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“WHY WOULD WE BE *LIMBERTE*?”
LIBERTÉ IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE, 1792-1798

Within the slogan of the French Revolution, *liberté, égalité, fraternité* it was the term *liberté* that was translated to Ottoman Turkish most frequently. The other two only appeared a few times and were not considered to be of great consequence. This focus on *liberté* as a seditious concept was the result of French propaganda in Italy and beyond. Besides, liberty in European political philosophy had the longest run as a concept that would appear in discussions on sovereignty, from Hobbes to Rousseau. The political struggles of the eighteenth century focused on liberty as a weapon against the absolutist state, especially used by the nobles. Its plural, *libertés* signified the various privileges conferred by the state on different communities, orders and universities.¹ As Ozouf explains, “it was this tension between the concepts of natural law and ancient law, *libertés* and *la liberté*, the abstract individual and the social body that the Revolution inherited.”² With the Revolutionary armies, *liberté* acquired a powerful force that could overturn *anciens régimes*, and it was this force that made the Ottomans wary at best. The Ottomans had all the more reason to be alarmed when Napoleon Bonaparte sent letters to Mani

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1. Ozouf, “Liberté,” p. 255.

2. Ibid., p. 259.

in Morea explaining his desire for a “*bonne harmonie entre deux nations également amies de la liberté*.”³

However, the concept did not come suddenly knocking on the doors of Ottomans who were caught unaware. The Ottoman Empire had been a long-time participant in European diplomacy and concepts like *liberté* had been used to legitimize different imperial aims in the second half of the eighteenth century. Moreover, the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-1774 and the rivalries it created in Morea, Poland and Crimea were centered around the concepts of liberty and independence which were occasionally described with the same word. Therefore, the histories of the Ottoman Turkish concept *serbestiyet* and the Greek *eleftheria* (ελευθερία) are equally important to discuss the French Revolution’s perception in the Ottoman Empire.

This paper will focus on the concept of *liberté* and its Ottoman Turkish and Greek counterparts to discuss how the Ottoman officials in the capital perceived the French Revolution especially after Bonaparte’s Italian campaign. Using Turkish and Greek documents from the Ottoman archives in Istanbul, I will underline shifts in perception, understanding of revolutionary movements and the creation of an alliance between the Ottoman government and the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople to contain the effects of French and Greek revolutionary activities.

The paper is inspired by conceptual history, especially the literature on *Begriffsgeschichte*. 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.”⁴ The translation of *liberté* as *serbestiyet* or *eleftheria* was not a shift for the meanings of these two concepts. It was just an addition to the already existing amalgams parallel to Alexandra Lianeri’s understanding: “Concepts are thus to be understood not as universal, 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.”⁵ By referring to conceptual history, this article attempts to contribute to the burgeoning field of Ottoman conceptual history as well.⁶

3. Serieys, *Voyage de Dimo et Nicolo Stephanopoli*, p. 188.

4. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, p. 57.

5. Lianeri, “A Regime of Untranslatables,” p. 476.

6. For a recent appraisal of the state of Ottoman conceptual history see: Topal, Wigen, “Ottoman Conceptual History Challenges and Prospects.”

FRENCH REVOLUTION IN RECENT OTTOMAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

Recent work on the Ottoman perception of the Revolution emphasized the Ottomans' earlier reception of revolutionary concepts. Fatih Yeşil studied the Ottoman ambassador to Vienna in 1792, Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, and his reports to the Ottoman capital written during his embassy.⁷ For Yeşil, his article is about a diplomat who “struggles 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.”⁸ Despite these obstacles, Ratib Efendi seems to have understood the importance of modern concepts. In Yeşil's words, Ratib Efendi provides us ample evidence to that effect:

“[W]hen dealing with France or Frenchmen he interestingly emphasized the concepts of the nation [*millet*] and the *patrie*/fatherland [*vatan*]. Ratib Efendi's distinction in the way he refers to the Habsburg Empire and to France confirms that he has recognized the emergence of a new type of state in Europe, a powerful national state united in one language with a common set of beliefs and values. It is for this reason that he coined the term *millet* to refer to a single European people and *vatan* to refer to their homeland.”⁹

Kahraman Şakul wrote about Ottoman efforts to contain French propaganda and influence in the Adriatic before and during the War of the Second Coalition. He argued that the Ottomans tried to create their own sphere of influence in the Adriatic in order to prevent the spread of revolutionary ideas by controlling the mountainous areas in Dalmatia.¹⁰ He found misleading the idea that the Ottomans were satisfied by observing Revolutionary Wars from afar until the invasion of Egypt.¹¹ His work focused mostly on the Ottoman participation in the War of the Second Coalition and the Empire's efforts just before and during the War.

Changing the focus from events and strategies to transmission of concepts, Hüseyin Yılmaz followed how different words were used to translate the French concept *liberté* throughout the nineteenth century. He argued that references in Arabic and Turkish sources to modern concepts have “often been highlighted as the earliest signs of an era that was marked by a sudden and traumatic discovery of European thought by

7. Yeşil, “Looking at the French Revolution through Ottoman Eyes.”

8. *Ibid.*, p. 284.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 302.

10. Şakul, “Adriyatik'te Yakobinler,” p. 232.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 234.

Ottoman learned men.” He argues against seeing the use of these concepts without history and underlines “the peculiar trajectories of such important vocabulary in the context of Islamic and Ottoman history.”¹² The concept of *liberté* 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. Whereas *serbestiyet* was a threat that was associated with sedition and secession, *hürriyet* became a keyword of the Ottoman Empire’s inclusion into the European state-system.

Ali Yaycıoğlu focused on Antoine Juchereau de Saint-Denis and his account of the events in the Ottoman capital from the fall of Selim III until the rise of Mahmud II in 1807 and 1808. Yaycıoğlu places Juchereau’s account into revolutionary history and the broader context of the Age of Revolutions. Discussing the decades preceding the revolution, Yaycıoğlu places the Empire in its diplomatic environment and underlines especially its struggles with Russia and its radical designs concerning Ottoman territories. He argues that “Ottoman central elites developed a profound awareness of such radical projects inspired by certain dicta of the Enlightenment.”¹³ When the French Revolution erupted, the Ottoman establishment reacted in manners quite similar to other ruling elites in Europe. Secularism was one of the aspects focused on by some commentators, “the mainstream Ottoman critique, however, focused on the revolutionary principles of equality and liberty.”¹⁴

Pascal Firges reads the story from the perspective of the representatives of the French Revolution in Constantinople.¹⁵ For Firges, this would be a great case study for French diplomacy during the Revolution as “the French Revolution led to a rapprochement between France and the Sublime Porte, because Paris was looking to Istanbul in search of an ally. Also, Ottoman policymakers were often much less scandalized by the new political culture of the French than most of their European counterparts – and hence much more tolerant of the changes in diplomatic practice.”¹⁶ He emphasized how “the Ottoman state and its inhabitants were thus entangled with the events and processes of the French Revolution not only through their diplomatic relations with France, but also

12. Yılmaz, “From Serbestiyet to Hürriyet,” p. 202.

13. Yaycıoğlu, “Révolutions de Constantinople,” p. 27.

14. Ibid., p. 28.

15. Firges, *French Revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire*.

16. Ibid., p. 1.

through the (trans-)local offshoots of the Revolution in the French expatriate communities.”¹⁷ From the perspective Firges is taking, the Ottomans looked more willing to listen to their French counterparts and more serene than other European monarchies.

In what follows I will build on these recent perspectives underlining what Ottoman documents tell us about the French Revolution and its concepts with a focus on the concepts of *serbestiyet* and *eleftheria*. Therefore, it is necessary to briefly overview these concepts’ histories.

PRECURSORS

Serbestiyet

Ottoman diplomatic documents almost unanimously used *serbestiyet* to translate *liberté*. Quite comparable to the French case, *serbestiyet* in this period had the meaning of privileges given to different groups within the Empire, especially concerning tax exemptions. So, for example, the exemptions of the inhabitants of the *mukataa* of Tire which belonged to Sultan Selim III’s sister, Hatice Sultan, was confirmed with an “exalted order of exemption” (*serbestiyet emr-i şerifi*).¹⁸ This use of the concept did not disappear when the Ottomans started writing about the French Revolution and its effects. There are other examples from the short rule of Mustafa IV (1807-1808), who had to renew and sometimes redistribute certain privileges as was the custom when a new sultan was enthroned.¹⁹

The word also had a political meaning in political/diplomatic Ottoman writing, which emerged from its use as a financial-administrative concept. Ottoman administration named free prebends, like the ones seen in the previous examples, that were granted various immunities as *serbest tımar*. Ottoman observers in Europe in the eighteenth century likened similar arrangements they had seen in Europe to the example they were familiar with and described them with the same concept.²⁰ Thus, the Ottoman ambassador to France in 1720, Yirmisekiz Mehmed Çelebi, uses

17. Ibid, p. 5.

18. BOA, HAT 273/16102, Undated.

19. For such examples, all undated see: BOA, HAT 275/16184; HAT 1354/52933; HAT 1356/53081.

20. For a discussion of Ottoman use of *serbest* and its derivatives to describe European political systems and the words’ development to acquire the meaning of *liberté* in late eighteenth century, see: Yılmaz, “From Serbestiyet to Hürriyet,” p. 211-220.

serbest şehir to describe Toulouse and Bordeaux. According to Bernard Lewis' explanation, in Mehmed Çelebi's account "each city was the seat of a *parlement* and *president*. Both words are given in French, transcribed in the Turco-Arabic script, and are explained."²¹ An Ottoman manuscript on the politics in Europe written in the early eighteenth century refers to "fifteen cities" in the Holy Roman Empire as being "excused and exempted from taxation (*mu'aflar ve müsellemdirler*) recognized as fiefs (*ber vech-i ocaklık*) with ancient privileges (*serbestiyet-i kadîme ile*)."²² Here, we might have the connection to the description of these cities as *urbs imperialis libera* in Latin, *freie Reichsstadt* in German or *ville libre d'Empire* in French. This points to a possible continuation between the use of concepts; *liberté* derived from *libera/libre* would be translated with *serbestiyet* derived from *serbest*. Moreover, *serbest* had already acquired the meaning of a political body that ruled itself, had ancient privileges and was exempted from taxation.

