Foundation Myths of the Millet System”, in Braude and Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire: the Functioning of a Plural Society*, (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1982), 70.

15 Ibid, 70.

16 Ibid, 71.

for the lack of the term in Ottoman documents before the 19th century, Braude continued to debunk the foundation myths of the three *millet*s. Specifically, for the Greek Orthodox, he argued that the first choice of Mehmed II to control the Greeks of the capital, the Grand Duke Loukas Notaras, pointed to the lack of a “predisposition to use ecclesiastical authority to control non-Muslim groups.”<sup>17</sup> He saw the authority invested in various Patriarchs in the earlier centuries as personal, rather than institutional. There was nothing to indicate the existence of an empire-wide system or community that was termed *millet* until very late, therefore “the concept of the *millet* system originated through a combination of myths.”<sup>18</sup>

A few years later, Michael Ursinus wrote an article that evaluated Braude’s argument. Agreeing with the latter on the inexistence of empire-wide communities that were led by the Patriarchs in the capital, Ursinus nonetheless raised objections. His main objection was to Braude’s argument that the use of *millet* system in Ottoman bibliography was due to the employment of Western sources which were inaccurate in their terminology.<sup>19</sup> Ursinus underlined the existence of the concept of *millet* as far back as early 18th century using documents collected and published by Ahmed Refik Altınay. Opposing Braude, he argued that *millet* was a political-religious concept, rather than an administrative one.<sup>20</sup>

Recent studies show that the development of the Armenian and Greek Patriarchates of Constantinople as leaders of Empire-wide flocks of their believers occurred in the second half of the 18th century. As per Paraskevas Konortas, the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople was still not an officially recognized entity at this time. Throughout the 18th century economic, social and political developments led the Ottoman authorities to recognize the collective character of the administration of the Patriarchate’s finances.<sup>21</sup> The term used to define the religious communities in the Empire was not *millet*, but rather *taife*, a term that was also used to define guilds. To further complicate the situation, the Patriarch was seen by the Ottoman governments as the leader not of a single unified *taife* but rather of numerous *tavâif* until

17 Ibid, 77.

18 Ibid, 70.

19 Michael Ursinus, “Zur Diskussion um ‘millet’ im Osmanischen Reich,” *Südost-Forschungen*, 48(1989), 201.

20 Ibid, 206.

21 See: Paraskevas Konortas, *Οθωμανικές θεωρήσεις για το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο - Βεράτια για τους προκαθήμενους της Μεγάλης Εκκλησίας 1705- αρχές 20ού αιώνα* [Ottoman Perceptions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate – Berats for the officials of the Great Church 17th- beginning of the 20th century], (Athens: Alexandria Pub., 1998).

late 16th century.<sup>22</sup> What Konortas brought into the discussion was not only important for the discussion of the term *millet*, but also for the term *Rum milleti*. Unlike several earlier historians, who tended to see the *Rum milleti* as existing since Mehmed II to encompass the entire Orthodox community in the Empire,<sup>23</sup> Konortas questioned whether the term *Rum* was even used for Orthodox communities before the 18th century. He found that Orthodox communities were described as *kefere* (infidels) until the 18th century. Then, only with the rise of the Phanariot elite, did the term describing the flock of the Orthodox Church of Constantinople changed into *Rum*.<sup>24</sup> Thus, *Rum milleti* was being shaped as an institutional religious community in late 18th century perhaps just a few decades before the term *millet* started acquiring a modern meaning that would correspond to *nation*.

Several historians undertook the task of identifying how the *millet* system affected the transition of various Ottoman communities into nation states. Niyazi Berkes, for example, read the issue in terms of the secularization of the Empire. The *millet* system, in his view, was an obstacle to institutional secularization attempts since the communities were led by their religious hierarchies. The system could sometimes stand in the way of Ottoman sultans as well, as in the case of Mahmud II's efforts to liberalize education.<sup>25</sup> For Berkes, especially since Mahmud II's rule "the *millet* was no longer a traditional institution which was a combined product of the Islamic and Christian medieval conceptions, nor was it a question of internal policy."<sup>26</sup> It became internationalized with the involvement of Great Powers in Ottoman politics, and the emergence of nationalist ideologies within Ottoman non-Muslim groups. A stepping stone in the nationalization of the *millets* was the Reform Edict of 1856 through which "the *millets* became little non-territorial republics and incipient 'nations.'"<sup>27</sup>

Kemal Karpat, further emphasized the contradiction between "religious-communal experience in the *millet*" which was the basis for the "ethnic-national identity" and "citizenship – a secular concept [which] was determined

22 Idem, "From Tâ'ife to Millet: Ottoman Terms for the Ottoman Greek Orthodox Community" in Dimitri Gondicas and Charles Issawi (eds.), *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy, and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, (Princeton, New Jersey: The Darwin Press, 1999), 171.

23 For example, Clogg sees a timeless "*millet-i Rum*" that is dominated by the most numerous among them, the Greeks: Richard Clogg, "The Greek *millet* in the Ottoman Empire" in Braude and Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire, 185-207*.

24 Konortas, "From Ta'ife to Millet", 173.

25 Niyazi Berkes, *The development of secularism in Turkey*, (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1964), 108.

26 Ibid, 96.

27 Ibid, 158.

by territory.”<sup>28</sup> He called for the study of the *millet* system to achieve an understanding of the shape nationalism took in post-Ottoman states in the Balkans and the Middle East. For him, the rise of nations from within the *millet* groups were the result of the “emergence of secular groups whose economic and political demands conflicted with their own church, with the organization of the *millet*, and with the traditional Ottoman concepts of authority.”<sup>29</sup>

Both authors subscribed to an idea of the *millet* as a system founded by Mehmed II after his conquest of Constantinople, although Karpat emphasized that “the Ottoman rulers treated their non-Muslim subjects as members of communities with specific ethnic and linguistic characteristics, rather than regarding all of them as part of one uniform *dhimmi* group.”<sup>30</sup> To them, the change within the *millets* that brought forth nationalization was the rise of secular primates who did not need the Patriarch as a justifier of their power, which further undermined the authority of the Patriarchates thus damaging the *millet* system. This idea would be shared by Halil İnalçık as well, who emphasized the 18th century as a time where the idea of the *millet* as a hierarchical social organization controlled from the capital was shaken due to a loss of power by the central authority.<sup>31</sup>

More recently, Dimitris Stamatopoulos took up the task of reading the transformation of *millet* communities in the last years of the Ottoman Empire. Unlike Berkes, Karpat or İnalçık, he emphasized the rise of the Phanariot groups and the emergence of the *millets* as a result of 18th century developments.<sup>32</sup> He did not assume that a well-defined system was broken down by the “decentralization” of the 18th century which led to the emergence of national groups. Rather, especially for the Greek Revolution of 1821, he saw the paradoxical emergence of “a relatively early revolutionary uprising” that was the result of the “preeminence of the Greek-speaking Orthodox clergy and the cultural dominance of [...] the Phanariots”.<sup>33</sup> Apart from this insight though, Stamatopoulos focuses on the transformation of the *millet* after the Greek Revolution. He reads this transformation through the necessities of Ottoman diplomacy vis-à-vis Russia

28 Kemal Karpat, “*Millets and Nationality: The Roots of the Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post-Ottoman Era*” in Braude and Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, 141.

29 Ibid, 152.

30 Ibid, 149.

31 Halil İnalçık, “Status of the Greek Orthodox Patriarch under the Ottomans”, *Turkish Review* v. 6 n. 30 (Winter 1992), 26.

32 Dimitris Stamatopoulos, “From Millets to Minorities in the 19th-Century Ottoman Empire: an Ambiguous Modernization”, S. G. Ellis, G. Háfadanarson, A. K. Isaacs (eds.), *Citizenship in Historical Perspective*, (Pisa: Edizioni Plus – Pisa University Press, 2006), 254-255.

33 Ibid.



and the Western powers, through the cliques within the Ottoman government and the Patriarchates and through power struggles among them.<sup>34</sup> To prevent any foreign power from gaining too much influence with a *millet*, the Ottomans allowed certain candidates to take up the Patriarchal throne and sometimes divided a *millet* by the creation of a new one as was the case of the Armenian Catholic *millet*.<sup>35</sup>

The above-mentioned works on the transformation of the *millet* system do not take into consideration the transformation of the term itself. The discussions revolve around how the *millet system* came into opposition with nation-building within the Ottoman Empire and how it conflicted or contributed to the creation of nations or minorities in the 19th century. In this way, *millet* and nation become antagonistic terms that do not have much in common. The translation of the concept of nation with the word *millet* in modern Turkish, in this perspective, seems to be a very late development.

To the contrary, Michael Ursinus defined three different indications of the word *millet*: “religion, religious community, and nation.”<sup>36</sup> He argued that gradually the word came to designate different non-Muslim peoples of Europe. Therefore, in the Turkish text of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774, it “means something like ‘a sovereign nation in the enemy’s territory.’”<sup>37</sup> Ursinus used the example of the first Serbian revolt to emphasize this meaning of the word within the Ottoman context. A few years after the start of the revolt in 1804 “the Porte commented by saying that the Serbs had claimed to form a ‘separate nation’ (*bashkadja bir millet*) with Belgrade and the other fortresses and fortified places under their own control, with Kara Yorgi as chief of all of them.”<sup>38</sup> Therefore, it seems that from very early on after the French Revolution, one meaning of *millet* was the modern concept of nation.

Going back to the document that started this paper after this brief discussion of the historiography of the term *millet*, is there any reason to read “*milletçe*” in our document as part of a new ideology, that of the nation? Given that the document in question is just repeating the reports received about the event, there is reason to believe that *millet* is used for the new ideology. That was the

34 See: Idem, *Μεταρρύθμιση και εκκοσμίκευση: Προς μια ανασύνθεση της ιστορίας του Οικουμενικού Πατριαρχείου τον 19ο αιώνα* [Reform and Secularization: Towards a reconstruction of the history of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of the 19th century], (Athens: Alexandria, 2003).

35 Idem, “From Millets to Minorities”, 258.

36 Michael Ursinus, “Millet”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Consulted online on 23 September 2018 <[http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_COM\\_0741](http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_COM_0741)>.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

point of the dissemination of these documents by Ypsilantis in the first place. Giving credit to Ottoman translators and officials who must have understood what was reported to them, requires us to translate this as *nation*-wide. But was this the only meaning that could be understood from it? And how exactly did *millet* acquire such a modern connotation?

### When *millet* Became Modern

Given the importance of the concept of nation for this paper, a discussion of its reception by Ottoman officials right after the French Revolution is crucial. As we have seen, the bibliography on the concept of *millet* rarely discuss when the modern idea of nation entered Ottoman politics. Earlier bibliography would date the change in Ottoman concepts like *vatan* (*patrie*) and *serbestiyet/hürriyet* (*liberté*) to later than 1800.<sup>39</sup> Bernard Lewis argued that “the revolution seems to have made little immediate impression on the Turks, who, like other contemporary observers, at first regarded it as a purely internal affair of no great consequence.”<sup>40</sup>

More recently, Fatih Yeşil demonstrated that Ottoman officials were more receptive of revolutionary concepts during the French Revolution than previously thought. Focusing on the reports of Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, Ottoman envoy to Vienna in 1792, Yeşil set out to demonstrate how Ratib Efendi “struggled to explain ideas in a language and within a culture which was ill-equipped to express concepts which were quintessentially Western European and above all modern.”<sup>41</sup> Through the reports of the ambassador, Yeşil demonstrated how modern concepts like *nation*, *patrie* and *liberté* entered into Ottoman language respectively as *millet*, *vatan* and *serbestiyet*. He also argued that Ratib Efendi was the first to use the concept of *millet* to translate *nation* with its very modern meaning.<sup>42</sup> Yeşil’s contribution notwithstanding, it is dubious whether we should give full credit to Ratib Efendi and completely ignore his dragoman Georgios Mourouzis. Moreover, there is reason to believe that *millet*

39 See: Bernard Lewis, “The Impact of the French Revolution on Turkey: Some Notes on the Transmission of Ideas”, *Journal of World History*, v.1 n.1 (1953), 107-108.

