

Social cleavages and national “awakening” in Ottoman Macedonia¹

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In early summer 1992 a lavish monograph was published in Skopje entitled *Macedonia on old Maps*.² In the first chapter of the book, which is called “A History without a Geography”, Ilija Petrushevski states that:

*“These maps present the undeniable historical and scientific facts about the distinctness of the Macedonian nation, which differs from its neighbours not only by its territory, which has always belonged to it, but also by its language, folklore, traditions and all the other elements of significance in ethnic differentiation”.*³

Petrushevski’s attempt to support the existence of a nation by stressing its connection with an age-old ethnic core is not a new task in Balkan historiography, nor is it the first time that the testimony of old maps is being employed to serve such a cause.⁴

It has been stated that the advent of the European Enlightenment in the Ottoman Balkans involved a rather slow procedure. Describing, however, pre-independence nationalist feelings of the Balkan peoples, especially the situation in the hinterland of the peninsula (Macedonia included), is a demanding exercise, which far exceeds the purpose of this paper.⁵ In brief, modern Greek nationalism emerged in the 18th century and was affected by western ideas, but its actual roots lay in protonationalist phenomena noticed in the 13th century Byzantium.⁶ Under Ottoman rule these feelings were only partly preserved through the institutions of the millet system. The folk of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was the Rum-i-millet, with a population which, in addition to the Greek-speakers, included large numbers of Slav- Vlach and other non Greek-speaking Orthodox subjects of the Sultan. In the 18th century a Greek-speaking mercantile elite started to split from the political and religious leadership of the Constantinople Patriarchate and to develop secular Hellenic nationalist attitudes.⁷

With the notable exception of the coastal line, where this Greek-speaking urbanised merchant class lived, and the Austrian imperial borderlands, most parts of the region, especially the central Balkan area, remained untouched by intellectual changes throughout the 18th century, evidently due to financial constraints which had retarded the consolidation of a middle class. Actually it was no sooner than in the early 19th century, in some cases even after the 1850s, that the Enlightenment got a firm grip on the Balkan peninsula in the favourable context which was shaped during the Ottoman reform period. Bulgarian nationalism, for example, started to make its presence felt only in the early 19th century in the regions adjacent to Russia.⁸

However, the assimilation of European ideas was not particularly smooth. The slow but steady collapse of the Ottoman Empire excited the Christian population, both inside and outside the Empire; especially outside, in the small and young Balkan kingdoms established in the 1830s, where quite often the struggles for the liberation of the unredeemed brethren were considered as a convenient alibi for political incompetence and financial underdevelopment. In theory, no less than in practice, Athens, Belgrade, and, later on, Sofia were exclusively concerned with irredentism and completely disregarded the option to consolidate their states by supporting the sense of citizenship.⁹

Especially in the second half of 19th century, when Ottoman collapse was imminent, the urgent need to redraw the boundaries required not only the supply of the necessary armaments but also the preparation of an ideological arsenal which was expected to facilitate foreign policy. In the absence of guns and financial resources, the importance of an offensive national ideology was overrated. Consequently national rights were conveniently considered as historical rights and not as natural, unlike west European trends of thought. The romantic quest for historical rights oriented Balkan intellectuals to the retrospective quest of their nations’ distinctive ethnic core in the depths of history. The consequent territorialisation and politicisation of the rediscovered ethnic core gradually transformed Balkan cultural societies into what Anthony Smith has called “ethnic nations”.¹⁰

In the case of Macedonia, however, things did not run so smoothly. In the late 19th century Greece, Bulgaria, and to a lesser extent Serbia and Romania, all claimed unredeemed brethren in Ottoman Macedonia on historical, linguistic, cultural and religious grounds. To bring this attempt to a successful end, they all tried desperately to show the strength, expansion and determination of the respective ethnic groups, which were believed to live in this geographically ill-defined area. In fact the Greek-speaking zone was roughly identified with the littoral part of Macedonia (i.e. the southern districts of the currently Greek part of Macedonia). The towns of Kastoria, Edessa and Serres were considered as the front line. Although the Greek language was widely spoken in every urban Macedonian centre, Christian peasants outside the littoral zone were as a rule Slav-speakers who were claimed both by Bulgarians and Serbians as their own brethren. The Balkan Wars and the Treaty of Bucharest (1913) terminated Ottoman rule in the Balkans but failed to close the Macedonian Question. Despite population exchanges in the interwar period, the problem surfaced once again during World War II. The Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Macedonia, which was established in 1944, following step by step the example set by other Balkan states, tried to consolidate its existence by associating the young Macedonian federal nation state with a thirteen century old Macedonian ethnic group. This option has further entangled the Macedonian Question.¹¹

In any case, the conflicting and complex argumentation of the Balkan states and the apparent mixture of languages, which could not escape the attention of any observer before the 1920s, naturally conveyed the impression that Macedonia was an “ethnological salad”, an expression which remained closely linked with the area ever after. The British Consul in Monastir, for example, Charles Calvert, wrote in 1867:

*“The Christian population of this Pashalic is composed of four different races who all profess the Greek Orthodox faith;... the Bulgarians... the Wallachs... the Albanians... and the Greeks”.*¹²

Apparently he was referring to linguistic or cultural groups, but the use of the term “race; probably suggested a sense of superiority which pointed to certain “immutable” features (i.e. language, mental abilities etc.).¹³ However, ill digested nation theories and the requirements of nationalism and romanticism, which always run high in the Balkans, did not permit Balkan scholars and politicians to realise that a blend of “races” or a linguistic blend does not necessarily imply an ethnic mixture as well. Thus, ignoring the considerable difference among a nation, i.e. a socio-political category (a “high culture”¹⁴) always related to actual or potential frontiers, an ethnic group, whose indispensable components are shared history and a myth of common descent,¹⁵ and race, a purely genetic category, Balkan students of Macedonian history have focused their interest on obscure and conflicting arguments about various forms of assimilation in the medieval ages. All these attempts, excluding the dense Muslim element of Macedonia, seek to prove that this land was not indeed a melting pot, but it was only one group which formed the majority of the population. In this context, tracing the national identity of the bulky Slav-speaking group has become an issue of paramount importance. All interested parties anticipate that a convenient definition of that identity would either justify the current diplomatic status quo or even sustain irredentist claims.

