

VIII. The shaping of the new Macedonia (1798-1870)

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1. Introduction

Macedonia, both the ancient historical Greek land and the modern geographical region known by that name, has been perhaps one of the most heavily discussed countries in the world. In the more than two centuries since the representatives of revolutionary France introduced into western insular and continental Greece the ideas and slogans that fostered nationalism, the ancient Greek country has been the subject of inquiry, and the object of myth-making, on the part of archaeologists, historians, ethnologists, political scientists, social anthropologists, geographers and anthropogeographers, journalists and politicians. The changing face of the ancient country and its modern sequel, as recorded in the testimonies and studies of those who have applied themselves to the subject, is the focus of this present work.

Since the time, two centuries ago, when the world's attention was first directed to it, the issue of the future of this ancient Greek land – the “Macedonian Question” as it was called – stirred the interest or attracted the involvement of scientists, journalists, diplomats and politicians, who moulded and remoulded its features. The periodical crises in the Macedonian Question brought to the fore important researchers and generated weighty studies, which, however, with few exceptions, put forward aspects and characteristics of Macedonia that did not always correspond to the reality and that served a variety of expediencies. This militancy on the part of many of those who concerned themselves with the ancient country and its modern sequel was, of course, inevitable, given that all or part of that land was claimed by other peoples of south-eastern Europe as well as the Greeks.

The quest for the true face of Macedonia, the real Macedonia at any given time, is no easy matter. The search for the necessary evidence and assessment of its reliability requires particular care, because its component elements are sometimes unreliable and misleading. Moreover, the very discipline of “Macedonology”, that is, the study of Macedonia, is itself the focus of study to identify the various tendencies and objectives in the works of the Macedonologists.

Both the primary sources, then, and the works of the specialists conceal pitfalls that may lead the inquirer astray. Both contain silences and inconsistencies. Our ignorance on many important aspects of the question is largely due to the lack of sufficient written evidence relating to the settlement of the Slavs in the region. Despite the fact that archaeology and the new methods available to archaeologists have shed light on a number of these aspects, the 7th century still remains very dark, darker than its predecessors, perhaps because the national histories of the peoples of the region have not yet been freed from the bondage of the national myths that were shaped in the 19th century.

This present study aspires to shed those fetters and portray the historical past of Macedonia in accordance with the precepts of that great servant of Clio, Lucian: not striving to serve expediencies or passing and imposed certainties or equally ephemeral correctnesses, but endeavouring solely to ascertain the reality, in the unshakable faith that this reality, and objective truth, exist. The fundamental and driving objective of this study is this: to overcome not only the remains of the ethnic mythologies of the past but also the obstacles created by an inexplicable relativity that undermines the single-

mindful commitment of the inquirer to the search for truth and a reality free of attributives.

One such step away from the established certainties bequeathed to contemporary historiography by the national antagonisms of the past is the separation of the history of Macedonia from the national histories of the peoples of the region. Two of the fundamental elements of this autonomous approach are: a) shifting the starting-point of the modern era from the 15th to the 18th century and b) broadening the boundaries of the country from those of antiquity to those of the so-called “modern” or “geographical” Macedonia.

These things, that is, dating the modern era in Macedonia from the end of the 18th century and using in this context the “geographical” rather than the historical Macedonia, are neither unrelated nor unconnected. “Geographical” Macedonia, which is congruent with the Macedonian Question, was shaped in the modern age as defined in this study and was the product of two main factors: a) the identification of three administrative provinces of European Turkey with ancient Macedonia and b) the Greek quest for the “northern” boundaries of the Greek nation in the modern age. The identification of the three provinces of the Ottoman Empire with the ancient Greek land and its name was inevitable, despite the fact that ancient Macedonia did not extend as far north as the three Ottoman provinces of the day, since the name was in the end imposed by the inclinations of the classically-educated travellers, diplomats, geographers and historians of that age. It was, naturally, an arbitrary nomenclature, but it was never challenged, least of all by the Greeks who were pushing the boundaries of their nation northwards taking Strabo as their guide. The end of the 18th century was chosen as marking the beginning of the modern period because that is the point at which one can begin to distinguish the elements used to identify a world moving out of the middle ages. For the contemporary historian, the older dating system, which, by analogy with Western Europe, fixed the 15th century as the starting-point of the modern age in Europe’s far eastern reaches as well, is unsatisfactory when applied to the region known as Macedonia. The 15th century, which in the West is synonymous with the Renaissance, with a shift away from the theocentric world view of the Middle Ages to humanist education and the anthropocentric world view of the modern world, with the shaping of the first nation-states and the epic exodus of the Europeans into the rest of world and, finally, their shaping of that world in their own image and likeness, was in the Greek East an age not of progress but of retrogression. The age when the last free centres of the Eastern Roman Empire in Europe and Asia, Constantinople, Pontus, Epirus and the Peloponnese, succumbed to the conquering Ottoman Turks. The Venetians already held the Ionian Islands, and the Knights of St John ruled in Cyprus.

The Greek East, and naturally Macedonia, entered the modern age at least three centuries behind the advanced countries of Western Europe. The tardy Greek Enlightenment, in which many of the heterolingual Orthodox communities living alongside the Greeks played a part, is, from a scholarly point of view, a more satisfying starting-point for the modern age, for it is then possible to distinguish the elements of modernity that appeared earlier in the West. And that is the time when, as we have said, the ancient Greek land was “expanded” to become the geographical Macedonia of its later history.