40 Idem, *The emergence of Modern Turkey*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 64-65.

41 Fatih Yeşil, “Looking at the French Revolution through Ottoman eyes: Ebubekir Ratib Efendi’s observations”, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, v 70/2, 284. See also: Idem, *Aydınlanma çağında bir Osmanlı kâtibi Ebubekir Ratib Efendi (1750-1799)*, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2011).

42 Ibid, 302.

was already used in the Ottoman capital, to translate the French word *nation* shortly before Ratib Efendi's reports.

This happened when the French National Assembly declared the First French Constitution of September 1791. The Ottomans were informed by the developments in official writing which were submitted by the French ambassador to Constantinople, Auguste de Choiseul-Gouffier.<sup>43</sup> An illuminating document is the correspondence of the French king, Louis XVI informing Sultan Selim III that "the papers declaring the new order (*nizam-ı cedid*) that was approved and decided upon by the national assembly of France (*cem'iyet-i milliye-i França*) were submitted to our pure direction and its acceptance was decided by our side as it was the beneficent outcome of the desires of the majority of the nation (*millet*)."<sup>44</sup> Already here, the new ideology of the *nation* is quite apparent. With the use of the word *millet* clearly referring to the modern idea, that of a political body making decisions for its own, there should be no argument that the concept entered Ottoman parlance.

Various other aspects of the modern idea of nation were also present in Ottoman documents using the word *millet*. I will mention some examples here from 1792-1798 to underline how the concept of *millet* acquired a modern meaning right after the French Revolution. In late 1792, the Habsburg ambassador in Constantinople gave the Sublime Porte a correspondence sent from his government which was summarized in Ottoman Turkish, to encourage the Ottoman government to reject Sémonville, the republican French envoy to Constantinople. The summary explains: "it is without doubt inconceivable for the ambassador of a *millet* which does not have a stable form of government

43 The ambassador himself was a peculiar character. Before becoming the ambassador, he wrote an account of his travels in Greek lands, with a preface eulogizing Catherine II's so-called Greek Project and deploring Turkish "fanaticism" wishing for the salvation of the Greeks. This was duly translated into Ottoman Turkish by English and Russian dragomans whose ambassadors tried to put the new French ambassador into a difficult position vis-à-vis the Sublime Porte. It is unfortunate that this translation did not surface yet; it would be an illuminating example for the discussion of concepts and their translations into Ottoman Turkish before the French Revolution See: Virginia Aksan, "Choiseul Gouffier at the Sublime Porte (1784-1792)" in Sinan Kunalp(ed.), *Studies in Ottoman Diplomatic History IV*, (Istanbul: Isis Press, 1990). For Catherine II's Greek Project see: Hugh Ragsdale, "Evaluating the Traditions of Russian Aggression: Catherine II and the Greek Project" in *The Slavonic and East European Review*, v. 66/1(1988), 91-117.

44 "cem'iyet-i milliye-i França tarafından savâb-dîd ve karâr-dâde olan nizam-ı cedîdi mübeyyen kağıdları bu def'a sûb-ı halisânemize takdim olunub milletin taraf-ı ekser ve ecseminin semere-i âmâlî i'tibârıyla kabulüne tarafımızdan karar virilmiştir" BOA, A.DVNSNMH\_d (Name-i Hümayun defteri) 4, p. 98, n. 91, this item is dated 20 Teşrin-i Evvel 1791 (20 November 1791). Another copy of the same document can be found at BOA, A.DVNSNMH\_d 9, p. 293, n. 289.

yet and which was not accepted by any state until today, to be accepted in the presence of his highness the Padishah of the Ottoman dynasty.”<sup>45</sup> It was impossible for the Ottomans to accept him due to pressure by Habsburgs, Romanovs and the British government, but it was possible for a *millet* (nation but can also be country here) to have an ambassador now.

Later, in 1793, the situation between pro-revolutionary French citizens and monarchist subjects of other countries became tense in the Ottoman capital as the War of the First Coalition was in full-swing. French citizens were allowed by the Ottoman government to use symbols of the Revolution like the tricolor cocarde. They were even allowed to plant a tree of liberty in the French embassy.<sup>46</sup> In September 24, 1793, two French *citoyens*, Roubeau and Guérin captains of merchant ships, were attacked by a crowd of Greeks and Russians while walking on the Pera street. They were saved by the Janissary guards (*yasağçısı*) of the French embassy. On October 1, 1793 the *voivoda* of Galata, with the intervention of the Russian ambassador, arrested Roubeau who had injured one of his attackers with his cane. He was given ten strikes of baton as punishment.<sup>47</sup> This event caused the strong protests of representatives of the French community of Constantinople and a pro-French dragoman of another country, Muradgea d’Ohsson of Sweden.<sup>48</sup> Muradgea explained in a meeting with the dragoman of the Divan that he had talked with the unofficial repub-

45 “henüz kendü sûret-i hükûmeti karagîr ve bu güne gelince hiçbir devletin makbûlü olmayan bir milletin ilçisi pâdişâh-ı âl-i ‘Osmân hazretleri nezdlerinde kabul olunmak muhâl kabilinden idüğü lâ şekdir” BOA, HAT 256/14698A, Undated.

46 The Ottomans seem to have been indifferent to the use of such symbols out of their desire to be neutral with pro-French overtones. One anecdote in Ahmet Cevdet Pasha’s *History* explains this indifference to the Austrian dragoman: “One day Austrian chief dragoman came to the chief secretary Raşid Efendi and said: ‘May God punish these Frenchmen as they deserve: They have caused us much sorrow. For heaven’s sake – if only you would have these cockades stripped off their heads!’ To this request Raşid Efendi replied: ‘My friend, we have told you several times that the Ottoman Empire is a Muslim state. No one among us pays any attention to these badges of theirs. We recognize the merchants of friendly states as guests. They wear whatever headgear they wish on their heads and attach what badges they please. And if they put baskets of grapes on their heads, it is not the business of the Sublime Porte to ask them why they do so. You are troubling yourself for nothing.’” cited in Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 52. This anecdote originated from the chronicle of Vak’anüvis Halil Nuri Bey, Seydi Vakkas Toprak (ed.), *Nuri Tarihi*, (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2015), 225.

47 Frédéric Hitzel, “Étienne-Félix Hémin, un jacobin à Constantinople”, *Anatolia Moderna (Yeni Anadolu)*, v. 1(1991), 42.

48 The Ottoman documents on the issue are as follows: The translation of the protest by Descorches, unofficial representative of the French Republic in Constantinople: BOA, HAT 258/14892, 25 Safer 1208 (2 October 1793); the translation of the protest by two French merchants recognized as the representatives of the community by the Ottomans: BOA,

lican representative in Constantinople, Descorches. D'Ohsson was told by him that this action was “insulting and belittling to the *millet* of France as a whole.”<sup>49</sup> He explains that he invited Descorches to have an audience with the dragoman of the Divan, but the representative declined “since an open apology to the *millet* of France was not made, it was not possible for him to accept a hearing.”<sup>50</sup> By their discussion a dragoman of a foreign embassy and the dragoman of the Divan were introducing the possibility of insulting a *millet* to the Ottoman Turkish language.

An additional and inseparable element of French national identity after the Revolution was the tricolor flag. For European monarchies it was such a controversial symbol that when the French ambassador in Vienna, Jean-Baptiste Jules Bernadotte, decided to hoist the tricolor flag over the embassy in 1798, it caused a crisis in the Habsburg capital, causing the ambassador to quit his position. This event was reported to the Ottomans by the chief dragoman of the French embassy, Ruffin, who asked the *Reisülküttab*, Çankırlı Ahmed Atıf Efendi, to send a letter of support to the French Directory. He asked Atıf Efendi to promise help to France in case another war broke out between France and Austria. Ahmed Atıf Efendi saw this request as an unnecessary attempt by the dragoman, who was taking care of the official business of the embassy after the death of the previous ambassador Aubert du Bayet, to ingratiate himself to the Directory. More importantly for our discussion, his report to the Sultan described what Ruffin asked him to write in his letter of support: “the Sublime State does not condone in any way the nerve the people of Vienna had in insulting the flag of the *millet* of France which is composed of three colors, and the ambassador who is the general named Bernadotte.”<sup>51</sup> It seems that Ahmed Atıf Efendi did not share the sentiment, still his report and his conversation with Ruffin brought into Ottoman diplomatic language, the idea that a *millet* had a flag that could be insulted.

In short, decades before the Greek War of Independence started, the concept of *millet* acquired the modern meaning of nation as part of its amalgamation of

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HAT 258/14876, 25 Safer 1208 (2 October 1793); the protest by Muradgea d'Ohsson delivered to the dragoman of the Divan, Georgios Mourouzis: BOA, HAT 258/14893, 26 Safer 1208 (3 October 1793). I will focus on the last one as it is the longest and the only one with details.

49 “umûmen França milletini tahkir ve terzil olundığını”, Ibid.

50 “mâdâmki França milletinin ‘alenen tarzıyyesi icrâ olunmaya görüşmek mâddesinde dahi nızâdâde olmak ihtimâlîm yokdur” Ibid.

51 “bu def’a Beç ahâlisinin elvân-ı seleseden ‘ibâret Fransa milletini bayrağını ve ilçisi Bernadot nâm cenerali tahkîre bu gûne cesâretlerini devlet-i ‘aliyye bir vechile tecviz itmediğinden” BOA, HAT 246/13898, Undated.

meanings. This transformation is crucial to the understanding of the Ottoman response to the Greek War of Independence.

### New Approaches to Ottomans Efforts during the Greek War of Independence

The Ottoman response had been totally missing from the classical accounts of the Greek War of Independence. Konstantinos Paparigopoulos was responsible for the master narrative of Greek historiography on the revolution. The sixth volume of his *Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους* [History of the Greek nation] published first in 1876 deals with the question of Greek independence from the Empire.<sup>52</sup> In his narrative, the Greek nation, a historical agent, starts its story from Antiquity and reaches modernity, always guarding its essence in an unbroken chain of events, perhaps except for the period of “foreign occupation.” It should be clear that in this narrative that was perfected in 1970s and 1980s by Apostolos Vakolopoulos,<sup>53</sup> there was no place for an Ottoman response to the Greek Revolution.

In the last decades this approach started to change. More historians started to deal with the Ottoman context of the War of Independence and collections and conferences started to include Ottomanists. In 1994, a collection of essays in honor of Despina Themeli-Katifori was published and it included one paper that focused on Turkish records in Rhodes by Maria Efthymiou although it does not directly deal with the Greek Revolution.<sup>54</sup> In 2007, an international conference was held in Corfu titled “The Greek revolution of 1821: a European event” whose papers were published first in Greek in 2009 and then in English in 2011.<sup>55</sup>

52 His work was complemented and edited to be published by Pavlos Karolidis in 1925: K. Paparigopoulos, *Ιστορία του ελληνικού έθνους* [History of the Greek nation], 6 vols. (Athens: Eleftheroudakis, 1925). On Pavlos Karolidis see: Vangelis Kechriotis, “Atina’da Kapadokyalı, İzmir’de Atinalı, İstanbul’da Mebus: Pavlos Karolidis’in Farklı Kişilik ve Aidiyetleri”, *Toplumsal Tarih*, 257 (May 2015), 28-35.

53 He discusses the Greek War of Independence in the last three volumes: Apostolos E. Vakalopoulos, *Ιστορία του νέου ελληνισμού* [History of Neo-Hellenism], 8 vols., 2nd ed. (Thessaloniki: 1974-1988).

