

THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN OTTOMAN OHRID IN THE PRE-NATIONAL PERIOD (LATE 18TH-EARLY 19TH CENTURY).

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Abstract

In a previous study (“Understanding the pre-national(ist) Balkans: the 'Romaic' community”, in P. Kitromilides and A. Tabaki, *Relations gréco-bulgares à l'ère de la formation des identités nationales*, Athens, 2010), I attempted to define the pre-national Orthodox Christian community in the Ottoman Empire in terms of a (rudimentary) multi-ethnic proto-nation, which was shaped by a common state-like institution (the Patriarchate of Constantinople), and whose members shared the same territory (the Ottoman Empire), the same religion (Orthodox Christianity), the same “high culture” (including a common “high language” — Greek), used the same name (“Christians” or a synonym like “Greek” or “Romaean”), and displayed a considerable cohesion and solidarity, as the massive participation of non-Greeks in the 1821 Uprising indicates.

This contribution deals with a specific “case” — the multi-ethnic Orthodox Christian population of the city of Ohrid at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century — as a sample of the Ottoman Orthodox Christian community, though with its own local particularities. Special attention is paid to some terminological and conceptual questions related to the investigation of Balkan society in the pre-national period.

Keywords: Balkans, nationalism, ethnic identity, religious identity

If, as most historians now think, national consciousness and national communities in the Balkans emerged by at the end of the eighteenth and during the nineteenth century, then the question arises about what kind of consciousness people had prior to the late eighteenth century: which community did they identify with and feel loyal to?

In fact, many tentative answers have been given already to this question. People are assumed to have identified themselves with an ethnic community (Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Serb, Vlach and the like), a religious community (Armenian, Catholic, Judaic, Muslim, Orthodox Christian), a local community in an area called “fatherland” where face-to-face contact with other members was possible (a city, an island, a valley), a clan, a tribe, a social or a vocational group. These many forms of collective identity did not exclude each other. Most often, one of them would become dominant depending on the situation and the presence of a “relevant other”.

While from the nineteenth century onwards, due to the effect of omnipresent state institutions on socialization, people in the Balkans as a rule have identified themselves with a national community, prior to the nineteenth century, due to a similar omnipresence of religious institutions exercising several secular functions, people identified themselves primarily with a religious community.¹ Although most historians are inclined to acknowledge religion as the decisive factor of community formation in the pre-national period, Balkan historiography—and certainly not only Balkan historiography—persists in approaching the

¹ Dennis P. Hupchick, *The Balkans from Constantinople to Communism* (New York, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 134-5, 144; Desislava Lilova, *Vāzrozhdenskite znacheniya na natsionalnoto ime* (Sofia: Prosveta, 2003), 24; Irina F. Makarova, “U istochnikov duhovnogo vrozhdeniya (bolgary pod vlast'yu Konstantinopol'skogo patriarha),” in *Istoriya Balkan. Vosemnadtsatyy vek*, ed. Vladlen N. Vinogradov (Moskva: Nauka, 2004), 271; Marc Mazower, *The Balkans* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 45.

past from a more or less pronounced ethnocentric or national angle. Loyalty to an ethnic group is used as an explanation of events and developments in eras in which ethnic affiliation was hardly of any relevance to group consciousness and social behaviour. The nation continues to offer the favoured framework for historical research, which tends to focus on aspects of the history of a particular nation; ethnic communities in the past are treated as budding nations. The attribution of the names of currently existing nations and states to communities and territories in the past suggests a teleological continuity which in fact is imaginary. Thus, the indiscriminate use of the term “Greeks” to denote people in antiquity, in the Byzantine period, under Ottoman rule, and in the modern period insinuates that the Greeks possessed throughout the ages an unalterable and imperishable consciousness of their “Greekness”, whereas, in reality, they had a very different mental make-up and perception of their identity in each of the aforementioned periods. Significantly, while Greek authors in the pre-nationalist era still referred to these successive identities using terms such as “Hellenes”, “Romaeans” (*roméi, romií*), or “Greeks”, nationalist historiographers imposed one single ethnonym, “Hellenes”, emphasizing the (imagined) continuity of an unchangeable core of “Greekness”. The Bulgarians in Tsar Boris’s time, calling themselves Bulgarians and speaking Old Bulgarian, are equally thought to have had a consciousness of “Bulgarianhood” comparable to that experienced by Bulgarians under Ottoman rule or by contemporary Bulgarians. Obviously, in all these historical periods, people perceived the world and organized their lives on the basis of constantly changing value systems in which ethnicity occupied a status which diverged radically from the status ethnicity (and nationhood) have occupied in people’s minds since the nineteenth century.

Several successful attempts have been made to penetrate into the mind of the inhabitants of the Balkan Peninsula in the pre-national period and to perceive and explain the world from their particular, basically religious point of view.² In order to create a conceptual framework of the Orthodox Christian community in the Ottoman Empire, we have attempted to describe it proceeding from the idea of a supra-ethnic proto-nation based on shared religious doctrines, practices, and values, and continuing Dimitri Obolensky’s “Byzantine commonwealth”.³ For the sake of brevity, we referred to the Ottoman Orthodox Christian community as the “Romaic community” (and will do so here too). Sticking to Eric Hobsbawm’s account of popular proto-nationalism⁴, we pointed out the following main features of the Romaic proto-nation:

1. A common name: most often “Christians”, but also “Greeks” and—rarely but most accurately—“Romaeans” (*Roméos* or *Romiós* in Greek, *romej* or *romeec* in Slav), used for all Orthodox Christians of whatever ethnic origin in or from the Ottoman Empire. (The latter provides a historical justification for our rather pragmatic option for the name “Romaic community”).
2. A common territory: the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople (and a small number of other patriarchates and autocephalous archbishoprics), constituting the *Rum milleti* and coinciding territorially with the Ottoman empire.