There is no need to revise the other established divisions in the history of Macedonia: they are marked by adequate signposts and turning points. Sovereignty, a determining factor in the dating of historical periods, was in this study as well a decisive element in the demarcation of chronological periods. Prehistoric Macedonia, ancient Hellenic and Hellenistic Macedonia, Roman-occupied Macedonia, Byzantine Macedonia (which includes the short-lived rules of Bulgars and Serbs over parts of the land), Turkish-occupied Macedonia (the last century of which saw the shaping of “geographi-

cal” Macedonia) and contemporary Macedonia, which was liberated by and incorporated into the nation-states of the Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians, are all distinct periods in the history of the ancient land and its mediaeval and modern successions.

Geographical Macedonia, that arbitrary historical entity of the modern age, has caused the researcher fewer problems down the ages than its inhabitants. Macedonia has always been a frontier, a place where many distinct linguistic and religious communities have come together and co-existed, for the most part peacefully. After the Roman conquest of the country Greeks, Romans and Latinised Greeks, Huns, Goths and Visigoths, Slavs, Albanians and Turks lived together, for longer or shorter periods, peacefully or otherwise, under a variety of dominations. From antiquity to the present, Macedonia has been a place of passage, settlement and migration, under divers conditions. Wars and persecutions, the requirements of the several overlords and the tribulations, such as famine and pestilence, that frequently afflicted the world and were interpreted as the wrath of God, created waves of refugees and emigrants; but the demographic losses were made up by refugees and immigrants from neighbouring or more distant lands. The years of Ottoman rule were marked by mass population shifts, with the settlement of incomers of other faiths from distant places and the emigration of surplus Christian mouths from the mountain villages of the west, primarily towards Central Europe.

Ever since the Macedonian Question was first raised on the international scene, the peoples that claimed Macedonia have put forward their so-called “ethnic” rights to the land, basing the legitimacy of those rights on two principal elements:) their “historic” rights to the land and b) the “majority” of their compatriots in relation to the other ethnicities in the country. There is nothing in the available evidence to suggest that those most directly interested in the matter ever seriously grappled with the following inescapable and still unanswered question: Which was of greater importance, in relation to the propounded legitimacy of these claims, historic rights or the numerical supremacy of an ethnic community? Which, in other words, weighed heavier, the place and its history or the inhabitants of the place? In the end, it was the legitimacy of the force of arms that tilted the balance in the resolution of the Macedonian Question.

The struggle for possession of Macedonia projected sides and aspects of the disputed land that have not been brought to the fore in the case of other historical countries. For nearly two centuries the history and culture of Macedonia, its society and economy and polyglot, multi-religious world, were the object of study and research that rendered the land transparent. That struggle also severely tested the scholarly authority of those whose work dealt with the disputed land and its future, and the peoples who claimed it and liberated it by force of arms. The Bulgarians fought chiefly for Macedonia and were defeated in three wars – the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), World War I and World War II. The Greeks were victorious in the same three wars, but paid a heavy price. The Serbs, with proportionally more modest sacrifices, in the end saw the portion of Macedonia that they had liberated claim its own ethnic identity and acquire independence.

Macedonia also tested the security system controlled by the Great Powers. A host of international conferences and bilateral or multilateral agreements were concerned primarily with Macedonia. The Russo-Turkish Treaty of San Stefano in 1878, the Berlin Congress and Treaty of that same year, the Ambassadors Conference in London in 1913, the Greek-Bulgarian Treaty of Neuilly in 1919 on mutual and voluntary migration to and from those countries, the stillborn Politis-Kalfov Protocol of 1924 and the equally stillborn Greek-Yugoslav Treaty conceded under Yugoslav pressure by Theodoros Pangalos in 1926: the object of these and other international acts of those and later years was to settle various aspects of the Macedonian Question. World War II severely tested the South-eastern European countries that shared the land of Macedonia;

but out of the travail of the Axis Occupation of that land came forth a new country on the fringes of the historical Macedonia.

That ancient Hellenic kingdom, called Macedon after its inhabitants, and the subsequent multi-tongued, multi-faith country that knew a succession of powerful conquerors and aggressors, shifted southwards on the map. It grew substantially, formed part of neighbouring provinces, was inhabited permanently or temporarily by a variety of peoples, until in the end it was forgotten and lived on chiefly in the legends of those who came together on its soil. From the barbarian invasions of the 4th century and the collapse of the Hellenic-Roman world and for many centuries after that, Macedonia remained in the wings of the historical stage, until it was rediscovered by the travellers, geographers, historians and ethnologists, who, as we have said, expanded it to the north and set about searching for ancient cities and identifying them with the settlements of their day, in order to establish the desired continuity. Towards the middle of the 19th century the quest was broadened to include monuments from the middle years, the Byzantine monuments that were more obvious and more numerous than the ancient, when the Eastern Roman Empire was adopted as the bearer of Hellenism in the Middle Ages.