54 Maria Efthymiou, “Περηφάνεια και οδύνη. Με αφορμή τις τουρκικές εγγραφές της Ρόδου” [Pride and Grief: Occasioned by Turkish records of Rhodes], *Η Επανάσταση του 1821 Μελέτες στη μνήμη της Δέσποινας Θεμελή-Κατηφόρη* [The Revolution of 1821: Studies in honor of Despina Themeli-Katifori], (Athens: ΕΜΝΕ, 1994), 223-38.

55 Greek version: Petros Pizanias(ed.), *Η ελληνική επανάσταση του 1821. Ένα ευρωπαϊκό γεγονός*, (Athens: Kedros, 2009). English version: Petros Pizanias(ed.), *The Greek revolution of 1821: a European event* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2011).

The conference had an entire section dedicated to the Ottoman context titled, “From the point of view of the Ottoman Empire.” This section has papers from Turkish and Greek Ottomanists such as Hakan Erdem, Sia Anagnostopoulou, Sofia Laiou, Şükrü Ilıcak and Greek historians who dealt with the Ottoman presence such as Nikos Theotokas and Nikos Kotaridis. Finally, the Society for the Study of Neo-Hellenism (ΕΜΝΕ) held a conference in Greek titled “Aspects of the Revolution of 1821” in 2015 the papers of which were published in 2018. One of the targets of the conference as emphasized by Christos Loukos in his introduction was the study of Ottoman documents relating to the Revolution.<sup>56</sup> The collection has a paper by Eirini Kalogeropoulou focusing on the reports by Yusuf Muhlis Paşa, commander of the besieged Patras during the Greek War of Independence.<sup>57</sup> As can be seen, Ottoman perspectives are quickly becoming an integral part of the research on the Greek Revolution. This new approach was also popularized in 2010 in the shape of a five-volume series directed by Thanos Veremis.<sup>58</sup>

In Ottoman and Turkish history writing, the Greek War of Independence was largely neglected, except in a few cases where it was used to demonstrate the total inability of the pre-*Tanzimat* state. Apart from the manuscripts written by participants<sup>59</sup> and official chroniclers,<sup>60</sup> the major historian to tackle the issue is Ahmed Cevdet Pasha who was rightfully termed the “Paparrigopoulos of Ottoman/Turkish historiography” by Hüseyin Şürü Ilıcak.<sup>61</sup> Ahmed Cevdet

56 Christos Loukos, “Οι στόχοι του συνεδρίου” [The aims of the conference] in *Όψεις της Επανάστασης του 1821 Πρακτικά συνεδρίου, Αθήνα 12-13 Ιουνίου 2015*, (Athens: ΕΜΝΕ, 2018), 15.

57 Eirini Kalogeropoulou, “Ζητήματα ανεφοδιασμού και πειθαρχίας στο πολιορκούμενο φρούριο της Πάτρας (1821-1825): η μαρτυρία του στρατιωτικού διοικητή Γιουσούφ Μουχλίσ πασά” [Aspects of Military Provisioning and Discipline in the besieged fortress of Patra: the testimony of the Military commander Yusuf Muhlis Paşa] in *Ibid*, 45-58.

58 *1821: Η γέννηση ενός έθνους - κράτους* [1821: The Birth of a Nation-State], Thanos Veremis and Iakovos Mihailides (eds.), 5 vols., (Athens: Skai, 2010).

59 Participant accounts would include: Mir Yusuf’s history, see Ahmet Aydin, “Mir Yusuf Tarihi: Metin ve Tahlili” (MA thesis, Marmara Üniversitesi, 2002); Mehmed Emin Vahid Pasha’s defense of his actions during Chios massacres, see: Mehmed Emin Vahid Pasa, *Tarih-i Vak’a-i Sakiz: Bin İki Yüz Otuz Yedi Tarihinde Sakızda Vuku Bulan İhtilali Beyan ıder* (Istanbul: Mekteb-i Sanayi, 1873); Kabudlu Mustafa Vasfi Efendi’s history, see: Ömer Koçyiğit, Cemal Kafadar and Gönül Alpay-Tekin (eds.), *Kabudlu Mustafa Vasfi Efendi Tevârih : (Analysis – Text – Maps – Index – Facsimile)*, (The Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, 2016).

60 Official chronicles of the period were written by Esad Efendi and Şanizade: *Vak’a-nüvis Es’ad Efendi tarihi: (Bâhir Efendî’nin zeyl ve ilâveleriyle): 1237-1241 / 1821-1826*, Ziya Yilmazer (ed.), (İstanbul: Osmanlı Araştırmaları Vakfı, 2000); *Şâni-zâde târihi: Osmanlı tarihi, 1223-1237/1808-1821*, Ziya Yilmazer (ed.), (İstanbul: Çamlıca, 2008).

61 Hüseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, *A Radical Rethinking of Empire: Ottoman State and Society during the Greek War of Independence (1821-1826)*, (unpublished PhD dissertation, Harvard University,

Pasha used the Greek War of Independence to underline the corruption of local powerholders and the inefficiency of the pre-*Tanzimat* state mechanism. This mechanism is not only responsible for the Greek grievances that result in the revolution in the first place, but also unable to suppress these “bandits” once the revolution started. Turkish historiography, with a few exceptions did not pay much attention to the matter until last decades.

More recently, various efforts have been made to situate the Greek War of Independence in its Ottoman context and to read Ottoman society through it. Hüseyin Şükrü Ilıcak rightly links the Ottoman response to the Greek Revolution to the earlier effort of dealing with local powerholders, an effort he terms the *de-ayanization* process. He also discusses the Ottoman perception of what was going on through the central bureaucracy’s Russophobia.<sup>62</sup> In focusing on earlier efforts of the Ottoman government to deal with local powerholders from the *boyars* of Moldowallachia to the Arab sheikhs and emirs, he situates the Greek War of Independence in its early 19th century context. According to him, these efforts “first of all, provoked rebellions on the part of the provincial power-brokers across religion and ethnicity; and secondly, reduced the Sublime Porte’s means of military recruitment.”<sup>63</sup> Thus when the Greek Revolution broke out, the Sublime Porte was in a real need of manpower, resorting to the age-old practice of utilizing Albanian irregulars. Intellectually, Ilıcak sees a resurgence of the Khaldunian world-view and a desire on the part of the sultan “to unite, mobilize and eventually transform his Muslim subjects under an identity which would transcend religion; and rally Muslims loyalties to the state under a constant state of mobilization by homogenizing Muslims in the militaristic ethos of the ancestors.”<sup>64</sup> As far as the Greek ambitions and Ottomans’ understanding of them are concerned, Ilıcak argues that the Ottoman officials regarded the Greek insurgents “as mere bandits and easily suppressible if the Muslims united against them.”<sup>65</sup>

Sophia Laiou reads the Ottoman reaction to the Samiot participation in the War, through the power strategies of local powerholders in Western Anatolia.<sup>66</sup>

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2011), 13.

62 Hüseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, *A Radical Rethinking of Empire*, 27-100.

63 Ibid, 98.

64 Ibid, 165.

65 Ibid, 170.

66 Sophia Laiou, “Η συμμετοχή των Σαμίων στην επανάσταση του 1821 και η αντίδραση του οθωμανικού κράτους” [The participation of Samiots in the Revolution of 1821 and the reaction of the Ottoman state], in *1821, Σάμος και επανάσταση: ιστορικές προσεγγίσεις, Πρακτικά Συνεδρίου, Σάμος, 28-29 Μαΐου 2010* [Samos and revolution: Historical Approaches. Conference Proceedings, Samos, 28-29 May 2010], (Athens: Ambrosia Publications, 2011), 41-56.



She argues that “in Ottoman political terminology of the epoch, modern concepts of “nation” (ἔθνος) and “patrie” (πατρίδα) were missing” although she concedes that *millet* and *taiife* were used to designate groups of people who tried to secede from the Empire.<sup>67</sup> In the Western Anatolian coast which was controlled by the provincial powerholders, corruption and disobedience undermined the Ottoman war effort.<sup>68</sup> The refusal of local *ayans* to provide soldiers constituted a major obstacle to Ottoman attempts to guard areas in the region against insurgents.<sup>69</sup> Laiou studies the case of İlyaszade İlyas Ağa, *mütesellim* of the *sancak* of Suğla, who contributed most to the Ottoman effort in the region. This case demonstrates how “different perceptions of the threat posed by the *Rum* insurgency” resulted in different responses by the *ayan* to Ottoman center’s calls for help.<sup>70</sup>

Hakan Erdem, on the other hand, discusses how Ottoman state’s use of Islamic law, and sometimes its failure to do so, affected *Rum* populations participating in the revolt or living close by.<sup>71</sup> He argues that “there can be little doubt that the *Sheriat* provided the legal framework within which the Greek revolt was dealt with.”<sup>72</sup> The challenge for the Ottoman officials was first to “differentiate the ethnic Greeks who started the rebellion from the other non-Greek members of the Greek *millet*” and second to “separate those ethnic Greeks who did not rise up in rebellion from those who physically opposed the Ottomans in armed conflict.”<sup>73</sup> However, the Ottoman state “went beyond the technical, legalistic framework provided by the *Sheriat* and began to take ‘pre-emptive’ and purely administrative measures” as the revolution endured.<sup>74</sup> Further, Erdem sees the Greek War of Independence as “a major channel through which the rulers of the Ottoman Empire made their acquaintance with the modern ideas of the age of nationalism.”<sup>75</sup>

Understandably, these works focus on the theatres of military operations and the Ottoman center. However, Ottoman central bureaucracy sent orders to almost every corner of the Empire warning governors and local power holders to be very careful about the *Rum* living in their territories. These governors were

67 Ibid, 43. My translation.

68 Ibid, 49.

69 Ibid, 51.

70 Ibid, 54.

71 Hakan Erdem, “Do not think of the Greeks as agricultural labourers’: Ottoman responses to the Greek War of Independence” in Faruk Birtek and Thalia Dragonas (eds.), *Citizenship and the nation-state in Greece and Turkey*, (London: Routledge, 2009), 67-84.

72 Ibid, 67.

73 Ibid, 68.

74 Ibid.

75 Ibid.

given permission to take their own measures without contacting the center in case of a sedition. I believe, this truly Imperial reach of the response should be taken into consideration and explained. Ilıcak has already done this to read Ottoman society before the Revolution, but he confines the discussion mostly to the capital and the theatres of the insurgency after 1821. Furthermore, there is an assumption that 1821 was the big moment for the Ottoman officials' encounter with the modern idea of national separatist insurgency. What is more, except for Laiou, the term *millet* is considered as separate and sometimes antagonistic to the modern concept of *nation*.

I would like to take a different path here. The first argument I would like to underline is that the creation of an empire wide response was not the way revolts were handled before 1821. Secondly, as I have tried to demonstrate, the concept of *nation* entered Ottoman political vocabulary as *millet* quite early. Moreover, there seems to be nothing in Islamic law that can link a revolt in one part of the Empire to communities hundreds of miles away. So, what made it possible to juxtapose non-combatants with combatants throughout the lands controlled by the Ottoman dynasty? The level of panic among Ottoman officials in the capital must have been occasioned by a new way of thought that linked the revolts in the Principalities and Morea to each Orthodox community in the Empire, through the ambiguity of the concept of *millet*.

I will attempt to explore this link through early Ottoman bureaucratic documents about the Greek War of Independence. As the Ottomans based their actions on Islamic law and rigorously defended their right to use it throughout the Greek War of Independence, I will focus on the *zimmi* and *harbi* statuses and some *fetvas* (religious opinions) dealing with revolts at this time. Moreover, as a point of comparison, mention will be made of the Serbian revolts of the preceding decades and the ways Ottoman bureaucracy defined and dealt with them.

