



## THE “TURKISH TOPICS” IN THE WORKS OF MATIJA BAN

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**Abstract:** Matija Ban (1818-1903), from Dubrovnik (Ragusa), had been drama writer and engaged intellectual. During his professional life he was strongly attached to the Ottoman Empire and its tradition. As an exponent of the Serbian policy and diplomacy, he had offered totally opposed solutions for improvement of the position of the Serbian population living in the Ottoman Empire: from active advocate of the overthrowing the sultan's power to the practice ideas regarding the possible reforms. His literary work cannot be separated from his political activities and national intentions. In his dramas with the topic taken from the Serbian national history, to the Ottoman characters, especially to the sultans, he had given the position of the very clever and tolerant people. That was in harmony with the tradition of the Dubrovnik diplomacy, as well as the new position of the newly born Serbian modern state.

**Keywords:** Ottoman Empire, Serbia, Matija Ban, Dramas, Turkish Topics

The 19<sup>th</sup> century in the Serbian history was the century dedicated to the national liberation and creation of the independent state after several centuries of the Ottoman rule. At the time, Serbian intellectuals usually wrote very patriotic and also anti-Turkish or anti-Ottoman books, letters and lectures. The Serbian historiography of the so called „romantic“ period was also full of negative images of the Ottoman rule. The case was almost the same in all the Balkan countries. However, with the beginning of the systematic research in the Ottoman Archives by the Serbian and Yugoslav historians, even before the Second World War the situation had begun to change. Today we can proudly say that in the Serbian historiography dedicated to the Ottoman period prevail the works which are objective and based on the primary sources.

This article is dedicated to one of the famous Serbian intellectuals from Dubrovnik (Ragusa), true patriot and national worker, who tried in his dramas mostly to show more balanced view of the Ottomans. Thus, in the

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further text would be described the Turkish topics found in the opus of Matija Ban<sup>1</sup>. The special attention should be paid to the usage of the terms Turk and Ottoman. The term Turk in this article has been used when used as such by Ban himself. The authors have used the term Ottoman since it is more correct in the strict methodological sense.

The decision made by 21 years old Matija Ban, from Dubrovnik, to settle himself in the hearth of the Ottoman Empire, was unusual and unexpected in the historical sense. The Republic of Dubrovnik (Ragusa) and the Ottoman Empire had been in a very close vassal relationship, but also commercial and friendly ones, mainly due to the very wise policy conducted by the Ragusians (Kunčević 2015:99-116). That relationship can be best described in the light of the fact that when the Napoleon troops had entered Dubrovnik, the population of the city had not been thinking about the „liberation“ from the Ottomans (usually called the Turks at the time), but about the fall of their Republic. In the time when young Matija Ban, along with his generation, had started his life the reminiscence of the independent Republic of Ragusa had been very strong feeling. That had led to the idealization of the period of independence not only in the literature, but also in the everyday dialogues and thoughts of the Ragusians.

The Ragusians had been travelling to the Ottoman Empire for centuries, mostly from the state, diplomatic and commercial reasons, but just rare among them had decided to settle there. Matija Ban, however, feeling strong disappointment of the young man, both in professional and personal sense, had reached Constantinople in 1839. He started working as a teacher of history and geography in the French school of St. Benedict, as well as the Italian language and literature in the French college Bebek on the shores of the Bosphorus. He was a teacher of the Italian language for a year

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<sup>1</sup> Matija Ban (1818, Petrovo selo nearby Dubrovnik – 1903, Belgrade) – writer, diplomat, politician. He was first in Dubrovnik. He had joined the Franciscan Order in Dubrovnik in 1834 but had left it the very next year. Since 1839 to 1844 he was living in the East: Halki Island, Constantinople and Bursa, where he had taught foreign languages and worked on his own self-improvement. Since 1844, he had been living in Belgrade, where he had died. He was of pro-Serbian and pro-Slav intended.

For the Serbian government he had accomplished several confidential diplomatic missions in the period from 1848 to 1850. They were all related to the intent to liberate the Balkans from the Ottoman domination. Since the dynastic turn over in Serbia in 1858, he became inclined to the policy led by Mihailo Obrenović. In 1861 he was given a position of the Chief of the Secret State Press Bureau in Belgrade, where he had worked until his retirement in 1880.