The search for evidence to establish the continuity and document the legitimacy of historic rights and national heritages required distant starting-points: *prior tempore, fortior iure* – the earlier in time, the stronger the right. All the ancient Hellenic tribes of Northern Hellas were summoned from oblivion, as were later the tribes of Illyria and Thrace, to lend their names to the corresponding regions. Ancient Macedonia lived again in place names, as these appeared on historical maps; but were these cartographical exercises sufficient to establish continuity and the legitimacy of ethnic rights?

The Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians and Albanians – and all those who supported their views on the Macedonian Question – disagreed with the Greeks that Macedonia was a “land celebrated in stones and monuments”, and argued that the inhabitants of the country were more important than history and the relics of the past, while at the same time searching for their own ancient ancestors.

Who, then, were the inhabitants of Macedonia? Centuries of foreign domination, barbarian incursions and forced migrations had shaped a linguistic and religious mosaic in the land, where, according to the 20th-century visitor and perspicacious observer H. N. Brailsford, the “centuries [did] not follow one another. They coexisted”.¹ Greeks, Slavs, Bulgarians, Turks, Jews, Vlachs and Albanians, plus such permutations as Greek-speaking Muslims, Vlach-speaking Muslims, Albanian-speaking Greeks, to name but a few, made up the colourful mosaic that was Macedonia. The ephemeral political correctnesses of a century and more added neologisms and nuances along the lines of “Hellenising”, “Bulgarising”, “Romanising”, “Vlachophone”, “Slavophone” and “Bulgarophone”, covering with a scholarly fig leaf the ethnic embarrassment of the Greeks.

This study will avoid scholarly games with assumptions based on logical leap-frogging with regard to the origin and descent of the various human communities in Macedonia. Starting from the today widely accepted view and standpoint that national communities are cultural communities formed with the adoption of such constituent elements as language, religion and selected historical elements, which over time undergo various changes, this study will shun the by now fruitless search for bloodlines, which still appear to attract scholars who flirt with the survivals of racism. Moreover, ascertaining – through DNA perhaps – the ethnic origins of today’s nations and those of earlier times would not render more doubtful the determinant role of culture in the shaping of distinct human communities. Establishing a blood link as a determining element in the shaping of national communities could be accepted as an hypothesis and a scholarly exercise, but would cause incalculable hardship if it were accepted as a basis for the

shaping of new national communities, as was attempted by the scientists of German National Socialism during World War II.

Greeks, Slavs, Bulgarians, Jews, Turks, Vlachs and Albanians and permutations thereof shaped modern Macedonia and were in turn shaped by it, by its history and environment, by its traditions and surviving mythologies. The evidence at the disposal of the inquirer is limited, and comes moreover from those who were in a position to leave their testimony. The evidence left by the silent masses is insufficient to document cultural identities other than those attested by those whose words have come down to us. It is on the existing and available evidence that this present history of Macedonia will be based, with the conviction of all who have had a share in it that it represents the fruit of many years of work on the part of many scholars in Greece and elsewhere and will contribute to a better knowledge of the past of one of the culturally most interesting regions of Europe. Any deficiencies or weaknesses in this study – like its virtues – reveal the limitations of its authors.

2. The discovery of Macedonia

As the 18th century drew to a close and the 19th began to dawn, as the Western European powers that were clashing in Europe reached the fringes of the Greek East to fight there for the advancement of their objectives, Macedonia still languished in the backwardness and debility to which it had been condemned by the Ottoman regime. All the evidence from the once glorious ancient Hellenic kingdom bears witness to a land without notable cities, poor and undeveloped, at the mercy of bands of brigands and of detachments of soldiers who under the banner of the authorities caused more hardship than the outlaws, without communications and virtually without schools. The turn towards classical studies and the arrival of military and political representatives from revolutionary France helped put Greece in the spotlight. The interest of the French and their rivals in the Near East, the English, contributed to the “discovery” of Macedonia.

The name Macedonia is now taken for granted; but this was not the case two centuries ago. The region, considerably more extensive than the ancient Greek land, was known officially by the names of the Ottoman administrative districts, which were those of its principal municipal centres: Monastir, Skopje, Kozani, Kastoria, Thessaloniki, Katerini, Veroia. The name Macedonia was known to those few who had had the benefit of a classical education, like the foreign travellers who were beginning to visit the landscapes of historical Greece more frequently in those days, and the Greek scholars and schoolmasters whose numbers were also beginning to multiply. Foreign travellers and Greek scholars, in their endeavour to discover the survivals of the ancient Hellenic-Roman world in a new age and to identify the ruins of ancient cities with neighbouring settlements, sought ancient Macedonia in the administrative districts of European Turkey, guided by Strabo and other ancient geographers and historians.

And even those few who had read the ancient geographers and historians had no clear image of the country they were searching for, on account of the confused and often contradictory information left by the ancient writers. An apparently decisive role in the quest for and “ascertainment” of Macedonia’s position and boundaries was played by the Roman citizen and geographer Strabo, who was, quite naturally, influenced by the administrative divisions of his day. The writers of that age who concerned themselves with the matter were, however, not all in agreement as to Macedonia’s relation to the Greece to the south. Despite Strabo’s dictum that “Macedonia, of course, is a part of Greece”, Greek and foreign classicists propounded diametrically opposed views, based on different sources and echoing different administrative divisions.