### *Zimmis becoming harbis*

*Zimmet*, or *dhimma* in Arabic, was “the term used to designate the sort of indefinitely renewed contract through which the Muslim community accords hospitality and protection to members of other revealed religions, on condition of their acknowledging the domination of Islam.”<sup>76</sup> A *zimmi* is a person

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76 Cahen, Cl., “Dhimma”, in *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel, W.P. Heinrichs. Consulted online on 06 May 2018 <[http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912\\_islam\\_SIM\\_1823](http://dx.doi.org.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca/10.1163/1573-3912_islam_SIM_1823)>.

who benefits from such an accord. Generally, one acquired the status of a *zimmi* through being part of a community, meaning a city or a region rather than being a member of a religious category that went beyond the region.<sup>77</sup> A *zimmi* could lose that status and become a *harbi*,<sup>78</sup> a person at war with the Islamic community, by revolting and fighting against the Muslim state. But the annulment of *zimmi* status did not mean annulment for their spouses, children, relatives or religious community in general,<sup>79</sup> although in the Ottoman case revolt in a region meant the annulment of *zimmi* status for everyone in that specific region.

This background determined the Ottoman juridical ways of dealing with non-Muslim revolts in its domains. Focusing on early 19th century, these included the Serbian revolts of 1804-1813 and 1815-1817 and the Greek War of Independence of 1821-1829.

When it became clear in 1806 that the Serbian rebels would not put down their weapons and would join the Russian armies against the Ottomans, a *fetva* was obtained against them from the *şeyhülislam*, Ahmed Esad Efendi:

Would *jihād* be obligatory for the people of Muslim lands who are capable of warfare if the Serbian infidels among the people of *zimmet* who are residents of the region of Belgrade of the frontiers of Islam break the accord and revolt, appoint one among them as leader, perform the rites of disbelief openly, reject the payment of the *cizye*, invade and take an area of the Islamic lands, fight against the people of Islam and kill them, and if the people of the regions close to the said region are not able to fend them off? Answer: It would be.<sup>80</sup>

77 Ahmet Özel, "Gayri Müslim," *Türkiye Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi (TDVİA)*, v.13 (1996), 420.

78 Ahmet Özel, "Harbî," *TDVİA*, v. 16 (1997), 112-114.

79 Ahmet Yaman, "Zimmi (Fıkıh)," *TDVİA*, v. 44 (2013), 435.

80 "serhad-ı İslâmiyye'den Belgrad nevâhisinde mütemekkin ehl-i zimmet tâ'ifesinden Sırb keferesi naks-ı 'ahd ve 'isyân idüb içlerinden birini serkerde ta'yin ve âyin-i küfri 'alâ sebili'l-iştihâr icrâ ve cizyelerini edâdan imtinâ' ve bilâd-ı İslâmiyyeden bir beldeye istilâ ve ğalebe ve cihâden ehl-i İslam ile mukâtele ve muhârebe idüb belde-i mezbûr kurbunda olan bilâdın ahâlisi def'e kâdir olmasalar kefere-i merkûmeyi def' mümkün olacak bilâd-ı müsliminin cihada kâdir ahâlisi üzerlerine cihâd farz-ı 'ayn olur mı el-cevâb olur" This is a verbatim copy of the *fetva* in an order (*hüküm*) sent to Hüsrev Mehmed Pasha, governor of Bosnia: BOA, A. DVNSMHM (Mühimme Defteri) 223, p. 195, n.756, (Evasit Muharrem 1221 / 31 March-10 April 1806). The *şeyhülislam* in question should be Salihzade Ahmed Esad Efendi: Mehmet İpşirli, "ESAD EFENDİ, Sâlihzâde", *TDVİA*, v.11 (1995), 345-346.

It was rather easy to identify the Serbian rebels as they inhabited a well-defined territory, which the Ottomans called *Sırb*. So, the *fetva* made reference to the territory and defined the rebels as “Serbian rebels who are residents of the region of Belgrade.” This geographical focus was clearer but elaborated in less direct terms in an undated *fetva* by Mehmed Zeynelabidin Efendi about the second Serbian revolt:

Declare if it would be permissible to kill, exile or enslave the *zimmis* living in villages close to a town from the lands of Islam who *in toto* leave submission to those who hold power, invade some regions of Islam and deploy and entrench to fight against Muslims; since the villages of the said group (*taife*) will be considered the lands of war and the soldiers of Islam will be compelled to campaign and fight against them as required by the Sultanic order in accordance with the sacred laws, the said people will be considered *harbi* and the stipulations for *harbis* will apply to them. Answer: Allah knows the best. It would be.<sup>81</sup>

There is nothing to indicate that the Ottoman center tried to warn other provinces or take precautions against possible Orthodox uprisings in other parts of the Empire during the two Serbian revolts. This was partly due to the local understanding of a revolt allowed by Islamic law; those *zimmis*-turned-*harbis* had to be in a city or a region and their actions did not concern other *zimmis* in the Empire. As important was the way the Serbs were identified when they became *harbis*: *Sırp milleti*. A few years after the start of the revolt “the Porte commented [upon this] by saying that the Serbs had claimed to form a “separate nation (*bashkadja* bir millet) with Belgrade and the other fortresses and fortified places under their own control, with Kara Yorgi as chief of all of them.”<sup>82</sup> In the treaty of Bucharest, the Serbs were referred to as a *millet* which

81 “Bilâd-ı İslâmiyeden bir beldenin civârında vâkı’a karyeler[d]e mütemekkin olan zim-miler itâ’at-i veliyyü’l-emrden bi’l-külliye hurûc edip ba’zı bilâd-ı İslâmiyeye istilâ ve müslimîn ile muhârebe için temekkün ve tahayyüz eyleseler tâ’ife-i mezbûrenin karyeleri şer’an dâru’l-harb olmakla asker-i İslâm muktezâ-yı şer’-i şerif üzere sâdır olan emr-i sultânî mücebince üzerlerine sefer ve muhârebe etdiklerinde tâ’ife-i mezbûre hükmen harbîler olmakla harbî ahkâmı haklarında câriye olup katl ve seby ve istirkâkları câiz olur mu, beyân buyurula. El-cevâb: Allahu a’lem. Olur.” BOA, MŞH.FTV 1/147. The document and its transcription were published in: Sinan Çuluk and Yılmaz Karaca (eds.), *Osmanlı Arşivi’nde Şeyhülislam Fetvaları*, (Istanbul: T.C. Başbakanlık, Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, Osmanlı Arşivi Daire Başkanlığı, 2015), 187. The *fetva* is not dated. Mehmed Zeynelabidin Efendi served as *şeyhülislam* between 22 March 1815-27 January 1818. Tahsin Özcan, “Zeynelâbidin Efendi”, *TDVİA*, v. 44 (2013), 366-367.

82 M. Ursinus, “Millet”.

became almost standard in the internal correspondence of Ottoman officials after the treaty. “In the official correspondence with the Bosnian governors after the Peace of Bucharest (28 May 1812), published in Kemura’s work, the Serbs are indeed more often than not mentioned as “the Serbian nation” (*šrb milleti*), and it is repeatedly emphasized that one should try at any price to bring the Serbs back into the ra’iyyet relationship.”<sup>83</sup> In fact the description of Serbs as a *millet* survived for long becoming almost standard with their first virtual, later official autonomy.<sup>84</sup>

At this point, it should be clear that in early 19th century Ottoman terminology when an Ottoman *zimmi* population revolted becoming *harbis*, they also became a *millet*, in its modern sense of a nation. This was adding another layer to the ways of dealing with a revolt, potentially surpassing the definition of the annulment of the *zimmi* status in Islamic law. By becoming a *millet*, every member of the group became a suspect although they kept their *zimmi* status if they were sufficiently far from the geographic center of the revolt. In the Serbian case, this did not create major problems, as the region called *Srb* which gave the Serbs their Ottoman name as well, was well-defined. But in the Greek case a few years later things would be much more complicated. Because the *Rum milleti* was not only geographically more spread, but it had already existed in a very different meaning.

### Understanding what *milletçe* Means

This paper started with an order sent to Mustafa Pasha that mentioned the declarations of Alexandros Ypsilantis. We have seen that the order explained the claim of Ypsilantis for the *millet-wide* (*milletçe*) nature of the rebellion. The declaration of Ypsilantis, dated 24 February 1821 was translated into Ottoman Turkish, although the exact date of the translation is not given. This translation has also been used by Hakan Erdem in his discussion of the Ottoman

83 Ibid. Ursinus is referring to Šejh Seifuddin Kemura, *Prvi Srpski ustanak pod Karagjorgjem: od godine 1219. po Hid., ili, 1804. po I. do dobitka autonomije: po turskim vrelima*, (Sarajevo: Islamska Dionička Štamparija, 1914), 313-25.

84 Various responses to an order for collection of soldiers against the Serbs after the treaty of Bucharest refer to them as the “*Srb millett*”. See among others: BOA, A.DVN 2441/81, Evahir Cemaziyelevvel 1228 (21-31 May 1813); A.DVN 2441/85, 23 Cemaziyelevvel 1228 (24 May 1813); A.DVN 2442/1, 27 Cemaziyelevvel 1228 (28 May 1813); A.DVN 2442/3, 28 Cemaziyelevvel 1228 (29 May 1813).

perception of the rebellion.<sup>85</sup> Here, I would like to first focus on some uses of *milletçe* in Ottoman documents from the period and then highlight certain points of the Ottoman translation of the said declaration related to this paper's focus.

Since religious community was still the predominant meaning of the concept of *millet*, it is not surprising to see it used in that connotation. When new Patriarchs were elected by the Holy Synod it was described as a *milletçe* election. The Ottomans emphasized this nature of the new Patriarch's election prior to the execution of Gregorius v. So, a document describing precautions to be taken during the execution relates that after the imprisonment of Gregorius a new "Patriarch will be chosen by the *millet (milletçe)*."<sup>86</sup> It was important for the Ottomans to create an air of non-interference in Patriarchal affairs especially in face of Russian pressure. By insisting on the election being made by the *millet*, i.e. by the Holy Synod following religious rules, they could argue that they followed due procedure and did not interfere with the Orthodox canon.

When the elected Patriarch, Eugenios II died a year later, an order (*buyuruldu*) was sent "addressing the entire *millet* for the election of another suitable [candidate] by the *millet (milletçe)*."<sup>87</sup> Thus, Anthimos III was elected *milletçe* as well. Here the same concept that we saw in Ypsilantis is used with different meanings. The election of the Patriarch referred to the Holy Synod, but the rebellion that Ypsilantis started did not have much to do with them. Even when the Ottomans executed Gregorius v and many of the metropolitans of the Synod this connection was not established. Besides, the declarations of Ypsilantis made no mention to them. There certainly was a difference between the "entire *millet*" Ottomans addressed when they wanted the election of a new Patriarch and the *millet* Ypsilantis addressed for the Revolution. To underline this difference, we should focus on what Ypsilantis declared.

To start with, we may speculate where the idea that this was a *millet*-wide rebellion originated from. The declaration invites the *nation* to assemble and elect its rulers, the English translation of Richard Clogg reads:

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85 Hakan Erdem, "Do not think of the Greeks as agricultural labourers", 78-79. The Ottoman translation is in BOA, HAT 927/40280D. An English translation can be found in Richard Clogg, *The Movement for Greek Independence 1770-1821 A collection of documents*, (London: Macmillan, 1976), 201-203. I will use the Greek original in Nestor Kamavianos and Leonoros Vranousis, *Η Εταιρεία των Φιλικών και τα πρώτα συμβάντα του 1821* [The Philiki Etereia and the First Events of 1821], (Athens: Academy of Athens, 1964), 24-28.

86 "milletçe intihâb olunacak Patrik" BOA, HAT 1315/51285, Undated.

87 "milletçe ahar bir münasibinin intihâb ve ifâdesiçin 'umum millete hitâben" BOA, HAT 279/16056, Undated.

The nation (*το ἔθνος in the original*) assembled will elect its rulers, and to this highest parliament all our acts will yield.

