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**WAR, PEACE AND NATION-BUILDING
(1853–1918)**

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THE BULGARIAN CHURCH QUESTION AND NATION-BUILDING IN THE BALKAN PENINSULA 1870–1878

Abstract: The paper examines the Bulgarian church question opened in the early second half of the 19th century, in the context of creation of modern nations in the Balkans. Being one of the most numerous peoples in the European part of the Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarians began the struggle for cultural and literary revival. Due to misunderstandings with the Ecumenical Patriarchate, that struggle grew into the movement for the establishment of an autocephalous church. The formation of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 impacted on relations between Bulgarians and the neighbouring Orthodox peoples. This also affected the relations between the Serbs and Bulgarians, between whom there was a wide zone of transitional dialects, where the national determination of the population was still not entirely defined. To illustrate this, we analysed the situation in the Niš, Nišava and Skopje eparchies from the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate until the Congress of Berlin in 1878, when state borders between the Principality of Serbia and the Principality of Bulgaria were defined.

Keywords: Ecumenical Patriarchate, Bulgarian Exarchate, Principality of Serbia, Ottoman Empire, Orthodoxy, Slavs.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, the process of national revival began among the majority of Balkan peoples. It manifested in different fields, from cultural activities and the struggle for church autocephaly, to the armed struggle for the liberation from Ottoman rule.¹ The early 19th century in the Balkans was marked by the war period of

¹ In the 18th century, important works about the history of the South Slavs were created. Among the Serbs, important works were those by Vasilije Petrović, *История о Черной горы* (Moscow 1754), Pavle Julinas, *Краткое введение в историю происхождения славеносербского народа* (Vienna 1765) and Jovan Rajić *История разных славенских народов найпаче болгар, хорватов и сербов* (Vienna 1794–1795), and among the Bulgarians: *История славянобългарска*, written in 1762 by the Hilandar hieromonk Paisios (София 2003). С. Ђирковић, *Срби у средњем веку*, Београд 1995, 257; М. Павић, *Барок, Историја српске књижевности*, 2, Београд 1970, 20. Паисий Хилендарски, *История славянобългарска*, предадена на новобългарски език от П. Диневков, София 2003.

the Serbian Revolution (1804–1815), which after the end of the Second Serbian Uprising continued by diplomatic means, until the creation of the autonomous Principality of Serbia in 1830.² The Greek Uprising began in 1821. After gaining the support of France, Great Britain and Russia, which militarily intervened from 1827 to 1829, the independent Kingdom of Greece was created.³ The Romanian principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia had the autonomous status in respect of the Ottoman Empire, but they saw, in the same period, an anti-Ottoman movement, led by Tudor Vladimirescu.⁴

Nation-building was one of the key questions in the Balkans in the 19th century.⁵ The Slavs differed from the Greeks, Albanians and the Roman population in regard to many characteristics, but there were also differences among the Slavs themselves, despite the indisputable closeness. From the mid-19th century, the Serbs and Croats shared the same basis of the literary language, but had different alphabets and faiths – the former were Orthodox and the latter Catholics. The majority of Muslims were of Serbian origin and spoke the Serbian language, but differed in regard to religion. In addition, Muslims were faithful to the Ottoman state idea.⁶ The Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks and Romanians, and the peoples who were small in numbers such as the Cincars, Vlachs, Karakachans, Kucovlachs and Aromanians, belonged to Orthodox Christianity within the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In addition, the Serbs and Bulgarians shared the joint Slavic origin, geographical closeness and strong mutual links, and the same status in the Ottoman Empire, which differentiated them from other majority-Orthodox peoples, primarily the Greeks and Romanians.⁷ Although one their part in Erdely was of Greek-Catholic faith, the Romanians managed to achieve national unity based on the Latinised language.⁸ In 1859, the personal union of the two Romanian principalities – Wallachia and Moldavia was created.⁹ The second half of the 19th

² В. Ђоровић, *Историја Срба*, Београд 1995, 527–576; Р. Љушић, *Кнежевина Србија (1830–1839)*, Београд 1986, 1–40.

³ В. Поповић, *Источно питање*, Београд 2007, 92–106, 107–114. After gaining state independence, in 1833 the Kingdom of Greece established the Greek Church, but the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognised its autocephaly only in 1850. Р. Клог, *Историја Грчке новог доба*, Београд 2000, 52.