In Athens, the arguments run as follows:¹⁶

- (a) Ancient Macedonians were ethnic¹⁷ Greeks.
- (b) Medieval Slavs and Bulgars were culturally converted to Byzantine Hellenism and were ethnically assimilated.
- (c) Slav-speaking Macedonians were not necessarily Bulgars or Slavs. Considering their loyalty to the Patriarch and their active contribution to Greek 19th century irredentism, it is evident that they were ethnically Greeks beyond doubt.¹⁸

In Sofia they are not concerned with ancient Macedonians but they argue that:¹⁹

- (a) Medieval Slavs in Macedonia were absorbed by the Bulgarians, but the latter were not assimilated either by the Greeks or by the Serbs.

(b) Despite allegiance to the Greek dominated Ecumenical Patriarchate, Slav-speaking Macedonian Bulgars were a separate ethnic group,²⁰ which in the late 19th century inhabited most parts of Macedonia, but failed to be annexed by Bulgaria.

During the last quarter of the 19th century Serbs also developed their own theories about the identity of Macedonia's population.²¹ They sought to demonstrate that:

(a) Medieval Macedonian Slavs were ethnic Serbs. In fact Serbs dominated Macedonia after the Bulgarians in the 14th century; thus, they could not have been assimilated by the latter who were swept out in the early 11th century.

(b) They preserved a distinctive Serbian culture, a language akin to Serbian and were called "Serbs" for centuries.

(c) Macedonian Slavs were not identified as Bulgarians until the mid 19th century.

Naturally after World War II Serbian views were abandoned. Serbs were replaced ever after by Yugoslav Macedonian historians who assimilated and further enhanced theories which in the past had been supported chiefly by the Communists. Their main task has been to show that:²²

(a) Ancient Macedonians were not ethnic Greeks.

(b) Medieval Slavs assimilated ancient non-Greek Macedonians, but were absorbed neither by the Bulgarians nor by the Serbs or Greeks.

(c) In 19th century a dense and distinct Slav-speaking Macedonian ethnic group, overwhelmingly larger than the Greek one, became the vehicle of Macedonian nationalism, but ethnic Macedonia, having failed to get independence in 1903, was divided in 1913.

After the declaration of independence in Skopje, in September 1991, the Macedonian Question revived and stimulated an academic and political debate, which is no less vigorous than similar Greek-Bulgarian struggles fought in newspaper pages a hundred years ago to capture the European public opinion over the very same issue: the ethnic identity of Macedonia. Nevertheless, in spite of conflicting arguments, Balkan states seem to share one point: that Ottoman Macedonia at the turn of the century was inhabited by various Christian ethnic groups. This common and persistent belief in the existence of primordial ethnic groups is sufficiently explained, if we take into account that up till now Balkan nation-states feel that they strongly require ethnic cores, if they are to survive.

However, the existence of different Christian "ethnic groups" in 19th century Ottoman Macedonia is not self-evident. Indeed the use of such a term causes considerable problems to the historical analysis of the social and political developments that took place between 1870 and 1913 especially in the extensive Slavophone regions. Thus, it will be argued that, though the early existence of "ethnic groups" is important for Balkan politicians and diplomats, the expression "parties with national affiliations" would be much more appropriate for the needs of historical analysis, in the case of the Slav-speaking population of Macedonia.

Political developments in Ottoman Macedonia from 1870 onwards have been studied thoroughly by many Balkan scholars and from different perspectives. From the Greek point of view, the institutions of the Church and the participation of all Greek- and non-Greek-speakers in Greek revolutionary activity and uprisings (1821-22, 1856, 1878) had prepared the necessary grounds for the spread of Greek national ideology, at least in the central (Slav-speaking) and southern (Greek-speaking) parts of Macedonia, i.e. in the vast area which spreads to the south of an imaginary line running from lake Ochrid to Bitol (Monastir), Strumitsa and Melnik (Melenikon). Greek scholars support that especially from the 1860s onwards, in the Tanzimat reform area, the dissemination of education facilitated the consolidation of Greek national feelings among Greek-, Vlach-, Albanian- and Slav-speaking inhabitants of Macedonia.²³ Indeed these feelings were tested successfully, they claim, shortly afterwards, during the fierce struggle for Macedonia (1903-1908) between Greek and Bulgarian armed bands.²⁴

For the Bulgarians argumentation runs exactly the opposite way: around 1870, after the establishment of an independent Bulgarian church, known as the Exarchate, an educational

campaign was launched in Macedonia, which managed to implant in the Slav-speaking inhabitants a Bulgarian national ideology.²⁵ After the establishment of the Bulgarian Principality (1878) and the Congress of Berlin the controversy between the two national ideologies (Greek and Bulgarian) gradually grew stronger and eventually turned into a Greek-Bulgarian state dispute.²⁶ The Ilinden uprising (1903) was the peak of the Bulgarian liberation activities in Macedonia.²⁷ The Ottoman reprisals weakened the Bulgarian grip and permitted a successful Greek counter offensive after 1904.

In Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia historians share few aspects with their Greek and Bulgarian colleagues. They maintain that: in the 1860s a Macedonian renaissance started to take place instigated by a small nascent intelligentsia, which worked ardently against Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian infiltration. Later on, after the mid 1890s, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Committee (IMRO) took over and prepared a popular insurrection, the so called Ilinden uprising. Ilinden was a genuine, massive and national Macedonian revolution, fought by the Slav-speaking inhabitants of Macedonia and completely distinct from the Bulgarian and Greek irredentist initiatives which were “imported” in the same area. Eventually ethnic Macedonia was divided and shared in 1913 by the allies who fought the First Balkan War against the Ottoman Empire. Greece took 51.6%, Serbia 38.3% and Bulgaria 10.1%.²⁸

Despite the striking differences in the interpretation of historical events it could be argued that insurrections, uprisings, struggles, clashes and band activities were indeed a considerable part of modern Macedonian history. It could also be maintained that such actions of self-sacrifice and perpetual aggressiveness against each other group must have been dictated by strong subjective feelings of solidarity related to common historical and cultural bonds.²⁹ The existence of such feelings could lead to the conclusion that ethnic groups had indeed been shaped in the Slav-speaking regions of Macedonia. However, there is strong evidence that such a conclusion is not valid.

Numerous contemporary sources testify that in the Slav-speaking districts of Macedonia solidarity of ethnic feelings was exceptional. Various anecdotes have been noted about individuals shifting continuously national identity for long periods of time, according to personal interests, or about brothers sharing different national loyalties.³⁰ A characteristic example is the following conversation between chieftain Euthymis Kaoudis from Crete with a certain Naoumi, local of the Lake Prespa region in 1904: “Why have you acted in this way Naoumi? We were friends before, but now we are enemies! When did you become a Bulgarian? I am going to kill you!”, thundered the chieftain. “Oh, no Euthymi! I do not change my mind, but what could I do? Had I refused, I would have been killed by the Bulgarians” mumbled Naoumi. The chieftain changed his mind: “I am going to spare your life now... but next time I shall kill you, if I am told that you are collaborating with them” he warned him.³¹ Incidents like the above can be found in abundance in all kinds of sources, but the most common observation involves entire communities which, under the pressure of guerilla bands, had little or no trouble at all in redirecting their national allegiances as many times as circumstances demanded.³²

The explanation of such phenomena requires a careful study of social cleavages in Macedonia long before the infiltration of national propagandas. In 1805 Pouqueville, a French consul and traveller, noticed that the community of Grevena had disintegrated due to the quarrels which had arisen among the local clans.³³ In the Vlach-speaking Pisoderi, even before 1800, two separate classes were distinguishable: the notables or dervendjides, i.e. the traditional keepers of the narrow passes (dervens), and the plebians or fabriciati, i.e. the workers.³⁴ Scant evidence is available, but it would not be too risky to assume that similar social cleavages had developed in most Macedonian peasant communities. Mistrust between landlords and tenants, pastoralist mountaineers and lowland agriculturalists, cultivators and merchants, employers and employees, quarrels for the community leadership, the different geographical origin of the local clans, the various migratory patters, disputes over water and wood resources and pasturage boundaries, clan vendettas and personal antipathies deeply divided peasant societies. Although unity within the community members was eventually preserved through strong links of intermarriage, clan loyalties and ritual practices, disputes between different villages were not so easily bridged. Nevertheless, the development of national feelings was bound to strengthen the sense of solidarity between both communities and individuals and produce a less fragmented

picture of the local society. But the success of national education in Macedonia is a highly questionable issue.

In the 1860s the British Consuls in Monastir and Salonika wrote that, due to the long period of Ottoman oppression, Christians in Macedonia had been subjected to a “moral degradation”. They were loyal subjects, they only cared about impartial administration and taxation and had little or no interest in anything else. It was expected that their “elevation to higher standards of life” would be progressive and lengthy.³⁵ As mentioned above, both Greeks and Bulgarians have argued that their educational campaigns, launched in the 1870s, invariably met with success. In fact both states had soon enough produced the necessary statistics to prove, each on its own behalf, the overwhelming superiority of the respective educational mechanisms and the effectiveness of their “peaceful” tactics.³⁶

Things were considerably different and rather justified the British consuls’ pessimistic views. In their rush to win the war of statistics, Greeks and Bulgarians, had concentrated their attention on quantity rather than on quality. The Greeks, especially, who proved unable to adapt their classically oriented education to the more practical needs of Macedonian peasant societies, were faced with serious problems, even after the turn of the century, despite their 1,000 educational institutions.³⁷ Although few would question the firm and solid grips that Greek and Bulgarian nationalist teachers’ work had created in southern and northern Macedonia respectively (especially the Greek dominance in urban centres throughout Macedonia)³⁸ still nationalist education -when and where it existed- can hardly be considered as successful in the rural parts of the extensive Slav-speaking zone. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that in this region the existence or absence of social or financial cleavages still determined local alliances and controversies.

Panslavist and Bulgarian nationalist agents took the most out of all kinds of pre-existing cleavages, social or financial discontent, local vendettas or personal resentments, as soon as they appeared on the scene in the 1860s, while their Greek colleagues were busy teaching ancient Greek in urban and semi-urban high schools.³⁹ In fact illiteracy, financial underdevelopment and lack of capital offered the necessary grounds for the progress of any propaganda.⁴⁰ Bulgarian propaganda in specific benefited from local financial strains in three different fields.

In the Tanzimat era, after the 1850s, Christians eventually acquired the right to possess land property. Given the shortcomings of Ottoman administration, especially of the tax-collection system, Christian beys, i.e. wealthy Greek- and Vlach-speaking merchants and entrepreneurs, who resided in urban centres, did not prove more tolerant than their Muslim predecessors. Although throughout Ottoman rule Christians in Macedonia never possessed the largest part of cultivated land, it seems that in some cases the traditional mistrust between landlords, who at the same time were merchants and money lenders, and tenants influenced national orientation. Since educated urban merchant families could easily trace their Greek national feelings back to the days of Rigas Velenstinlis (a most eminent and heroic figure of Greek enlightenment in the late 18th century), landless peasants were apt to identify Greek sentiments with exploitation. In some cases mistrust developed between Albanian- and Vlach-speaking mountainous semi-urbanised towns and the Slav-speaking rural communities in the vicinity, who produced the necessary food and raw material but felt financially used by the former. It was natural that in such cases the pro-Bulgarian sentiments of some Slav-speaking tenants and small-holders grew stronger.⁴¹ Later on, as disaffection increased, some of them offered a listening ear to the calls of the IMRO, which promised abolition of debts and the break up of the chifliks.⁴²

Especially in the period 1870-1890, conversion to the Bulgarian Independent Church, wider known as the Exarchy, implied some real financial profits as well: newcomers escaped -or at least expected to escape- from the heavy dues, which were imposed upon them by the local Patriarchist Bishops. In addition, the creation of an alternative ecclesiastical option generated a significant question: the separation of the clerical property, which in many cases included the local educational institutions. An observer attributed conversion to Exarchism to peasants’ avarice⁴³, but there is overwhelming evidence that indeed some bishops extracted contributions inappropriately.⁴⁴ Such practices alienated the followers from the Patriarch in Constantinople.