This confusion as to Macedonia's position and boundaries and its relationship to the rest of Greece is not without importance, since the inquiries and confusions of that age also influenced official Greek positions with regard to Macedonia at the time of the Greek Struggle for Independence, when the first Greek positions on the question of the "realm" of the Greek nation were formed. The *Graecia propria* of the Romans, that is, the Greece that lay south of Tempe, which was a dominant reference point for many Greek and foreign writers of the time, significantly influenced later views.¹

At the time of the 1821 Revolution, the views of the Greek exponents of prevailing public opinion with regard to Macedonia were still influenced by those of the West, which tended to leave Macedonia outside Greece. In 1828, in view of their mission of establishing a boundary between Greece and Turkey, and with the object of securing naturally strong borders and an effective separation between the two "peoples", Governor Ioannis Kapodistrias, then newly arrived in Greece, proposed to the three Protecting Powers the line running from Mount Olympus through the summits of the Pindus massif to Zygos in the Metsovo district. "This line also formerly separated Greece", according to Kapodistrias, "from the neighbouring parts to the north. During the Middle Ages and in modern times Thessaly has always remained Greek, while Macedonia was conquered by the Slavs and by many other tribes". Another contemporary reference to Macedonia is contained in the notes made by Athanasios Psalidas, a scholar from Ioannina, for the geography class he taught in the Greek schools of his day: "The eighth province (of European Turkey) is Macedonia, which is famous for Philip and his son Alexander the Great. Nowadays, however, the land is backward, and is inhabited by base men. It is fertile and fruitful, producing wine, silk, cotton and other crops. Learning, however, is altogether absent. Its inhabitants are Bulgarians, Turks and a few Greeks and Vlachs from Albania".²

What was the real Macedonia behind this image left by the representatives of the Enlightenment, whose criteria were naturally Greek language and letters, "learning", and how, from this image, did there emerge the larger geographical Macedonia that, moreover, was claimed by the Greeks as an ancestral heritage? The enlargement of the historical Macedonia was effected by Greek and foreign classically-educated geographers, historians and travellers before, and independently of, Greek national claims: in other words, first the territory of Macedonia was defined, following the views of – primarily – Strabo with regard to the historic land, and only after that were claims to this land put forward. According to Strabo, Macedonia is bounded "to the north [...] [by] the straight line conceived as running through the mountains of Vertiskos and Skardos and Orbelos and Rhodope and Haemus". The line drawn by this erudite Roman citizen remained thenceforth the northern boundary of Macedonia and, naturally, of Greece.³

The 1821 Revolution was a turning-point in the history of Macedonia: the rupture with the Ottoman overlord, which was prepared by the Philike Hetaireia and in which many Macedonians took part, Greeks in the main but also non-Greek speakers who still accepted Greek education as an organic element of an independent polity, revealed the first fissures brought about by nationalism in the Orthodox world. These fissures had, twenty years before, been discernible in the work of Regas Velestinlis, and particularly in his *Greek Political Governance*, in which he clearly formulated the vision of a nation, the Greek nation, as a political community in which all the inhabitants of the land would have an equal share, as citizens, regardless of language or religion. Rigas envisioned, not a federation or confederation of Balkan peoples, as his political thinking has occasionally been misinterpreted to mean, but a Greek Polity, in which the Greek language and civilisation would have the same place as the French language and civilisation had in France. At the time of Rigas it was not arrogance to believe that the Greek language and Greek letters were sought after by all the allophone peoples sharing

the land with the Greeks. “Albanians, Vlachs, Bulgarians, rejoice/ and prepare, one and all, to become Greeks”, the enthusiastic apostle of Hellenism Daniel Moschopolitis, himself a Hellenised Vlach, urged the allophones of the Orthodox world; “learn the Greek language, mother of wisdom”.⁴

This exhortation to allophone Christians in the four-language *Lexicon* Daniel published in the early years of the 19th century is often misinterpreted. But taking this exhortation as an expression of arrogance reveals an ignorance of how widely accepted the Greek language was at that time as a splendid inheritance, open to all, to allophone as well as to the Greek-speaking Christians of the Ottoman Empire. A Greek education was considered an end in itself, as well as a means to knowledge and from knowledge to freedom. Language, before it acquired the properties subsequently bestowed upon it by the romanticism of Herder, was an instrument for the perfection of man through knowledge; it was not the inalienable element of the “spirit” of a “people”. Greek, therefore, was promoted by Regas and Daniel as a means of perfectionment.

Equally untenable is the view that the Phanariotes, the Greek élite of Constantinople, sought joint Greek-Turkish sovereignty or the eventual assumption of political power by the Greeks, an objective dashed by the Greek Revolution. This was the product of the late 19th – early 20th-century escape from reality cultivated by Ion Dragoumis and his circle and arising out of the contempt they felt for the recently defeated and humiliated Greek nation-state, a variant of which was incorporated by the English historian and philosopher Arnold Toynbee into his *Study of History*. A serious study of the Phanariotes before the Revolution leaves no margin for doubt about the aspirations of those who were concerned with the future of the Greek nation: they envisioned and promoted, like other Greek scholars of that age, the advancement of learning and liberty.⁵