⁴ Ч. Попов, *Грађанска Европа (1770–1871)*, књ. II, Нови Сад 1989, 36–37.

⁵ М. Тодорова, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York 1997, 128.

⁶ In his work *Дуго кретање између клања и орања* [The Long Movement Between Slaughter and Plowing], Milorad Ekmečić states that religious affiliation was “the watershed of the nation” in the Balkans in the 19th century. М. Екмечић, *Дуго кретање између клања и орања: Историја Срба у Новом веку 1492–1992*, Београд 2007, 194, 202. Kemal Karpat also concluded that religious affiliation was the cornerstone of the establishment of national states in the Balkans, in contrast to Western and Central Europe. К. Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History: Selected Articles and Essays*, Leiden 2002, 615.

⁷ Р. Детрез, *Не търсят гърци, а ромеи да бъдат: Православната културна общност в Османската империя. XV–XIX в.*, София 2015, 150–170.

⁸ О. Печикан, *Историја Румуна*, Београд 2015, 416.

⁹ *Ibidem*, 438.

century saw the national revival of the Albanians, who differed among each other in terms of religious affiliation. The Albanians were Sunni Muslims, the Bektashi, Orthodox and Roman Catholics. The uniformisation of different Albanian dialects into a single language was the step towards overcoming the differences.¹⁰ The Muslims who were members of other Balkan peoples were faithful to the Ottoman state idea and until the Congress of Berlin in 1878 they did not participate in national movements of their Christian compatriots.

In his work “Стварање Југославије 1790–1918” (“Creation of Yugoslavia 1790–1918”), Milorad Ekmečić emphasised the importance of religion in the formation of modern nations of the South Slavs. He also emphasised the difference between the formation of South Slavic nations and the formation of Central European and Western European nations, among which the most important factor was belonging to a particular population of the speakers of a single language, while respecting the existence of state borders.¹¹ As nation-building among the South Slavs was largely under the influence of religion, Ekmečić’s conclusion that “religion was the watershed of the nation” is true.¹²

Until the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans, in the majority of cases, Balkan peoples had their own states, along with a single, universal Byzantine Empire. With the exception of the Roman Catholics, they shared the same Orthodox faith. In the medieval period of statehood, the Serbs and Bulgarians also achieved their church autocephaly. The cultural influence of Byzantium and the Greek language was indisputable, though the South Slavs had their own literacy from the 9th century.¹³

Upon the Ottoman conquest, Balkan peoples found themselves in an empire which was founded on Sharia law, which did not recognise ethnic, but only religious affiliation. Until the early 19th century, this affiliation was reflected in *tayife*, groups of subjects of the same faith gathered at local levels. Later, the institution of the *millet* was officially established – a community of persons of the same faith at the state level, represented before the authorities by the supreme religious authority.¹⁴ All Orthodox subjects, regardless of their ethnicity, constituted a single, Rum Millet,

¹⁰ Т. Толева, *Утицај Аустроугарске империје на стварање албанске нације 1896–1908*, Београд 2016, 307–346.

¹¹ М. Екмечић, *Стварање Југославије*, књ. I, Београд 1988, 12–17.

¹² *Ibidem*, 15. There are exceptions from this rule, such as the Serbs Catholics in Dalmatia in the 19th century, or some Bosnian Muslims who had a fluid national identity. See more in: Л. Бакотић, *Срби у Далмацији, од пада Млетачке републике до уједињења*, Београд 1939; Ј. Хаџи Васиљевић, *Муслимани наше крви у Јужној Србији*, Београд 1924.

¹³ About the Byzantine influence on the Balkan Slavs and the Russians see more in: Д. Оболенски, *Византијски комонвелт*, Београд 1996; Дž. Bilington, *Ikona i sekira: istorija ruske kulture, jedno tumačenje*, Beograd 1988.