Thus, though not without hesitation, they were finally breaking loose from the age-old symbol of the East-Roman (or Byzantine) tradition.

To make things even worse for the Greek camp, attachment to the Exarchate, or even to the Romanian side, could provide peasantry with additional savings, since Bulgarian and Romanian education was free or even occasionally subsidised.⁴⁵ For peasants and pastoralists, who traditionally considered children as an integral part of labour force, paying tuition fees was a deterrent. Having their offspring educated without spending money, or even making profit out of their education, were considerable advantages in a society which was struggling to make ends meet. As soon as students left Greek schools the gap with the Greek-speaking Patriarchate was widened and left few, if any, ways for the infiltration of Greek national ideology into small villages. However, it should be kept in mind that teaching children the Greek, Bulgarian or Romanian language and history was a long term project. It could hardly be argued that the true consequences of national education were visible before 1900, not even before the Balkan Wars. Thus, the choice of school, regardless of the long term sideeffects, should preferably be considered in its financial context.

Financial motives can partly explain the development of national allegiances. Internal community animosities must also be taken seriously into account and it could be argued that they reflected an ongoing class differentiation process. As Abbott remarked, Christian communities as a rule were divided into two parts, the bishop's friends, proponents of the Greek cause who formed the governing party, and the bishop's foes, i.e. the opposition.⁴⁶ In the 1860s in the Vlach-speaking town of Kleisoura (district of Kastoria), for example, two camps had been consolidated, a pro-Greek and a pro-Romanian one but dispute essentially was focused on council supremacy.⁴⁷ In 1879 in Gevgeli, in central Macedonia, the village notables rejected the participation of Exarchists in the council and asked for the substitution of the Exarchist seal keeper. In Bogdantsa, few miles to the north, in 1884, the Exarchist (pro-Bulgarian) party, having been defeated in the local elections, refused to hand over the community seal to the Patriarchists (pro-Greek).⁴⁸ Contemporary observers also noticed the fact that Bulgarians exploited systematically these divisions; and they underlined that, eventually, the opposition was oriented towards the Bulgarian cause, while "the best and honest householders" (or, seen from a different angle, the "capitalists" and the "conservatives") sided with the Greeks. Sources also testify that bourgeoisie in the urban centres, as a rule, despised peasants, who on the contrary admired them.⁴⁹ In fact, community disputes were mentioned quite frequently, even during the years of the armed struggle (1904-1908), not only in small villages but in towns like Kozani, Naousa, Serres, Goumenissa etc., with or without a clear national character.⁵⁰

These comments assume additional importance, if another factor is taken into account: in Macedonia, for reasons related to the economic development of the region⁵¹ and the constant political upheaval, the creation of an incontestable leading group of notables in Christian peasant communities had been retarded, especially in chiflik villages. Thus, quarrels for community leadership between the relatively wealthiest clans must have been frequent and harsh. The absence of social stability in these agrarian societies due to the lack of a permanent ruling elite maximised the clergymen's influence and the local chieftains' (klephtes) patronage. Eventually, their national choices determined, in a positive or in a negative way, the national preferences of their clientele. Dependency on these local patrons facilitated the work of nationalist agents. If they were flexible enough to side with the right party, exploit its ambitions for power and profits and/or to proselytize the leading personalities then the peasant clientele was bound to follow.

In many cases communal disputes seem to be related to the different geographical origin of the local clans. Though no proper research has been done, it is a fact that between 1750 and 1850 successive waves of refugees settled in Macedonia. They were Christians, Albanian-, Greek- or Vlach-speaking, evicted from Epirus due to the continuous disturbances caused initially by the Albanian tribes and later on by the Ali pasha irregulars. In the course of a century a considerable number of new villages were established throughout Macedonia, while in other cases refugee families settled in Slav-speaking communities.⁵² Naturally, most of the time, especially in the case of small settlements, linguistic assimilation was inescapable, but it is reasonable to assume that this process was not free from social and financial frictions. Given

the conservatism of these peasant societies, it is highly improbable that the two different population groups, new comers and old residents, had managed to overcome friction by the turn of the century despite linguistic assimilation. Bitter memories were probably reflected in communal disputes, selective intermarriage, residential segregation and various kinds of social prejudice.⁵³ This argument partly explains the fact that a considerable number of Slav-speaking villages or individuals who fought together with Greek bands between 1904 and 1908 against the Bulgarians, were initially Greek- or Vlach-speakers of Epirot origin but had gradually adopted the Slavic vernacular.