Matija Ban had written poetry and dramas, and he was also interested in literary critique. In his time, he was the most popular drama writer. His thirteen plays can be divided into two big groups: historical dramas (Emperor Lazar, Marojica Kaboga) and melodramas (Dobriča and Milijenko, Fatal Secret). According to the critique, in some of those plays, he had achieved outstanding artistic quality and thus contributed to the development of those genres in Serbia.

on the Halki Island. He started to learn Greek and French, and in the French Institute he had been listening to the course of the military sciences. He had also travel along the Asia Minor. His intentions were to stay in the Ottoman Empire for a longer period, since he had bought the estate in Bursa, where he had started the agricultural production, but has also continued his literary work. One of his four dramas written at that time, *Il Moscovita*, had been published in Constantinople.

Constantinople at the time was a place of gathering of numerous European intellectuals, among which Ban had a lot of encounters with the Polish emigrants and had been delighted with the plan of Comte Chartorisky to free and unite all the Slavs in the Balkans.

With that leading idea Ban had come in 1844 to Serbia, where he would spent all of his long life. However, first out of his numerous political and diplomatic engagements was related to the Ottoman Empire. Matija Ban had enrolled actively in the planed Balkan joint action against the Empire. This in 1848 he had travelled to Voivodina, Croatia, Dalmatia, Dubrovnik and Montenegro, to negotiate the cooperation regarding the organization of the uprising, being a reliable person of the Serbian government. (Милутиновић 1974; Petrović 1982: 70; Поповић 1903: 431-433; Митровић 1991: 361-368). Also in 189 in Dubrovnik he was a leader of a secret organization for preparation of the armed uprising for liberations of the Balkans.

As it is well known, this action has never come to effect, which Ban had accepted very emotionally. Nevertheless, he had continued his engagements for better status of the Slavic population under the Ottoman rule.

The action of 1848/49 is well known in the literature, beside the fact that Ban himself had left written testimony regarding it, especially concerning his encounters with the spiritual and administrative ruler of Montenegro Petar II Petrović Njegoš (Максимовић 2011:33-44). However, his mission in Constantinople during the fifties of the 19<sup>th</sup> century had not been researched enough so far.

Antun Fabris had written that during the Crimean War, Ban had spent eight months in Constantinople on the special mission. At that time the Ottoman sultan had become benevolent to him, but it was the same with the Western Powers. Napoleon had sent him the decoration, while the Ottoman Empire had proposed both decoration and service. However, Ban had thanked in a very diplomatic way on those decorations and opportunities, not to offend either side (Fabris 1901). Biographer of Matia Ban, Camilla Lutzerna, has been certain in her assertion that his mission to Constantinople at the time was a secret one, and that Ban had „prepared“

it by writing his *Praise to the Sultan* [*Oda Sultanu*], which is according to her typical example of the Ragusian diplomacy. It seems that Ban at the time had not had the connection with the Serbian government any more, in order to have better position in Constantinople and to be able to influence the Ottoman process of reforms. (Lucerna 1906: 25).

Ban`s work on his dramas and literature in general (Никић, Жујовић, Радојчић-Костић 2008: 14-15) was a part of his national, ideological and political engagement, which was clearly shown by his *Praise to the Sultan*, which full title is in a form of dedication to the *Establisher of the Civil Equality in the Turkish Empire, Enlightener of the East and Friend of the Manhood Sultan Abdulmejid* (Бан, *Установитељу Грађанске једнакости...*). Ban had sincerely supported Sultan Abdulmejid in his fight with the rest of the old Ottoman society, led by the ideas of the civil equality and religious freedom.

However, the poet has been aware of the unique nature of his undertaking in the Serbian literature, thus he had begun his poem with the call to mute the voices of „vulgar prejudices“ under the awake of the new age. The idea of the new age had been illustrated by the fantastic illustration of all the people united in love „of all languages, of all confessions“, where the Muslim was giving his hand to the Christian. (Бан *Установитељу Грађанске једнакости...*).