¹⁴ F. Öztürk, *The Ottoman Millet System*, Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi 16 (Istanbul 2009) 71–96, 72, 74; M. O. H. Ursinus, *Millet*, Extract, from the Encyclopaedia of Islam, CD ROM, edition v. 1.0, 1; *Millet*, in: Encyclopædia Britannica (electronic issue), <https://www.britannica.com/topic/millet-religious-group>. Accessed on: 04/02/2020.

headed by the Ecumenical Patriarch. Local churches were not observed separately.¹⁵ The Greek influence on other peoples in the Ottoman Empire was dominant. Many Bulgarians, Serbs, Romanians, Vlachs and members of other peoples were educated in Greek schools.¹⁶ This influence was also strong among the Orthodox Serbs outside the Ottoman Empire. The Serbs in the Habsburg Monarchy also attended Greek schools.¹⁷ After the abolishment of autocephaly of the Patriarchate of Peć and the Archbishopric of Ohrid, all Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans came under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.¹⁸ In the metropolitanates with Slavic areas, the Ecumenical Patriarchate was placing metropolitans of different origin, but the majority of them were Greeks.¹⁹ The influence of the Greeks in the Ecumenical Patriarchate was prevalent. The Rum Millet was increasingly called the “Greek Millet” in the documents of 19th-century Ottoman offices, although the Greeks were only one its part.²⁰

The opening of the Bulgarian church question was under a strong sway of the acceptance of national identity among Ottoman Slavic subjects of Orthodox faith. At the very start, this led to a clear difference between the Bulgarians and other Slavs in the Ottoman Empire on the one, and the Greeks on the other side. According to Raymond Detrez, this eliminated any possibility of creation of a “Roman protonation”. Namely, linguistic similarities between the Orthodox Greeks, Bulgarians and Romanians were much smaller than differences between them.²¹ The exception were the communities encompassing persons of Bulgarian origin and Greek literary language and culture, such as the Gudilas of Plovdiv²² or the Karakachans who spoke

¹⁵ V. Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization, and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict*, Greenwood Press, 2001, 230.

¹⁶ Ι. Σ. Κολιόπουλος, *Η Μακεδονία στο επίκεντρο των εθνικών ανταγωνισμών (1870–1897)*, Η Νεότερη Και Σύγχρονη Μακεδονία Ι, Α τόμος, Θεσσαλονίκη 1990, 490. The Greek influence on the Romanians was particularly pronounced from the early 18th century when the Porte began to appoint the Greeks as princes of Wallachia and Moldavia for a mandate. O. Печикан, *op. cit.*, Београд 2015, 365–366.

¹⁷ J. H. Радосављевић, *Грчки културни утицај на Србе крајем 18. и почетком 19. века*, Српске студије 9 (Београд 2018) 38–49.

¹⁸ St. Runciman, *The Great Church in Captivity*, Cambridge 1968, 381–384.

¹⁹ The Skopje Metropolitanate is such an example as metropolitans of Greek origin were usually appointed despite the majority Slavic population. J. Хаџи Васиљевић, *Скопље и његова околина*, Београд 1930, 491, 531.

²⁰ Хр. Арнаутов, *Пълно събрание на държавните закони, уставы, наставления и високи заповеди на Османската империя*, преведени от турски 1, Цариград 1871, 17–30; V. Roudometof, *From Rum Millet to Greek Nation: Enlightenment, Secularization, and National Identity in Ottoman Balkan Society, 1453–1821*, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 16 (Baltimore 1998) 11–48, 19.

²¹ P. Детрез, *Не търсят гърци, а ромеи да бъдат: Православната културна общност в Османската империя. XV–XIX в.*, София 2015, 36–39.

²² R. Detrez, *Relations Between Greeks and Bulgarians in the Pre-Nationalist Era: The Gudilas in Plovdiv*, in: *Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters Since Enlightenment*, New York 2017, 30–46, 35.

Greek dialects, but lived in mountainous areas with the majority Slavic population.²³ The emergence of the Bulgarian church question showed that the division between the Bulgarians and Greeks was clear. The language – the main factor of division, served as the confirmation of ethnicity of the population of a particular area. One of the motives for opening the Bulgarian church question was also of linguistic nature – the faithful in the areas of a mixed ethnic composition did not understand Greek as the liturgical language.²⁴

In regard to the Bulgarians and Serbs, the circumstances were much different. The two most numerous South Slavic peoples were often equated. Foreign travel writers often mixed them, using their names as synonymous.²⁵ The closeness of the two peoples is also seen in the example of migration movements towards the Pannonian Basin in the late 17th and during the 18th century. The Orthodox Bulgarians quickly assimilated with the local Serbs, while, on the contrary, the Roman Catholic Bulgarians integrated into the Hungarian people with much more difficulty. This process has never fully ended.²⁶