Another significant use of *serbestiyet* in Ottoman Turkish in the eighteenth century was to refer to independence or autonomy of a polity. An example is from a petition by the nobles of Poland and Lithuania during the Seven Years' War. Complaining about the atrocities committed by Russian soldiers, the nobles explain that they are contacting the Ottomans because "you are supporters of the protection and conservation of the principles of our liberty (*serbesti*)."²³ It is hard to translate this part, as the nobles could be talking about liberty as their privileges or as the independence of Poland. But a later reference leaves no doubt for the use of *serbestiyet* as independence: "Since the Sublime State is faithful to the terms of the treaty that was made in the place called Karlowitz, our Polish Republic is independent (*serbest*); as according to the aforementioned terms, the independence (*serbestiyet*) of the Polish Republic is protected from dissolution, but if it submits to the state of Russia it would mean harm for the Sublime State."²⁴ This document not only uses

21. Lewis, "Serbestiyet," p. 50.

22. Tüfekçi, *İcmal-i Ahval-i Avrupa*, p. 21: "*on beş şehir dahi vardır ki serbestiyet-i kadîme ile ber-vech-i ocaklık mu'aflar ve müsellemlerdir*" Lewis adds Danzig to this discussion referring to this manuscript. However, the manuscript refers to Danzig only as *mu'af*. Ibid., p. 36.

23. Uzunçarşılı, "Yedi Sene Muharebesi," p. 19. The document is dated 6 Şaban 1174 (13 March 1761).

24. Ibid., p. 23: "*Mademki devleti alıyye Karloviçe nam mahalde münakit olan şeraiti uhutta sabit kadem ola, Leh cumhurumuz serbesttir; zira şeraiti mezkure muktezasınca Leh cumhurunun serbestiyeti berî olur, ancak Rusya devletine tabi olur ise devlet-i*

serbestiyet to describe the independence of a state in 1761, but also posits it as the opposite of submission, to Russia in this case.

Polish independence continued to be described as *serbestiyet* throughout late eighteenth century. The Ottomans declared war on Russia in 1768 to protect this *serbestiyet*. It is important to underline the fact that the concept's meaning was not settled; it was also used to describe the privileges or *liberties* of Polish nobles. An anonymous report dated on the state of Europe dated 1774, which explores the possibilities of alliance with various European powers against Russia, argues that the Ottomans declared war "as it was necessitated to return the privileges of the Polish (*Lehlülerin serbestliği*) to its status quo ante."²⁵ The official chronicler of the period, Sadullah Enveri Efendi, argues that the Ottomans declared war "to liberate (*tahlis*) the Polish people from Russian aggression and restore their liberties (*şurut-ı serbestiyetleri*) as before."²⁶ The documents Enveri incorporated in his account stress this point repeatedly. Enveri quotes from a letter of the Grand Vizier Mehmed Emin Pasha to his Polish allies of the Bar Confederation: "[Russia] dispersed and scattered our republic[an] friends by bringing foreign soldiers (*ecnebi asker*) into Poland and acted contrary to their ancient liberties (*serbestiyet-i kadimeleri*). It is possible that they might rush to end and abolish the conditions of liberty (*şürût-ı serbestiyet*)."²⁷ The Grand Vizier's invitation to his Polish allies to take up arms looks quite modern too:

"You, our friends and neighbors of the Polish republic! It is a necessity of your situation to elect a new king for the prosperity (*umrânî*) of your homes and lands (*dâr u diyâr*); to work for clearing and cleaning your country (*memleket - patrie?*) from Russian soldiers who intend to harm it; to protect it from foreign soldiers (*ecnebî askerden*) and to save it and your people from Russia who has been usurping your country (*memleket*

aliyyeye muzır bir manadır." Uzunçarşılı reads the word as *serbestî*, however in the facsimile of the document he provides at page 29, the word is clearly *serbestiyet*.

25. Yeşil, *Bir Osmanlı gözüyle Avrupa siyasetinde güç oyunu*, p. 8: "*Lehlülerin serbestliğini hâl-i aslîsine red husûsunda mecburen [...]*."

26. Yılmaz, "From Serbestiyet to Hürriyet," p. 215. Çalışkan, "Enverî Sadullah Efendi," p. 27-28.

27. Çalışkan, "Enverî Sadullah Efendi," p. 18: "*memleket-i Leh'e ecnebi asker düh-üliyle cumhur dostlarımızı perâkende ve perîşân ve serbestiyet-i kadîmelerine mugâyir hareket, belki şürût-ı serbestiyetin def' ü ilgasına müsâra'at idecekleri.*" Enveri discusses the issue in terms of liberties (*serbestiyet*) and foreign soldiers entering Polish territories. See: *Ibid.*, p. 17-19, 27-29, 32-34.

- *patrie?*), your people (*reaya*), your honor (*ırz*) and your property (*mal*) for the last few years.”²⁸

It is life, honor and property that “foreign” soldiers are trampling, and Polish nobles are invited to defend their country. This is a very modern invitation using the language of enlightened absolutism in line with the Grand Vizier’s times.²⁹

Enveri is not alone in discussing the Ottoman declaration of war in such terms. Ahmed Resmi Efendi refers to a petition of Joachim Potocki who defined Poland as “free/independent (*serbest*) according to the treaty of Karlowitz.”³⁰ Ahmed Vasıf Efendi who wrote later in 1790s, mostly taking his information from Enveri, mentions that the war started because the Ottomans desired for Poland “to remain in liberty/with their privileges (*serbestiyetleri üzere*) as before.”³¹

The use of the concept of *serbestiyet* became problematic for the Ottomans at the end of the disastrous war, as the Russians were demanding *serbestiyet* for Crimea now. The use of the word in negotiations and the treaty leaves no ground for doubt as to the word’s meaning. The Russian side was demanding the independence of the territory from Ottoman rule.³² The concept must have been used so frequently and with such disdain that it finds its way into a history written in Greek by a Phanariot who was in the Ottoman army for some time. Athanasios Komnenos Ypsilantis describes the word as “*serbestiyet* (*σερπεστιέτι*) which means

28. Çalışkan, “Enverî Sadullah Efendi, p. 19-20: “*Siz ki bi’l-cümle Leh cumhûrı dostlarımız ve hem-civârimızız, size dahi memleket ve re’âyânızı ve ırz u malınız Rusyalu’nun birkaç seneden berü olan tasallutundan tahlis ve ecnebi askerden te’mîn için dâmen-i gayreti dermiyân ve memleketinize sût-i kâsd fikr-i fasidinden olan Rusya askerinden memleketinizi tanzîf ve tathîr için ahz-i intikâm ve bi’l-ittifâk cedîd Kral nasbıyla umranî-i dâr u diyarınıza sa’y u ihtimâm lâzime-i hâliniz olmağla.*” I do not see any reason why *memleket* in this specific context should not mean *patrie*. I am not aware of a French (or Italian or Polish) translation of this document, but *patrie* seems natural for me here as a translation.

29. On enlightened absolutism see: Mueller, “Enlightened Absolutism.” See also: Scott, *Enlightened Absolutism*, p. 1-36. On the rival of the Ottomans, Catherine II, as an enlightened absolutist see: Madariaga, “Catherine the Great”. Catherine was using similar language in her declarations to the Greek-Orthodox populations of the Empire: Kontogianis, *Oi Έλληνες*, p. 461-463; Rotzokos, *Εθναφύπνιση και εθνογένεση*, p. 198.

30. Ahmed Resmi Efendi, *Hulâsatü’l-İ’tibâr*, p. 11: “*Karlofça musâlahası şurutı mucibince serbest olub.*”

31. Ahmed Vasıf Efendi, *Mehâsinü’l-âsâr ve hâkâ’ikü’l-ahbâr*, p. 204: “*Lehli kemâ fi’l-evvel serbestiyetleri üzere kalması.*”

32. Lewis, “Serbestiyet,” p. 49. See also: Yılmaz, “From Serbestiyet to Hürriyet,” p. 216.

the autonomy of the Tatars.”³³ Ahmed Resmi Efendi blames the Crimeans for it: “the accursed Tatar’s desire for independence (*serbestî*) became apparent.”³⁴ He gives the meaning by quoting the words of the Russian delegate Obreskof: “we promised the Tatars that ‘we will make you individual on your own.’”³⁵

A similar example is from a document that discusses the possibility of an alliance with Prussia during the 1787-1792 war against Austria and Russia. It explains that the Polish ambassador wished to be included in the peace negotiations with Austria and Russia and “his desire through this was the protection of the privileges (*serbestiyet*) of Poland.”³⁶ It may as well mean “the protection of the independence of Poland” as the document is produced well after the Küçük Kaynarca treaty, when *serbestiyet* was already used to describe independence. In short, *serbestiyet* was a widely circulating and politically loaded term before the French Revolution. The Ottomans used it to legitimize their war against Russia, demonstrating their familiarity with the language of enlightened absolutism. When they lost the war, the concept became a weapon at their enemy’s hands. It had the meaning of liberties or independence, but mostly, not being subdued by a *foreign*, unwanted monarch.

Eleftheria

The Greek word *eleftheria* has many parallels in its meaning to its Ottoman Turkish counterpart. There is reason to believe that one of its uses was exemption from taxation. This use can be seen in a petition by the inhabitants of Mykonos to the archbishop of Sifnos (*Σίφνος*, *Yavuzca*) dated April 1772. Both islands were under Russian occupation at the time and Admiral Spiritov had tried to regulate the taxes inhabitants had to pay to their archbishops. The petition explains that “we should be exempted (*eleftherothoumen*) from the old privileges that were [instituted by] the Turks who were among us.”³⁷ They demand that

33. Ypsilantis, *Ta μετά την Αλωσην*, p. 546.

34. Ahmed Resmi Efendi, *Hulâsatü'l-İ'tibâr*, p. 57: “Uğursuz Tatar’ın da’vâ-yı serbestisi meydana çıkub.”

35. *Ibid.*, p. 57: “Biz Tatar’a sizi başlı başımıza adam ideriz deyü söz virdik.”