Let us move then with a common spirit. Let the wealthy give up part of their own property, let the holy shepherds instill in the people their own example, and let the educated advise what is beneficial. Those fellow countrymen serving as soldiers and civilians in foreign courts, giving thanks to the power for which each works, let them all rush to the great and brilliant career already opened up, and let them offer to the Motherland the debt they owe; and as brave men let us all take up arms, without wasting time, with the unconquerable weapon of bravery, and I promise you in a short while victory, and after victory everything that is good.<sup>88</sup>

The Ottoman translation describes this invitation as addressed to *milletimiz* (our nation) who will elect its rulers. In the same document, the translation of another declaration by Ypsilantis to the *Rum taifesi* (Greeks, but also the Orthodox people) invites “Morea, Albania, the environs of Yenişehir (Larissa), the country of Serbia, the lands of Bulgaria and the Aegean islands, in short the entirety of the lands of Rumelia” to take up arms to defend the cross.<sup>89</sup> I think already here, *millet* takes up meanings that can refer to multiple layers of identity. On one hand, *millet* is the *nation* that Ypsilantis refers to with an ancient character and a desire to free itself from Ottoman yoke. On the other, *millet* is the religiously defined community of the Orthodox of the Ottoman Empire, especially of Rumelia.

*Rumili* is another interesting term to take up. Ypsilantis constantly refers to *Ἑλλάς* (Greece in Clogg’s translation). The Ottoman translation turns this into *Rumili*. It might be argued that this term is making the concept more familiar to an Ottoman audience. This way, the meaning Ypsilantis is imbuing the term with might be lost. However, it is also the best term available to give the full meaning of what Ypsilantis is trying to highlight. After all, *Rumili* means the land of the *Rum*, the land of the Greeks. Here again, we can read multiple layers of meaning that bring together old understandings with modern connotations turning this geographical term into a concept.

The most glaring term in the translation, as highlighted by Hakan Erdem, is *Yunani*. The declaration starts “*Ἡ Ἰωνανίλων*” (*ὦ Ἄνδρες Ἑλληνας* / O Hellenes). It refers to “*şecâ’atli Yunaniler*” (*ὦ ἀνδρείοι καὶ μεγάλοψυχοὶ Ἑλληνας* / brave and

88 Richard Clogg, *The Movement for Greek Independence*, 202.

89 “Mora ve Arnabudluk ve havâli-i Yenişehir ve memleket-i Sırb ve diyâr-ı Bulgar ve cezâ’ir-i bahr-i sefid hâsılı bi’l-cümle memalik-i Rumili” Ibid.

magnanimous Greeks), “*sefâin-i Yunan*” (Ελληνικά πλοία / Greek ships), “*kalb-i Yunani*” (ελληνική ψυχή / Greek soul). It can be argued that the translation makes a clear distinction between *Rum* and *Yunan*. However, the translation is introduced as “the translation of the seditious declaration of the bandit Alexandros Ypsilantis to the *Rum taifesi*.”<sup>90</sup> Moreover, another translation on the same document of a different declaration addresses the *Rum taifesi* in Wallachia and Moldavia and starts with “*Yâ Rumlar*” (O Rums!) while using similar ancient references and utilizing occasionally the word *Yunani*. Unfortunately, I am not aware of the Greek original or an English translation of this other declaration, though it is from Ypsilantis again. Still, I think this demonstrates how the term *Rum* in Ottoman use incorporated ancient, modern, nationalist and religious meanings all at the same time. *Rum* had part of *Yunani* (Hellene) in it now.

How did the Ottomans really perceive these differences then? How can we argue that they were not totally ignorant except the translators? To demonstrate that these layers of understanding were available to Ottomans themselves, I will first focus on the chroniclers then on Ottoman documents.

### Şânizâde’s Contradictions

There are several Ottoman accounts dealing with the Greek Revolution. We have two from official chroniclers Şânizâde and Esad Efendi, and several others from people that participated in the Ottoman efforts to quell the rebellion. The latter include the accounts of Mir Yusuf and of Kabudlu Mustafa Vasfi Efendi who described their experiences as part of the expedition in Morea.<sup>91</sup> We can also include Mehmed Emin Vahid Pasha’s account of the massacres in Chios in this category.<sup>92</sup> As this paper aims to uncover official approaches that were formulated mostly in the capital, I will focus on Şânizâde and Esad Efendi.

Şânizâde examined the first year of the revolution, while Esad Efendi took up where he left, to write the events until 1826. The many-layered concepts that were highlighted in this paper are all over Şânizâde’s work. It appears that he was struggling to give meaning to the rebellion and to define the rebels. His account brings together old and new understandings of rebellions in a seemingly chaotic manner.

90 “Aleksândri İpsilândi nâm şakinin Rum tâ’ifesini izlâl ve ‘isyâna teşvik kasdıyla geçen mâh-ı Şubâtn yirmi dördü ya’ni Fi 7 Ca 236 tarihiyle müverrih neşr eylediği bir kıt’a beyânâme-i şekâvet ‘allâmın tercemesidir.” Ibid.

91 Both accounts were transliterated. Mir Yusuf’s as an MA thesis: Ahmet Aydın, “Mir Yusuf Tarihi”, Kabudlu’s was published: Ömer Koçyiğit (ed.), *Tevârîh*.

92 Mehmed Emin Vahid Pasa, *Tarih-i Vak’a-i Sakız*.



This is very apparent in various parts where he discusses the causes of the rebellion. In the first section about the Greek revolution, titled “the commencement of the *Rum* sedition” (*Şurû-i fesâd-ı Rûm*), he connects the events to the operation that was undertaken against Ali Pasha of Ioannina. He argues that Ali Pasha was left with no other option than sending instigators to places like Wallachia, Moldavia, Morea and Euboea (Eğriboz/Negroponte) which were “gathering place(s) of the *Rum*” (*mecma‘i Rûm*).<sup>93</sup> After listing how different men from Ali Pasha’s circle went to different places to sow discord among the non-Muslims, he never returns again to Ali Pasha as a factor behind the rebellions.

In a later section titled “Excitement of rebellion among the *Rum* and its explanation” (*Heyecân-ı ‘isyân der-meyân-ı Rûmiyân ve tafsîl-i esbâb-ı ân*), he tries to put the rebellion in a historical context. He mentions Russian plans concerning the Orthodox populations of the Empire starting with Catherine II “who named one of his sons Constantine, hoping that he would become the ruler of the place with his name.”<sup>94</sup> He argues that some kings of Europe gathered in Austria and agreed on their desire to see the “*millet* of Christianity in its entirety in security, comfort and liberty (*âzâdelik*)” which resulted in the *Rum* within the Ottoman Empire to “hope to quit the Ottoman rule in an opportune time.”<sup>95</sup> The “reason for the sleeping sedition to awake” according to Şanizade was a declaration by Russian Foreign Minister Ioannis Kapodistrias who was in Corfu in 1819. He says that this declaration was disseminated in all corners and islands of *Rumistan*.<sup>96</sup> Then, he goes on to give a full translation of the declaration which was written in French.<sup>97</sup>

93 Ziya Yilmazer (ed.), *Şânizâde Tarihi II*, 1012.

94 “oğullarından birine Kostantîn tesmiyesi, hem-nâmı olan mahal hâkimi olacağı zu‘muna mebni” Ibid, 1033-34. Şanizade is referring to the infamous Greek Project of Catherine II. See: Hugh Ragsdale, “Evaluating the Traditions of Russian Aggression.”

95 “Hiristiyan milletinin emn ü râhat ve âzâdeliğini dahi meclislerinde der-meyân ederek bi’l-ittifâk iltizâm etdiklerini” and “Devlet-i ‘aliyye ra’iyyetinde bulunan Rûmlar’m bir vakt-i fursatda zîr-i hükm-i ‘Osmânî’den hurûc ümmîdlerine sebep” Ziya Yilmazer (ed.), *Şanizade Tarihi II*, 1034.

96 “Lâkin heyecân-ı fitne-i der-hâbın akvây-ı cümle-i esbâbı olan mâdde budur ki, Rûmiyyü’l-asıl olup, hâlâ Rusya’da Baş-vekîl olan Korfalı Kapodistiri nâm minister bundan akdem bin iki yüz otuz dört senesio sila behânesiyle Rusya’dan me’zûnen Korfa Adası’na gelüp, anda bilâ-izmâ Rûmiyyü’l-‘ibâre bir ta’lîm-nâme tahrîr u inşâ ve Rûmistân’m cemî‘ cezâyir u enhâsma neşr u isrâ eyledi” Ibid, 1037.

97 Şânizâde’s translation is in Ibid, 1037-1043. The French version can be found in Kostas Dafnis (ed.), *Αρχείον Ιωάννου Καποδίστρια, τ. ΣΤ’* (The archives of Ioannis Kapodistrias v. 6), (Kerkyra: Εταιρεία Κερκυραϊκών Σπουδών, 1984), 11-20.

Şanizade misinterprets what Kapodistrias is talking about. Kapodistrias condemned revolutions, for him liberty was something to be attained through education: “Nous le répétons, c’est de l’éducation morale et littéraire de la Grèce que les Grecs doivent s’occuper uniquement et exclusivement; tout autre objet est vain, tout autre travail est dangereux.”<sup>98</sup> If the Greeks wanted to attain civilization and liberty it was going to be through education and respect for religion. It is hard to see this declaration as a call for revolution.

Still, it is interesting to see how both authors use their concepts. Kapodistrias does not refer to Hellenes for one, he constantly talks about *les Grecs* and *la Grèce* which become *Rumlar* and *Rumistan* in Şanizade. However, Kapodistrias uses modern concepts even though he has a conservative approach. He talks about “les Grecs appelés par leur dévouement au service de notre patrie” which find its way in to Ottoman Turkish as “*vatanımız (notre patrie) hudmetine da’vet olunan Rûmlar.*” He talks about the Orthodox church as “la sauvegarde de la nation” which becomes “*milletin (nation) muhâfiz-ı hâmisî*” in Şanizade. He talks about “la régénération de la nation” which is translated as “*milletin (la nation) yeniden hayât bulması.*”

In short, although Şanizade misunderstands/misinterprets the declaration of Kapodistrias, he uses words in their modern context adding new significance to concepts like *millet* and *vatan* and bringing in to Ottoman Turkish discourses like the regeneration of a nation. He also separates the Church from the *millet* which is a total divergence from the classical Ottoman understanding. Şanizade was wrong to see an incitement to revolution in the text, but it underlines his line of argument that the Greek Revolution was a product of Christian agitators and Great Powers outside of the Empire.

However, this is not the only approach Şanizade has. In the same section before his translation of Kapodistrias, he describes the developments among the Greeks (*Rum*) as such:

They strove to disseminate sciences and industry among their members and constructed new schools in places like Morea, Mount Athos, Smyrna, Chios and Ayvalık and brought salaried teachers from Frankish lands. In each of these [schools] they conversed about and studied books of sciences and industry that included tools for deliverance (*istihlâs*) and liberation (*azadegî*), especially those publications that stir national zeal (*gayret-i millîye*) and remind of [their] original state (*keyfiyyet-i aslîyye*). They were not content with this and they sent groups of youths to the Frankish lands and they examined with their own eyes the reasons for

98 Ibid, 13.

the deliverance (*restgârî*) of the independent nations (*mîle-i müstakille*). Some of them served in the wars and battles in land and sea and gained familiarity in warfare and earned proficiency in training and mechanics. These [youngsters] returned and became ready to be employed when necessary.<sup>99</sup>

Here we have a modern approach. Greeks want to be free, a desire that defines nationalist ideology. They follow and learn what other independent nations are doing. They learn about their own “original state” and inevitably this leads to a rebellion. This is an approach that is different than simply reading foreign machinations into the rebellion.