The Serbs, Bulgarians and Greeks did not undergo the same process of national revival. In addition to the cultural component, the Serbs and Greeks also led an armed and diplomatic struggle, which led to the creation of their modern states.²⁷ The

²³ Р. Детрез, *Не търсят гърци, а ромеи да бъдат: Православната културна общност в Османската империя. XV–XIX в.*, 148–166; The prevailing attitude in the Greek scientific literature is that the Karachachans are of Greek origin, speaking the Greek language with a specific pronunciation. Г. М., *Σαρακατσάνοι: η εθνική και η θρησκευτική τους συνείδηση*, Θεσσαλονίκη 2013 (postgraduate thesis at the Theological Faculty in Thessaloniki).

²⁴ The Ecumenical Patriarchate often strove to send to the metropolitanates inhabited with the Slavs metropolitans with the knowledge of the Slavic language. Such was metropolitan Joachim in Skopje, who was well-versed in the Slavic liturgical language. The Slavic language was also studied at the patriarchal seminary in Halki, where lecturers were of Slavic origin. However, their knowledge was probably insufficient for them to fluently talk with the faithful who spoke the local dialects. On the other hand, even when the metropolitan was a Greek, it was not always possible to insist on holding a liturgy in Greek as the local clergy did not always speak Greek. Е. Давидова, *Неофит Рилски*, in: *Кой кой е сред българите XV–XIX в.*, София 2000, 188–189; С. Вуковић, *Српски јерарси од деветог до двадесетог века*, Београд–Подгорица–Крагујевац 1996, 229.

²⁵ Д. Пантелић, *Војно-географски описи Србије пред Кочину крајину 1783. и 1784. године*, Споменик СКА LXXXII (1936) 7–56. Ж. А. Бланки, *Пътуване през България на 1841. година*, София 2005, 99–100. Ф. Каниц, *Дунайская Болгария и Балканский полуостров: Историческая, географическая и этнографическая путевые наблюдения*, Санкт Петербург 1876, 51–54.

²⁶ After the failed uprising against the Ottoman rule in 1688, some Bulgarian Catholics from the environs of Čiprovci (Pavličani) emigrated to Banat. This process unfolded in parallel with the migrations of the Serbs to Hungary. П. Пейковска, *Етнодемографска характеристика на банатските българи в Унгария през втората половина на XIX и в началото на XX век*, in: *Личност, народ, история, националноосвободителните борби през периода XV–XIX в.*, София 2014, 88–103, 88–89.

²⁷ See notes 3 and 4.

Bulgarian national revival was based on the educational and church activity.²⁸ Given the proximity of Constantinople, many Muslim populations in Bulgarian countries and their strategic importance, the possibility of an armed struggle for liberation was hard to achieve. That is why the struggle for church autonomy in Bulgaria was of primary importance. The support of Russian diplomacy to the Bulgarian objectives, personified in the activity of Count Ignatyev, a Russian envoy in Constantinople, was very important in this process.²⁹ The Ecumenical Patriarchate opposed the creation of the new church within the country that it was active in – the Ottoman Empire, and in regard to this issue, it sought support and understanding of autocephalous and autonomous churches. On the other hand, the Bulgarian circles maintained that the Ecumenical Patriarchate did not respect their religious rights, such as the use of the Church Slavonic language in liturgical practice and the appointment of a sufficient number of metropolitans of Bulgarian nationality.³⁰ After failed negotiations between the two parties, the Porte got involved in their dispute. The Ferman of 28 February 1870 declared the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate, an autonomous church that was to remain within the Ecumenical Patriarchate.³¹ According to Ilia Todev, the creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate was “the start of Bulgarian statehood” as the Exarchate had some features characterising the state: territory, people and, to an extent, spiritual and educational authority. Some later border solutions suggest that this attitude was justified as the borders of the Principality of Bulgaria established by the Russo-Ottoman Treaty of San Stefano and the Bulgarian Exarchate partly overlapped.³² Under Article 10 of the Ferman on the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate, it was possible for more than two thirds of the faithful, who opted for it, to join the eparchies not initially included in its composition.³³ The Greeks, Vlachs and Slavs faithful to traditions of the Peć and Ohrid Patriarchate lived in these eparchies.