It is obvious that the Serbian cultural public did not have understanding for such literary, but at the same time diplomatic and political engagement by Ban. That had provoked his strong reaction in the Serbian press, trying to express his believes that the Ottoman Sultan had shown toward his Christian subjects great dose of tolerance, which according to Ban „could serve to the pride of the most enlighten nations“. Ban was trying to explain that this movement had started „from the Head“ [i.e. the Sultan, I.A. E.M.] and then had widen until the last inhabitant of the waste Empire.<sup>2</sup> Ban continued by saying that „It is true that it does not go fast and easy, as it has been wanted, but there is no possibility to change the people`s mind in just a few years...“ (Бан *Установитељу Грађанске једнакости...*)

However, that was not enough. His „excuse“ or rather explanation he had tried to elaborate in the newspaper called „*Narodne novine*“ (no. 152) in 1854, when he had addressed himself to the „Yugoslav intelligentsia“ for its inattentive behavior which had cause bad development for „our

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1. There is no doubt that Ban was quite impressed by the changes that the Ottoman sultan Mahmud II (1808-1839) and Abdulmejid I (1839-1861) had tried to induce into the Empire by the Gülhane decree from 1839. At that time was adopted and proclaimed the famous document called the The *Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif* (Supreme Edict of the Rosehouse) or *Tanzimât Fermânı* (Imperial Edict of Reorganization), by which for the first time in the Ottoman history, at least on the paper the rights of the Muslim and Non-Muslim population of the Empire had become equal.

brothers in Turkey“, inviting all Yugoslavs of the good will to get out of a whirl of passion and to start serious political work. (Lucerna 1906:26).

By those words Ban had been addressing the public as the real Ragusian, putting himself by this work of his among those old writers of Dubrovnik, such as Mavro Vetranović, before all. They also had written works dedicated to the Ottomans, with very strong politically engaged message. (Letić 1982:20-24).

Matija Ban had been really hurt by the comments raised after his writing *Praise to the Sultan*. This can be proved by his speech dated 1878, when he was awarded with the pension and praised for his fruitful work long several decades. He had said at the occasion that he would have write not one, but ten such poem if that would have helped, as it could then, to save Serbia of any danger „without either blood shred or money spent“. (Lucerna 1906: 26).

It is well known that Ban, who was sincerely welcomed by the Ottoman authorities and European representatives in the Ottoman Empire, had prepared couple of projects as models for regulation of position of the Christian community in the Empire, as well as for raising a level of general spiritual and material culture. He had worked really hard in order to spread the modern education to the East.

In 1856 the article *The positions of the Serbs in the Ottoman Empire*, in which he aimed to prove that Serbia is not the land conquered by the Ottoman army on the battle field, but taken by the Sultans under the pretext of various forms of hereditary rights, was praised by the Serbian government, and later translated into Russian, French and German.

Ban`s further relations with the Ottomans Empire had been transferred to the literature level. The events from the Serbian-Ottoman history had been a subject of his historical dramas, as well the personalities of the Turks (or rather Ottomans) in them. Among the wider spread of genres of Ban`s drama writing, could be found melodrama (*Meyrima*), tragedy (*Emperor Lazar and Kosovo Disaster*), historical dramas (*Uprising of the Serbian State, Takovo Uprising*), as well as heroic drama (*Prince Nikola Zrinjski, Maroyitzza Caboga*). In all quoted dramas he had used Turkish themes and personalities. It was not unusual, either for Ban, or for his contemporaries, since the historical drama of the time had found its sources in the Serbian national history, related to the Ottoman history for centuries.

Thus, in the historical tragedy *Emperor Lazar or Kosovo Disaster* the main subject is the Kosovo battle held in 1389. In the dramas *Uprising of the Serbian State, Takovo Uprising* the theme was the Second Serbian Uprising. The epic drama *Maroyitzza Caboga had been related to the events*

*after the Big Earthquake in Dubrovnik in 1667, and Prince Nikola Zrinjski has been dedicated to the siege of Sziget in 1556.*<sup>3</sup>

Regarding the characters of the Ottomans (Turks) in the Ban's historical dramas, they were all different. It was noted that Ban really tried hard not to represent them in the black-white perspective, thus there were mostly supportive role, but positive characters, Turks by origin. Extremely negative were only those characters that had been remembered as such in the course of history.

In the sense of drama, the Ottoman (Turkish) characters had been given significant role. They had solved certain conflicts, made judgments in those situations when they were psychologically defined as the different personalities. Some of them were real life commenters of the certain situations, which made possible to the author to perceive complex events both on the stage and in drama itself. They were quite often opponents to the main characters, especially when the plot had been made around famous historical personalities. Most often, they were positive characters, created to make balance in describing certain crimes perpetuated by the real historical figures.