36. BOA, HAT 256/14615, 2 Rebiülevvel 1204 (20 October 1789): “bundan murâdları serbestiyet-i Lehîñ vikâyeti oldığı.”

37. GAK, Zerlenti Collection, K39/110, 16. 18 July 1773 (Gregorian: 29 July): “ἡμεῖς να ἐλευθερωθούμεν ἐκ τῶν ἐκ πάλαι παρανομιῶν ὁποῦ διάμέσου τῶν τουρκῶν εἰσρικόνταν εἰς ἡμᾶς.”

“since we the seculars have been exempted (*eleftherothesan*) from every heavy tax, we ask that our religious leaders should be free (*eleftheroi*) too.”³⁸ In this document *eleftheria* and the words associated with it concern exemptions from taxation, but interestingly freedom from old privileges that were instituted by the Ottomans as well.

Nikos Rotzokos highlighted the use of *eleftheria* by focusing on Nikolaos Glykys’ translation of Catherine II’s famous *Nakaz* (Instruction) of 1767.³⁹ Rotzokos argues that *eleftheria* as discussed by Glykys is “a favorable government under ‘foreign’ or ‘local’ (meaning national) rule, but only in terms of privileged governance, which could only be guaranteed by the ‘legislating philosopher [Catherine II]’.”⁴⁰ In fact, when Russians addressed Ottoman Christians they used exactly this language. The declaration of Alexei Orlov to the Christians in Morea claims that he was there “to free (*na elefteroso*) their people (*to genos*) from slavery.”⁴¹ The declaration of Catherine II uses a similar tone.⁴²

We should not forget that the Ottomans used Greek together with Ottoman Turkish in their communications to the Aegean islands and Morea. Such documents were translated by scribes that worked for the dragoman of the Navy. In one declaration after the war with Russia ended, the Grand Admiral (*Kapudan Pasha*) Gazi Hasan Pasha declares to the islanders that they will be treated with the same liberties (*me eleftherian omoios*).⁴³ The concept was employed together with *serbestiyet* to signify parallel meanings. To emphasize this point better, we can get help from Athanasios Ypsilantis who translates the Ottoman declaration of war in 1768 into Greek. According to him, the Ottomans declared war because Russians violated the terms of their agreements with the

38. Ibid.: “καθώς ἡλευθερώθησαν οἱ κοσμικοὶ ἀπὸ κάθε βάρους δοσίματος οὕτως ζητοῦμεν καὶ οἱ ἱερεῖς μας νὰ εἶναι ἐλευθεροί.”

39. For an English translation of Catherine’s text see: Catherine II, *The Grand Instructions*. For Nikolaos Glykys’ translation: Glykys, *Ερμηνεία της κραισιτάτης, και σεβαστής Αικατερίνης Β’*.

40. My translation. Rotzokos, *Εθναφύπνιση και εθνογένεση*, p. 228.

41. Kontogiannis, *Οι Έλληνες*, p. 462.

42. Unfortunately, the declaration that I have read is a nineteenth century Greek translation of the Russian original: Palaiologos, “Ρωσικά περί Ελλάδος έγγραφα”, p. 148. There is an Ottoman translation of a declaration by Catherine II, but it is not the same document as the one translated by Palaiologos: BOA, TS.MA.e 384/23, 13 Zilhicce 1183 (9 April 1770).

43. Kontogiannis, *Οι Έλληνες*, p. 303.

Ottomans and the Polish and acted “contrary to the circumstances of Polish liberty (*lechikes eleftherias*).”⁴⁴

To put it briefly, the two concepts *serbestiyet* and *eleftheria* had entangled histories. They were related to each other, they were used to translate each other, and they were always in connection to the wider world of European debates. The Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-1774 facilitated their use in imperial projects and political settlements. What the Ottomans proposed to the Polish and what the Polish Catholic nobility hoped from the Ottomans was the same thing as what Russians proposed to the Orthodox populations of the Empire and the Greeks, in the diaspora at least, hoped to gain. This was not the radicalized *liberté* of the French Revolution yet, but it was getting there. Enlightened absolutism paved the way for radical re-interpretations of concepts and Greek and Turkish speaking Ottomans were well-equipped to follow the transformation.

LIBERTÉ IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

The oft-quoted memorandum of Chief Scribe (*Reisülküttab*) Atıf Efendi on the French Revolution and its ideals, explains that the “common people desired this equality and liberty (*müsâvât ve serbestiyet*) with the hope of supposedly attaining complete earthly bliss which was pronounced by the abominable gang that aroused mischief and sedition for their own desires and the execution of their hostilities.”⁴⁵ This document was produced in an atmosphere where the Ottomans felt threatened by the advances of Bonaparte in Italy and were expecting an invasion of their territories. It was the summary of monarchic perceptions, both those that were developed by the Ottomans and those that were received from foreign dignitaries and displays an understanding of these concept albeit from a perspective that was against the Revolution. Moreover, this basic explanation does not tie the concepts to international relations, or the

44. Ypsilantis, *Ta μετά την Αλωσην*, p. 424-425: “κατά τα περιστατικά τῆς λεχικῆς ἐλευθερίας.”

45. BOA, HAT 274/16130, Undated [1798]: “ve icrâ-yı nefsânîyyet veyâhûd celb-i menfâ’at için ikâz-ı fitne vü fesâd iden gürûh-ı mekrûh tarafından lâ yenkâti’ ‘avâm-ı nâs i’lân olundığı üzere güyâ sa’âdet-i kâmile-i dünüevîyyeyi ihrâz itmek ümmîyyesiyle lafzı murâd olan işbu müsâvât ve serbestiyete cân itdiler.” The report is widely used which is no doubt the result of Ahmed Cevdet Pasha’s influence in Ottoman historiography. See: Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, VI, p. 311-319.

threat posed by French armies to Ottoman territories but reads them as the basis of the revolution in France and as a threat to other monarchies. *Serbestiyet* in this understanding is rebellion against order, authority and religion. As there are other significant meanings attributed by the same concept, it is necessary to focus on documents from earlier years to gain a better understanding of the various meanings the concept acquired after the French Revolution.

For one, the last ambassador of the Bourbon dynasty to Constantinople, Choiseul Gouffier, used a description of the Revolution quite similar to Atif Efendi's in his note of resignation to the Sublime Porte: "The king of France and his children and his subordinates fell under the oppressive clutch of the group that claims liberty (*iddia-yı serbestiyet*)."⁴⁶ Thus, the use of revolutionary *liberté* translated as *serbestiyet* became part of Ottoman parlance very early, adding another meaning to the Ottoman concept. Both mentioned uses were filtered by diplomats that saw the Revolution as dangerous.

There were early perspectives outside of Istanbul as well. Ebubekir Ratib Efendi, Ottoman ambassador to Vienna in 1792, explains the French Revolution as the result of the bankruptcy of the French state and the increase in the tax burden that proved impossible for the peasantry to pay. In the end they revolted. After some time, the "rabble" (*erâzil ü esâfil*) tasted liberty (*serbestiyetten lezzet alarak*) and demanded more.⁴⁷ In his report prepared after he returned to Istanbul, Ratib Efendi commented more on the concept. After making a long discussion of Austrian institutions and how strict and even inhumane they were, Ratib Efendi makes the following comment: "You always need to behave with caution (in this land). They say they are free (*serbestiz*). I cannot understand this, but their women are free with distinguished people, I made jokes to them sometimes and she would laugh."⁴⁸ Fatih Yeşil interprets this as the

46. BOA, A.DVNSNMH_d 9, p. 479, n. 498: "*França kralı ve evlâd ve tevâbi'i iddi'â-yı serbestiyet eden tâ'îfenin giriftâr-ı pençe-i ta'addileri olmağla.*" The original of this document is in BOA, HAT 168/7176, Undated.

47. Yeşil, "Looking at the French Revolution", p. 290. TSMA E.6700/3; E.8530.

48. Arıkan, *Nizâm-ı Cedit'in Kaynaklarından Ebubekir Ratib Efendi'nin "Büyük Lâyihası,"* p. 327: "*Dâ'imâ ihtirâz üzere hareket olunmalıdır. Serbestiz derler. Velakin ma'nâsını fehm edemem lâkin nisvânı vücûhla serbest olmağla hattâ ba'zen kendülere dahi latîfe ederdim. Güler idi.*" I modified Fatih Yeşil's translation in Yeşil, "Looking at the French Revolution", p. 303: "However, as women are free with men." This part can also be understood as "their women are free with their faces," meaning they don't cover their faces in public. I would like to thank Nikos Sigalas for pointing this out to me.

difficulty Ratib Efendi was having to comprehend the concept of liberty.⁴⁹ I would rather say, he understands the concept well enough to criticize it. Ratib Efendi is making a social criticism of the Austrian society's claim to be free here. Moreover, the meaning of the concept here is not connected to the French Revolution. *Serbest* has a meaning beyond the revolution and is connected to how a society is organized or how people behave.