In other cases, actually quite often, national preferences were influenced by intra-Balkan migratory patterns. Masons from the highlands around Kastoria, Florina and the Prespa region, who stuck to age-old emigration practices, were employed annually in Greece and Bulgaria, always in the same town and hood. Most of them were to be recruited; soon they evolved into first class nationalist agents and guerrilla fighters and, quite expectedly, they tried to impose their national preferences to their village of origin. The confrontation between pro-Greek and pro-Bulgarian migrant workers in the highlands of Korestia, near Kastoria, was so vigorous that even reached the pages of a Salonika Greek newspaper in the early 1880s.⁵⁴ In this context, railway connection with Sofia, during the same decade, greatly promoted emigration to Bulgaria and naturally widened the channels for the infiltration of Bulgarian nationalist propaganda.⁵⁵ Greece, on the other hand, despite its continuous efforts, failed to convince the Sublime Porte of the necessity of a Greek-Turkish railway junction and remained isolated.⁵⁶ Similar phenomena can be traced within the Vlach-speaking communities. As late as in 1917 the Prefect of Florina noticed that friction between the pro-Romanian and the pro-Greek party, originated from the fact that the latter, who had their permanent living quarters in Macedonia, were trying to expel the former from the community councils and to reduce their rights in communal pastures.⁵⁷

Last but not least, personal antipathies of varying degrees, individual peculiarities and everyday incidents, sometimes details of an extremely private nature, are to be taken into account, as far as national orientation is concerned, because they defined preferences more frequently than modern historians could assume. Bishop Germanos Karavangelis of Kastoria, for example, exploited local vendettas to attract some eminent local chieftains to the Greek camp.⁵⁸ In Emporio, a village to the south-west of Kastoria, the formation of the initial Bulgarian core was the direct result of the local priest's efforts to appoint his son as the village teacher instead of the Bishop's choice.⁵⁹ In Poroia, in Eastern Macedonia a Patriarchist notable had little hesitation in registering his son in the Bulgarian school when he was refused a scholarship by a Greek high-school.⁶⁰ In spite of scant evidence, incidents like these should be considered as the rule rather than exceptional.

All the above mentioned evidence clearly testifies that national preferences in large parts of Macedonia were based on a wide variety of pre-existing social cleavages. Although wearing the mantle of national ideology the different Christian camps were not indeed ethnic groups. Even the Greek Consul General in Salonika was very specific about this: "As usually" he wrote, "in the villages of Macedonia antagonism of interests takes precedence but later on it is necessarily transformed into a national confrontation".⁶¹ Evidently nationalist propaganda and armed clashes tended to forge ethnic groups in the non-Greek-speaking regions. But such a partition was neither completed by 1912 nor could have been completed in the course of only one generation (1870-1900) under any circumstances. Siding with, or even fighting for, a certain camp, did not necessarily imply different culture or different genealogical and historical myths. Perhaps the best argument to support this view is the undeniable fact that Vlach-speakers belonged to three different camps: Greek, Bulgarian and Romanian; while Slavspeakers divided their allegiance among the Greek, the Bulgarian and occasionally the Serbian side. Although the indispensable national myths had been circulated through education, no camp could boast of the stability of its members nor claim that belonging to a camp could sufficiently predict choices of activity. All in all, Christian camps in Macedonia were not yet closed social groups with distinctive features, which would impose certain activity options.⁶²

Contemporary observers seem to have had a much more realistic view than historians. The terms "party", "side" and "wing" are used as a rule in primary sources and memoirs whenever they want to denote different Christian camps.⁶³ In fact, a distinguished Greek fighter, a general

of the Army and a deputy in the interwar period, had no hesitation in comparing Greek consulates and Bulgarian commercial agencies in Ottoman Macedonia to political clubs, where the different communal parties shaped their “identity” according to the guarantees provided.⁶⁴ The use of political terms obviously rendered the necessary grounds for manoeuvring. After all, for Christians, especially for the non-Greekspeakers, belonging to a party with national affiliations was a political and rather flexible option and not the result of ethnic preference.

Of course, large scale violence between these parties was a common phenomenon in the early twentieth century but had a rather short history. In fact it was imported from Bulgaria around 1898 in an attempt to gain quick control over Christian communities in Macedonia and to accelerate the long expected annexation procedure. Greeks reacted actively only five years later and band war soon escalated.⁶⁵ However, bandit attacks against opponent villages were most often initiated by non Macedonian residents in the context of the wider Greek-Bulgarian confrontation. Locals were eager to participate in these raids and, although they were more cautious in choosing targets, they themselves perpetrated a considerable number of violent activities. However, these activities, in spite of the brutalities, sometimes must be seen as local vendettas, rather than as a national war or ethnic cleansing.

The existence of parties with national affiliations instead of ethnic groups within the Christians of Macedonia and the undeniable fact that around 1900 national loyalties as a rule were not to be taken for granted puts the following vital question: whether in the years preceding nationalism or under the thin layer of nationalism the various Christian linguistic groups (Greek-, Vlach-, Albanian- and Slav-speakers) corresponded to different ethnic groups. In 1903 Noel Brailsford, a British journalist, met in Ochrid (medieval Achris), near the Byzantine ruins, a group of Slav-speaking village boys. When he asked them whether they knew who had built those ancient constructions they replied: “The free men, our ancestors”. “Were they Serbs, Bulgarians, Greeks or Turks?” asked the journalist. The boys responded: “No they were not Turks, they were Christians”.⁶⁶

If the boys’ answer represents an impartial or prenationalistic view, then it is most likely that some illiterate, non Greek-speaking peasant members of the Rumi-imillet in Macedonia (certainly not many amongst the fighting bandsmen), had treasured their previous cultural loyalties as late as the early twentieth century. In spite of all the ill digested national ideologies, they had been and some still were Romii (Romans) or Rum (terms which had a strong religious connotation), followers of the Ecumenical Patriarch, members of the *genos* (i.e. the ethnic group). This was a notion which in many parts (some Macedonian regions included) had not yet developed into that of a modern national identity.⁶⁷ They seemed to draw from an Eastern-Orthodox Byzantine cultural tradition which had amalgamated a variety of regional and social subcultures, myths and memories, symbols and values. A tradition which had always disregarded linguistic differences and had created a common mentality based on shared attitudes towards time, space, Muslim oppressors (i.e. the Turks), and “civilized” Europeans. In a troubled region where romantic nationalism was re-discovering and re-describing the communal past, their actions and bloody conflicts were mostly determined by cleavages which reflected real and vital interests, basically the allocation of material resources. At least for the time being some Orthodox Christian *rayas* in Macedonia, Thrace, and probably in other parts in the Sultan’s domains had little, if any, concern for any further ethnic distinctions.⁶⁸