There had, of course, been revolutionary movements in Macedonia in the period prior to the Revolution, such as that of the heroically brave and tragic *Armatolos* Nikotsaras in 1808, in the framework of one of Russia’s many wars with the Ottoman Empire and instigated by Russian agents. The real dimensions of this movement, which broke out at a critical turning-point in the history of the Empire and in a period of fluid alliances among Europe’s Great Powers, have never been explored. The movement was certainly not unconnected with the collapse of the system of *Armatoliks* that Ali Pasha had, largely successfully, set up in his extensive territories; nonetheless, it revealed the potential, in times of power vacuums like the period following the repudiation of Ali Pasha by the Ottoman Sultan in 1820, for concerted action by the armed bands of every description operating in the region. The 1821 Revolution differed from all the other revolutions that had preceded it in that part of the world, since a) it was the product of prior preparation by a national society, b) it was supported by a broad conspiratorial network and c) it aimed at the establishment of an independent and well-governed state. Ali Pasha’s rebellion in 1820 contributed not only to the outbreak of the Greek Revolution but also to its outcome, essentially because the extensive engagement of the Sultan’s armies with those of the rebel pasha created a power vacuum and fostered the progressive conspiracy of the klephts and *armatoles* in the region under the leadership of the Greek revolutionary authority. The rebellion of Ali Pasha was a conjuncture of decisive importance; but the 1821 Revolution was the product of an autonomous movement with political goals independent of those of the rebel pasha.

The revolution of the Greeks, which broke out in Macedonia as well, linked the historic Greek land, *de facto* and irrevocably, with the whole Greek nation, for on the one hand serious revolutionary action against Turkish rule took place in Macedonia right from the outset and on the other many Macedonians hastened, directly after the bloody suppression of the risings in their own land, to fight in southern Greece against

the common foe. The suppression of the insurrections in Macedonia in 1821-1822 and the concomitant flight of many of the insurgents and their families to southern Greece created in the newly independent Greece the first of a series of waves of refugees from Macedonia, as one of the still unredeemed historic Greek lands.

The fighters and subsequently refugees from Macedonia represented a significant proportion of the multitude of fighters from northern Greece who for a variety of reasons and under diverse circumstances found themselves in southern Greece. Greeks in the main, and for the most part from central and western Macedonia, but also Bulgarians and South Slavs, found themselves in revolutionary southern Greece, and remained there until the end of the revolution. The Greeks and the South Slavs were for the most part *Armatoles* who had abandoned their districts after the suppression of the insurrections in their parts, as had many Bulgarians. It was not easy in those days to distinguish between Bulgarians and South Slavs. Distinguished fighting men like Hadjichristos "Voulgaris" ("the Bulgarian") and Vassos "Mavrovouniotis" ("the Montenegrin") pose no fewer problems for the researcher attempting to trace their identity, primarily because the descendants of the Slavs of Macedonia were called Bulgarians by the southern Greeks but also because the boundaries of the southern Slav countries had not yet been stabilised and were somewhat fluid and indeterminate. The appellation "Bulgarian" meant a Bulgarian-speaking Christian from Macedonia or a Christian from Bulgarian-speaking Macedonia; the Bulgarian-speaking population (later described as the "Slavic-speaking" population) of Macedonia was at that time quite visible, in the form of many pockets of Bulgarian-speakers. These were, as already mentioned, the southern tips of the Slavic world that, together with the scattered pockets of Vlach-speakers, Turkish-speakers and Slavic-speakers, fragmented the Greek-speaking world of Macedonia. Most of the Bulgarians who fought alongside the Greeks in southern Greece had been enlisted in Macedonia and Thrace by the Turks as cavalry grooms, but, finding themselves opposing fellow Orthodox Christians, they defected to the Greek camps and remained in Greece, where they were known as Thracio-Macedonians.

3. Urban Macedonia

Much more is known about the urban Macedonia of that age, for it is the towns and cities that are attested in the sources available. The countryside was then of interest only to the authorities, and chiefly as a source of revenue. The peasantry were, for government purposes, either Christians or Muslims: the former were necessary as taxpayers and the latter as conscripts. The rural world, polyglot and multi-faith, was known by its clusters of single-language or single-faith villages – the Karayiania, Boutsakia, Mastorochoia, Kastanochoia, Grammochoia, Korestia, and so on.

One significant element that emerges from analysis of the data of that period is that, while the cities of Macedonia had mixed, mainly Greek-speaking, populations, the villages were virtually uniformly monoglot and single-faith: they were either Christian or Muslim, and almost purely Greek-, Slavic-, Vlach-, Albanian- or Turkish-speaking. The cities of Macedonia – Thessaloniki, Serres, Kavala, Drama, Edessa, Naoussa, Veroia, Florina, Monastir, Kastoria, Ochrid, Siatista and Kozani –, all seats of metropolitan or suffragan bishops, preserved the Greek language and Greek letters and were agents for the Hellenisation not so much, at that time, of the neighbouring villages as of the villagers who left them for the cities. At that time, let it be noted, the rivalry between the region's ethnic communities with regard to the founding and operation of ethnic schools in its villages had not yet begun, nor had the role of religious schools in education in the region declined in relation to secular schools.