² For instance, Paschalis Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate [Variorum]), 2007.

³ Raymond Detrez, “Understanding the Pre-National(ist) Balkans: The ‘Romaic’ Community,” in *Relations gréco-bulgares à l’ère de la formation des identités nationales*, eds Paschalis Kitromilides and Anna Tabaki (Athens: Institute for Neohellenic Research, 2010), 21–70.

⁴ Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 46-79.

3. Common origins: as Makarova pointed out, the term “*pravoslavie*” (Orthodox Christianity) gradually implied the notion of descent and kinship.⁵ In Greek, the word “*genos*” (“descent”, “race”) was used, in Slavonic, the word “*rod*” (the translation of “*genos*”), for example in the common expression “*hristianski rod*” (the “Christian race”).
4. A common religion: Orthodox Christian doctrines and practices.
5. Common institutions: the Patriarchate with its religious and secular functions which actually “produced” the Orthodox community.
6. A common language: Greek used as a means of intellectual communication by the multi-ethnic Romaic cultural elite.
7. The consciousness of belonging—or having belonged—to a lasting political entity.

All these features were not only indications of the existence of a Romaic community, but also the very factors contributing to its emergence. If we assume that a community displays less of the political consciousness and societal coherence typical of a proto-nation, the term “community” is more appropriate than “proto-nation”. The idea to constitute a proto-nation and, possibly, a budding (supra-ethnic) nation might have existed somehow for a short time among the Romaic social and cultural elite during the last decades of the eighteenth and in the beginning of the nineteenth century, as Rigas Fereos’s “civil nationalism” and the massive participation of non-Greek Orthodox Christians in the Greek War of Independence suggest.⁶

The aim of this contribution is to examine to what extent the general observations we made on the Romaic community in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century also apply on the level of a small, local community. We focus on the main features, which are likely to yield the most interesting material for further reflection. The community in question is the Orthodox Christian flock in the small provincial town of Ohrid in Macedonia.

Common institutions

The common institution that was decisive for the formation of the Romaic community was the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The Patriarchate was, without any doubt, a “church in captivity”⁷ and a tool of Ottoman administration, but nevertheless enjoyed a considerable autonomy. It ruled its flock on the basis of Orthodox church law and succeeded in preserving the Orthodox community and its age-old traditions.

From a strictly formal point of view, the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate did not coincide completely with the total area in the Ottoman empire inhabited by Orthodox Christians. Besides the Patriarchate of Constantinople and in addition to the three ancient oriental patriarchates—Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem—there existed a small number of other “churches” such as the Church of Cyprus, the Patriarchate of Peć, and the autocephalous archbishopric of Ohrid. The latter was founded in 1019 by the Byzantine emperor Basil II and was meant to replace the Bulgarian patriarchate which disappeared together with the First Bulgarian Empire in 1014. Under Ottoman rule, the archbishopric of Ohrid, unlike the

⁵ Irina F. Makarova, *Bolgarskiy narod v XV-XVIII vv. Ètnokul’turnoe issledovanie* (Moscow, 2005), 94.

⁶ Cfr. Raymond Detrez, ““*Alafranga* Nationalism”: civil nationalism in the Ottoman Balkans,” *Études balkaniques* 47 (2011) 2-3: 203-223.

⁷ Steven Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1968.

Bulgarian and the Serbian patriarchate, was not abolished and continued to exist until 1767. The Serbian Patriarchate of Peć was reestablished in 1557 and existed until 1766.

The division of the Orthodox Christian flock over several churches had a formal character and did not affect the feelings of commonality and solidarity that existed among the faithful. All these churches adhered to the same doctrine and were in the same way subordinate politically to the sultan and morally to the Patriarch of Constantinople. There was a regular exchange of bishops and even patriarchs between them.⁸ Each of the churches ruled a multiethnic flock. In all these respects, nothing distinguished the Archbishopric of Ohrid from the Patriarchate of Constantinople or the Patriarchate of Peć.

In the Archbishopric of Ohrid, Greek was increasingly used as the language of worship and church administration, especially in the episcopal cities. The spread of Greek was due to historical circumstances and pragmatic considerations, and did not aim at the ethno-cultural Graecization of the Orthodox Christian flock. In the Patriarchate of Peć, which had a more homogeneous Slav (Bulgarian and Serb) population, the Church Slavonic tradition was better preserved.

From the seventeenth century onwards, Constantinople started interfering more drastically in the affairs of Ohrid and Peć. In 1766, the Patriarchate of Peć was abolished, followed by the Archbishopric of Ohrid a year later. It is of little relevance whether this happened as the result of “Phanariote intrigue”, as traditional historiography holds, or at the request of the local higher clergy because of its insolvability,⁹ the incorporation of both the Patriarchate and the Archbishopric anyhow strengthened the unity of the Orthodox Christian community even more.