Notes

1. For their valuable comments I am grateful to my friends Prof. John S.Koliopoulos, Dr Stelios Virvidakis, Dr Philimon Peonidis, Dr George Angelopoulos and Mr Keith Brown.
2. Ilija Petrushevski (ed.), *Macedonia on Old Maps* (Skopje, 1992).
3. *Ibid.*, p.5.
4. See J.Cvijic, *Remarks on the Ethnography of the Macedonian Slavs*, translated by Annie O’Brien (London, 1906), pp.19-34 and the classic study by H.R.Wilkinson, *Maps and Politics; a Review of the Ethnographic Cartography of Macedonia* (Liverpool, 1951). For the use of maps in nation building in general see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 1991 2nd edn.), pp.163-185.

5. See Paschalis Kitromilides, "Imagined Communities and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans", Martin Blinkhorn & Thanos Veremis (eds.), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens, 1990), pp.26-33.
6. See Stephen Xydis, "Medieval Origins of Modern Greek Nationalism", *Balkan Studies*, 9 (1968), 1-20.
7. Hans Vermeulen, "Greek Cultural Dominance among the Orthodox Population of Macedonia during the Last Period of Ottoman Rule", A. Block and H. Driessen (eds), *Cultural Dominance in the Mediterranean Area* (Nijmegen, 1984), pp.227-229.
8. Marin V.Pundeff, "Bulgarian Nationalism", Peter F.Sugar & Ivo J.Lederer (eds.) *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle & London, 1971), pp.98-110.
9. See the classic study of Peter F.Sugar & Ivo J.Lederer (eds.) *Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Seattle & London, 1971), pp.3-54; see also the articles by Dimitrije Djordjevic, "Balkan versus European Enlightenment", *East European Quarterly*, 9 (1975), 487-497 and Peter F.Sugar, "External and Domestic Roots of Eastern European Nationalism"; Peter F.Sugar, "The Enlightenment in the Balkans. Some Basic Considerations", *East European Quarterly*, 9 (1975), 499-507. For a bibliography on Balkan nationalism see Gale Stokes (ed.), *Nationalism in the Balkans. An Annotated Bibliography* (New York & London, 1984).
10. See Anthony D.Smith, *The Ethnic Origin of Nations* (Oxford, 1989), pp.134-137, 212-213 and the shorter edition *National Identity* (London, 1991), pp.19-42.
11. See Evangelos Kofos, "The Macedonian Question: The Politics of Mutation", *Balkan Studies*, 27 (1986), 157-172 and Loring Danforth, "Claims to Macedonian Identity. The Macedonian Question and the Breakup of Yugoslavia", *Anthropology Today*, 9/4 (1993), 3-10.
12. See *Parliamentary Papers-Accounts and Papers (PPAP)*, 75 (1867), 627.
13. See John Rex, *Race and Ethnicity* (Bristol, 1986), pp.15-17.
14. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, (Oxford, 1983), pp.7 and 57.
15. See Smith, *op.cit.*, pp.22-30.
16. See Ekdotike Athenon, *Macedonia 4000 Years of Greek History and Civilisation* (Athens, 1991 3rd edn), an extremely popular reference book for all Greek scholars. For an excellent synopsis see Evangelos Kofos, "National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Macedonia", *European History Quarterly*, 19 (1989), 229-267, a paper which is also included in the publication by SAGE ELIAMEP: Martin Blinkhorn & Thanos Veremis (eds.), *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens, 1990), pp.103-141. In this paper the latter edition shall be used for reference.
17. It should be kept in mind that in most Greek studies written in Greek one still does not find different terms to denote "ethnic" and "national". The Greek adjective *ἠθελή* usually is translated as "national" but in fact it means "ethnic"; see Michael Herzfeld, *Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the making of Modern Greece* (New York, 1986), p.16. This linguistic deficiency partly explains Greek reluctance to justify the existence of nation states without pre-existing ethnic cores.
18. The last point has been criticised by E.J.Hobsbawm (*Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1991), p.107) though without sufficient evidence.
19. See the classic works of Ofeikov [A.Shopov], *La Macedoine au point de vue historique, ethnographique et philologique* (Philippopolis, 1887), J.Ivanoff, *La question Macedonienne au point de vue historique, ethnographique et statistique* (Paris, 1920) and the more recent publication of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, *Macedonian Documents and Material* (Sofia, 1978).
20. The term "ethnic" was not in use in Bulgarian inter-war studies. Professor Ivanof used the term "nationalite", but its definition (see *op.cit.*, p.231) was almost identical to that of the modern term "ethnic" (Cf.Smith, *op.cit.*, pp.2230).