Another important characteristic of the human geography of the region at that time, which also emerges from the available evidence, is that an attentive observer could have discerned, running from the Grammos massif and Lake Ochrid in the west to the river Nestos in the east, a perceptible line demarcating the boundary of the Greek language, which the Greek schools pushed northwards in the following period (1870-1912). This borderline, product of centuries of the migration and resettlement of linguistically and religiously discrete populations, began in the west at the triple convergence point of lakes Ochrid, Prespae and Orestias, where three languages and cultures came together, Greek language and education from the south, Albanian from the west and Slavic from the north, and ended at the river Nestos in the east.

The area surrounding the lakes, that is, the districts of Kolonia, Korytsa, Ochrid, Monastir, Florina and Kastoria, was a region in which the Greek, Albanian, Slavic and Vlach languages co-existed. The more important towns – Kastoria, Korytsa, Ochrid, Monastir and Florina – were major Hellenising centres. Their episcopal and community schools and commercial activity had by that time already Hellenised the Albanians, Slavs and Vlachs who had flocked there for all the reasons that have attracted rural populations to the cities in every age.

To the east of the lakes lay the main southern projection of the Slavic language into Macedonia, which extended as far as the plains of Emathia and Thessaloniki and was dotted with pockets and centres of Greek-, Vlach- and Turkish-speakers. Apart from Thessaloniki, the mainstays of Hellenism here were Veroia, Naoussa and Edessa on Mount Vermion and the Hellenised Vlach centres of Vlachokleisoura and Vlasti on Mount Mouriki. The Karatzova villages of Almopia Notia, Archangelos and others formed a Vlach-speaking Muslim pocket, while the main Turkish-speaking villages lay in the southern part of the districts of Ptolemais and Giannitsa.

This part of Macedonia, that is, the area to the west of the Axios river, was a continuation of the zone that extended from the Akrokeravnia mountains to Olympus – Konstantinos Paparegopoulos' zone of "equilibrium" between Greeks and Slavs. More precisely, it was, as has already been noted, a place of convergence and scattered ridges and pockets of Greeks, Slavs, Albanians and Vlachs. This makes it difficult to discern, in this region, a clear northern boundary of the Greek language. Then and later cities like Kruchevo, Prilep, Velessa, Strumitsa, Melenikon and Nevrokop, which were considered as marking the northern boundary line of the Greek language, were, rather, Greek centres, isolated from the Greek-speaking world to the south, deep inside an allophone world. Not even Monastir could be held to mark such a boundary: Korytsa, Kastoria and Naoussa were closer to the imaginary line that could be thought to mark the northern limit of the Greek-speaking world.

The projection of such a boundary farther north than that proposed above was rooted in the following mistaken but unstated reasoning, upon which Greek claims have been founded for more than a century: that the Greek presence in the southern part of the Balkan Peninsula was continuous, denser in the south and sparser in the north. This perception, naturally, is a direct projection of the Greek presence in the Peninsula from antiquity to the Middle Ages and from the mediaeval to the modern age. It has been ascertained, however, beyond any shadow of a doubt, that in the mediaeval and modern ages the Greek-speaking land of antiquity was broken into a mosaic of Graecophone and allophone populations. The same perception also underlay the theory of three zones in Macedonia, a southern zone more densely Greek-speaking, a middle zone with Greek and Slavic in equilibrium, and a northern predominantly Slavic-speaking zone. Greek, however, did not fade out gradually from south to north. The northern boundary of a continuously Graecophone population, south of the city of Kastoria, which had been identified by observers in the 19th century and was discernible up until World War II,

does not describe the situation as it had taken shape in the region. What does describe it is the visible existence, north of this boundary of a continuously Graecophone population, of pockets and centres of Greek in a largely allophone hinterland. The mass founding and operation of Greek schools in the region after 1870 does not reflect the situation prior to 1870. Greek centres old and new, such as those cited above, Hellenised the allophone country folk who poured into them but not the allophone enclaves, which retained their different languages. This form of Hellenisation, slow but certain, continued until the last quarter of the 19th century, when the region was projected as a vital space of Greece and belonging to Greece by right of inheritance. Thenceforth, as will be shown in the following chapter, Greek schools began to be established outside the cities, but the Hellenisation of the villages slowed down as the counter-balancing Bulgarisation of the Slavs of Macedonia, promoted by Bulgaria, began to yield results.⁶

It should at this point be noted that a truer indication of the real Hellenism of the Macedonia west of the Axios was that ensured by the system of Greek schools that had developed as a product of the Enlightenment, not of the schools founded in the nationalist phase, primarily because the fundamental goal of schools of the latter phase was, apart of course from teaching Greek letters, the promotion of a Greek national identity and the advancement of the number of schools and their pupils as proof of the Greek presence in the contested area. What needs to be remembered in this regard is this: the Greek-speaking population was directly proportional to the Greek schools in the cities in the zone in question and especially in the period preceding the manifestation of ethnic rivalries in Macedonia.

On the basis of all the evidence available to the inquirer it is possible to trace the northern boundary of the Greek language in Macedonia at that time, a demarcation line that makes plain the Hellenising influence of the Greek cities to its north. East of the Grammos massif, then, and following an imaginary line southwest of Kastoria, where the three basic languages of the area (Greek, Albanian and Slavic) converge, this line left most of the Kastanochoria to the north, left to the south the villages of Damaskinia, Skalochori, Botani, Kostarazi, Germas, Sisani and Vlasti, left to the north the Greek-speaking Vlachokleisoura and, turning south, the Slavophone villages of Eordaia and the Turkish-speaking villages of the same district, passed to the north of Kozani, Veroia and Naoussa and ended at the mouth of the Axios. North of this line, as we have said, the cities of Kastoria, Vlachokleisoura, Florina, Monastir, Kruchevo, Velessa, Prilep and Strumitsa were all Greek-speaking.