In Bulgarian historiography, the abolition of the Archbishopric of Ohrid and its “annexation” by the Patriarchate of Constantinople is often explained as the abolition of a “Bulgarian” church and its incorporation into a “Greek” one. However, neither was the archbishopric of Ohrid Bulgarian nor was the Patriarchate of Constantinople Greek in an ethnic sense. Initially, the archbishopric of Ohrid included Macedonia, Serbia, Western Bulgaria, Albania, and Thessaly. In the sixteenth century, the Serbian and Western Bulgarian dioceses were ceded to the newly established Patriarchate of Peć, while the dioceses in the south were attached to the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Nevertheless, at the moment of its abolishment in 1767, the archbishopric of Ohrid still included Macedonia and a large part of Albania. During all of the nearly eight centuries of its existence, the archbishopric ruled a multiethnic flock of Albanians, Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbs, and Vlachs. There is no reason to think that the local flock considered the archbishopric as belonging to one particular ethnic community. The archbishops too had various ethnic backgrounds. From 1715 to 1745, the archbishop was Ioasaf, a Vlach from Moschopolis.¹⁰ The very last archbishop, who ruled from 1763 to 1767, was Arseniy, a Bulgarian from Ohrid.¹¹ We have no information on former archbishops, but these two examples, dating from a period when Greek influence was mounting, may suffice.

Similarly, the Patriarchate of Constantinople should not be regarded as a “Greek” church at the moment it annexed the Archbishopric of Ohrid. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the Patriarchate behaved as a supra-ethnic, ecumenical institution and was perceived

⁸ Olga Todorova, *Pravoslavnata tsarkva i bǎlgarite, XV-XVII vek* (Sofia: Marin Drinov, 1997), 76–77, 265.

⁹ For the archbishopric of Ohrid, see Ivan Snegarov, *Istoriya na ohridskata arhiepiskopiya*, vol. 2 (Sofia: Gutenberg, 1924), 123; Paschalis Kitromilides, “Orthodox Culture and Collective Identity in the Ottoman Balkans during the Eighteenth Century,” in: Kitromilides, *An Orthodox Commonwealth*, 139–141.

¹⁰ Ivan Snegarov, “Grad Ochrid. Istoricheski ocherk,” part 1, *Makedonski pregled* 4 (1928), 1: 113.

¹¹ Snegarov, *Istoriya*, vol. 2, 210.

as such by its flock. Among its bishops and even patriarchs, there were—more than is generally assumed—not only Greeks but also Albanians, Bulgarians, Serbs, and Vlachs, though admittedly the majority was Greek.¹² Nothing indicates that after 1767 the Patriarchate pursued a policy of Graecization of the former archbishopric. In the decades following the latter's abolishment, there did occur in Ohrid a number of minor conflicts involving the clergy, the citizens, the new bishop Isaia, and the patriarchate, but the reasons for these conflicts seem to have been of a financial nature and obviously had nothing to do with possible attempts of the patriarchal clergy to Graecize the non-Greek.¹³ In 1802, Kallinikos, a Greek from Gelibolu, became bishop of Ohrid and occupied the seat for forty years, until his death in 1843. According to Ivan Snegarov, Kallinikos was not a “Greek chauvinist”, did not harass the Bulgarians, but defended their interests, and apparently spoke Bulgarian.¹⁴ His successor Iosif was a Karamanli (Turkish speaking Orthodox Christian) from Anatolia.¹⁵ After being revoked in 1847, Iosif was succeeded by Dionysios, who held the post until January 1859. Dionysios was a Greek, but the many complaints about his “unworthy” behaviour cannot convincingly be related to a policy of Graecization.¹⁶ The next bishop, Ioannikis, who occupied the episcopal seat until his death on 25 December the same year, was an Albanian from Elbasan. The very same day of his death, the citizens of Ohrid sent a letter to the patriarch asking for a “wise and worthy bishop, meeting to the contemporary requirements of the people”, preferably of Slav origin.¹⁷ Two days later, they sent another letter in which they suggested the name of Avksentiy of Veles.¹⁸ Prior to December 1859, the Bulgarians in Ohrid never thought of demanding a Bulgarian bishop.

From this short survey, it appears that the archbishopric of Ohrid, although until 1767 it was a separate ecclesiastical organization, for all doctrinal, legal, ritual, and cultural matters constituted one whole with the ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, and that the existence of a separate archbishopric did not diminish the feeling of unity and solidarity among the flock in both “churches”. Neither the Patriarchate of Constantinople, nor the Archbishopric of Ohrid can be regarded as the church of one particular ethnic group. They both were ecumenical churches, serving a multi-ethnic flock. Patriarchs, archbishops, and bishops had various ethnic backgrounds. The Greeks among them, who constituted a majority, are not reported to have pursued a policy of Graecization. It appears that in Ohrid prior to the mid-nineteenth century, the ethnic background of the bishops was irrelevant both to the institutions that elected and appointed them as to the faithful that were administered by them. The Patriarchate of Constantinople received many complaints about bishops, but the complaints always pertained to “unworthy behaviour” as drinking, adultery, and greed. (Such complaints were frequently made also in homogeneously Greek environments.) One cannot discern a pattern of “Bulgarian” complaints against “Greek” bishops in Ohrid prior to the late 1850s. The bishop's ignorance of the flock's language, let alone ethnic discrimination, is never mentioned. Furthermore, either the complaints were supported by the entire multi-ethnic community in Ohrid, or the contested bishops had supporters and opponents among all

¹² Detrez, “Understanding the Pre-National(ist) Balkans,” 43-46.

¹³ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 1, 118-120.

¹⁴ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 1, 121; Ivan Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 2, *Makedonski pregled* 4 (1928), 2: 65.

¹⁵ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 2, 66, note 5.

¹⁶ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 2, 67-68. Snegarov suggests that Dionysios “overtly made Graecizing propaganda” (*otkrivo e vodil elinizatorska propaganda*), but does not provide any evidence.

¹⁷ Sprostranov, Evtim. “Po vāzrazhdanyeto na grad Ohrid,” *Sbornik za narodni umotvoreniya, nauka i knizhnina* 13 (1896): 626.