²⁸ О. Тодорова, *Пайсий Хилендарски, Кой кой е сред Българите XV–XIX в.*, София 2000, 200–201. Паисий Хилендарски, *История славянобългарска*: предадена на новобългарски език от П. Динев, София 2003.

²⁹ Th. A. Meininger, *Ignatiev and the establishment of the Bulgarian exarchate 1864 / 1872, a study in personal diplomacy*, Madison 1970, 109–120.

³⁰ D. Stamatopoulos, *The Bulgarian Schism Revisited*, *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 24/25 (Minnesota 2008/2009) 105–125, 106–107.

³¹ З. Маркова, *Българската екзархия 1870–1879*, София 1989, 27–30; П. Ников, *Възраждане на българския народ: църковни и национални постижения*, София 1929, 308–310; М. Γεδεών, *Εγγραφα Πατριαρχικά Περί Του Βουλγαρικού Ζητήματος (1852-1873)*, Κωνσταντινούπολη 1908, 243.

³² И. Тодев, *Екзархията: фактическо начало на модерната българска държавност?*, in: *Държава и църква: Църква и държава*, София 2006, 235–241; Idem, *Българско национално движение в Тракия 1800–1878*, София 1994, 20; С. Рајић, *Спољна политика Србије: између очекивања и реалности 1876–1878*, Београд 2015, 532.

³³ Хр. Темелски, *Църковно-народният събор 1871. г.*, Архивите говорят 15 (София 2001) 39–40; Ι. Σ. Κολιόπουλος, *Η Μακεδονία στο επίκεντρο των εθνικών ανταγωνισμών (1870–1897)*: Η Νεότερη Και Σύγχρονη Μακεδονία Ι, Α τομος, Θεσσαλονίκη 1990, 492.

The authors dealing with the Bulgarian church issue emphasised the intention of the Porte, with the above Ferman, to prevent a potential joint work on the liberation of Balkan peoples, by the principle *divide et impera*, and to create a permanent conflict between the Greeks and Bulgarians.³⁴ This idea was successfully realised. The publication of the Ferman marked the struggle for the patriarchal, i.e. Bulgarian exarchian influence not only in the so-called *mixed* eparchies, but even in those which became part of the Bulgarian Exarchate. The population of these areas, often illiterate in large numbers, was found in the situation to declare whether they belonged to the Patriarchate or the Bulgarian Exarchate. The rift became particularly prominent when the Patriarchate, at the Local Council in Constantinople in 1872, proclaimed that the new church was schismatic, and this decision was valid until 1945.³⁵ The Greek population, traditionally devoted to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, did not accept the spiritual authority of the Bulgarian Exarchate in mixed eparchies. In many villages and towns, there were parallel patriarchal and exarchian church structures.³⁶ The creation of the Bulgarian Exarchate influenced the relations between the Bulgarians and Romanians. The large Vlach population, in whose interests Romania was interested, lived in the territories in Macedonia to which the Bulgarian Exarchate aspired. Although they did not have aspirations to annex these territories to their state in the near future, Romanian statesmen followed with great interest the expansion of the territory of the Bulgarian Exarchate, trying to protect the rights of the people to use the Vlach language in education and church activities, although they were already largely used to the use of the Greek language as liturgical.³⁷

The Ferman on the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate created a problem between the Bulgarians and Serbs, and their closeness was turned into the reason for their later conflict. The territories included by the Ferman into the Bulgarian Exarchate were also the Metropolitanates of Niš and Nišava, which were under a strong influence of the Principality of Serbia and in which a significant number of the faithful cherished the Serbian national feeling. This particularly concerns the Niš Metropolitanate, where the traditions of the Patriarchate of Peć to which it used to belong were still alive.³⁸ The formation of national awareness among the Slavic population in the Ottoman Empire exclusively on the linguistic or religious principle

³⁴ З. Маркова, *op. cit.*, 30. З. Първанова, *Православие, етнонационализъм и османизъм: Гърцката патриаршия, Българската екзархия и младотурският режим (1908–1912)*, in: История, религия и политика, сборник със студии и статии, София 2016, 83–84.