Similarly, to the east of the Axios Greek was restricted to a few cities and large villages: Thessaloniki, a few of the villages of Rentina, Gevgelija, Melenikon, Serres, Alistrate, Zichna, Nigrita, Doirane, Kato Jumaya, Petric, Doxato, Drama, Kavala, Pravi, Sochos and Komotene. These and other centres east of the Axios could boast of a long and very considerable Hellenising action, perhaps even more notable than that of the corresponding centres west of the Axios, primarily because these eastern centres were closer to the then heart of the Hellenic world, Constantinople, and the flourishing Greek communities of the Black Sea and the Danubian Principalities. Compact pockets of Bulgarians, equally compact pockets of Turks and Bulgarian-speaking Muslim Pomaks, as well as pockets of Christian or Muslim Vlachs, formed the linguistic mosaic of these eastern Ottoman provinces.

It is essential to stress here that the language communities of this region, which at that time came to be called “geographical” Macedonia, were not national communities in the present sense of the term. Nor could they be described as “ethnic” communities, since use of this term would complicate unnecessarily a question that sustains no interpretation other than the determination, which is permitted by the very little evidence that exists from that time, of the distribution of the languages spoken in the region be-

fore the changes brought about by the penetration of national schools of the peoples that were claiming parts of it. It can be taken as certain that the Greek-speaking Christians, especially in the cities, identified with the free centre of the Greek nation, as did most of the Vlachs and many of the Slavs; this was also true of the Albanian Christians of western Macedonia. At that time, before the Bulgarians began presenting themselves as brothers of the Slavs of Macedonia and the Romanians as brothers of the Vlachs, all the allophone Orthodox neighbours of the Greek Christians in this region who received their general education in its Greek schools identified with the Greek nation, principally because the free Greek nation preserved the splendid inheritance of the Enlightenment.

In the world of rural Macedonia the quest for a national identity other than the traditional one assured by Orthodox Church as leader of the Greek people or that projected by the national centre of the Greek nation is not feasible, and insistence on tracing another such identity would burden the analysis unnecessarily with elements that appeared only later and were not identifiable at the time. This means that the terms Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian (or Slav) and Vlach are understood here as describing those whose mother tongue was Greek, Albanian, Bulgarian or Vlach, regardless of the probable origin or identity of the speakers of those languages. The descent or origin of the different language communities examined in this present study will not be investigated, because that would divert the analysis into directions other than that permitted by the available reliable evidence.

What, then, were these cities like, which spread the Greek language in the Macedonia defined by its classically-educated visitors? Or how at least do they appear to us from contemporary accounts? Ochrid, the ancient Lychnidus that marked, on the Via Egnatia, the boundary between Macedonia and Illyria and was known as Ochre to the Greeks, was the seat of a Metropolitan bishop and occupied the northwest corner of a contested ethnological boundary whose other two corners were Kastoria and Monastir. Greeks, Albanians and Slavs met in this triangle, as in the distant past had Greeks, Illyrians and Paeonians. The picture of this area left by a Greek observer *circa* 1830 portrays the situation as it was then: "Ochre with its environs and those of Resnia and Strounga together numbers no more than 6000 houses (smokes) [that is, hearths] and 50,000 souls all told. Of this number half are Christian Bulgarians and half are Albano-Bulgarian Turks. And of villages Turkish and Christian there are perhaps 140. The language is Slavic both in Ochre and Strounga and Resnia and in all the surrounding area".⁷

Kastoria, which by all accounts never lost its mediaeval Greek core and which throughout the mediaeval and modern eras attracted Christian Slavs, Vlachs and Albanians from the surrounding areas, as well as Muslim Turks, gradually Hellenised a considerable proportion of these allophone Christians. Its mixed population, as revealed by the baptismal names on 14th-century deeds of sale and in the register of a 17th-century monk of the Holy Sepulchre with the alms of the faithful, remained so right up until the beginning of the 19th century, when one of the few Greek schools in the region is attested. In Kastoria, a "small city on the lake of the same name", in the words of a reliable contemporary account, "inhabited by Bulgarians, Turks and Greeks, all of them unlettered and unskilled", Greek education spread and developed in the following decades. Towards the end of the period, according to an expert on that era, the Greeks formed the majority of the population of the city, while the Bulgarians had been Hellenised and spoke Greek sprinkled with Bulgarian words. The Muslims and Jews remained quite separate.⁸