In the historical tragedy *Emperor Lazar or Kosovo Disaster*, the supporting characters – Ottoman soldiers had been described as personalities who had not been respectful to the code of honor, while the sultan were described as personality worth of every praise. (Мирјана Ђирковић 2014: 172). To the Sultan Murat I who had been killed in the battle field during the Kosovo battle in 1389, and had the same destiny in the drama written by Ban, the author had given the special role of mind giver. Thus, this figure had his importance in the dramatic sense itself, since the main topics of the historical tragedies had been subjects as heroic behavior, diplomacy, intent to make intrigue, loyalty of the vassals, which made Ban's dramas idealistic historical, or in the sense of genre statehood drama. (Фрајнд 1987: 28)

Thus, Sultan Murat, quite reasonably, has seen the reasons for the Serbian tragedy in rivalries. That had been, at the same time, the writer's main message to the young nation, to which, as many authors of his time, had addressed from the stage. Chosen the adversary ruler as the figure who would address the main message, at his death bed, Ban had to appraise him the highest ethical and moral values. In Ban's drama, Murat I had spoken, while dying, appraisal to Miloš<sup>4</sup>, Serbian knight who had killed him,

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2. During that siege Suleiman Qanuni had died, but of the natural causes, not in the battle field.

<sup>4</sup> It is not confirmed yet if certain Serbian nobleman called Miloš Obilić had really existed or he was named later in the epic poetry. However, one of the Serbian nobleman during the Kosovo battle in 1389 had entered the Murat's tent and killed him.

concluding that many of his soldiers were not ready to give their lives despite the oath to their ruler. (Ban 1867: 25-144).

Ban was very proud of this particular scene. He had written an article about it in the Dubrovnik paper related to theater called *Драмски назори* (Бан 1891: 61), emphasizing that his contemporaries, also from Dubrovnik, brothers Niko Veliki and Medo Pucić, had also put special stress to this scene and he had trusted in their refined taste in art and literature.

On a very similar way he had characterized Sultan Suleiman the Great in the drama called *Prince Nikola Zrinjski*, who had also died during the battle for Sziget, but of natural causes. This particular event is also the thematic frame of this epic drama. The old sultan, Suleiman the Great, had been shown as rigid and just ruler, to whom his Christian adversaries had shown their respect. He had also respected battle merit of the enemy's hero *voivoda* Sečujac. In this drama, the old sultan had also help Sečujac's daughter Ljeposava to free her brother and severely punish the Venetian „scumbag“. (Ban 1888).

The deaths of both sultans, Ban had not used as a special dramatic moment, although it was possible with the historical documents he had had at hand. He had just wanted to describe them as honorable and deeply ethical personalities.

However, despite these figures, the historical figures of other Ottoman dignitaries, who had been remembered in history upon their cruel deeds, were presented as such in the Ban's dramas as well.

The big enemy of the Ragusians, Ottoman Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa-Pasha<sup>5</sup> had been presented in the drama *Maroyica Kaboga* as unworthy, brutal, greedy, not respecting any agreements or laws. This way, he was directly opposite to the main character, *Maroyica Kaboga*, the Ragusian. Our writer had wanted to emphasize morality, honor and legendary readiness for sacrifice, which were legendary characteristics of the people from Dubrovnik.

At the end, unethical person such as Kara Mustafa had to be killed, and by the orders of the Sultan himself, which again had created equilibrium in presenting the personalities of the Turks. (Ban 1880)

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<sup>5</sup> Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Pasha (Ottoman Turkish: مرزيفونلى قره مصطفى پاشا; Turkish: *Merzifonlu Kara Mustafa Paşa*; "Mustafa Pasha the Courageous of Merzifon"; 1634/1635 – 25 December 1683) was an Ottoman military commander and Grand Vizier, who was a central character in the Ottoman Empire's last attempts at expansion into both Central and Eastern Europe.

The historical events dramatized in the volume called *Српске убујему*, consisted of two historical dramas: *Takovo Uprising* and *Uprising of the Serbian State*, made possible to Matija Ban to visualize more Turkish figures. They were of various characteristics, as emphasized by the author in the Preface. (Бан 1889-1892: VII).

Ban was limited with the historical base itself, as well as the jubilee for which both dramas had been written. Thus, he had to present Turkish misbehavior during the centuries, but also during the described historical event itself, as it was the case at all Balkan countries at the moment.