³⁵ А. Трајановски, *Политиката на бугарската екзархија во Македонија (1870–1893)*, Списание на Сојузот на друштвото на историчаритена СР Македонија, год. 16, бр. 2 (Скопје 1980) 49–63, 49; М. Γεδεών, *Έγγραφα Πατριαρχικά Περί Του Βουλγαρικού Ζητήματος (1852–1873)*, 427.

³⁶ That was the case with the Ohrid and Skopje Metropolitanate. М. Георгиева, *Доротеј Софийски*, in: Кой кой е сред българите XV–XIX в., София 2000, 88–89. З. Маркова, *op. cit.*, 94.

³⁷ И. Барбулеску, *Румуни према Србима и Бугарима, нарочито с погледом на питање македонских Румуна*, Београд 1908, 57–73.

³⁸ Хр. Темелски, *Црковно-народният събор 1871. г.*, Архивите говорят 15 (София 2001) 40.

was not possible, since the areas where they lived covered a large zone of transitional dialects, while their religion was the same. The exception were Bosnia and Herzegovina and a part of Old Serbia, where the belonging to the Serbian nation was unquestionable. The joint history, culture, tradition, literacy, the same liturgical and very similar spoken language, are only some of the elements making the Bulgarians and Serbs close. The separation between the Bulgarians and Greeks was quickly carried out. This was made possible because of the different origin and language, and disputes within the Ecumenical Patriarchate. However, in regard to the Bulgarians and Serbs, this process was complex and not always voluntary.

At the time when the struggle of the Bulgarians for church autonomy began, their degree of achieved freedoms was much more modest than those enjoyed by a significant part of the Serbian people. In the specified chronological framework, there was the autonomous Principality of Serbia, the state with full internal self-governance, and the autonomous Orthodox Church in it. On the other hand, the Bulgarian Exarchate was created. The Slavs, Serbs and Bulgarians lived predominantly in the Principality of Serbia and within the new Church – the Bulgarian Exarchate. Linguistic differences existed between them, but were not large. This is also confirmed by the fact that even in the modern times, after the orthographic reforms of both languages, the Serbs and Bulgarians can easily understand each other. In the period observed, the transitional dialectical area between the Serbs and Bulgarians was very wide.³⁹ In such areas, the awareness of the population about their nationality was fluid.

Two national propagandas, Serbian and Bulgarian, acted by different means. As a vassal state, the Principality of Serbia could not create a network of consulates in the Ottoman Empire, and often lacked reliable and privileged information, while under the Tomos of 1831 the Orthodox Church in it was also limited by its state borders. The only possibility that remained was the educational mission, which involved the sending of teachers and books, and aid to schools and some churches.⁴⁰ The Bulgarian national propaganda had more possibilities. The Bulgarian Exarchate was in the Ottoman Empire, and the authorities considered its activity legal. As the educational activity was also under the jurisdiction of the millet, it also acted at the church and educational level.

³⁹ According to Jovan Cvijić, the area between the Timok and Iskar rivers was a transitional area between the Serbs and Bulgarians, inhabited by the local Torlak population, whose national awareness was more closely defined only at the Congress of Berlin, with the demarcation between the Principality of Serbia and the Principality of Bulgaria. To illustrate this, he mentions the St Patron's Day (*krsna slava*) which, after the demarcation, disappeared in the areas belonging to the Principality of Bulgaria. J. Цвијић, *Балканско полуострво*, Београд 2000, 437–438.

⁴⁰ V. Vojvodić, *Školovanje nacionalnih radnika za rad van Srbije 1873–1877: zavod u Beogradu za školovanje pitomaca iz susednih oblasti Turskog carstva i Crne Gore (1873–1877)*, Beograd 1963, 24–58; M. Јагодић, *Помоћ Кнежевине Србије црквама, манастирима и школама изван Србије (1839–1868)*, Српске студије 9 (Београд 2018) 50–101.