Meanwhile, Ottoman policy makers in Istanbul were trying as much as possible to follow the discussions in the French Republic that concerned their empire. This allowed the translation of a limited part of works and speeches by people supporting the Revolution. One such example is the translation of a short report that was submitted to the *Assemblée Nationale* on the relations of France with neutral European states. The concept of *liberté* is used as the foundation of the new system in France again, although in a positive way this time. The document describes the situation in the following way:

“Although the laws and systems instituted by the nation (*millet*) of France, by the necessity of the time and situation, to organize the order of their country and state based on the principal of liberty (*esâs-ı serbestiyet üzere*) have been admired and well-accepted by the majority of common folk; as this system does not allow kings and rulers, the greatest and the strongest of Europe left aside their special grudges, became opposed to and struggled against this system and all of them united and allied against France.”⁵⁰

For the other monarchies of Europe, *liberté* did not remain simply the organizing principle of the French Republic, it was immediately perceived as a threat. For the Ottoman Empire, it became a threat only after the Wars of the First Coalition and only when French armies started advancing in Italy. When this happened, *serbestiyet* acquired a seditious meaning as well. The Prince of Moldavia, Alexandros Kalimachis, uses *serbestiyet* in this sense to describe the situation in Italy:

“After the incidents in Venice, a revolution (*ihtilâl*) appeared within the Republic of Genoa too and it extended and grew day by day and the fire of

49. Yeşil, *Aydınlanma Çağında Bir Osmanlı Kâtibi*, p. 169.

50. BOA, HAT 196/9772, 7 Muharrem 1209 (4 August 1794): “*França milleti hasbe'l-vakt ve'l-hâl nizâm-ı mülk ve devletlerini esâs-ı serbestiyet üzere tertîb için vaz' etdikleri kavânin ve usûl ekser efrâd-ı nâs 'indinde müstahsen ve maktûl ise dahi bu usûl mülûk ve hükkâma bir vehile el vermediğinden düvel-i Avrupa'nın a'zam ve akvâları mu'ârız ve mücâdil olarak beynlerinde derkâr olan ağrâz-ı mahsûsalarını terk ile França hilâfına cümlesi hem-dem itihâd ve vifâk oldukları [...].*”

mischief and sedition that originated from the aforementioned people who are inclined to liberty (*serbestiyet*) by nature and also from the agitation of the French through their secret correspondences, suddenly blazed and battles ensued within the country. They were forced to ask for help from the French. Bonaparte seized the opportunity and sent some soldiers to the region who calmed down the sedition and the revolution, extinguished the fire of the massacres and turned the aforementioned republic (*cumhûr*) in to a *dimokratiya* as he did with Venice.”⁵¹

In Kallimachis, *serbestiyet* already acquired a negative meaning, a seditious principle that aimed at overturning established governments and caused bloodshed. What is more, Kallimachis, uses the Greek word *demokratia* (δημοκρατία) transcribed in Arabic letters (ديموقراتيا) to describe the new kind of republics that Bonaparte was founding in Italy, as opposed to the old oligarchic republics that were described as *cumhur* in Ottoman Turkish and *aristokratia* (αριστοκρατία) in Greek. To my knowledge, this case is unique, as other reports on revolutionary European affairs will make use of the term *cumhur* to describe both types. Nevertheless, this points to the Prince of Moldavia’s very clear understanding of what was going on.

A similar report from the Prince of Wallachia, Alexandros Ypsilantis, dated just four days later, uses similar vocabulary to describe the creation of a Cisalpine Republic, although Ypsilantis does not make a distinction between old-style and new-style republics, using *cumhur* to describe both. In his reports *serbestiyet* becomes an ideological force used by the advancing French armies. “France controlled and occupied the country of Milan in Italy which belongs to the Emperor of Austria and motivated its people (*ahâlî*) for liberty (*serbestiyet*) and encouraged the [creation of a] republic with the laws and order in place in France.”⁵² France was also

51. BOA, HAT 230/12839, 3 Muharrem 1211 (9 July 1796): “Venedik vâkı‘asından sonra Ceneviz cumhûri beyninde dahi evvel emrde bir nev’ ihtilâl karîn-i zuhûr ve yevmenfe-yevmen müzdâd ve mevfûr olarak gerek ‘an aslin serbestiyete meyâl olan ahâlî-i mez-bûrenin zamîrlerinden muzmirr olan şîrâre-i tuğyân ve gerek Françaluların gizlû muhâbereleriyle bu aralıklarda eksik olmayan tahrikâtından neş’et iden âteş-i fitne ve fesâd birdenbire parlayarak derûn-ı memleketde ‘âzim mukâteleler vukû‘ bulduktan sonra Françalulardan isti’âneye muztarr olmalarıyla Bonaparta fırsatı ganîmet ‘add ederek ol tarafa dahi bir mikdâr ‘asker gönderüb teskîn-i fesâd ve ihtilâl ve iffâ-yı nâ’ire-i kitâl eyledikten sonra cumhûr-ı mezbûri dahi Venedik misillu dimokratiyaya tahvil ile tanzîm [...]”

52. BOA, HAT 230/12805, 7 Muharrem 1212 (2 July 1797): “İtalya cânibinde Nemçe imparatorunun mâlik olduğı Milân ülkâsini França esnâ-yı muhârebeye zabt ve teshîr edüb ahâlîyi serbestiyete terğîb ve França’da mer’î olan kânûn ve nizâm ile cumhûr vâdilerine teşvik [...]”

responsible for “introducing the desire for liberty (*serbestiyet dâ'iyeleri*) among the people (*ahâlî*) and subjects (*re'âyâ*)”⁵³ in Parma, Piacenza and Modena. *Serbestiyet* then was a subversive ideology that was spreading due to French efforts in Italian cities, resulting in the overthrow of established power structures and the creation of republics that were very close to the French system.

The danger did not remain in Italy though, it spread rapidly throughout Europe and was quickly grasped by the Ottoman diplomatic community, even before Campo Formio. In a report on the fate of Venice, which together with Poland, was one of the most important concerns in Ottoman diplomacy during the War of the First Coalition, Alexandros Ypsilantis explains that Bonaparte, without consulting the Directory (*müdirin-i hamse*, i.e. five directors), had promised parts of Venetian territories to the Emperor of Austria. This plan was not welcomed by the Directory who thought it would be “unfitting to show this kind of disloyalty to the people whose struggle for liberty (*gayret-i serbestiyet da'vâsı*) was obvious.”⁵⁴ In a separate paragraph in the same document, Ypsilantis reported some troubles the Russians were having with their own subjects and the Polish, where a side note is attached:

“The aforementioned *voyvoda* reported previously that sedition (*fesâd*) and revolution (*ihtilâl*) showed their faces in Russia and as is his imperial knowledge my humble self has counselled him with the writing of a letter to the aforementioned *voyvoda* to state and to advise the actual situation after searching and investigating whether this sedition and revolution was built on a struggle for liberty (*serbestiyet da'vâsı*) with the agitation of the French or is just against the Russian emperor. According to this report of events it has become ascertained that the signs of sedition and revolution were the result of Polish teaching and French agitation.”⁵⁵

This note, probably prepared by the Grand Vizier Safranbolulu İzzet Mehmed Pasha, is an important proof of the dissemination of the

53. Ibid.: “*ahâlî ve re'âyâsına serbestiyet dâ'iyelerini ilkâ idüb [...]*.”

54. BOA, HAT 230/12816, 13 Safer 1212 (7 August 1797): “*‘ale'l-husûs gayret-i serbestiyet da'vâsı derkâr iken ahâlîsine bu misillü gâdr olunmasını revâ görmeyüb.*”

55. Ibid.: “*Rusya'da fesâd ve ihtilâl sûretleri rû-nümûn olduğunu bundan akdemce voyvoda-i mumâ ileyh tahrîr etmiş olmağla işbu fesâd ve ihtilâl Fransalu'nun tahrikiyle serbestiyet da'vâsına mı mebnîdir yohsa mücerred Rusya imparatorunun 'aleyhinde midir gereği gibi taharrî ve tedkik birle vâki'-i hâli ifâde ve iş'ar eylemesi voyvoda-i mumâ ileyh kullarına taraf-ı çâkerânemden mektûb tahrîriyle tenbîh olndığı ma'lûm-ı hümayûnlarıdır işbu havâdis kâ'imesine nazaran ol fesâd ve ihtilâl emâreti tahsil-i serbestiyet da'vâsına mebnî Lehlûmün ta'lîmi ve Fransalu'nun tahrikiyle idüğü ma'lûm olmuş oldığı.*”

perception of threat. The use of *serbestiyet* as seditious French propaganda and a revolutionary ideology did not remain in the reports of the *voynodas* of the Danubian Principalities. They became the common “property” of the Ottoman diplomatic community, finding their way to the highest Ottoman dignitaries and becoming part of policy-making. The desire to know whether this *sedition* was simply a movement against the Russian emperor or connected to the French teachings is also important. The author of the note, and his readers, seem receptive to the difference between revolts that were motivated by ideology and those that were not.

Moreover, Russia was not the only European monarchy threatened by the new ideology emanating from the French Republic. Another report by Ypsilantis a few days later explains that “the French have subverted most of European countries and [have caused] this kind of confusion (*şûriş*) and revolution (*ihtilâl*) in Europe by introducing the desire for liberty (*serbestiyet*) and freedom (*hürriyet*) among the subjects.”⁵⁶ The monarchic reaction to the French revolution reached the Ottomans, but it was still not clear whether they felt the same level of alarm.

A story of revolutionary cocardes

That level of alarm started appearing in Ottoman documents in the following months when Bonaparte contacted the *bey* of Mani. Bonaparte was in Italy when Tzanetbey Gregorakis sent his son Petros to Trieste in order to seek an audience with Bonaparte through the French consul there. In fact, Trieste was a center for Greek revolutionaries who tried to contact Bonaparte, although Petros seems to have been one of the few who managed to reach the General.⁵⁷ The agents Bonaparte sent in response to the Maniot initiative were two Corsicans of Moreot origin, Dimo and Nicolo Stephanopoli. The Ottomans seem to have taken notice of their mission. They were monitoring not only the Stephanopolis but also other movements concerning French influence in Morea and beyond.

56. BOA, HAT 235/13081, 25 Safer 1212 (19 August 1797): “*Françalu Avrupa memâlikinin ekserini ifsâd ve serbestiyet ve hürriyet dâ’iyyelerini re’âyâya ilkâ ederek Avrupa’nun bu misillü şûriş ve ihtilâli.*” Two further examples relating to problems among Prussian subjects desiring *serbestiyet* can be seen in two other reports by Ypsilantis: BOA, HAT 231/12866, 7 Cemaziyelevvel 1212 (28 October 1797) and HAT 228/12721, 15 Cemaziyelevvel 1212 (5 November 1797).