¹⁸ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 2, 71.

ethnic groups.¹⁹ The bishops themselves were not interested in favouring one ethnic group and discriminating against another. Evtim Sprostranov points out that they were eager “to keep the Varosh together” (*da zapazi v tselost Varosha*).²⁰

A common language

According to Grigor Pärlichev (1830–1893), a Greek poet of Bulgarian origin born in the city, Ohrid was “thoroughly Hellenized” (*sävsem pogärcheniy*) in the mid-nineteenth century.²¹ This means that the urban establishment, living in the Varosh or old city centre, spoke Greek and probably called itself “Greek”. The Graecization was due partly to the influence of the clergy and constituted an essentially spontaneous social and cultural development, which the church had neither discouraged or curbed, nor deliberately worked toward. With the abolishment of the archbishopric and its replacement by the diocese of Prespa-Ohrid within the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Greek influence cannot have but increased.

~~———— In the process of Graecization, the urban social elite played an even greater role. In Ohrid, as in most Ottoman cities with an Orthodox Christian population, the (multiethnic) commercial and artisanal upper class used Greek as a *lingua franca* for professional reasons. As an important centre of fur trade, Ohrid had a relatively well developed petty bourgeoisie. Through the use of Greek, however poor their command of the language might have been,²² this “aristocracy”, as Pärlichev calls them,²³ distinguished themselves socially from the villagers in the neighbourhood of Ohrid who were overwhelmingly Slav or Vlach. As such, Greek exerted a considerable attraction for all those wanting to climb the social ladder. The Ohrid neighbourhood of Mesokastro, populated with Bulgarian immigrants from the surrounding villages, was considered to be “wild” and “rural” by the Ohrid upper class.²⁴ (In Serbia, trade was a less developed, and consequently, there were fewer Greek or Graecophone traders in the cities, which explains why the Church Slavonic (*slavenoserbskiy*) tradition was better preserved.²⁵)~~

~~Finally, in Ohrid too “learned” Greek was considered to be the language of communication between the members of the Romaic intellectual elite. They participated in a Romaic high culture that was not a “Greek culture” but a “culture in the Greek language”.²⁶ The best example of Ohrid’s involvement in this Romaic literary culture is the famous eighteenth-century printing house in Moschopolis that worked for the H. Naum monastery in the proximity of Ohrid and depended on the archbishopric.²⁷ By the end of the eighteenth century, Greek also became the language of progress and Enlightenment and was particularly attractive to the younger generation of the elite. Pärlichev himself is a good example of a~~

¹⁹ The letter to the patriarch from 25 December 1859, for instance, in which the Orthodox Christian community in Ohrid, according to Sprostranov, “unanimously” (*edinodushno*) formulated its demands concerning the new bishop. (Sprostranov, “Po väzrazhdanyeto,” 625.)

²⁰ Sprostranov, “Po väzrazhdanyeto,” 634.

²¹ Grigor Pärlichev, *Izbrani proizvedeniya* (Sofia: Bälgarski pisatel), 283.

²² Sprostranov, “Po väzrazhdanyeto,” 621, 622; Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 1, 122.

²³ Pärlichev, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, 261.

²⁴ Sprostranov, “Po väzrazhdanyeto,” 622.

²⁵ Nedeljko Radosavljević, *Pravoslavna crkva u Beogradskom pašaluku 1766-1831 (uprava Vaselenjske patriaršije)* (Beograd: Istorijski institut, 2007), 67.

²⁶ A revealing distinction made by Džuzepe Del’Agata (Giuseppe Dell’Agata), *Studii po bälgaristikata i slavistikata* (Sofia: Bälgarski mesechnik, 1999), 53-4.

²⁷ See Max Peyfuss, *Die Druckerei von Moschopolis 1731-1769. Buchdruck und Heiligenverehrung im Erzbistum Achrida* (Vienna: Böhlau 1989).

Bulgarian who was attracted to Greek mainly for intellectual and literary reasons. Under the penname of Grigorios Stavridhis—the translation of his given name and patronymic Grigor Krăstev—he won the famous Athenian poetry contest in 1860 with *O Armatolos*—a poem that was an eloquent expression of its author’s Romaic identity.²⁸ Other Bulgarians from Ohrid who made a career as Greek intellectuals were Michail Potlys (1810–63), born to the family Bodlev, professor of church law at the University of Athens and minister of Justice, and Margaritis Dhimitsas (1829–1903), a Greek historian and geographer, born as Margarit Dimzov to a Bulgarian (or Vlach) family. Potlys and Dhimitsas, who lived in Greece, were Graecized and actually belonged to the Greek nation, but Părlichev, in spite of his role as a Bulgarian national activist, remained to a large extent a representative of the Graecophone Romaic cultural elite all his life.²⁹

The use of Greek did not always imply or result in those who spoke that language ultimately considering themselves to be ethnic Greeks, as Potlys and Dhimitsas did. In Ohrid, with the exception of a few families of ethnic Greek origin, to be “Greek” meant being firstly an Orthodox Christian and secondly a well-to-do city-dweller. Greek was, of course, the language of a particular ethnic group, but within the Romaic community, a command of Greek also functioned as a distinctive feature of a religious community, a social class, a vocational group and an Enlightened elite. To be sure, things were not unequivocal. Without knowing any Greek, one could be an impeccable “Romaean”, attending divine services in Church Slavonic, or one could have demotic Greek as a native language without belonging to the economic, social, or intellectual elite.