In Monastir, the lack of an original Greek-speaking core like that in Kastoria was compensated by the city's commercial activity and an inflow of Hellenised Vlachs from Moschopolis. The following account, dating from the early decades of the 19th century,

depicts the reality of that era: “Bitola, which is also called Monastir, is a city in lower Macedonia, populous and wholly illiterate, inhabited by Bulgarians, Turks, Vlachs and Jews”. By the middle of the same century the city looked quite different: “In Pelagonia lies the new city of Bitola, which is also called Monastir, inhabited by 20,000 souls and of long date the seat of the rulers of Rumelia. Its Christian inhabitants are mainly Bulgarian-speaking, but among them the Greek Language is highly esteemed and day by day more diligently secured...”. Half a century later, another visitor and reliable witness left the following image of the city of Monastir: “Panopticon of nationalities and religions, mosaic of faces and costumes. All races of incomers to this land add to the atmosphere, Ottomans, Jews, Bulgarians, Albanians, Vlachs and Serbs mingling with the Greeks”.⁹

Neither the exaggerated account by the first witness, a distinguished scholar, of the ignorance of the people of Monastir, nor the reference of the last to the “races of incomers”, from which he excepts the Greeks, refute the reality of that era, namely the Hellenising role of the cities of Macedonia. The handsome schools and other Greek public buildings still preserved in Monastir bear witness to the progressive prosperity of its Greek citizens, which stemmed from humble beginnings in the early 19th century.

Another “panopticon” of the nations of the region was Chroupista, today called Argos Orestikon. The Bulgarians and Turks who inhabited the small town with its famous annual (at least from the 16th century) fair were joined, towards the end of the 18th century, by Vlachs from Moschopolis and, later, Grammoutsa and Samarina. Shepherds, small traders and farmers formed the population of the town, which retained its other languages even after the use of Greek had spread, primarily among its Vlachs. Towards the end of the century Chroupista, certainly one of the most typical urban microcosms of 19th-century Macedonia, had Greek, Bulgarian and Romanian schools, although by that time the Greek language had become predominant among its Vlach and Bulgarian inhabitants.¹⁰

Southeast of this polyphonic ethnological triangle lay a compact pocket of Greek-speaking Muslims, the Valaades, product of the mass Islamisation of the Greeks of the region, and a pocket of Turkish immigrants settled north of Kozane, an area that touched the Slavic extension of Pelagonia, which was dominated by strongholds of the Greek language like the Vlach village of Nymphaion, Lechovo, a village of Hellenised Albanians, and Flambouro, Drosopege and Pisoderi, villages with mixed populations of Albanians and Vlachs, where Greek encountered those tongues. Mount Vermion, finally, sheltered the last sizeable Greek-speaking centres west of the Axios. Along its eastern foothills and from southwest to northeast, Veroia, Naoussa and Edessa had, the first two earlier than the third, already assimilated a significant number of Vlachs and Slavs from the surrounding countryside into their Greek-speaking cores. For the mountain-dwelling Vlachs and the Slavs of the plains, these three cities were a powerful magnet. At least three reliable foreign witnesses from the early years of the 19th century saw in the cities of Vermion a secure northern boundary of the Greek language. Vermion and the Pieria massif formed a sort of natural rampart against the Bulgarians who had occupied the plains to the east.

Several points emerge from the body of evidence and assessments regarding the Macedonia of that period, before the fierce rivalry broke out between the Greeks and the Bulgarians for the advancement of their ethnic claims in the region, and some of them are elements essential to any understanding of subsequent developments. These elements were: a) the non-existence of readily discernible zones of Greek language density north of a perceptible demarcation line described above; b) the extensive allophone populations in the region arbitrarily defined as Macedonia; c) the progressive Hellenisation of the region’s cities, which acted as centres of Greek language and letters in a

largely allophone countryside; d) the progressive advancement of Greek education, the result as much of the renown of the Greek language and Greek letters as of the practical value of Greek for the economic and social advancement of its speakers; and e) the fact that the cities retained their polyglot nature while the villages remained monoglot. Another related element was the Hellenising role of those cities on the country people who flocked into them, although the countryside itself remained largely allophone. One final element was this: the existence of Greek schools in the region before the breach between the Greeks and the Bulgarians and, secondarily, the Romanians, was proof of the demand for Greek education as much on the part of the allophone peoples who shared the land with the Greeks as on that of the Greeks themselves.

Notes

1. Ioannis S. Koliopoulos, *I „peran“ Ellas kai oi „alloi“ Ellines: To synchrono elliniko ethnos kai oi eteroglossoi synoikoi christianoi (1800-1912)* [*The Greece of 'Beyond' and the 'Other' Greeks*], Thessaloniki 2003, p. 13 ff.
2. Ioannis S. Koliopoulos, *Istoria tis Ellados apo to 1800* [*History of Greece*], Thessaloniki 2000, vol. I, p. 80 ff.
3. Strabo, frag. VII, 10.
4. Koliopoulos, *The Greece of 'Beyond'*, p. 165.
5. Koliopoulos, *History of Greece*, vol. I, p. 104 ff.
6. See in Koliopoulos, *The Greece of 'Beyond'*, the chapter entitled “Greek’s Northern Boundaries”, p. 79 ff, with extensive commentary.
7. Cf. Kosmas Thesprotos – Athanasios Psalidas, *Geografia Alvanias kai Ipeirou* [*Geography of Albania and Epirus*], in. A. Ch. Papacharissis (ed.), Ioannina 1964, pp. 26-28.
8. Cf. Koliopoulos, *The Greece of 'Beyond'*, pp. 105-106.
9. Koliopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-107.
10. Koliopoulos, *op. cit.*, pp. 107-108.