57. Katsiardi, “Ελληνικά διαβήματα στον Βοναπάρτη.”

In a long report about the situation in the region, the governor of Morea Kethüda Hasan Pasha recounts the report of an official he sent to Chania in Crete to observe the new consul of France in the city. In a drinking table, the consul boasted about the “acquisition” of Venice and talked about the possibility of France taking over Morea and Crete which originally belonged to the Venetians. The governor thought this was dangerous in light of new information he would continue to relate, although “this might have been the result of the joy of intoxication.”⁵⁸ Answering a demand made by the capital on the situation, Hasan Pasha continues to report on the Croatian and Venetian refugees coming from Cephalonia and other islands. He estimates the total number as four hundred and those who accepted Ottoman subjecthood (*ra'iyyeti kabul*) as one hundred, explaining that none was putting on the revolutionary cocarde and Ottoman subjects were not imitating this practice. This shows the Ottoman concern about the possible expansion of “sedition” among its non-Muslim populations in Morea, linked to the use of such symbols as the tricolor cocarde.

To emphasize the transformation of Ottoman attitudes we can make a comparison about a frequently quoted and earlier episode concerning the use of the cocarde. I will use the translation of Bernard Lewis, of a conversation he takes from Ahmed Cevdet Pasha's history:

“One day the 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 what 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.’”⁵⁹

58. BOA, HAT 171/7310, Undated: “*bir gün esnâ-yı ‘işretinde işte Venediklüyi dahi tasarrufumuza idhâl eyledik bundan böyle Venediklüyi ‘Osmanlu üzerine muhârebeye kıyâm ve taslî ve cumhûrumuz tarafına dostluk şî‘ârıyla miyâneye tavassut ile fi'l-asl Venediklü'den nez' olunmuş Mora ve Girid cezîrelerini dahi zamûne-i memâlik-i França ederiz kelâmını îrâd eylemiş olduğımı haber vermeleriyle eğerçi sekr neş'esinden neş'et ve tefevvüh eylemesi ihtimâl [...].*”

59. Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe*, p. 52. Lewis refers to Ahmed Cevdet, *Tarih-i Cevdet*, VI, p. 183. Raşid Efendi was in office between 1792 and 1794.

Ahmed Cevdet Pasha took this passage from the court chronicler Halil Nuri Bey who was a contemporary of the Revolution and might have listened to this story from someone who was present, even Raşid Efendi himself. However, Cevdet took his liberties in transmitting the story. The original passage is much longer and starts with another story:

“The ambassadors of Austria, England and other belligerent States occasionally sent their dragomans to the Sublime Porte and complained: ‘The French are committing such insolence and such infamy in Galata. They did not even stop with the cocardes they put on their heads. They erected a pole in the French palace as a symbol of liberty (*serbestiyet alâmeti*) and they gather around it and make various buffooneries. Their prevention and punishment are the responsibility of the Sublime State.’”⁶⁰

The Ottoman response to this would be underlining its neutrality:

“The Sublime State is neutral in the matter of France. And these kinds of symbols are not recognized in the Sublime State. The Sublime Porte recognizes all the French people in the well-protected domains as the nation (*millet*) of France, whether they are the supporters of the king or the supporters of the Republic. As required by the peace and affection between the Sublime State and the entirety of the nation (*millet*) of France, the affairs of the French related to trade are allowed and favored by the Sublime State.”⁶¹

Already here, the chronicler is using the concept *serbestiyet* (*liberté*) as a fundamental principle of the French republic. The pole he is referring to is probably an *arbre de la liberté*. The immediate next passage is the one taken by Ahmed Cevdet into his history, which I would translate at length as:

“One day Austrian chief dragoman *Valyerung* almost unable to breathe and showing signs of deep pain to the point of crying came to Mehmed Raşid Efendi who was the chief scribe at that time, ‘May God give those French

60. Toprak, *Vak'anüvis Halil Nuri Bey*, p. 224: “*Nemçe ve İngiltere ve sâ'ir düvel-i muhâribîn elçileri aralık aralık Bâb-ı âlî'ye tercemânların gönderüp, 'Frânçelüler karşu Galata'da şöyle edepsizlik ve böyle bed-nâmlık edeyorlar, hatta başlarına vaz' etdikleri kokardaya kanâ'at etmeyüp, Frânçe sarayında serbestiyet alâmeti olarak bir sırtık nash ve etrafına tecemmü' ve gû-nâ-gûn masharalıklar ediyorlar. Bunların men' ve te'dibi Devlet-i Aliyye'nin vazife-i zimmetidir.*”

61. Ibid.: “*Devlet-i Aliyye, Frânçe mâddesinde bî-arafdır. Ve Devlet-i Aliyye'de bu makule alâmetler mu'teber olmamağla, gerek kral tarafdârı ve gerek cumhur tarafgiri, memalik-i mahrûsada olan Frânçelülerin cümlesini Der'aliyye, Frânçe milleti bilir ve Devlet-i Aliyye ile ale'l-ittlâk Frânçe milleti beyninde derkâr olan sulh u safvet muktezasinca Frânçelülerin ticârete dâ'ir vâki' olan umûr ve husûsuna taraf-ı Devlet-i Aliyye'den müssä'ade ve himmet masruf kılınur.*”

what they deserve, they made us suffer. We are all inflicted with tuberculosis now. We feel pain at our hearts whenever we see the cocardes on their heads. O sir at least strip their cocardes from their heads so that we could be consoled a bit. We are being destroyed by all this sorrow.”⁶²

To this, the chief scribe responded:

“O my friend! We have told you several times that the Sublime State is a state of Islam and cannot be compared to other European states. In the Sublime State, these symbols are not held in consideration in anyway. We consider the merchants of friendly states as guests in the Sublime State. They put on their heads whatever they wish. If they want, they can put baskets of grapes on their heads. It is not for the Sublime State to say, “Why did you put baskets on your heads?” If you were to put on your head a symbol that was respected in your state, the Sublime State would not attack that. Wouldn’t you consider it like this and console yourself? You are tiring yourself with too much conversation over nothing.”⁶³

These passages point to the fact that the Ottomans considered the revolution a European event; and themselves as the “state of Islam” in Europe. They did not get scandalized by the revolution until they started courting Russia for an alliance in 1797. Secondly, Raşid Efendi’s response should be considered rhetoric. He was not disinterested or unable to understand the significance of the cocarde. Underlining his state’s neutrality, he even offered the Austrian dragoman to put on symbols of their own. We know that the Ottomans cared deeply enough for clothing, symbols and their colors as markers of social status and religious identity. In fact, several sartorial regulations were promulgated during the reign of Selim III (1789-1807).⁶⁴ It might be argued, however, that the officials in the capital did not feel threatened by the cocardes of Frenchmen unlike

62. Ibid., p. 225: “Bir gün Nemçe Baştercemânı Valyerung, nefes almağa liyâkati olmadığı hâlde bükâ mertebelerinde izhâr-ı sûziş-i derûn ederek, ol vakit riyâset-i küttâb mesned-i celilinde bulunan Mehmed Râşid Efendi tarafına gelüp, ‘Şu Fransızların Allah lâyıkmı versün, bizi derdli etdiler. Verem illetine mübtelâ olduk. Başlarında kokardalarını gördükçe yüreğimizin yağı eriyor. Amân efendim, bâri şunların başlarından kokardalarını nez’ buyurun, bir mikdâr teselli bulâlım. Zîrâ istilâ-yı ekdâr ile helâk u telef olyoruz.’”

63. Ibid.: “Behey dostum! Biz size şimdîye dek kerrâtla beyân eylemişdik ki; Devlet-i Aliyye İslâm devleti olup, âher Avrupa devletlerine makis olmaz. Devlet-i Aliyye’de o misillü alâmetler bir vechle mu’teber değildir. Dost düvel tüccârını Devlet-i Aliyye’de müsâfir bilirüz. Başlarına ne iktisâ ederler ise ederler. Dilerler ise başlarına üzüm küfesi giyerler. Niçün küfe iktisâ eyledin demek Devlet-i Aliyye’nin vazifesi değildir. Sizin dahi başınızda devletinizde mu’teber bir alâmet olsa, Devlet-i Aliyye âna dahi ta’arruz etmez. İşte bunu böylece bilüp teselli bulsanız, olmaz mı? Nâfile kesret-i kelâm ile kendinizi yoruyorsuz.”

64. Quataert, “Clothing Laws, State, and Society,” p. 410-412.

other European monarchies. Theirs is not a disinterest or a belief in their immunity as members of a different world. It was a desire to allow the new French symbols at a time when they were more welcoming to the French than they would care to admit to ambassadors of the First Coalition.⁶⁵ As we have seen, this attitude changes completely in 1797 in the report of Hasan Pasha.

Why would we be *limberte*?

Hasan Pasha was also attempting to relate to the capital, the “ideologic” background of the threat. Per the same report quoted in the previous section, French agents were introducing to Morea “the word *limberte* that the people of France (*França tâ'ifesi*) introduce in the ears and minds of the people (*ahâlî*) of the countries that they enter and by which they violate their good order; which means that we should not be under the rule of a ruler.”⁶⁶ The governor, catching wind of rumors about French agents asked the *bey* of Mani about their circulation in Morea. The *bey* told him that “they have come for *limberte*, but we have no complaints thanks to our padishah. Why would we be *limberte*?”⁶⁷ This part of the report is very interesting for several reasons. To begin with, the word used by the report, *limberte*, is not the Ottoman Turkish rendition of the French word. It is written with Arabic letters and with vowel marks (لَمْبِرتَه), with a clear *mim* in all three cases; obviously the representation of the Greek pronunciation of the word (λιμπερτέ) in Arabic letters.⁶⁸ We have another case of Greek-speakers and Greek language hidden in an Ottoman document here. Hasan Pasha had to work with the dragoman of Morea who would aid him not only as a translator, but also as a member of the governing council in Tripoli.⁶⁹ If in fact the governor

65. For French diplomatic efforts in Constantinople during the early years of the French Revolution see: Firges, *French Revolutionaries in the Ottoman Empire*. Many French officers came to the Ottoman capital to help train Ottoman soldiers. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

66. BOA, HAT 171/7310: “*França tâ'ifesi dâhil oldukları memleket ahâlîlerinin mesâmi' ve izhânlarına ilkâ ile şîrâze-i nizâm-ı hâllerin ihlâl eyledikleri limberte lafzı ki lîsân-ı Efrenc'de bir hâkimin hükmünde olmayalım demek imiş.*”

67. *Ibid.*: “*limberte içün gelmişler bizim ise sâye-i pâdişâhîde ne sıkletimiz varki limberte olalım.*”

68. Greek alphabet lacks the letter “b,” it is represented by the letter combination “μπ” and its pronunciation occasionally gives the sound “mb.”