In order to fathom the linguistic situation in Ohrid, we should have a closer look at the use of Greek and Bulgarian in worship and education. In many Bulgarian towns and villages outside Ohrid, the Church Slavonic tradition was still alive and met little resistance from the patriarchal authorities. Olga Todorova points out that “the foreign metropolitans and bishops (Greeks, Hellenized Albanians, Serbs and others) did not obstruct the Slavonic services in the Bulgarian churches, nor did they prohibit the veneration of the traditional Bulgarian saints.”³⁰ In 1741–2, the printing house in Moschopolis had published a collection containing a *vita* of the Holy Clemens of Ohrid and a church service for the Holy Seven—Cyril and Methodius and their five disciples—medieval clergymen who played a crucial role in spreading Slavonic literacy.³¹ In Ohrid, the church services as a rule were celebrated in Greek, but there are many indications of patriarchal clergy’s tolerance towards the use of Slav. During the 1840s, entire masses were sometimes celebrated in Church Slavonic on the basis of liturgical books imported from Russia.³² The Bulgarian Church Slavonic tradition, however, had fallen into oblivion, and the Slav idiom used during the masses was mainly the local Ohrid dialect. The sermons were often given in that idiom (occasionally written down in Greek script). Because there were no longer any liturgical books in Church Slavonic in Ohrid, apart from the Russian ones, the Gospel was sometimes translated from the Greek copy in the church into the Ohrid dialect. The Greek bishops attended services in Church Slavonic and also corresponded with

²⁸ An *armatolos* is a kind of Ottoman policeman, recruited among the Christian population of the empire and charged with fighting banditry. In his poem Părlichev explicitly opposes religious communities (Christians and Muslims), while the ethnic identity of the heroes remains ambiguous.

²⁹ Cfr. Raymond Detrez, *Krivolitsite na misălta* (Sofia: LIK, 2001).

³⁰ Olga Todorova, “Pravoslavnata tsărkva v bălgarskoto sotsialno prostranstvo prez rannite stoletiya na osmanskoto vladichestvo,” in *Bălgarskata tsărkva prez vekovete*, ed. Petko Petkov (Sofia: Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 2003), 121.

³¹ Ivan Bogdanov, *Trinadeset veka bălgarska literatura. Săbitiya. Avtori. Proizvedeniya. Bibliografiya* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1983), 207.

³² Ivan Snegarov, “Grad Ochrid. Istoricheski ocherk,” part 3, *Makedonski pregled* 3 (1928), 57–58.

Slavic village priests in Slav.³³ The patriarchal clergy certainly did not encourage the use of Church Slavonic or (spoken) Slav during the divine services, but obviously they did not prohibit it. One wonders whether the only occasional use of Church Slavonic or the local Slav dialect resulted from a restrictive policy pursued by the patriarchal clergy or from the Ohrid population's lack of interest in divine services in Church Slavonic. Given the fact that protests against the state of affairs failed to occur, the latter seems to have been the case.

— The situation in Ohrid's schools provides us with additional evidence supporting this assumption. The language of instruction was Greek in all "central schools"—the old primary school in the Varosh, the Hellenic-Greek school (for whole class teaching) founded in the beginning of the nineteenth century, and the new school for mutual education (according to the Bell-Lancaster system) built in 1841. Most teachers occasionally made use of the native language of their pupils (the Ohrid dialect); however, they did so only to enable the pupils to acquire Greek more easily and rapidly.³⁴ The teachers, furthermore, were not always Greek. We know the names of Albanian, Bulgarian, Karakachan, and Vlach teachers who zealously taught Greek from 1800 to 1840 at the Ohrid Hellenic-Greek school.³⁵

— In 1843, a new school built and financed by Vlach seasonal workers opened in the Ohrid Lower Vlach neighbourhood (*Dolna Vlashka mahala*). As Snegarov points out, the Ottoman authorities gave the incentive to build this school:

after the famous visit of the grand vizier, sent by sultan Mahmut to travel around in his empire and to give freedom to the suppressed Christian subjects of the Sultan, so that they can build churches everywhere and worship God in them without fear, in that Vlach village the Church of Saint George was built in 1835-1840 and afterwards the old school [in the Lower Vlach neighbourhood, R. D.], and later in 1848-1849 also a new one [in the Upper Vlach neighbourhood, R. D.]³⁶

However, the schools in the Vlach neighbourhood were not Vlach schools. There too was Greek the language of instruction or at least the language the pupils were supposed to master. Moreover, the school had Bulgarian pupils and teachers. Kuzman Shapkarev studied at that school for five years and his uncle taught there.³⁷ In 1848, bishop Dionysios closed down the school and turned the building into a church.³⁸ Because the school was after all a Greek school spreading the Greek language, Dionysios' decision to remove it cannot have been inspired by Greek nationalist considerations, the Graecizing effect of a church being much more limited than that of a school. Significantly, the Vlachs did not seize the opportunity offered by the Sultan to open schools with Vlach as the language of instruction: their schools were "Greek" schools with pupils and teachers of various ethnic origins, just as the central schools were.

Already in the 1840s, attempts were allegedly made to "Bulgarize" the Ohrid central schools, but insurmountable resistance was offered by the pro-Greek forces in the city.³⁹

³³ Kuzman Shapkarev, "Nyakolko kriticheski belezhki vārhu obnarodvanite do sega materiyali po istoriyata na vāzrazhdanieto na bālgarshtinata v Makedoniya," part 3, *Bālgarski pregled* 2 (1895), 9-10: 276-277.

³⁴ Shapkarev, "Nyakolko kriticheski belezhki," part 3, 279.

³⁵ Ivan Snegarov, "Grad Ohrid," part 3, 59-60, 65; Shapkarev, "Nyakolko kriticheski belezhki," part 3, 272-273.