21. For a review of Serbian ethnographic cartography and argumentation on Macedonia see Wilkinson, *op.cit.*, pp.92-111 and Cvijic, *op.cit.*, 32-33, 200-203.
22. See for example the official publication of the Institute of National History, *A History of the Macedonian People* (Skopje, 1979).
23. Kofos, *op.cit.*, pp.104-110. For the Greek educational work see the works of Stephanos Papadopoulos, "Ecoles et association grecques dans la Macedoine du Nord durant le dernier siecle de la domination Turque", *Balkan Studies* 3 (1962), 397-442 and *Ekpaideutiki kai koinoniki drastiriotita tou Ellinismou tis Makedonias kata ton teleutaio aiona tis tourkokratias* [Educational and Social Activities of Hellenism in Macedonia during the Last Century of Ottoman Rule] (Thessaloniki, 1970).
24. See the study by Douglas Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913* (Thessaloniki, 1966).
25. For the Bulgarian educational work see G.TodorovN.Zecev, "Documents ayant trait aux luttes des Bulgares pour une eglise et des ecoles nationales en Macedoine vers le milieu du XIXe siecle", *Etudes historiques*, 3 (1966), 173239. S.Makedonski, "L' Exarchat bulgare et l' enseignement scolaire en Macedoine" *Etudes balkaniques*, 2 (1971), 104119. V.Bojinov, "Cultural and Educational Work in Macedonia and the Participation of Goce Delcev, Damjan Gruev and Jane Sandanski in it", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 52 (1977), 24-36; idem "L'instruction bulgare en Macedoine et en Thrace d'Andrinople 1878-1903", *Etudes historiques*, 8 (1978), 255274.
26. See for example R.Pandev "Le mouvement de liberation de la Macedoine et la region d' Andrinople du Congres de Salonique 1896 jusqu' en 1899", *Bulgarian Historical Review*, 111 (1983), 41-57.
27. See D.Kosev, "The Ilinden-Preobrazenie Uprising 1903", *Bulgarian Historical Review* 64 (1978), 14-30 and N.Todorov, "La lutte de liberation des Bulgares en Macedoine et dans la region d' Andrinople 1903", *Bulgarian Historical Review* 64 (1978), 30-39.
28. See for example Apostolski, *op.cit.*, pp.114-181 and also numerous articles published in the *Macedonian Review*. These views are partly shared by Jutta de Jong in the study *Der Nationale Kern des makedonischen Problems: Ansätze und Grundlagen einer makedonischen Nationalbewegung (1890-1903)* (Frankfurt, 1982), who, despite certain methodological obstacles, feels obliged to accept a Macedonian ethnic pole (vs a Bulgarian pole) in order to interpret the Ilinden uprising. Duncan M.Perry in his study *The Politics of Terror. The Macedonian Revolutionary Movements 1893-1903* (Durham & London, 1988) also tries to show, though not convincingly enough, that IMRO was not manipulated exclusively by Bulgaria but he also supports the view that the name "Macedonian" was not used in an ethnic sense (see pp.19-24).
29. Cf. Smith, *op.cit.*, pp.22-30.
30. See for example Public Record Office (PRO), Foreign Office (FO) 195/2297, Lamb to O'Connor, Salonika, June 8th, 1908, f.569; *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, 1st series, vol.24, No.111, Note prepared in the Foreign Office for information of the British representative at forthcoming meeting of the Council of the League of Nations, July 12th, 1922, p.277; Cvijic, *op.cit.*, p.37; Dimitrios Kakkavos, *Apomniponevmata (Makedonikos Agon)* [Memoirs. The Macedonian Struggle] (Thessaloniki, 1972), p.63.
31. Vasilis K.Gounaris (ed.), *Phthinoporo tou 1904 sti Makedonia. To anekdoto imerologio tou Makedonomachou Euthymiou Kaoudi* [Fall of 1904 in Macedonia. The Unpublished Diary of Euthymios Kaoudis] (Thessaloniki, 1992), p.67.
32. Cf.Perry, *op.cit.*, pp.22-23 and Nikolaos Vlachos, *To Makedonikon os phasis tou Anatolikou Zitimatou* [The Macedonian Question as Part of the Eastern Question] (Athens, 1935), pp.92-94.
33. F.C.H.L.Pouqueville, *Travels in Epirus, Albania, Macedonia and Thessaly* (London, 1820), pp.78-79.

34. Antigoni Tsiami, "To Pisoderi", *Aristotelis*, 35205-206 (1991), 9-10.
35. PPAP, 67 (1861), 508 and 75 (1867), 608.
36. See for example D.M.Brancoff, *Macedoine et sa population chretienne* (Paris, 1905) and Patrocle Contoyannis, *Carte des ecoles chretiennes de la Macedoine* (s.l., 1903).
37. See Danglis Papers (Benaki Museum, Athens), F.22, *Syntomos perigrafis katastaseos ton scholion tis en Makedonia dimotikis ekpaideuseos*, [Brief Description of the Elementary Education in Macedonia], Salonika, April 26th 1909; Sophia Vouri, "Vodena 1900. Ekpaideutikes kai ethnikes opseis" [Vodena 1900. Educational and National Aspects], *Praktika tou symposiou "I Edessa kai i periochi tis: istoria kai politismos* [Minutes of the Symposium on the history and civilisation of the Edessa district] (forthcoming).
38. The situation is clearly reflected in the memoirs of Anastasios Pichion from Ochrid, a protagonist of Greek irredentist activities in the Kastoria region in the 1880s. Pichion wrote that when he was a boy, in the 1850s, he was initiated to classical letters and to the "hellenic spirit" by Margaritis Dimitsas, a graduate of a high-school in Athens, who had settled down in Ochrid and introduced new educational methods, based on the classical texts instead of the church books; see Konstantinos A.Vakalopoulos, *O Voreios Ellinismos kata tin proimi phasi tou Makedonikou Agona (1878-1894)* [Northern Hellenism during the Early Stages of the Macedonian Struggle] (Thessaloniki, 1983), pp.356-359.
39. For a well documented criticism of the Greek educational strategy see Sophia Vouri, *Ekpaideusi kai ethnikismos sta Valkania. I periptosi tis voreioditikis Makedonias 1870-1904* [Education and Nationalism in the Balkans. The case of north-west Macedonia 1870-1904] (Athens, 1992), in particular pp.181-186.
40. For financial issues see Basil C.Gounaris, *Steam Over Macedonia: Socio-Economic Change and the Railway Factor* (East European Monographs: New York, 1993).
41. See for example the case of Agios Panteleimon (Pateli), district of Florina, where the progress of the Bulgarian Propaganda in 1882 was not irrelevant to the complaints of the Slav-speaking tenants against their Christian landlord who, in fact, supported the local Greek school (Vakalopoulos, op.cit., p.150). The same views are shared by Vermeulen, see op.cit., p.237 ff.
42. See Dakin, op.cit., pp.93, 100. Typical is the case of Lofoi (Zabirdeni), district of Florina, where, during the 1903 anti-Ottoman uprising instigated by IMRO, Christian peasants also burned down the farm of their Christian landlord (FO.195/2157, McGregor to Graves, Monastir, Aug. 6th, 1903, ff.259-264)
43. Victor Berard, *La Turquie et l' Hellenism contemporain* (Paris, 1896), p.182.
44. See for example Kakkavos, op.cit., pp.40-41.
45. Vakalopoulos, op.cit., pp.98, 100-103; Dakin, op.cit., p.21; Vermeulen, op.cit., p.240.
46. G.F.Abbott, *The Tale of a Tour in Macedonia* (London, 1903 2nd edn.), p.85; cf. Victor Berard, *La Macedoine* (Paris, 1900 2nd edn.), pp.278-289.
47. Vakalopoulos, *Voreios Ellinismos*, pp.374-375.
48. *Ibid.*, pp.91,136.
49. Periklis Argiropoulos, "O Makedonikos Agon. Apomnimonevmata" [The Macedonian Struggle. Memoirs], Institute for Balkan Studies, *O Makedonikos Agon. Apomnimonevmata* [The Macedonian Struggle. Memoirs] (Thessaloniki, 1984), p.30; Georgios Modis, *Makedonikos Agon kai Makedones archigoi* [The Macedonian Struggle and the Macedonian Chieftains], (Thessaloniki, 1950), p.20; idem *O Makedonikos Agon kai i neoteri makedoniki istoria* [The Macedonian Struggle and Modern History of Macedonia] (Thessaloniki, 1967), pp.78-79. Konstantinos Mazarakis-Ainian, "O Makedonikos Agon. Anamniseis" [The Macedonian Struggle. Memories], Institute for Balkan Studies, *O Makedonikos Agon. Apomnimonevmata* [The Macedonian Struggle. Memoirs] (Thessaloniki, 1984), p.203.