69. The dragoman of the Morea was part of the governor’s council together with two Orthodox and two Muslim representatives of the “people.” Fotopoulos, “Οι δραγομάνοι του Μορέως”, p. 51.

wrote the document, he was hearing the French concept from Greeks and reporting it as he heard it. Furthermore, *liberté* is not translated as *serbestiyet* here. The long report does not use the word *serbestiyet* anywhere, it only once refers to France “incorporating the republic of Venice into their circle of liberty (*serbestî*).”⁷⁰

Regardless of the response he got from the *bey* of Mani, Hasan Pasha was cautious about Orthodox loyalties in Morea. He was warning that “although no demeanor contrary to the state of subjection was witnessed from the subjects of the Morean peninsula and Mani, trust is not permissible.”⁷¹ The correspondence between Bonaparte and the former *bey* of Mani fitted squarely into this concern:

“The inclination and affection of the former leader of Mani, *Canete*, towards the French was felt and his secret activities concerning sedition and the agitation of subjects has been heard as he has previously sent his son to the general of heretic-actions [Bonaparte], has worn a hat from him and earned the closeness and warmth of the French.”⁷²

This kind of relationship was especially threatening to the Ottomans as the governor of Morea reports the placement of numerous soldiers to former Venetian islands occupied by the French, which allowed them to improve their relationships with non-Muslim Ottoman subjects. The danger of *serbestiyet* which was previously reported to the capital as different movements among subjects of European empires, had appeared in Ottoman domains and various actors started to develop defensive policies against it.

70. BOA, HAT 171/7310: “*Venedik cumhûrını dahi dâ’ire-i serbestîlerine idhâl eyledikleri [...]*.”

71. Ibid.: “*Cezîre-i Mora ve Manya re’âyâlarından şimdiki hâlde muğâyir-i resm-i ra’iyyet bir hâlet müşâhede olunmamış ise dahi emniyyet de câ’iz olmayub [...]*.”

72. Ibid.: “*Manya başbuğî sâbık Canete’nin Françalı tarafına meyl ve hâhişi ihsâs ve mukaddem oğlını gönderüb ceneral-i dalâlet-fi’âlden şabka giymek gibi Françalı ile kesb-i imtizâc ve istinâs eylemiş olmağla tahrîk-i re’âyâ ve ifsâda dâ’ir harekât-ı derriyesi dahi mesmû’ olmakda idi.*” Putting on a different clothing, especially the hat, has long been considered a change of allegiance by the Ottomans. İshâk Bey, the envoy of Selim the heir apparent to Louis XVI excited the hatred of Gazi Hasan Pasha for donning European clothing: Beydilli, “Şehzade Elçisi”, p. 77. Tijana Krstić finds the same idea in sixteenth and seventeenth century Ottoman *fetvas* and Orthodox neomartyrologies: “Fetvas confirm the allegations found in neomartyrologies that donning Muslim headgear was considered conversion.” Krstić, *Contested Conversions to Islam*, p. 150. “Wearing of hats assumed a new definition” in the eighteenth century Ottoman Empire as per Virginia Aksan, “it meant what we call ‘westernization’, and invoked deep suspicion in a population which suddenly found itself conscripted for the new Muslim army.” Aksan, “Who Was an Ottoman?,” p. 313.

THE FIGHT AGAINST *LIBERTÉ* IN THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

Answering Bonaparte

The mission of Dimo and Nicolo Stephanopoli to Mani was taken very seriously by the Ottoman center. It was initially thought that they were sent by Bonaparte as consuls to Morea, with the aim of inciting the population of the peninsula. The recently appointed *bey* of Mani, Panagiotis Koumoundouros, reported to the governor of Morea that there had never been consuls in Mani, only two Corsicans had arrived to Marathonisi to have an audience with the “traitor” Zanetbey Kapetanakis Gregorakis.⁷³ The report was translated to Ottoman Turkish and sent to the capital with other reports on the same issue.⁷⁴ Probably, with the knowledge and involvement of Ottoman officials in Morea and in the center, a letter by another son of the former *bey*, Antonis Gregorakis, was sent to Bonaparte. Its contents allow us to speculate about the involvement of possible actors.

The letter explains to General Bonaparte that the ancestors of Maniotes were those who either stayed in the region or came from other places after Ottoman conquest and they have enjoyed “complete liberty and welfare” (*kemâliyle serbestiyyet ve refâhımız – zomen me kathe loges eleftherian*) since then. This was perhaps a response to their being identified as Spartans by the French.⁷⁵ The letter repeats the same point later by saying that “thanks to our padishah we have welfare and liberty (*refah ve serbestiyetimiz*), it is our duty as subjects and the decree of our religion to submit and be loyal to the padishah.”⁷⁶ Bonaparte’s men were telling them that they would “save them from tyrants” and “they have

73. BOA, HAT 131/5417B, 1 Cemaziyelahir 1212 (21 October 1797).

74. For the all the reports see: BOA, HAT 131/5417 and 5417A, B, C, D and E.

75. Serieys, *Voyage de Dimo et Nicolo Stephanopoli*, p. 188. The former *bey* of Mani is described as “*un descendant des Spartiates*” in Bonaparte’s letter. Defining Maniots as Spartans seems to be common. Rhigas Velestinlis, the Greek Revolutionary who was caught by Austrian authorities in Trieste in December 1797 explained to Austrian interrogators that he wanted to go to Mani to start the revolution because he considered them as the descendants of Spartans: Legrand, *Documents inédits concernant Rhigas Vélestinlis*, p. 71.

76. BOA, HAT 234/13037B, 25 Cemaziyelevvel 1212 (15 October 1797): “*sâye-i pâdişâhîde refâh ve serbestiyyetimiz olmağla vazîfe-i zimmetimiz ve dînimiz hükmi pâdişâha itâ’at ve sadâkat eylemekdir.*” The Greek part does not mention welfare (*refâh*), and it is not the Greeks’ duty as subjects to be loyal, but it is honor and duty that demands it: “*ο ελευθεριαν μας έχομαι και την τιμήν μας και το χρέος μας μας παρακινή έν πιστην μας, δια να υποτασώμεθα εις τον βασιλέα ημών.*” The original document was prepared in

endured this coercion and tyranny for so long and if we follow your call, it will be removed from us.”⁷⁷ The final answer Antonis Gregorakis gave to Bonaparte was that “nothing can happen in the world without the will of God Almighty, Creator of the universes; whatever he wills or does, humans should be content with it. As the Sublime Ottoman State was chosen by the Compassionate, we are subject and subservient to it.”⁷⁸

As much as it is an official answer to Bonaparte trying to dissuade him from interfering with Ottoman subjects, this letter was also obviously directed to internal readership. The production of the document required the cooperation of many prominent figures, forcing an illusion of common grounds and interests between them against foreign interference. The signatory of the letter, Antonis Gregorakis was the son of the former *bey* who is described in Ottoman documents as a traitor (*hain*). The copy of the letter in discussion introduces him as “Ligor *kapudan* who was made the *başkapudan* of Mani thanks to the intervention of the *başbuğ* of Mani.”⁷⁹ It seems from this introduction that he owed his position to the new *bey/başbuğ* of Mani who intervened for him and the answer to Bonaparte was his way of keeping (may be even earning) his position.

If this way of thinking is right and the anonymous author of the *Voyage de Dimo et Nicolo Stephanopoli en Grèce* is correct about Ottomans replacing the former *bey* of Mani for his attempt to communicate with Bonaparte, then the new *bey* Panagiotis Koumoundouros was probably involved in the formulation of the response. Moreover, this would point to the involvement of not only the governor of Morea Kethüda Hasan Pasha, but also of the capital since the change of the *bey* would

September 1797. I chose to translate the Ottoman versions, giving the relevant part in Greek and emphasizing the differences that I see as important.

77. Ibid.: “*Ceneral senin âdamlarının takrîrinde bizleri cebbârlardan kurtarmak ve niçe bir bu cebr ü tahakküme tahammül ederiz ve senin dâyine tâbi’ olsak bu ra’iyyet-i hakkâreti bizlerden zâ’il olacaktır.*” In the Greek version: “τους ρήθεντας αξιωματικούς παραστένοντας ότι μας ελευθερώσης από τους τυραννούς οπού μας παιδένουν και λέγοντας ότι εώς τότε να υποφέρωμεν αυτάς τας τυραννίδας και ότι αν σε ακούωμεν θέλει φύγει η καταφρόνιση από λόγου μας εις την οποίαν υποκείμεθα αυτά και άλλα μας ειπαν οί άνθρωποι σας και αξιωματικοί.”

78. Ibid.: “*Bârî te’âladan izinsiz dünyâda bir şey’ olmaz hazret-i hâlık-ı ‘âlemiyân her ne ki diler işler ise insan ona râzî olmalıdır devlet-i ‘aliyye-i ‘Osmaniyye min tarafi’-rahman meb’ûs oldığından bizler tâbi’ ve münkâd re’âyâsıyuz.*” In the Greek version: “χωρίς να θέλει ο θεός κανένα πράγμα δεν γίνεται [...] οπού κάμνει ο θεός ημείς πρέπει να υποκείμεθα διά τούτο και εις τους οθωμανούς υποτασόμεθα ως παρά θεού πεμφθεντας.”

79. Ibid.: “*Bundan akdem Manya başbuğünün iltimâsına mebnî Manya Başkapudanlığıyla bekâm olan Ligör Kapudan.*”

necessarily involve them. Therefore, I think that the answer to Bonaparte's letter was probably prepared in Tripoli, the seat of the governor, with the involvement of the dragoman of Morea as well. In short, this was a governmental project.