³⁶ Ivan Snegarov, "Prinos kām istoriyata na prosvetnoto delo v Makedoniya. Edna avtobiografiya na Kuzman Shapkarev ot 1864 godina," part 2, *Makedonski pregled* 3 (1927), 2: 25.

³⁷ Snegarov, "Grad Ohrid," part 3, 67-68; Snegarov, "Prinos," part 2, 69-70.

³⁸ Shapkarev, *Za vāzrazhdaneto*, 53.

³⁹ Yordan Vanchev, *Novobālgarskata prosveta v Makedoniya prez Vāzrazhdaneto* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1982), 34-35.

More likely, the proponents of Bulgarian education received too little support. In 1852, the inhabitants of the neighbourhoods of Mesokastro, Kasam bey and Skenderbey opened a school which was, as an inscription in Bulgarian indicates, meant to be a Bulgarian school, but was ultimately transformed into a Greek school.⁴⁰ The short lived school for mutual education, founded by Janakiy Strezov and Kuzman Shapkarev in 1854, was a Greek school anyway, with Greek as the language of instruction.⁴¹

The first real Bulgarian school was founded in Mesokastro in 1858 by father and son Mustrev, saddle makers who had learned some Church Slavonic in the monastery of Saint John the Baptist near Debar in West Macedonia. The language of instruction was spoken Bulgarian (more specifically the Ohrid dialect), but the language to be acquired by the pupils was in all probability Church Slavonic. Classes began at sunset, after the teachers finished their daily business, and lasted for two hours.⁴² The Mesokastro school lost most of its pupils and had to close its doors after the Hellenic-Greek central school started organizing courses in Bulgarian, taught by Shapkarev—to whom we owe this version of the fate of the Mesokastro school.⁴³ According to other sources, the school was closed by the Ottoman authorities after the “pro-Greek forces” in the city and the bishop had accused the teachers of making propaganda against the Ottoman state.⁴⁴ It is impossible to re-establish with certainty what really happened, nevertheless Shapkarev seems to be more credible since his own role in the events is not particularly laudable, the more so as the Hellenic-Greek school soon after discontinued the Bulgarian courses. Moreover, “Graecomans” accusing the Bulgarians of insubordination is so conventional an explanation in nineteenth-century Bulgarian historical literature that is hard to attach much weight to it. If Shapkarev is right, it transpires that a Greek education in combination with some courses in Bulgarian was obviously still more attractive to the Bulgarians than an education exclusively in Bulgarian, which left the pupils with no knowledge of “learned” Greek at all. If Shapkarev’s opponents are right, it appears that the “Greek forces” for the time being still constituted a majority able to impose their will on the clergy who in principle was not opposed to education in Slavonic.

A second Bulgarian school which used Bulgarian as a language of instruction was founded in 1859 or 1860 by the Bulgarian construction workers in the neighbourhood of Kochishta. Indicative of the church authority’s fence sitting, the school was inaugurated by bishop Meletios, who eventually donated 150–200 Serbian primers to the school.⁴⁵ One year later, in 1861, when the church struggle had reached a new peak (after the Bulgarian “Easter action” in Istanbul), Meletios had a Bulgarian school in construction in the Bolnitsa neighbourhood turned into a Greek school.⁴⁶ The Kochishta Bulgarian school was constantly on the verge of being closed down for financial reasons, which again suggests that the population was not particularly eager to invest in Bulgarian education, but it ultimately managed to survive until 1877 thanks to the support of the Russian consulate in Bitola.⁴⁷ Interestingly, this school was left alone by the Ottoman authorities, although the Russian support might easily have raised their suspicions.

⁴⁰ Yordan Ivanov, *Bălgarite v Makedoniya* (Sofia: BAN, 1986 [1913]), 359-360.

⁴¹ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 3, 68.

⁴² Shapkarev, “Nyakolko kriticheski belezhki,” part 3, 283.

⁴³ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 3, 70-71; Shapkarev, “Nyakolko kriticheski belezhki,” part 3, 284-286.

⁴⁴ Shapkarev, *Za vāzrazhdaneto*, 85-89; Sprostranov, “Po vāzrazhdanyeto,” 622-625.

⁴⁵ Sprostranov, “Po vāzrazhdanyeto,” 633-634.

⁴⁶ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 3, 73.

⁴⁷ Shapkarev, *Za vāzrazhdaneto*, 89-91; Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 3, 71-73.; Sprostranov, “Po vāzrazhdanyeto,” 632-636.

—The Patriarchate of Constantinople was not principally opposed to schools with Bulgarian as a language of instruction, since it had always permitted church services in languages other than Greek. In the Balkans, in villages and small cities, there were thousands of Bulgarian schools that trained priests and altar servers to celebrate the mass in Church Slavonic. Prior to the 1860s in Ohrid as in many other Bulgarian cities with a Graecophone elite, Bulgarians in favour of Bulgarian education and divine services in Church Slavonic apparently had not yet reached the critical number necessary to oust Greek successfully. The majority among them obviously still believed that their children needed a fair command of Greek for religious and professional reasons (priesthood and trade). Their native language—Bulgarian, or for that matter Albanian or Vlach—was associated with the peasantry, a social category the urban elite was eager to distinguish themselves from. Moreover, standardized Bulgarian which could possibly compete with “learned” Greek with regard to its various (religious, professional, cultural) functions and social prestige was unknown in Ohrid. Pärlichev spoke Ohrid dialect but wrote excellent Greek (in addition to clumsy literary Bulgarian) until the end of his life. In Ohrid, as in many other Bulgarian cities, the Graecophone elite was much more fanatically in favour of Greek education than the compliant clergy who continued to represent a basically ecumenical, supra-ethnic institution and reluctantly gave in to the pressure of Greek nationalists. Identifying themselves with a religious community, Bulgarians in Ohrid had no scruples about denying their native language and adopting a more useful and prestigious one spoken by an ethnic community belonging to the same religious community as they did. Needless to say, their attitude would eventually and radically change as ethnicity replaced religion as the basis of their moral value system.