50. For the case of Naousa see for example Archeion Ypourgeiou ton Exoterikon (AYE) [Greek Foreign Ministry Historical Archive]/Kentriki Ypiresia [Central Department] (KY)/1905 Consulate in Thessaloniki, Koromilas to F.O., Thessaloniki 19 Sept.1905, reg.621; Kakkavos, op.cit., p.101; Konstantinos Vakalopoulos, Neotourkoi kai Makedonia, 1908-1912 [The Young Turks and Macedonia (Thessaloniki, 1988), p.340.
51. Commercialisation of agriculture was a very slow and doubtful process, thus capital accumulation was negligible in villages. In the highlands small proprietors also run the additional risk of bandit attacks and guerrilla visits. In the lowlands Christians were as a rule tenants rather than small holders. The Ottoman tax-farming system left them few chances for hoarding up cash (see Gounaris, Steam Over Macedonia, pp.118-130.
52. Modis, Makedones Archigoi, p.216 ff.
53. Almost no research has been done on this. Cf.Hans Vermeulen, “Agrotikes sygrouseis kai koinoniki diamartyria stin istoria enos makedonikou choriou sti mesopolemiki Makedonia” [Rural Conflicts and Social Protest in the History of a Macedonian Village in Interwar Macedonia”, Diadikasies koinonikou metaschimatismou stin agrotiki Ellada [The Process of Social Transformation in Rural Greece] (Athens, 1987), p.226; Vasilis Nitsiakos, Paradosiakes koinonikes domes [Traditional Social Structures] (Athens, 1991), pp.59-61.
54. Pharos tis Makedonias [The Lighthouse of Macedonia], May 26th, 1882.
55. Basil C.Gounaris, “Emigration from Macedonia in the Early Twentieth Century”, Journal of Modern Greek Studies, 7 (1989), 135.
56. Basil C.Gounaris, “Greco-Turkish Railway Connection: Illusions and Bargains in the Late Nineteenth Century Balkans”, Balkan Studies, 30 (1989, 311-332.
57. Archeion Pavlou Kalliga (Pavlos Kalligas Papers in the possession of Eirini Kalliga), see Kalliga’s report No.5359 Oct.18th, 1917, f.9.
58. Germanos Karavangelis, O Makedonikos Agon. Apomnimonevmata [The Macedonian Struggle. Memoirs], (Thessaloniki, 1958), pp.13-14,16.
59. Vakalopoulos, Voreios Ellinismos, pp.120, 135-136.
60. Argiropoulos, “op.cit.”, p.46.
61. AYE/KY/1904 Consulate in Thessaloniki, Koromilas to F.O., Thessaloniki Aug.9th, 1904 reg.450.
62. Cf. Fredrik Barth, “Introduction”, Fredrik Barth (ed.), Ethnic Groups and Boundaries (London, 1969), p.38 and Rex, op.cit., pp.8-10.
63. Bishop Karavangelis for example wrote (op.cit., p.11) that during a tour in his bishopric in all villages he celebrated mass with the “Greek party”.
64. Kakkavos, op.cit., p.63.
65. See Stephen Fischer-Galati, “The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization: Its Significance in ‘Wars of Liberation’”, East European Quarterly, 6 (1973), 459-464 and Dakin, op.cit., pp.55-58.
66. Quoted by Perry, op.cit., p.22.
67. This is based on Stephen Xydis, “Modern Greek Nationalism”, Peter F.Sugar & Ivo J.Lederer (eds.) Nationalism in Eastern Europe (Seattle & London, 1971), pp.206-227 and Vermeulen, Greek Cultural Dominance, pp.245-246.
68. Cf. Smith, op.cit., pp.73 and 108 and Kitromilides, op.cit., pp.25-26; The most important study on this issue is by Paschalis M.Kitromilides, ““Balkan Mentality”: History. Legend, Imagination”, Septieme Congres International d’Etudes du Sud-Est Europeen. Rapports (Athens, 1994), pp.441-467. See also Cvijic, op.cit., p.10.