Suleiman, Belgrade Vizier had been largely known by his atrocities, thus in the Ban`s drama he was portrayed as cautious, brutal, double-tongued. In the drama *Takovo Uprising* he was a symbol of a Serbian slavery.

As such, he had not respected his agreement with the leader of the uprising, late Serbian Prince Miloš Obrenović, and he made plot to kill all Serbian leaders. It was not enough for the author, so the evil vizier had behaved similarly in the direct contact with subjugated Serbs. The example was his relation toward the old woman, Kulišić`s mother, to whom he had made sever threats when she had decline to convert into Islam and had sent her daughter into the harem.

On the opposite to him, but also to all the events regarding unrespect of the agreement, was the character called Sechesma, who was commander of the *deli* unit. In the first drama, he was presented at just couple of scenes, with few replicas, when he had rejected the young girl as a gift, and left astonished by the atrocities perpetuated by Suleiman, That is the introduction of dominance of his character in the second drama. In the *Uprising of the Serbian State* he had kept his promise about Miloš`s safe returning among the Serbs, saved Serbian *voivoda*, but also saved the honor of the Turks. To make that possible, he was ready to sacrifice himself, not believing even his cowarriors, especially Vizier Rushid, brutal and unsincere. To protect Miloš, he had prepared the gunpowder, thus taking him safely across the Drina river.

Beside this Ottoman dignitary, Ban has presented several supporting Ottoman (Turkish) characters, among them Ashin Beg, commander of Rudnik, close friend of Miloš, who was ashamed of Suleiman actions, providin Miloš a protection.

To Ban was of imense importance to show prudence, notability and skilfull diplomatic behaviour of the future Serbian prince, Miloš Obrenović, who had sent a message that he was against the vizier, but not His Majesty the Padishah. However, as special would be remembered the scenes of the Ottoman atrocities, not only suffering of the Serbian soldiers,

but also scenes of the girls which had thrown themselves, together, in the river Morava, in order not to become prey for the Turkish soldiers.

However, the peak of his skillful portraying of the characters from the Ottoman world on the scene is Ban's historical melodrama *Meyrima*. (Бан 1851). This piece is very important, by several facts, for the whole Serbian literature, especially 19<sup>th</sup> century literature.

This fact means that Matija Ban, well remembered as a writer of great talent but also of clear national goals, was a talented writer in the literal, theoretical and esthetical sense. *Meyrima* has been considered one of the best Serbian melodramas, while character of Meyrima herself has been one of the most important female characters in the Serbian romantic drama. On the other side, the most complex character shaped by this Ragusian writer of the immense talent was Ali Pasha.

It has to be emphasized that the characters of Ali Pasha and his daughters, as well as the other characters from their milieu, are not Turks by origin, but the Slavs converted to Islam. In the drama, they had issued that warning themselves putting themselves between the rebel Christians and the man of the Sultan (Бан 1987: 152). In this melodrama the difference between the way of thinking and living between the Christians and the Turks had been the main plot and the conflict in this drama.

In the clearly posted historical frame, in which had been announced and happened conflict in Bosnia, during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, while the Bosnian begs were in constant conflict both with the Christians, but also the sultan's army, love between Živko, the Christian and *Meyrima*, the Muslim girl, ended tragically.

In the literature critique had been observed that in creation of the nationally and confessional divided characters, Matija Ban made great difference. The opinions about that went from those who thought that Matija Ban was very objective in portraying characters, both Serbs and Turks, and their heroic characteristics had been presented in the same measure, as well as their prejudices and limitations (Фрајнд 1987:27). There are also different opinions stating that Ali Pasha and his daughter are more unique characters than Novko and his son Živan, who were Christians (Несторовић 2007: 144).

The main character of this melodrama is Meyrima herself. Meyrima is the victim and the criminal at the same time, led by the passion and not paying attention to method, even ready to kill her rival, in order to accomplish her goal. But, at the moment when she had thought that she had lost her love, she committed suicide. Such Meyrima as a character is totally opposed to her rival Ljubica, but also to Živan himself, very weak

character, who had always had doubts and different thoughts (for more details, see: Милинчевић 1996:62)

Voluptuous and passionate, Meyrima was adored by the Serbian public, although the literary critique had reproached to Ban her psychological justification. The literal historiography had even tried to find the base for this characters in the Ban`s own feelings, to whom had often been reproached that he was just cold cabinet writer with no link to reality.