A common name

Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire used to denote themselves most frequently as “Christians”. Western travellers relate in their accounts that Balkan peasants when asked who or what they were always replied they were “Christians”. “Greek” was often used as a synonym of “(Orthodox) Christian”, especially in relation to wealthy city dwellers involved in trade or crafts. However, even in this case, the term “Greek” contained a religious semantic component as an Armenian, Jew, or Turk member of the urban elite was never called a Greek.⁴⁸ A less frequent, although more specific synonym of Greek was “Romaean” (*Roméos* or *Romiós* in Greek, *romej* or *romeec* in Slav), which pertained not only to Greeks but to all Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire regardless of their ethnic origin. In the *Chronicle of Ohrid*, which recounts events that took place between 1801 and 1843, the population of Ohrid is called “Romaean” or “Christian” six times, while the ethnonym “Bulgarian” is used only once.⁴⁹ Until the late twentieth century, elderly people in Macedonia are reported to have called themselves “Rim” or “Rimi” in the sense of Orthodox Christian.⁵⁰ Like “Greek”

⁴⁸ To be sure, the word “Bulgarian” just as well implied the connotation “Orthodox Christian”, since Bulgarian-speaking Muslims—or Muslim Bulgarians—as a rule were called “Pomaks” or even “Turks” and were considered to belong to another community, just like the Catholic Bulgarians, who were usually called “Pavlikeni”, and not “Bulgarians”.

⁴⁹ Bernard Lory, *La ville balkanissime. Bitola 1800–1918. Thèse pour l’habilitation*. Paris: Université de Paris I—Panthéon-Sorbonne. 2009, 206, quotes Ljuben Lape, *Domashni izvori za makedonskata istoriya*, vol. 1 (Skopje, 1951), 21, 26, 31, 32, 33. Lorry calls the first half of the nineteenth century “la période où les Slavophones de Macédoine se perçoivent avant tout comme membres du *Rum milleti*, ce qui s’exprime par exemple dans la Chronique d’Ohrid par l’usage fréquent du terme *Romei*. L’altérité se construit face au camp des musulmans.”

⁵⁰ Violeta Duklevska Schubert, “‘My Faith, My Nation’: Exploring the ‘Natural’ Affinity between Orthodox Christianity and National Identity in Macedonia,” in *Macedonia. The Political, Social,*

~~(referring to rich Christian city dwellers), “Romaeon” contained a social semantic component, differentiating the “Romaeans” in Ohrid from the “Bulgarians” in neighbouring, more rural Struga (as evidenced in the collection of the Ohrid priest Stefan).⁵¹~~

Yurdan Ivanov points out that “every Bulgarian who somehow knew to read and to write was proud to call himself a Greek and to behave as a Greek”.⁵²

Shapkarev explicitly and repeatedly pointed out that all citizens of Ohrid, even if they spoke Greek, called themselves “Bulgarians”.⁵³ How to explain this apparent contradiction? Most probably, the citizens of Ohrid would call themselves Bulgarians in one moment and Greeks or Romaeans the next, depending on their social class, the presence of a “relevant other”, the reason why they were asked, the situation, and even the collocutor. The fact that the Bulgarian population in Ohrid basically identified itself with a religious community does not mean that they had lost the awareness of a Bulgarian ethnic identity. However, this ethnic consciousness obviously did not involve any moral obligations. A Bulgarian in the second half of the nineteenth century with a fully-fledged Bulgarian national consciousness would have found it intolerable to call him- or herself a “Greek”, to have had an education in a foreign language, and to speak and write in everyday life in a language other than Bulgarian. Such behaviour would be considered an absurdity or an apostasy. In pre-national Ohrid, however, Bulgarians did so without any qualms of conscience because such behaviour was not regarded as a moral transgression. The primary moral obligation was faithfulness to the religious community; adopting another language and even another ethnic identity was tolerated as long as it occurred *within* the religious community.

The consciousness of belonging—or having belonged—to a lasting political entity.

Hobsbawm rightly thinks that the consciousness of belonging or having belonged to a lasting political entity is one of the main features of popular proto-nationalism. At first sight, such a consciousness would have divided rather than united the Orthodox Christian community in the Ottoman Empire. In the Middle Ages, the Orthodox Christians in the Balkans belonged to different states: the Byzantine Empire, Bulgaria, Serbia, the Romanian Principalities. Although all of these states had a multi-ethnic population, their mere existence must have contributed to the emergence of some form of proto-national consciousness.⁵⁴ However, the Byzantine commonwealth, described by Obolensky, had created an Orthodox Christian community that was the precursor of the Romaic community referred to in this study.⁵⁵ Under Ottoman rule, the consciousness of the inherited commonality on the basis of religion obviously outlived the memory of the separate Balkan states. If there had remained any clear

Economic and Cultural Foundations of a Balkan State, eds Victor C. de Munck and Ljupcho Risteski, (London, New York : I. B. Tauris, 2013), 72-73.

⁵¹ Snegarov, “Grad Ohrid,” part 1, 122.

⁵² In Yurdan Ivanov, “Kām istoriyata na Vāzrazhdaneto v Ohrid,” *Svetlina* 2 (1882), quoted in Shapkarev, “Nyakolko kriticheski belezhki,” part 3, 278.

