

THE DANUBE AS A LINK OF MODERN SERBIA TO TRADE AND TRAFFIC WITH EUROPE

Milan KUTLEŠIĆ

Institute of History Belgrade, Serbia

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the Serbs started their fight against the Ottoman Empire and creation of their own state. In the years to come, the founding of institution and prerogatives of the state were the key tasks of every government.

The formal autonomy was accomplished in the year of 1833, when Serbia was given the self-government, with the authority of tax collection, armed forces, and trade.¹ Serbian autonomy under the formal Ottoman rule was well used way of development of agriculture and trade of goods with neighbor state of Habsburg monarchy and Wallachia across the Danube. Serbian government was obligated to organize the control of the border and customs with neighbor states and the border was defined by two rivers: Sava and Danube. That was huge responsibility and the men who were put on that places were the ones of the biggest confidence of the Serbian prince and government since, beside taxes, the customs was one of the biggest contribution to the government budget. By the insight of the paid customs you can analyze the development not only of the Serbian agriculture, but the agriculture of Habsburgs and Romanians, because these two states were the biggest, if not the only, importers of Serbian products and vice versa.

Serbia was only the province of the Ottoman Empire until it was recognized as independent state in 1878. As a result of Congress in Berlin that took place during that year. The conditions under which Serbia could trade with its neighbors were dictated by the agreements between Ottoman Empire and those countries. The origins of trade contracts between Habsburgs and Ottomans begin in seventeenth century, since the Treaty of Karlovac in 1699 and they were developing through the whole eighteenth century. With the Treaty in Požarevac in 1718 Austrian and Ottoman side agreed some details about trade and exchange of merchandise so that was the key point of every other agreement later on. The Treaty in Belgrade 1739 confirmed the previous one and in 1784 the Ottomans determined the rules under which Austrian merchants could trade on the territory which is under the rule of Sultan. The Treaty in Svišt from 1791 added one more confirmation about trading in provinces of Ottoman Empire, one hundred years after the first treaty. These arrangements were the basic in trade relations between these two powers until 1862.²

When Serbia was recognized as a subject by the Sultan and Ottoman government in 1833, Serbian prince Miloš Obrenović gave instructions in 23 July 1834 to customs Fetislam and Tekija,

¹ Ljušić 2004; Istorija srpskog naroda V-1, Beograd 1981, p. 120-158; Jakšić 1933, p. 337-403.

² Milić-Miljković 1959, p. 168-170.

where he specifically explained how customs should work in these two places.³ The instruction consisted from 9 points which emphasized that this local custom places must be looked upon the central custom in Belgrade and that every spear money that seemed to appeared must be sent to the central government.⁴ The three custom places that were located on Danube, beside Belgrade who is on the confluence of two rivers, were Tekija, Kladovo and Radujevac. Tekija was established for the trade with Habsburg monarchy and Kladovo and Radujevac for trade with Wallachia. For this purpose, the men of the biggest confident to Prince Miloš and government were put as chiefs of custom points. One of the problems occurred between Serbian custom officers and the ones on the other side of Danube. The head officers at Danube customs complained to prince Miloš that their colleagues treated them with disrespect since the Austrian and Wallachia officers were noblemen and Serbian custom officers had no aristocratic background, because they were from common people. Police official in Kladovo complained that about his difficulties in communications with other side since the chief of the Kladovo county is having a lot of problem with his Walachia counterpart and when he arrives to a meeting, the Wallachia nobleman is treating him like he was a slave, with lower rank than him. While Wallachia nobleman spoke French, the Serbian had no knowledge of that language, so knowledge of the French recommended the next county chief.⁵

The merchandise that was exported to Austria was cattle, horses, fish, goats, honey, sheep, pigs, animal skin, ajvar etc. The merchandise that Serbia imported from Austria was mainly paper, sugar, colonial goods, silk, cotton, agricultural tools. To Wallachia Serbia exported pigs, fish, ajvar, gun powder, animal skin. Wallachia exported to Serbia flower, barrels, horse equipment, small knives, small guns, Russian tea and sault, as the most important article.⁶

With Greek revolution this part of Europa became interesting to the countries which had political interest with Ottomans and not only them. As a new state in progress, Serbia became interesting and exotic area for travelers who were discovering new places on their way of pilgrimage to the Orient. Their notes and memoirs were one of the ways to represent this part of Europe to the wide audience in their countries. The Danube was the most common way of getting to Serbia, but some of the people never dared to sway away from the river course, so the Serbia and the Serbians were portrayed only by the impression caught from the Danube shore.