However, it seems that only one full blossoming character from the Turkish, Muslim world was not enough. Another character from that particular milieu in this drama is another outstanding personality, Meyrema`s father Ali Pasha. While his daughter was very passionate, he was calm, thoughtful, and attentive in his acting. He seemed to be higher creature. He had observed the changes with great wisdom and wanted to adjust to them. His relations toward the Christians, as well as to the other Bosnian dignitaries were just. To his daughter he had been giving freedom which was rarely given to the women not only in the Muslim milieu. At the end, his death was really tragic (Стаменковић 2013:67).

The Serbian literal historiography did not have any doubt that Ban had created this character masterfully. One of the critiques of Ban`s work had observed that Ban had written that his „greatest“ character was Ali Pasha, and that Meyrima was the most tragic one. However, both those characteristics belong to Ali Pasha; he is the greatest and the most tragic, because he never had loosen anything from his monumental proportion and had not foregone from his lonely, dramatic restlessness to the prosaic explication of himself. He has always been in the center of interior, social conflicts. He has always been between those conflicts and his personality. He has permanently been the one who had felt the consequences of the sins of the others. It is tragic to be one owns victim, and the victim of one owns passions, but it is more tragic be „a poor man “and die like a „real Turk“(Ерчић 1974: 440, 441).

The real question is to find the reason why has Ban created such rich, complex personalities?

There were some attempt to explain Ban`s sympathies toward Ali Pasha by his national and ideological ideas. Portraying Ali Pasha as a just man, big hero and great man had nicely fit into the ideas of Matija Ban, which could be seen in all his works. The passionate advocate of *Načertanije*<sup>6</sup> he

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<sup>6</sup> *Načertanije* (1844) is a document signed by Serbian minister Ilija Garašanin'*Načertanije* (Начертаније) was influenced by "*Conseils sur la conduite a suivre par la Serbie*", a document written by Polish Prince Adam Czartoryski in 1843 and the revised version by Polish ambassador to Serbia, Franjo Zach, "*Zach's Plan*".<sup>[8][9]</sup> From the 1850s onward, this concept has had a significant influence on Serbian politics. The document was created with the aim of creation of the independent Serbian state.

was well aware of Garašanin idea to write a short history of Bosnia, where the great Muslim hero of Bosnian would not have been omitted. This was with the aim of rapprochement of Serbia and Bosnia. This historical melodrama is Ban's attempt to contribute to that idea, which make more probable above mentioned thesis by Vladimir Erčić and Sava Stamenković (2013:73).

However, it seems that the success of drama itself had denied the above mentioned. The work of art created only with a cold head and hearth cannot possibly awaken in his author such creative energy which will make such characters as Ali Pasha certainly is. It is also obvious that Ban had not wanted to create characters from the Ottoman milieu, which would be painted only in black and white. This attitude is in harmony with the support that the writer had been given to the policy led by Prince Miloš Obrenović, who looked upon the personalities from the Ottoman world in a very balanced way, same as Ban did in his works.

As for the tradition itself, i.e. the Serbian literature, in the epic poetry, for example, could be found the positive characters from the Turkish milieu. Some of the Serbian writers had created positive Turkish characters, such as Jovan Sterija Popović. They had defended this attitude with the argument of the enlightenment intensions. They had been opposed to any revolutionary actions, regardless against whom.

Matija Ban had relied to another part of the Serbian literary tradition. It is a character of the Ottoman sultan Osman II, who was a main character of the historical-romantic poem *Osman*, written by Ivan Gundulić. Gundulić, as a Christian poet, wanted to write an epic with the main subject being the conflict between the Christianity and Islam. However, writing probably the most beautiful versus of the Serbian baroque poetry, had painted tragic sultan as the most complex epic figure of the time.

It is probable that Matija Ban creating the character of Ali Pasha was in the same situation. This character is precedent to the Muslim characters in the books of the greatest Serbian writers Ivo Andrić and Mešo Selimović, before all.

The Turkish topics in the biography and work of Matija Ban have very important place. They, firstly, define him as an engaged intellectual who tried to make the position of the Serbian nation in the Ottoman Empire better. He had shown various ranges of ideas from the revolutionary ones to the idea of reforms. As a drama writer, from the scene he had acted in accordance with the enlightenment, finding in the Serbian-Ottoman turbulent history characters and situations that were far from the stereotypes and which had brought new perception of the others.

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