In yet another section titled “Collection of important news from Europe” (*İcmâl-i havâdis-i ‘azîme-i Avrupa*), Şanizade takes yet another step to present the Greek Revolution as part of great revolutions taking place all around Europe: “The great seditions that has been circulating in European countries in the last few years are like sketches and introductions to the Greek sedition (*Rum fesâdı*) that appeared in the Imperial domains.”<sup>100</sup> He goes on to discuss the revolutions of 1820 which erupted in Napoli and Spain. It should be interesting to note that he describes how the people of Spain revolted in every part of the country and shouted: “Long live the nation (*millet*)! Long live the law!”<sup>101</sup> The connection between these revolutions and the Greek one seems not to have been lost on Ottoman policy makers as well. When the Greeks serving in the navy were found to be dangerous, the Ottomans decided to look to other places to get their sailors. They first thought about Neapolitans

99 “miyân-ı efrâdında neşr-i fûnûn ü sanâyi’ê ictihâd birle Mora ve Aynaroz ve İzmir ve Sakız ve Ayvalık ve sâ’ir mecma’i Erâvim mahallerde müceddeden mektebler binâ vü icâd ve her birine Firengistân’dan muvazzaf mu’allimler celb ü ik’ad ederek, her birinde vesâ’il-i istihlâs ü âzâdegî olan mecâmî-i fûnûn u sanâyi’i ve bâ-husûs muharrik-i gayret-i milliyye ve müzekkir-i keyfiyyet-i asliyye-i mü’ellefât-ı bedâyi’i müzâkir ve mut âli ‘olduklanna kânî’ olmayup, takım takım şübbânî Firengistân’a irsâl ile anlar re’yed-‘ayn mîle’-i müstakillenin esbâb-ı rest-gârîlerine dikkat ve ba’zıları berr ü bahrda vukû’ bulan harb ü kıtâllerinde bî’l-fi’l ma’iyyetle hıdmet ederek, ahvâl-i cengle ülfet ve ta’lîm ü hi-yelde tahsîl-i mehâret etdikden sonra, merkuamları yanlarına i’âde ve hîn-i iktizâda istih-dâma âmâde etdiler.” *Şânizâde Tarihi II*, 1035.

100 “Bir iki seneden berü memâlik-i Avrupa’da dâ’ir olan fiten-i ‘uzmâ bu defa derûn-i Memâlik-i Hâkâniyye’de zâhir olan Rûm fesâdına nîreng ve mukaddime misillü bir ma’nâ olduğuna” *Ibid*, 1155.

101 “Millet var olsun, kânûn dâ’im olsun!” deyü çağırışur oldular. *Ibid*, 1158.

but “it was considered that their employment in the imperial navy would be harmful as they were [now] used to revolt and they naturally inclined towards rebels.”<sup>102</sup>

We can now move on to how Şanizade describes the rebels and build on his use of concepts like *Rum* and *millet* some of which we have already seen. The most basic thing that can be said about his approach is his desire to portray the rebellion as a plan that was taken up by the entirety of the *Rum millet-i*. For example, after a brief discussion of the Vienna Congress and the foundation of the Holy Alliance, the members of which he thought “took the liberation (*serbestiyet*) of all Christian nations (*Kıristiyân milletlerinin*) upon themselves,” he jumps to the *Rum* of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>103</sup> He argues that this plan was “known to all *Rums* and a secret pact and agreement among approximately eighty thousand vermin, to save the *millet-i Rum* from the Islamic government was made through the intermediacy of the Phanariots, the *voivodes* of the Two Principalities [Wallachia and Moldavia] and the priests and merchants of other places where there were leaders of the *Rum*.”<sup>104</sup>

In various parts of the chronicle, Şanizade emphasized his belief that this was a rebellion of the entirety of the *Rum millet-i*. Thus, we see him describing the Greek Revolution as “the revolt of the entire *millet-i Rum*.”<sup>105</sup> There was no difference of social class among them as “the strong and the weak among the *reaya*, all of them, are aware of the sedition and are all of one heart and mind.”<sup>106</sup> The *Rum* had united against the people of Islam.<sup>107</sup>

He believed that some of them may not have revolted because of their specific conditions, but it did not mean that they were loyal. Describing the massacres around the town of Ayvalık and the island of Cunda, he laments the delay in the precautions allowing the revolt to erupt:

102 “İsyâna alışarak erbâbma bi’t-tab’ meyl etmiş olmaları der-hâtır olduğu cihetle, bunların dahi Donanma-yı hümayûn’da istihdâmları mazarratlı olacağı mülahaza olunmuş.” Ibid, 1271.

103 “cemî’ Kıristiyân milletlerinin serbesiyetini cümlesi iltizâm edinmiş oldukları” Ibid, 1060.

104 “bi’l-cümle Rûmların ma’lûmu idüğü ve Fenarlı takımı ve Memleketeyn voyvodaları ve sâ’ir sanâdîd-i Rûm bulunan mahallerin cümlesinde papas ve bâzergân makuleleri vesâtatiyle takriben seksan bin kadar haşerât beyinde sırrânî ‘akd-i ‘ahd ü misâk ile Millet-i Rûm’un hükûmet-i İslâmiyye’den tabîisine ittifak olunduğu” Ibid.

105 Ibid, 1079.

106 “re’âyânın akviyâ vü zu’afâsı mâdde-i fesâda bi’l-cümle vâkıf olarak, ‘umûmen yek-dil oldukları” Ibid, 1103.

107 “Rûmlar ehl-i İslâm ‘aleyhine ittifâk etmiş” Ibid, 1177.

The *Rum milleti* is ascertained to be in alliance in sedition with their lower and higher classes and these people [in Ayvalık and Cunda] needed [to look] loyal like the *reaya* of some other places who could not bring to light their treachery until now due to necessity. Such a flourishing place of the Sultan could have been protected from pillage and destruction if only those who were the causes of sedition among them were punished with what they deserved.<sup>108</sup>

All this would have been consistent if Şanizade was promoting harsh measures against every *Rum* in the Empire. But as we have seen there was hardly any basis in Islamic law to equate those who rebelled with those who could rebel. Therefore, Şanizade happily reported some measures taken to protect the *reaya* who did not rebel and condemned some officials who went too far in their measures. After reporting the precautions and guarantees given to the *Rum* and foreign inhabitants of İzmir, he reports that “the oppression of the respectable *reaya* who were not involved in the rebellion and of the foreigners (*müste'men*) was against the imperial consent.”<sup>109</sup>

This was one of the things the Ottoman government found hard to control. One example Şanizade cites is about Kara Mehmed Ağa who was tasked to gather weapons from non-Muslims between Istanbul and Edirne. It seems Kara Mehmed Ağa went out of his way to execute non-Muslims as he saw fit, a behavior that bothered the government. The order sent to him complains: “Though you are writing to us that you have executed the infidels (*gavurlar*) a number of times until now, their crimes are not clear.”<sup>110</sup> Kara Mehmed Ağa was reprimanded that

your task is to disarm the *reaya* of the place you are in and make sure of its protection. It is not to execute the infidels (*gavurlar*) with or without crimes. It is necessary to deal with the traitors that are involved in the sedition among the infidels (*gavurlar*), but it is not necessary to do anything to those *reaya* who are respectable and disciplined. Even those

108 “Rûm Milleti'nin 'ale't-tahkik küçüğü ve büyüğü fesâd ü mel'anetde müttetikler iken, ile'l-ân mecbûren izhâr-ı hıyânet edemeyan ba'zı mahaller re'âyâsı gibi bunlar da lâ-'ilâc muhtâc-ı itâ'at olup, içlerinde bâdî-i fesâd ü mel'anet olanların birer ikişer cezây-ı mâ-yelikları birer takrîb tertîb olunarak, öyle bir arz-ı ma'mûre-i hazret-i Pâdişâhî masûn-i târâc ü harâbiyyet olur idi.” Ibid, 1246. A similar description is in Ibid, 1188.

109 “ehl-i ırz olan ve şakâvetde medhali olmayan re'âyâya ve müste'men takımına askerî tâ'ifesinden te'addî, nzây-ı âliye münâfi olmağla” Ibid, 1193.

110 “Sen şimdiye kadar böyle birkaç kerre gavurları salb eylediğini yazıyor isen de, cürm ü kabâhatleri ne olduğu anlaşılmıyor.” Ibid, 1195.

guilty infidels (*gavurlar*) involved in the sedition that were caught, are prisoned and reported even by the *viziers* before the necessities are carried out.<sup>111</sup>

So, in Şanizade we see the *Rum milleti* as the Orthodox population of the Empire, but also as Greek nationalist rebels. They are all guilty of the sedition, however not everyone is responsible for it. They are *Rum*, infidels (*gavur*), *reaya*, *millet*, rebels (*ussât*), fugitives (*hazele*) and various combinations of these. The many layers of these concepts were what allowed the Ottomans to take various measures.

### Esad Efendi: Role of the Clergy and Return to Submission

Esad Efendi started his history from where Şanizade had left. Therefore, he doesn't have much to write on the start of the revolt and its causes. I will highlight his description of the role of the clergy, his discussion of some officials who were tasked with suppressing the rebellion and his characterization of cases where certain communities tried to return to the status of *reaya*.

In a section titled "The death of the former governor of Rumelia Hurşid Ahmed Paşa and summary of the situation in Morea until that month," Esad Efendi goes over the conditions leading to the rebellion in a condensed version of Şânîzâde's. Like him he blames the preparation of the rebellion on Ioannis Kapodistrias who was in Corfu and argues that he crossed over to Patra on the Ottoman side, loaned money from England and plotted a *reaya* attack on the Muslims of the peninsula on the Easter night. "He and his allies sent priests in secret to villages and towns to declare their baseless intentions to the entire *millet-i Rum* of perverse rites."<sup>112</sup> These priests threatened people with excommunication in case this plan was informed to the Ottomans. Esad Efendi continues to talk about priests stirring the population for a rebellion. So, for example, he tells us that the metropolitan of Yenişehir (Larisa) was one of

111 "Hâlbuki senin me'mûriyyetin, re'âyânın es- lihası devşirilerek olduğun mahal- lin muhâfazasıdır, yohsa rast geldiğin gavurları suçlu suçsuz i'dâm etmek olmayup, gavurların mürtekeb oldukları fesâdda medhali olan hâ'inlerin haklarından gelinüp, kendü hâlinde 'ırz u edebiyale olan re'âyâya bir şeyi denilmek lâzım gelmeyeceğinden, o makule suçlu ve fesâdda medhali olan gavurlar bile ele geçdikde salb ü siyâset, muktezây-ı düstûriyyetinden olan vüzerây-ı 'izâm hazerâtı bile habs edüp, keyfiyyeti ifâde vii beyân ederek, ba'dehû muktezâsmı icrâ edeyolar." Ibid, 1196.

112 "niyyet-i bâtlıların bi'l-cümle Millet-i Rum-i dalâlet-rusûma i'lân ü tenbîh için hafiyen kurâ vü kasabâta papaslar tesyâr eylediler." Ziya Yılmaz (ed.), *Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, 145.

those priests who were “friends of Satan” who were responsible for the treachery that emerged from the “rebel *millet* of Rum” (*millet-i bağıye-i Rum*).<sup>113</sup>

In most of these cases the connection between the rebellion and the clergy underlines the religious nature of the *Rum milleti*. It is a rebellion with a religious nature, therefore it makes sense that it was led by the clergy. Moreover, it gives legitimacy to the executions of so many clergymen. Esad Efendi does not repeat the European connections except in one place where he mentions that the *Rum* rebels dared to revolt against Muslims “with the encouragement of various Frankish states” (*iğrâ-yı milel-i şettâ-yı Efrenciyye ile*).<sup>114</sup> Education and new schools does not figure at all in his history.

What is significant in his account is his emphasis on the differentiation between those who could still be coaxed into submission and those who could not. For example, he blames the harsh measures of the governor of Rumelia Ebulebûd Pasha for his dismissal. Esad Efendi blames the Pasha for “reproaching those *reaya* who could still be coaxed into submission” and for pressing others in Rumelia with extraordinary taxes.<sup>115</sup>

Here is the fundamental dilemma in the Ottoman approach to the rebellion. Many documents and authors portrayed the rebellion as one of the entire *Rum milleti* however they chose to define this community. The tools in their hands did not allow to punish everyone though. Some limit had to be put even in places where rebellion had rooted. There was a real necessity of separating rebels and potential rebels. I will emphasize this point through Ottoman documents in the next section.