From Prussia, in the year of 1829 young lieutenant arrived in Belgrade, on his journey from Pest. That was Otto von Pirch, proud Prussian, who got interest in Serbia by the works of Leopold Ranke and VukStefanović Karadžić. Otto von Pirch was born on 1st May 1799 as the only child of the fourth son of Franz Otto von Pirch. As a sixteenyear old, he joins his uncle in a fight against Napoleon and France and after the war, continues the military career in Berlin. He graduated in military academy with officer rank, where he found his interest in languages and philology. He got moved to the topography department and afterword to the headquarters. The war between Russia and Ottoman Empire was in full intensity in 1828/1829 and von Pirch got eight month release from his duty in headquarters. On the 8th October 1829 he arrived in Belgrade from Zemun. He was very enthusiastic about Serbian rebellion against the Ottomans considering that every Christian should be joyful to see how Christians of the Ottoman Empire are struggling to their way to freedom and education. His impressions of the voyage he put in the book and published in 1830 as *Reise in Serbien im Spätherbst 1829, von Otto v. Pirch, Premier-Liuetenantim Königlich Preussischen Ersten Garde-Regiment. Zweiter Theile. Erster*

³ Milić 1998, p. 31–42.

⁴ Petrović 1897.

⁵ Milić 1998, p. 31–42.

⁶ Milić 1998, p. 31–42.

Theil. Berlin Ferdinand Dümmler 1830. Zweiter Theil. Ibid. 1830. His description of people, local customs, prince Miloš and his family is very detailed, along with topography, counties, roads, towns, villages. Otto von Pirch ended his life in a tragic accident two years after his entrance in the world of writing. In 1832 he injured himself during the horseriding and passed away in the local hospital.⁷



1. Otto von Pirch

The monarchy of Habsburgs always paid special attention to this part of Europe, so no wonder that one of the biggest explorers of Serbia came from this country. Felix Philip Kanitz (1829–1904) was born in Budapest, as a son of factory owner. His family originally came to Hungary from Germany in eighteenth century. He studied arts at Vienna University and got very skilled in drawing sketches and painting. Afterward he studied history and ethnography at Munich University. He traveled through Italy, Montenegro, Serbia, Dalmatia, Bulgaria, and Romania. His connection with Serbia and Belgrade was the closest since the Danube was the easiest and the fastest way of transport. He traveled through Serbia and as a result of ten years of exploration he published a book in Leipzig in 1868 *Serbien. Historisch-ethnographische Reisestudien aus den Jahren 1859–1868* (Leipzig, Fries, 1868. XXIV+744). The book describes local people, local customs, close, architecture, towns and surroundings, even the prices of the goods at food markets and small shops. His research work was helped by Serbian authorities since that was a good way to represent the country to the rest of the Europe. Felix Kanitz was not only a historian; he was anthropologist and archeologist as well. He was always present when some archeological discovering got in focus. Every description had a graphic image with comment about the subject the image was representing. He painted people, town streets, and

⁷ Oto Dubislav plem. Pirch, *Putovanje po Srbiji u godini 1829*, Beograd 1900.

buildings in very authentic way and left for the readers a hundreds of sketches and drawings in various books, newspapers as probably the only source for some subjects of that time. The old parts of Belgrade, Niš, Kragujevac and other cities and fortresses, religious objects, mines and the way of exploitation of them are just one of the different areas of interests he presented. Other works related with Serbia were in context of Roman and Byzantine heritage: *Römische Funde in Serbien. Wien, 1862* and *Serbiens Byzantinische Monumente. Gezeichnet und beschrieben von F. Kanitz. Wien, 1862.*⁸