The authors of the letter first take the concepts that were used by Bonaparte and his envoys and turn them around to argue something totally contrary. Liberty (*serbestiyet* – *eleftheria*), in their usage becomes something that they have been enjoying for centuries and there is no need for Bonaparte to “bring” it. It seems that unlike the previous report of Hasan Pasha, which must date before this reply, the authorities in Morea are now aware of the uses and possible translations of words that were circulating in the Ottoman diplomatic community. They use *serbestiyet* to translate *liberté* and the usage in the letter is very close to what Bonaparte might have meant: saving themselves from tyrants. Still, in their response, the concept is used closer to the idea of economic and other privileges enjoyed by certain communities, perhaps more than elsewhere in Morea.⁸⁰ The *serbestiyet* said to be enjoyed by the Maniotes was probably the result of their privileged position, rather than liberty.

What is more, the letter uses the standard Orthodox way of describing Ottoman rule. Ottomans were sent by God to rule over the Orthodox, so one had to accept that fate against which it was futile to struggle. This was to be pronounced exactly in this era by the Orthodox clergy against the encroachments of French propaganda and the arguments of the Greek Enlightenment. Whether we should see the finger of the Patriarchate, or at least a local metropolitan bishop in the preparation of this document is debatable. Still, it points to the dissemination of the Patriarchal argument to keep Orthodox populations under Ottoman rule which was used and promoted by Ottoman officials themselves.

80. In fact, Demetrios Stamatopoulos argues that “the catalyst for the revolutionary process in the Peloponnese was the increased political privileges enjoyed by the social class of notables”: Stamatopoulos, “Constantinople in the Peloponnese,” p. 149-150. Martha Pylia describes the same issue in the following way: “*On sait bien que les primats moréotes chrétiens, installés à la périphérie de l’État ottoman, jouissaient, par rapport à leurs collègues des régions centrales, d’une autonomie considérable et géraient une grande partie des produits de cette contrée fertile.*” Pylia, “Conflits politiques,” p. 137.

A Holy Alliance of Order

French propaganda was not the only concern in the capital when it came to the perception of sedition among Ottoman subjects. There were several Ottoman Greeks in Austrian domains, among them the famous Rhigas Velestinlis, who were busy publishing revolutionary pamphlets to disseminate in the Empire and were seeking an audience with Bonaparte himself. Rhigas was arrested by Austrian authorities in Trieste while trying to arrange transfer to Mani with boxes of revolutionary material.

Much has been written on the life and activities of Rhigas Velestinlis.⁸¹ Rhigas had served as a scribe to a boyar in Wallachia, Nicolas Brancovano, before the latter's exile in 1788.⁸² After that point he had been mostly in retreat, serving other boyars or staying in his own lands. He moved to Vienna for his revolutionary activities in 1796-97. In Vienna, he published a revolutionary declaration, a translation of the rights of man, a constitution for his projected state that was based on the French Constitution of 1793, a revolutionary hymn and a map of twelve parts that was to accompany his translation of the fourth volume of *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*.⁸³ Austrian authorities found several copies of these publications with him when he was arrested.⁸⁴

The constitution Rhigas prepared focuses on several problems that were specific to the Balkans. Kitromilides argued that the constitution's true significance was Rhigas' willingness to create a unitary but multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state.⁸⁵ Aristovoulos Manessis had already highlighted that Rhigas wanted to create a multi-ethnic state that was Greek (Hellene). Although becoming Greek was possible solely by being a citizen of the new republic regardless of ethnicity and religion; Rhigas still listed Greeks as one of the constituent ethnicities of his future state. So, Greeks already existed regardless of the new state, creating a confusion about the role of ethnicities in his proposed republic.⁸⁶

Beyond everything else, Rhigas' problem was bringing *liberté* into the Ottoman Empire. As Maria Lopez Vilalba mentions for Article 122

81. On Rhigas Velestinlis see: Dascalakis, *Rhigas Velestinlis*; Woodhouse, *Rhigas Velestinlis*; Kitromilides, *Ρήγας Βελεστινλής*.

82. Camariano, "Rhigas Velestinlis," p. 695. For his translation and publication activities see: Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution*, p. 200-229.

83. Barthélemy, *Voyage du Jeune Anacharsis en Grèce*.

84. Legrand, *Documents inédits concernant Rhigas Vélestinlis*, p. 13.

85. Kitromilides, "An Enlightenment Perspective."

86. Manessis, "L'activité et les projets," p. 103-104.

of his constitution: “four times Rhigas uses the word *eleftheria* (freedom) in order to render in Greek, the French *liberté* and the expression “*le libre exercise des cultes*” (freedom of religion). Three times he writes it with a small “e”, the fourth time, however, the same word appears written with a capital “E”, even though it has no correspondence in the French text.”⁸⁷ Article 122 was an attempt to define the liberties of the future citizens of the Republic, after *Liberté* was attained.

This emphasis did not escape the attention of the Austrian authorities who questioned him. According to the report of the governor of Trieste dated December 20, 1797 Rhigas had published a text calling for liberty (*Freiheit*) and equality (*Gleichheit*).⁸⁸ The Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, İbrahim Afif Efendi, was also monitoring Rhigas and his circle, asking for the intervention of the Austrian government and keeping the Ottoman capital informed. His efforts bore fruit when the Austrian government decided to hand over Velestinlis who was to be hanged by the Ottomans. His report dated 22 February 1798 informs:

“It has been previously reported to his highness that the accursed people who are the subjects of the Sublime State, who live in Vienna with the excuse of trade and travel, who prepared and printed manifesto papers introducing devilish misgivings and who desire to send and disseminate them in the well protected domains of the Sublime State to incite the subjects according to their seditious beliefs, have been caught and imprisoned in places called Vienna, Trieste and Pest.”⁸⁹

The ambassador also reports the arrest of one of these seditious subjects called “Riga the cartographer.” In the same document he mentions that he was informed by the Prime Minister Baron Thugut that others in the city of Leipzig were publishing similar pamphlets to disseminate in Moldavia and Bosnia to galvanize people for liberty (*serbestiyet*) and they were promoting the false image that they had the support of the

87. Villalba, “Balkanizing the French Revolution,” p. 148. An English translation of the mentioned article can be found in: Clogg, *The Movement for Greek Independence*, p. 62.

88. Amantos, *Avéκδοτα έγγραφα*, p. 2-4.

89. BOA, HAT 1469/24, 6 Ramazan 1212 (22 February 1798): “*Ticâret ve seyâhat bahânesiyle Bec’de mukîm devlet-i ‘aliyye re’âyâsından olub ilkâ-yı vesâvis-i şeytânîyye ile mânifesto evrâkı tertîb ve tab’ etdiren ve zu’m-ı fâsidlerinçe re’âyâyı tahrik için memâlik-i mahrûse-i devlet-i ‘aliyyeye irsâl ve neşr itmek dâ’iyyesinde olan melâ’inin kimi Beç’de ve kimi Triyeste ve Peşte nâm mahallerde ahz ve tescîn oldukları bundan akdem hâk-i pâ-y-i devletlerine ‘arz ve iş’âr olunmuş idi.*”

French directorate who had occupied Zakynthos and Cephalonia. Baron Thugut, was excusing himself for the inability in their arrests, as the emperor could not interfere with the internal politics of Saxony.⁹⁰ Regardless, reports Afif Efendi, he sent letters to the governor of Bosnia, Mustafa Pasha, and the Prince of Moldavia, Alexandros Kallimachis, to warn them of this danger.

The Ottoman ambassador in Vienna, therefore, was not just aware of the activities of the Empire's subjects in Habsburg domains, but was also trying to act proactively, warning the necessary dignitaries to be careful. The side note on Afif Efendi's report from Vienna, probably from the Grand Vizier, adds another layer to this awareness. It explains that although the ambassador and himself had previously warned the governor of Morea and the princes of Wallachia and Moldavia about the dissemination of such pamphlets, he saw it fit to write again to them and to order them to burn any pamphlet they would find.⁹¹

In fact, the Prince of Wallachia, Konstantinos Hantzeris, talks about the Grand Vizier's warning. In a report he sent to the capital, the Prince explains that he had received the order that "the printed papers that were prepared by some mischief-makers who are subjects of the Sublime State that resided in Austrian lands to support the dissemination of baseless liberty (*serbestiyet-i bâtila*) and to seduce the simple-minded folk should be burned and those [people] coming from that way should be investigated and if they have such papers they should be arrested and punished as required."⁹² The liberty they were offering was fake, and "it was especially clear that the end of this struggle for liberty will result in nothing except desolation, destruction, looting and ignominy."⁹³

Returning to the Grand Vizier's note on Afif Efendi's report, the Grand Vizier adds that the deportation of those who were under arrest were demanded from Austrian authorities and they were to be transferred

90. Austrian documents mention the activities in Leipzig as well: Legrand, *Documents inédits*, p. 54-56, 158.

91. BOA, HAT 1469/24.

92. BOA HAT 45/2230C, 21 Şevval 1212 (8 April 1798): "*Devlet-i 'aliyye re'âyâlarından olub Nemçe ülkelerinde bulunan ba'z-ı fesede serbestiyet-i batılanın intişârını iltizâm ile sâde-dilân-ı nâsı iğfâl zemininde tertîb eyledikleri basma kağıdlarından ele geçenleri hark ve ol taraftan âmed-şüd edenleri tecessüs ve yanlarında böyle kağıdlar var ise ahz ve iktizâsına göre te'dîb [...].*"

93. Ibid.: "*bi-tahsîs bu serbestiyet da'vâsının nihâyeti bi't-tahrîbe perişâniyyet ve harabiyet ve yağmakerlik ve mezelletden gayriye müntic olur bir keyfiyyet olmadıği bedîdâr idüğünü.*"

to Belgrade. Moreover, he says, “as is his imperial knowledge, the papers by the Patriarch of Jerusalem that are to be spread to certain places are being published and completed and are about to be sent to their places.”⁹⁴ The Grand Vizier is clearly referring to the Paternal Instruction (*Διδασκαλία Πατρική*) prepared by Anthimos, the patriarch of Jerusalem.⁹⁵ In the light of this note, it becomes clear that the Ottoman center was involved in the creation and dissemination of the religious defense against the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, finding a ready ally in the Orthodox Patriarchate.