### *Harbî Rum and Potentially Rebellious Rum*

In January 15, 1822, the Sublime Porte received an undated report (*i'lâm*) from the deputy judge (*nâ'ib*) of the mines at Keban. The report included a reiteration of the order that the *nâ'ib* received as is the general tendency in *i'lâms*. It summarized the revolt by the *Rum* as their “general alliance and union in order to fool and betray the religion and state of Muhammad and the generous *millet* of Ahmed.”<sup>116</sup> The local officials and powerholders were to “act according to the necessities of the law of the Prophet against those daring to revolt from among

113 Ibid, 20.

114 Ibid, 183.

115 “taht-ı ra'îyyete idhâli mümkün olan re'âyâyı tekdîrinden başka” Ibid, 292-293.

116 “din ü devlet-i Muhammediyye ve millet-i semiha-yı Ahmediyye hakkında icrâ-yı mekr ve hyânete ‘umumi müttefik ve müttehid olduklarına binâ’en”, BOA, A.DVN 2517/57, 21 Rebiülâhîr 1237 (15 January 1822).

them wherever they may be.”<sup>117</sup> This was in fact a general order sent to every corner of the Empire.<sup>118</sup>

The *nâ'ib* of the mines at Keban, informed the Porte that he had read the order in front of the Muslims and non-Muslims working in the mines. He explained that most of the miners were from the *millet-i Rum*. However, the *Rum* in the mines were just working day and night below ground and had no idea about what was going on. When they heard the news “they were devastated and fell into lamentation and sorrow” for their future, as they were expecting to be executed.<sup>119</sup> The Ottoman central authority triggered panic in many far away provinces with similar orders. What remains to be answered is why they perceived such a heightened level of threat, and what bureaucratic/legal definitions allowed them to define the miners of Keban with the rebels in Morea.

The answer we are looking for, does not seem to emanate from Islamic law and *fetvas* declaring the rebels as *harbis*. In fact, Şanizade relates a meeting of the Grand Vizier, the *şeyhülislam*, the Janissary Agha and Halet Efendi with the Sultan where they debated the measures to be taken. The Sultan was so mad that he gave the order to kill all *Rums* (*Rûm re'âyâsına katl-i âmm olunmak*) and tasked the Janissary Agha with carrying out the order in Istanbul and its environs. But the *şeyhülislam* Hacı Halil Efendi asked for some days to “separate the guilty from the innocent” (*mücrim ve bî-cürmü tefrik*) and to “arrange the issue according to Islamic law” (*maslahatı şer'î şerife tensik*).<sup>120</sup> Hacı Halil Efendi was shortly dismissed, although neither an order nor a *fetva* was ever acquired to exterminate all the *Rum* population of the Empire.

As for the rebels, a copy of a *fetva* is included verbatim in the report of the *nâ'ib* of the mines of Keban:

It would be permissible to fight and wage war against, to loot the property of, and to exile and enslave the women and children of, the *zimmis* living in a town from among the lands of Islam who *in toto* leave submission

117 “her nerede bunlardan 'isyâna cesaret iden olur ise muktezâ-yı şer'at-ı nebeviyye üzere harekete ibtidâr kılınması hususuna hatt-ı hümayun-ı şevket-makrun-ı şâhâne mantuk-ı münifi üzere” Ibid.

118 Şanizade lists the places such orders were sent to: *Şânizâde Tarihi II*, 1077.

119 “ma'dencyân tâ'ifesi millet-i Rumdan olub emr-i celilü'ş-şâm istimâl'larında cümlesi nigûn olub ve yâs ve mateme düşüb kendü hâllerinde derûn-ı ma'dende olan ehl-i iman ve İslama su'al itdiklerinde anlar dahi derûn-ı ma'dende olan Rum tâ'ifesi hafri mağara ve ihrâc-ı cevher ve keremit-i furun ve kömürkeşlik ve arapçılık(?) ve biristâdlık ve kâlcılık ve sa'ir ma'den-i hümayûn umûr-ı husûsuna bezl-i makderet itmeden ğayri bu makûle ustabaşlar ve ustalar ve 'amelelerden bu misillü sû-i hareket bunlardan me'mul deĝil ve zuhûra gelmeyeceĝi olki vâki'ü'l-hâldir” BOA, A.DVN 2517/57.

120 Ziya Yilmazer (ed.), *Şânizâde Tarihi II*, 1072-73.



to those who hold power, begin warfare and kill so many of the people of Islam since it becomes clear that they are belligerents and the rules regarding the *harbis* will be valid for them.<sup>121</sup>

The geographic limit, based on Islamic law, which we have already seen in the Serbian case applies here as well. However, unlike the first *fetva* quoted for the first Serbian revolt, the locality is not clearly mentioned. This allowed the *fetva* to be reproduced and sent to anywhere in the Empire. This is a case of using a tool from Islamic law and taking it beyond the domain of law and into state running and making it re-usable. The decision to declare *Rums* as *harbis* in any region is left to local officials in this case. The central bureaucracy is instrumental only in declaring the *Rum* potentially rebellious wherever they be.

This kind of approach was also applied when it came to the re-incorporation of certain rebels into submission. An undated *fetva* by Mekkizade Mustafa Asım Efendi forbids the killing and looting of those who re-submit to Ottoman power:

Would it be permissible to kill, to exile and to assault the property of *zimmis* living in a town from among the lands of Islam whose break of the accord is established, against whom soldiers of Islam had been appointed by the order of the Sultan and victory of Islam occurred; if they repent their break of the accord and accept the payment of the *cizye* and *zimm*et status like before? Answer: Allah knows the best. It would not be.<sup>122</sup>

121 “bilâd-ı İslâmiyyede bir belde mütemekkin olan zimmiler itâ’at-i ülü’l-emrden bi’l-küllîye hurûc ve muhârebeye tasaddî ve nice ehl-i İslâmı katl ile muhârib oldukları zâhir olsa ol tâ’ife hakkında harbî ahkâmı câri olmağla tâ’ife-i mersûme ile mukâtele ve muhârebe olunub emvâlleri ğanimet nisvân ve sibyanları seby ve istirkâk olunması şer’an câ’iz olur” Ibid. Another copy, among others, can be found in a report coming from the *mütesellim* of Menteşe using the exact same wording: BOA, A.DVN 2510/58, 7 Ramazan 1236 (8 June 1821). The date on this document is the date of compilation, so we can be sure that the *fetva* was obtained earlier than June and was used again and again in the following months.

122 “Bilâd-ı İslâmiyyeden bir belde sâkin olan ahali-i zimmetin oldukları mahalde men’â ittihâzıyla naks-ı ‘ahdleri mütehakkik olub emr-i sultânî ile üzerlerine asker-i İslâm ta’yin olunub muhârebe ve mukâtele ile galebe-i İslâm vâki’ olmağla merkûmun naks-ı ‘ahdlarına nâdimler olub ke’l-evvel üzerlerine darb-ı cizye ile zimmeti kabul eyeseler ol zimmileri katl ve seby ve istirkâk ve mâllarına ta’arruz câ’iz olur mu? El-Cevâb: Allahu a’lem Olmaz” ΓΑΚ (Γενικά Αρχεία του Κράτους – General State Archives of Greece), 4481η – δ003, Undated. This *fetva* can also be found in Ziya Yılmaz (ed.), *Es’ad Efendi Tarihi*, 314-15. Mustafa Asım Efendi served as *şeyhülislam* three times: 1818-1819, 1823-1825 and 1833-1846. This *fetva* probably dates from his second term as this was the only time his

This approach combined with a general inability on the part of the Ottoman officials to control their forces led to illegal attacks on communities that the Ottoman center tried, and mostly failed, to tackle. One such problem arose during the Ottoman offensive against the island of Chios. The village of Mastaki whose inhabitants were already pardoned, was attacked and its inhabitants were enslaved by Ottoman soldiers. When faced with the illegality of the enslavements, Ottoman high-ranking officials tried not to alienate their soldiers, did not forcibly take back the wrongfully enslaved and limited themselves with telling the soldiers that Islamic law required them to return these slaves.<sup>123</sup> In a similar incident, the island of Mytilene was attacked by a group of Ottoman soldiers claiming that there was an imperial order to that affect.<sup>124</sup> Another group “unfurling their flags” attacked Orthodox communities around Kuşadası, Aydın and Suğla.<sup>125</sup> Of course these attacks were clearly not permissible according to *fetvas*, but the road to them was opened by the oblique nature of these same *fetvas* and their widespread dissemination leaving decisions to local power-holders. In a time when soldiers were circulating in large numbers and the Ottoman authority unable to control them, it is not hard to imagine that these soldiers considered themselves as holding power and having the right to decision.

Unable to find the answer we are looking for in Islamic law, we may concentrate on the administrative responses and search for the bureaucratic-intellectual basis of Ottoman measures. A report by el-Hac Mehmed Behram, probably the *mutasarrıf* of the *sancak* of Saruhan is among the earlier examples of defining the rebellion after it became clear to the Ottoman center that this was not limited to the Principalities. Like other reports responding to the demands of the center, Mehmed Behram repeats the description of the troubles made by the central bureaucrats, given to him in his order: “the *Rum milleti* in whose seditious hearts various wiles and treasons had been circulating for many years made it clear that they were traitors of Islam.”<sup>126</sup> The blame is put on the entire *Rum milleti* although they are not clearly declared

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service coincided with a major non-Muslim rebellion. On Mustafa Asım Efendi see: Mustafa İpşirli, “ÂSİM EFENDİ, Mekkîzâde”, *TDVİA*, v. 3(1991), 478.

123 Hakan Erdem discusses in length the illegal enslavement of these people in idem “Do not think of the Greeks as agricultural labourers,” 70-71. Some of the enslaved were returned to their villages: BOA, A.DVN 2525/8, 29 Şevval 1236 (30 July 1821).

124 BOA, A.DVN 2526/15, 15 Zilkade 1237 (3 August 1822).

125 BOA, A.DVN 2532/71, 23 Ramazan 1238 (3 June 1823).

126 “vâfir senelerden beru kulûb-ı fâsîdelerinde envâ'-ı mekâ'ir ve hıyânet cevalân iden Rum milletinin dahi bu bâbda mühin-i İslam oldukları nümâyân oldığı” BOA, A.DVN 2508/61, 11 Receb 1236 (15 April 1821).

*harbis* in entirety. Another response from Kastamonu to an order for the levy of three thousand soldiers, repeats a similar description. This time, the document attempts to link and confuse the administrative perception with a *fetva*: “The sedition that started in Wallachia and Moldavia infected Morea and some other places; and the traitorous group of the base *Rum* demonstrated their revolt and treason by uniting as a *millet* and a sacred *fetva* was given requiring the treatment of such infidel rebels as *harbis*”<sup>127</sup> Of course, the entirety of the *Rum* was not declared *harbis*, but they were already suspicious wherever they may be, as a result of belonging to the same group of people: *Rum milleti*.

The problem, however, is with defining what exactly the *Rum milleti* was. As we have seen, with the developments in late 18th century in the relationship between the Ottoman government and the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople, the *Rum* started being defined as *millet* rather than *taife*, as a religious group that encompassed the Empire with the Patriarch at its head.<sup>128</sup> At the same time, as we have seen with the Serbian revolts, *millet* was used to describe a group of former *zimmis* who rebelled against the Empire and was considered to be a separate entity, a nation. It is this confusion and the amalgam of meanings that could be ascribed to the word that allowed the central bureaucrats to go beyond the restraints of Islamic law and define the entire *Rum milleti* as potentially rebellious and take administrative precautions against them. By revolting, as in the case of the Serbian rebels, the *Rum* became a *millet* but *Rum milleti* was already defined as an empire-wide community of believers which allowed the Ottoman officials to take empire wide measures. It is only by understanding this identification, or confusion depending on how you look at it, that the order to the mines of Keban and many other places becomes understandable. It is in this light that we can read a report coming from Kars which tells the center that there were no *Rum* in Kars,<sup>129</sup> or from Erzurum which tells that there were only a few;<sup>130</sup> and understand why they were alerted in the first place.