2. Felix Philip Kanitz

The travellers from Great Britain got interested in Serbia in the same time when foreign policy of Great Britain found their interest in this part of Europe. For Britons, Serbia was just one of the provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Alexander Kinglake left his home and started his tour towards the Orient and arrived in Serbia in 1834, carried by the waves of Danube. He was delightful for leaving the western world and entering in the mystic East. He was not very impressed with the scenery, since there were no any significant monuments of the classic period or any famous author he could meet. As a nobleman, he didn't show any sympathy for the common people, regardless of their religion. He carried on his voyage to Bulgaria, Asia Minor and Near East and published his impression in the book *Eothen*.⁹ The British who was more eager to present the Serbian state and history to British public was David Urquhart (1805–1877). He was Scotsman, nobleman and great supporter of Greek revolution. His own brother died as a volunteer in Greek army. Later he changed his political views and became great supporter of Ottoman Empire, since he saw the decline of Ottomans as a big fret to British interest in Middle East. He visited Serbian prince Miloš Obrenović and contributed in making diplomatic relations between Serbia and Great Britain. When he returned to Britain after he got dismissed from the diplomatic service in Constantinople, he started to publish articles and books where he criticized the official policy of British government and where he payed tribute to the oponents of Russia. In 1843 he published a book about Serbia and its history: *A Fragment of the history of Serbia, London 1843*. This was the first history of Serbia published in English language. He saw

⁸ Kanic 1991; Milošević 2003, p. 247–261.

⁹ Kinglake 1982; Todorova 2006, p. 201–204.

Serbians as part of Slavic nations, along with Russians and Poles. The period that his describing is from the time the Ottoman Turks came to Balkan penninsula in fourteenth century, to the Treaty in Bucharest 1812.¹⁰



3. David Urquhart

Bibliography

- Istorija srpskog naroda V-1 1981 = Istorija srpskog naroda V-1, Beograd, 1981.
- Jakšić 1933 = G. Jakšić, *Evropa i vaskrs Srbije (1804-1834)*, Beograd, 1933.
- Kanic 1991 = Feliks Kanic, *Srbija: zemlja i stanovništvo od rimskog doba do kraja XIX veka*, 1-2, Beograd, 1991.
- Kinglake 1982 = A.W. Kinglake, *Eothen*, London, 1982.
- Ljušić 2004 = R. Ljušić, *Kneževina Srbija 1830-1839*, Beograd, 2004.
- Milić 1998 = D. Milić, *Spoljna trgovina, skele i carine na Dunavu u XIX veku*, Godišnjak Istorijskog arhiva u Negotinu. Baštinik 1, Negotin 1998, p. 31-42.
- Milić-Miljković 1959 = D. Milić-Miljković, *Trgovina Srbije 1815-1839*, Beograd, 1959.
- Milošević 2003 = G. Milošević, *Feliks Kanic-crtač arhitekture Beograda i okoline*, Beograd u delima evropskih putopisaca, Beograd, 2003, p. 247-261.
- Pirh 1900 = Oto Dubislav plem. Pirh, *Putovanje po Srbiji u godini 1829*, Beograd, 1900.
- Petrović 1897 = M. Petrović, *Finansije i ustanove obnovljene Srbije do 1842*, Beograd, 1897.
- Todorova 2006 = M. Todorova, *Imaginarni Balkan*, Beograd, 2006.
- Urquhart 1989 = David Urquhart, *A fragments of the history of Serbia*, Belgrade, 1989.

¹⁰ David Urquhart, *A fragments of the history of Serbia*, Belgrade 1989.

THE DANUBE AS A LINK OF MODERN SERBIA TO TRADE AND TRAFFIC WITH EUROPE

(Abstract)

In the beginning of the nineteenth century the Serbians have risen against the Ottoman rule. The formal autonomy was accomplished in the year of 1833, when Serbia was given the self-government, with the authority of tax collection, armed forces, and trade. Serbian autonomy under the formal Ottoman rule was well used way of development of agriculture and trade of goods with neighbor state of Habsburg monarchy and Wallachia across the Danube. As a new state, Serbia became interesting and exotic area for travelers who were discovering new places on their way of pilgrimage to the Orient. Their notes and memoirs were one of the ways to represent this part of Europe to the wide audience in their countries. The Danube was the most common way of getting to Serbia, but some of the people never dared to sway away from the river course, so the Serbia and the Serbians were portrayed only by the impression caught from the Danube shore.