In fact, the Enlightenment and its ideals were in circulation among the Greek-reading Orthodox populations of the Empire for decades. Voltaire had been known by Greek-speaking men of letters since at least the 1760s. Some of his works, including *Memnon: histoire orientale*, were translated by no other than a clergyman, Eugenios Voulgaris. In the 1760s and early 1770s, some Orthodox clergymen were more receptive to the ideas of the Enlightenment. This was also related to the position taken by Catherine II of Russia. Eugenios Voulgaris, being the primary example, eventually found his way to the Russian court in 1770s after being prevented from teaching in Constantinople. The activities surrounding Enlightenment and its reception and the fortunes of pro-Enlightenment persons depended on several factors including the Patriarchate’s

94. BOA, HAT 1469/24: “ve ma’lûm-ı hümâyûnları buyurulduğu üzere Kuds Patriki tarafından olarak ba’z-ı mahallere nasîhati şâmil neşr olunacak kağıtlar dahi bir taraftan tab’ ve tekmil olunmağla mahallerine neşr etdirilmek üzere idüğü [...]”

95. The authorship of the document has been questioned very early on. Adamantios Korais, the author of a treatise called *Brotherly Instruction* admonishing the Paternal Instruction, refused to accept (perhaps to serve his polemical purposes) that the document was authored by Patriarch Anthimos. See: Kokkonas, “Ένας αυτόπτης μάρτυρας,” p. 71. Kokkonas argues that Anthimos was in fact the author. He quotes Dionysios Kleopas, biographer of Anthimos, to demonstrate the relationship Anthimos had with higher-ranking Ottoman officials and the Sultan. The side note of the Grand Vizier supports this. It clearly mentions the Patriarch of Jerusalem as the author. Another debate is about the date of the document. The above-mentioned report from İbrahim Afif Efendi is dated 22 February 1798, but it is the date of preparation in Vienna. The side-note of the Grand Vizier is undated, allowing for a month and a bit more for the document to reach the capital, we can say that the note dates from late March or early April. This would fit in squarely with the choice of Kokkonas of April 2 as the latest date of publication, basing it on the account of William George Browne. Ibid, p. 68. An earlier discussion surrounding the production of this text together with an English translation can be found at Clogg, “The ‘Dhidhaskalia Patriki’.”

relationships with Russia, Catherine II's relationships with Enlightenment thinkers and Ottoman-Russian relationship.⁹⁶

Until the French Revolution, as long as Catherine II felt comfortable with its ideas, the Enlightenment was seen in a positive light. Voltaire's works, among others, were being translated into Greek. Even in this atmosphere though, Konstantinos Dimaras warns us, the Patriarchate may have tried to prevent such work from being read and taught in academies.⁹⁷ This did not meet the expected success though, as the conditions were far from favorable for such a stance. When the Revolution occurred, the attitudes changed completely. This was undoubtedly more related to the shift in Catherine's perception than to any significant change in the perception of the Sublime Porte. The Patriarchate and Orthodox clergymen started publishing works and pamphlets that were against the Revolution and were condemning Enlightenment ideas together with Voltaire, the villain *par excellence*.⁹⁸ The Ottomans do not seem to have taken note of this movement within the Orthodox clergy until 1797. Even if they did, it seems that they were not interested to support it or ally with it until the Revolution turned into a danger for them too. Ottoman policy-makers might have been finally convinced by the Patriarchate to act. Ottoman-Russian relationship might have been finally supportive of the proliferation of the anti-Enlightenment fight-back. Whatever the reason, the alliance between the Patriarchate and the Sublime Porte, as far as the fight against the Enlightenment and revolutionary ideals is concerned, started in 1797. The Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople was the experienced opponent in this alliance.

It should not be surprising at this point, that the *Paternal Instruction* itself is a long discussion of *eleftheria*, calling the concept "a fake, non-existent so-called liberty," echoing the report of Konstantinos Hantzeris.⁹⁹ Similar to the response letter to Bonaparte written in Mani, God "has raised this strong kingdom of the Ottomans in order to keep unblemished the Holy Orthodox belief of our pious and to save it eternally."¹⁰⁰ The

96. Dimaras, *Νεοελληνικός Διαφωτισμός*, p. 148.

97. *Ibid.*, p. 173-174.

98. On the counter-Enlightenment publication efforts of the Patriarchate of Constantinople see: *Ibid.*, p. 154-164 and Kitromilides, *Enlightenment and Revolution*, p. 291-315.

99. Anthimos, *Διδασκαλία Πατρική*, p. 20: "ψευδή κι ανύπαρκτον τάχα ελευθερίαν."

100. *Ibid.*, p. 11: "διά να φυλάξη κι αύθις αλώβητον την αγίαν και ορθόδοξον πίστιν ημών τών ευσεβών και να σώση τούς πάντας, ήγειρεν εκ τού μηδενός την ισχυράν αυτήν βασιλείαν τών Οθωμανών."

language of the Paternal Instruction shares the general sentiment with the previously mentioned response to Bonaparte from Mani. Whether we see an ideology being elaborated on in a time of crisis or not, these two documents make it clear that the Ottoman policy makers are concerned about the spread of the revolutionary ideologies in the Empire and are benefiting from the services of the Orthodox Church, to counter it. The danger of *liberté* and secession was well-understood, and it gave rise to stronger ties between the Ottoman state and the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople, and probably its affiliates that would survive for years to come.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to demonstrate the many meanings of the parallel concepts of *liberté*, *serbestiyet* and *eleftheria*. I argued that these terms were already intertwined in the 1760s but especially during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1768-1774. When the French Revolution erupted, the concept was not so foreign to the Ottomans and did not prevent their understanding of such a dramatic shift. Ottoman diplomats in Istanbul and elsewhere adopted serene attitudes to the French Revolution and to the concept of *liberté* in the first years of the Revolution. This changed with Bonaparte's Italian campaigns and the increasing expectations of revolutionary Greeks expressed towards the General. In this environment, *serbestiyet* was equated with sedition. In the Greek milieu, *eleftheria* experienced a similar turn that did not escape the attention of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople. Thus, Ottoman power and the Ecumenical Patriarchate acted in concert.

So started decades of debates and struggles that culminated in the Greek War of Independence. In fact, these concepts were still alive and well in 1821. A good example is a declaration by the bishop (*piskopos/episkopos*) of Methoni to the Muslim inhabitants of Navarino (*Anavarin/Pylos*) during the first months of the Greek War of Independence in 1821. He claims that "Wallachia, Moldavia, the Serbs and Istanbul have risen, and we intend to acquire the degree of liberty (*serbestiyet 'unvâni*) from now on as you have been free (*serbestiyet üzere*) until now."¹⁰¹ This little passage translated into Ottoman Turkish is almost a summary of all the

101. BOA, HAT 927 – 40280E, 3 April (Gregorian: 15 April) 1821: "Eflak ve Boğdan ve Sırb tâ'ifesi ve İstanbul ayaklanub sizler şimdiye kadar serbestiyet üzere olduğunuz misillü biz dahi fimâ-ba'd serbestiyet 'unvânını tahsil etmeğe kasd."

developments in the previous decades. *Serbestiyet* became a keyword for revolution and the desires of the revolutionaries by 1821 but it did not shed itself from previous meanings. Muslims were “free” in the words of the bishop, meaning they were privileged. It was time for Christians to acquire their own liberty, in the sense of *la liberté*, by toppling them. This was in fact what Ottoman power had been afraid of since at least 1797. If the declaration of the bishop of Methoni and its translation is of any indication, neither the Ottoman bureaucracy, nor Greek revolutionaries forgot what these terms meant and just how important they were in their struggles.

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Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak, "Why Would We Be Libberte?" *Liberté in The Ottoman Empire, 1792-1798*

This article makes use of conceptual history and focuses on the Ottoman concept of *serbestiyet* to understand facets of the Ottoman reaction to the French Revolution. It argues that the transformation of the concept of *liberté* had connections to the transformation of *serbestiyet* before the French Revolution and the two concepts acquired a new revolutionary meaning simultaneously following the Revolution. The Ottoman reaction to the Revolution turned defensive with Bonaparte's Italian Wars and *serbestiyet* became a seditious concept that put Ottoman ruling elites on alert after 1797.

An important part of the argument of this article is the Greek connection. The Greek concept *eleftheria* (*ελευθερία*) followed a similar trajectory in late 18th century and was in touch with Ottoman Turkish and French transformations. The rise of revolutionary ideologies among Greek speaking Orthodox populations and Bonaparte's propaganda in the Peloponnese connected these developments. Faced with the possibility of revolutionary movements among Greek speaking Orthodox populations, the Ottoman government and the Orthodox Patriarchate of Constantinople formed a defensive alliance of order. This article explores how the amalgam of meanings that were attached to the concepts of *liberté*, *serbestiyet* and *eleftheria* were central to this alliance.

Yusuf Ziya Karabıçak, "Why Would We Be Libberte?" *Liberté dans l'empire ottoman, 1792-1798*

Cet article utilise l'histoire des concepts et se concentre sur le concept ottoman de *serbestiyet* afin d'examiner les différents aspects de la réaction ottomane à la Révolution française. Il fait valoir que la transformation du concept de *liberté* avait des liens avec celle du *serbestiyet* avant la Révolution française ; les deux concepts ont parallèlement acquis un nouveau sens révolutionnaire après la Révolution. La réaction ottomane à la Révolution est devenue défensive avec les guerres italiennes de Bonaparte et *serbestiyet* est devenu un concept séditieux qui a mis les élites ottomanes en alerte après 1797.

Une partie importante de la question abordée par cet article est la connexion grecque. Le concept grec d'*eleftheria* (*ελευθερία*) a suivi une trajectoire similaire à la fin du XVIII^e siècle et a été en contact avec les transformations turques ottomanes et françaises. Ces développements ont été reliés par l'émergence des idéologies révolutionnaires parmi les orthodoxes grecophones, et par la propagande de Bonaparte dans le Péloponnèse. Face à la possibilité de mouvements révolutionnaires parmi les populations orthodoxes grecques, le gouvernement ottoman et le Patriarcat orthodoxe de Constantinople ont formé une alliance d'ordre défensif. Cet article explore comment l'amalgame de significations attachées aux concepts de *liberté*, *serbestiyet* et *eleftheria* se trouvait au cœur de cette alliance.