To further underline the point that this use of the *Rum milleti* did have the meaning of *nation* as separate from the Orthodox community of the Empire, we can take some help from the Serbian example during the Greek War of Independence. In the translation of a letter by the Serbian *knez* Miloš Obrenović asking for the release of Serbian hostages in the Patriarchate, the

127 “Eflak ve Boğdan taraflarında zuhur iden fesâd Mora ve sa’ir ba’z tarafa dahi sirâyetle Rum-ı mezmuûm ta’ife-i hâ’inesi milletçe müttelik olarak ibrâz-ı bağı ü ihânet imtiş olmakdan nâşi o makule ‘ussât-ı kefereye harbî mu’âmelesi lâzım geldiğine virilân fetvâ-yı şerife (...)” BOA, A.DVN 2509/31, 9 Şaban 1236 (12 May 1821).

128 Paraskevas Konortas, “From Tâ’ife to Millet”.

129 BOA, A.DVN 2518/30, 11 Safer 1237 (7 November 1821).

130 BOA, A.DVN 2518/31, 13 Muharrem 1237 (10 October 1821).

knez explains that “all kinds of incitation and encouragement were made by the unworthy rebels to incorporate the *Sırb milleti* into their union and alliance to achieve independence (*serbestiyet*) which is the farthest desire and the last extreme of the intentions of *Rum* rebels.”<sup>131</sup> This document refers to the Serbs as a *millet* six more times. Moreover, this is a document that refers to the Patriarchate, the focal point of the *Rum milleti* as an Orthodox Christian entity, more than once. Here, we have the Orthodox Patriarchate in relation to an Orthodox *millet* that was not the *Rum milleti*.

In another letter to the Porte, describing Serbian fears after the massacres in Istanbul committed against the *Rum*, Miloš explains that the amassing of soldiers on Serbian borders by the governors of neighboring provinces “made their ill intentions towards the *Sırplu milleti* apparent.”<sup>132</sup> This use is reflected by Ottoman chroniclers as well. Şanizade refers to *Sırp milleti* and *Sırplu milleti* while describing the situation in Serbia after the start of the Greek Revolution.<sup>133</sup> Esad Efendi talks about *Sırp milleti* in a section about Ottoman-Russian relations during the Greek War of Independence.<sup>134</sup>

In the documents and chronicles concerning the Serbs, the *Rum milleti* was divided, referring to a population under the spiritual guidance of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople as a separate *millet* in the context of the Greek War of Independence. In the light of this, it should not be far-fetched to argue that one of the meanings of the *Rum milleti* was an entity that was outside the *zimmi* contract, governing its own body-politic, at war with the Ottomans. The catch was that the same *Rum milleti* referred to a group of *zimmis* that lived peacefully under Ottoman rule. This overlap, confusion and blur allowed the Ottoman center to take the measures it took against Orthodox populations in the entirety of the Empire. These measures, however, did not always remain precautionary.

### What to Do with the Potentially Rebellious *Rum*?

On a report by the governor of Baghdad which explains the lack of sedition among the *Rum* of Iraq, Mahmud II has a note saying: “The mentioned regions are free of sedition as they lack Phanariots.”<sup>135</sup> Here we see glimpses of who was held responsible for the rebellion. In fact, this connection was put forward

131 BOA, HAT 1135/45229B, Undated (catalogue date: 1238-1822/1823).

132 BOA, HAT 1343/52476, Undated (catalogue date: 1237-1821/1822).

133 Ziya Yilmazer (ed.), *Şânizâde Tarihi II*, 1194.

134 Ziya Yilmazer (ed.), *Es'ad Efendi Tarihi*, 554.

135 “Havâli-i merkûmede Fenarlu takımı olmadıĝından bu fesâddan âsûdedir.” BOA, HAT 730/34713, 1 Şaban 1236 (4 May 1821)

as one of the main reasons for the execution of the Patriarch Grigorios v: “these *Rum* Patriarchs have been dismissed and selected by the preferences of the *bey takımı* [notables, i.e. the Phanariots] for some time and this way both the former and the latter dared to do this kind of disgrace in the end, following the necessities of the malice and sedition that is central to their nature, and of their dependence on the Muscovites; despite all the sublime favors accorded to them.”<sup>136</sup>

One of the primary aims of Mahmud II was to deal with the Phanariot complex, whom he held responsible for the rebellion.<sup>137</sup> As the highest ranking among these people were directly connected to the Sultan himself, it was easier to execute them, as any Ottoman official could be executed by the Sultan. The connection was less obvious when certain discriminatory measures were to be taken against other *Rum* officials. For example, when Ottoman *chargés d'affaires* in European capitals were dismissed by the Sultan, the argument he used was that they could not be trusted as they belonged to the *Rum milleti*.<sup>138</sup> Same applied to the sailors who were removed from service in the Navy by the Kapudan Pasha, as “there could be no trust in the *Rum milleti*.”<sup>139</sup>

The same argument could be used to justify violence against the *Rum* in the Empire's capital. Although the violence in the first months of the Greek War of Independence is out of the scope of this paper,<sup>140</sup> I would like to point out an indirect argument between Janissaries and Mahmud II from an undated document. The report is about the removal of a certain *dervish* called Haydar Baba from the janissary quarters because he was suspected for being an Iranian spy. It ends with a bizarre request from the janissaries. They argue that there are too many Armenians and *Rum* in the capital and they do not feel safe from them in case of a war with an enemy. They ask for the removal of these non-Muslims or their massacre by the state or permission for the janissaries to massacre all of them. Mahmud II in his note explains that “It is obvious that no one from the *Rum milleti* can be trusted, but I cannot order them [the janissaries] to kill this

136 “bu Rum Patrikleri bir müddetden beru bey takımı olan hanelerin intihâblarıyla ‘azl u nasb olunarak ol vechile gerek anların ve gerek bunların haklarında bu kadar ‘inâyât-ı ‘aliyye erzan-ı şâyân buyurulmuşiken merkûz-ı cibilliyetleri olan habis ve fesâd ve cümlesinin Moskovlu’ya istinâdları iktizâsınca en sonra bu misillu fezâhate dahi cür’et ve cesâret itmiş olduklarına nazaran” BOA, HAT 1316/51287, Undated (1821).

137 “Phanariot complex” was coined by Christine Philliou. See: idem, *Biography of an empire: governing Ottomans in an age of revolution*, (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2011).

138 BOA, HAT 1338/52282, Undated. Hakan Erdem, “Do not think of the Greeks as agricultural labourers”, 74.

139 Ibid. BOA, HAT 1316/51316, Undated.

140 Ilıcak discussed the violence in the capital in his PhD thesis: Hüseyin Şükrü Ilıcak, *A Radical Rethinking of Empire*, 168-202.

many *reaya* without a religious opinion as our sublime state is a Muhammedan state and the submission of the people to my imperial self is because I am the leader of the Muslims.”<sup>141</sup>

Regardless of the actual violence in the capital, Mahmud II felt that he needed a religious opinion to officially order the massacre of the entire population. As we have seen, he had tried to acquire it according to Şanizade. The lack, and the impossibility, of such a *fetva* made such measures impossible officially. However, the central bureaucracy and the Sultan did not need a *fetva* to take “preventive” measures and suspect the *Rum* wherever they might have been in the Empire. Collapsing two different understandings of the concept of *millet* allowed them to consistently take those measures and even target the *Rum* who stood out in the capital, executing or exiling them as they were part of the *Rum milleti*.

### Conclusions

The Ottoman measures, especially massacres in the capital and the execution of the Patriarchate resulted in the strong protests of the Russian ambassador, and limited objections from the others. The French *chargé d'affaires*, Comte de Viella, in a meeting in the Sublime Porte, advised the Ottomans to take every measure to protect their Christian subjects and not to turn this into a war of religion in order to prevent Russian intervention. This meeting’s minutes was presented to Sultan Mahmud II who noted that:

the Sublime State has never engaged in wars of religion, and never prevented the performing of the rites of its subjects, whichever religion they may belong to as long as they were bound by their honor. This emerging sedition came out of the leaders of the *Rum milleti* and the involvement of some clergymen was verified requiring their punishment by the state. If this was a war of religion, the Patriarch of Jerusalem would have been the first to be executed and the *Rum* and the Armenians under the power of our hand would have been massacred.<sup>142</sup>

141 “Rum milletinden hiçbir ferdin emniyeti olmadığı zâhirdir kaldı ki devlet-i ‘aliyyemiz devlet-i Muhammediyye olup zât-ı hümayûnuma halkın itâ‘ati imâm-ı müslimin olduğum içündür sûret-i şer‘isi ma‘lumum olmaksızın bu kadar re‘âyâyı kırsunlar deyu emr idemem” BOA, HAT 284/17078, Undated (1821-1823).

142 “Devlet-i ‘aliyye bir vaktde mezheb ğavğası itdiĝi yokdur ve ‘ırzıyla mukayyed olan re‘âyâsı her kaĝı mezhebde olur ise icrâ-yı âyinlerine mûmâna‘at itdiĝi dahi yokdur bu def‘a zuhur iden fesâd Rum milleti küberâsından zuhur idüb ve ba‘z papasların dahi müdâhaleleri tahkik olunduĝa mülken tertib-i cezâları lâzım gelmişdir mezheb ğavğası

In many ways this was a response given to satisfy the fears of the French ambassador. It was also a summary of the measures taken by the Ottoman power and the tools it had in its hand. The Sultan iterated that this was not a clash of religions, and the punishments were limited to the leaders of the sedition. He was bound to be respectful to Islamic law, which did not allow him the blanket execution of an entire religious group. His use of *Rum milleti*, by his own admission, cannot be religious here as he chooses to define religion (*mezheb* in his words, with the actual meaning of sect) as Christianity including *Rums* and Armenians. He re-centers Christian religion around the Patriarch of Jerusalem as well. Although both *Rum* and Armenians had a Patriarch there, since the discussion is about the *Rum* after the execution of the Orthodox Patriarch of Constantinople, we have to assume that he is talking about the Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem. This allows him to reject *Rum milleti* as a religious entity, and to redefine the Patriarch of Constantinople as the leader of a “secular” *millet*. The two faces of this term are thus collapsed into one.

To reiterate, the lack of blanket measures in Islamic law against a group of people defined on religious or ethnic terms forced the Ottoman power to make use of new conceptual tools to deal with the Greek War of Independence in a satisfactory way. They were already familiarized with the concept of *millet* as a nation that rejected the Ottoman *zimmi* status during the Serbian revolts, so they used it to deal with the new rebellion. The standard way of *fetvas* being in general terms allowed them to utilize this tool together with the new understanding. The ambiguity of the concept of *Rum milleti* allowed Ottoman officials enough space to take measures in every part of the Empire and punish people as they saw fit. Thus, the rebellious *Rum* were the rebels in the Principalities and Morea who had potential collaborators everywhere in the Empire. Unlike the Serbian revolts, there was no way to territorialize this *millet* giving vent to the Ottoman panic and resulting in the peculiar way they reacted. Concepts were used as weapons in the Ottoman effort to quell the rebellion.<sup>143</sup>

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olsa ibtidâ Kuds-i Şerif Patriki te'dib olunur ve zîr-i dest-i iktidârımızda bulunan Rum ve Ermeni tâ'ifesi katl-i 'âm olunurdu" BOA, HAT 1338/52285, 12 June 1821.

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