⁵³ Shapkarev, “Nyakoi kriticheski belezhki,” part 3, 276-277; Shapkarev, *Za vāzrazhdaniето*, 46.

⁵⁴ See, for Byzance, Stephen G. Xydis, “Mediaeval Origins of Modern Greek Nationalism,” *Balkan Studies* 9 (1968): 1–20; for Bulgaria, Dimitār Angelov, *Obrazuvane na bālgarskata narodnost* (Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1971).

⁵⁵ Dimitri Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth. Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971).

memories of the former states, they were memories of kings, tsars, and patriarchs, always in a highly mythologized form. The various legends and prophecies related to the end of the Ottoman dominance contain no explicit references to the resurrection of the Byzantine Empire or any other medieval Balkan state. As Richard Clogg points out,

aspirations [...] of an eventual restoration of “their race of princes to the throne and possession of Constantinople” were enshrined in a body of prophetic and apocalyptic beliefs which held out the hope of an eventual deliverance not through human agency but through divine intervention.⁵⁶

Understood largely in religious terms, the idea of regained freedom had lost its political dimension and become a deliverance in the Christian sense of the word for the entire Orthodox Christian community. Again, it appears that ethnic consciousness, as the primary form of group consciousness, had been gradually supplanted by an Orthodox Christian consciousness.

We should probably approach things conversely here: as the consciousness of having belonged to separate political entities had largely disappeared, the remaining obstacles to the formation of an Orthodox Christian community were actually removed. In Ohrid, the fate of the Cyrillic script provides a revealing example of how historical memories had faded away. In the Middle Ages, Ohrid had been one of the main centres of Slavic literature, culture, and spirituality. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, nobody, according to Shapkarev, was capable of reading the Slavic books in the library of the H. Kliment Church.⁵⁷ In the 1840s, the Russian traveller Viktor Grigorovich could not find anyone in Ohrid who had any notion of the Cyrillic script.⁵⁸ The records of the church committees and the guilds as well as trade agreements and similar official documents were all written in Greek. Whenever the local Slav dialect of Ohrid was written, Greek characters were used. The Cyrillic script was considered to originate from Serbia and was called “Serbian”.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Returning to the question we asked at the beginning of this paper, we may now attempt to define what it actually meant to be a Bulgarian in late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Ohrid. Bulgarians at that time, even while persistently calling themselves “Bulgarians”, had no problem attending church services in Greek and visiting schools that had Greek as the language of instruction or aimed to ensure that the pupils acquired a command of Greek while almost completely neglecting their native tongue. In one of the main centres of Bulgarian medieval literary culture, Church Slavonic had fallen into disuse, and the Cyrillic script was all but completely forgotten. Many Bulgarians, having made a career and belonging to the social upper class, were eager to call themselves “Greeks”. Although some kind of ethnic awareness must have been transmitted from generation to generation, it obviously did not imply the same moral implications national identity has today.

We argued that in the pre-national era religion provided the basis on which communities were formed and constituted the chief source of moral values. The bizarre fact of Bulgarians readily accepting Greek as the language of worship and education becomes comprehensible when we keep in mind that their behaviour did not impede their basic allegiance to their religion and their religious community. The “others” were not (yet) the

⁵⁶ Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 17.

⁵⁷ Shapkarev, “Nyakoi kriticheski belezhki,” part 3, 276-277.

⁵⁸ Viktor Grigorovich, *Ocherk puteshestviya po Evropeyskoy Turtsii* (Moskva 1877), 102.

⁵⁹ Pärlichev, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, 371; Skopakov, Kiril. “Grigor Pärlichev. Istoriko-literaturen ocherk,” *Izvestiya na Seminara po Slavyanska Filologiya pri Universiteta v Sofiya* 3 (1911): 425.

speakers of another language, but those confessing another faith (Catholic, Muslim). The Bulgarians' acceptance of the Greek language was facilitated by the fact that Greek, due to its many functions in a multi-ethnic environment, was not considered exclusively as the language of a particular ethnic community. It had become to a large extent ethnically "unmarked".

Speakers of Bulgarian did not consider themselves as a community merely on the basis of the language they shared: Orthodox and Muslim Bulgarians, although speaking the same language, constituted two different and often hostile communities. Language then still played a secondary role in community formation. By the same token, Bulgarians who had preserved their native language and divine services in Church Slavonic did not necessarily possess a more sound Bulgarian ethnic consciousness than those who were Graecized as in Ohrid. Shapkarev points out that by the end of the 1860s the Bulgarians in Prilep, where schools had always had Bulgarian as the language of instruction and divine services had always been celebrated in Church Slavonic, pupils still "read breviaries and psalters" and were satisfied with their Greek bishop, whereas the Graecized Bulgarians in Ohrid were already "conscious of the rights of their ethnicity" and demanded a Bulgarian bishop.⁶⁰ Obviously, Bulgarians in Prilep still identified themselves mainly with their religious community, while in Ohrid a Bulgarian ethnic identity had already replaced the old Romaic identity.

When describing and explaining late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Balkan society, instead of assuming the existence of a kind of unchangeable "ethnic consciousness", historians should take into account that the term "Bulgarian"—and for that matter all terms referring to ethnic, religious, social, and professional groups in the Balkans—is by far not unequivocal. Ignoring the multilayered historical nuances inherent to the word "Bulgarian" and simply grafting them onto the sense it has acquired in the nineteenth through the twenty-first century, historians impute to the mere recurrence of "Bulgarian" a very questionable continuity of meaning.

⁶⁰ Shapkarev, "Nyakoi kriticheski belezhki," part 3, 280-282.