To explain the influence of the Principality of Serbia and its institutions on the one hand, and the Bulgarian Exarchate on the other hand, on the national affiliation of Ottoman Slavic subjects, we have taken as an example three eparchies with a dominant Slavic majority of the faithful. Those are the metropolitanates of Niš, Nišava and Skopje. The vicar bishop of Vranje was active in the Skopje Metropolitanate. The Principality of Serbia did not show any major interest in the areas south of the Skopje Metropolitanate and the areas to the east from its state borders. The Metropolitanates of Kyustendil and Samokovo prove this. Until 1766, they were a part of the Patriarchate of Peć and maintained its tradition, though the Bulgarian identity of the population of these areas was indubitable.⁴¹

The Metropolitanates of Niš and Nišava were initially included in the Bulgarian Exarchate, while the others, including the Skopje Metropolitanate, could achieve that with the declaration of two thirds of the faithful. They also cherished different traditions. The Metropolitanates of Niš and Skopje were part of the extinguished Patriarchate of Peć. In contrast, the Metropolitanate of Nišava did not exist until 1761. That year, it was removed from the Sofia Metropolitanate and became a separate eparchy.⁴² The Metropolitanate of Niš, just like the Sofia Metropolitanate, cherished the tradition of the medieval Bulgarian Tarnovo Patriarchate. The issue of ethnic affiliation of the population of the border areas between the Bulgarian Exarchate and the Principality of Serbia became even more topical after the end of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878. Under the San Stefano Treaty concluded between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the major part of the territory was to belong to the future Bulgarian state. However, several more months passed until the final resolution of borders. The decisions of the Congress of Berlin defined the borders between the Principality of Serbia, Principality of Bulgaria and Ottoman Empire.⁴³

The city of Niš and the environs had the population with an awareness about belonging to the Serbian nation. Educated teachers and priests, who consolidated the Serbian national idea, were coming from Serbia to the Niš Metropolitanate or were returning to it.⁴⁴ This was the area of strategic interest for Serbia.⁴⁵ The Bulgarian propaganda in the Niš Metropolitanate did not have great strength, and was hindered even from the inside. Niš Metropolitan Viktor Čolakov, a Bulgarian who for a long time administered the Hilandar metochion in Niš, quickly shaped the position which enabled him to be always along with the faithful. The Bulgarian schism of 1872 was unacceptable for him as a monk of Hilandar, and he remained passive in terms of

⁴¹ Pursuant to the Ferman, these two metropolitanates became part of the Bulgarian Exarchate, which did not change in the future. Хр. Темелски, *op. cit.*, 39–40.

⁴² Д. Анастасијевић, *Кроз једну збирку новијих аката Цариградске патријаршије о њеним епархијама*, Богословље VIII, 2 (Београд 1933) 111–114.

⁴³ *Ослобођење Ниша од Турака 1877. године*, прир. В. Петровић, Ниш 1997, 235.

⁴⁴ V. Војводић, *op. cit.*, 26–27.

⁴⁵ В. Стојанчевић, *Србија и Бугарска од Санстефанског мира до Берлинског конгреса*, Београд 1986, 32–33.

activities in the bodies of the Bulgarian Exarchate. However, he personally intervened in the exarchian Holy Synod in regard to the use of the language in schools and the church administration, which is why this body declared that it did not oppose the use of different “dialects” in the church.⁴⁶ The Synod did not manage to limit his direct communication with the Metropolitan of Serbia Mihailo Jovanović, unsuccessfully trying to make sure that it went through the Bulgarian Exarchate and the Serbian diplomatic agent in Constantinople. The deposition of Metropolitan Viktor Čolakov was not considered as his reputation in the eparchy was strong. If that had been done, the faithful would have joined again the Ecumenical Patriarchate.⁴⁷ With the liberation of Niš in 1878, the Niš Metropolitanate became part of the Orthodox Church in the Principality of Serbia, and the Bulgarian national propaganda no longer existed in serious form.⁴⁸ Even from the entry of the Serbian army in Niš in January 1878, it was clear that the population greeted it as the liberation army and that they were in favour of being ceded to the Principality of Serbia.⁴⁹ The exarchian metropolitan Viktor Čolakov immediately established communication with the temporary Serbian authorities in Niš. As the Congress of Berlin decided that Niš with the environs should belong to the Principality of Serbia, he was accepted into the structure of the Orthodox Church in the Principality of Serbia, where it continued to work.⁵⁰

The Metropolitanate of Nišava was in a different situation. Geographically close to Sofia, it had a significant concentration of the population with the Bulgarian national feeling, and the activity of the Bulgarian Exarchate quickly took root. The economic and educational links with Serbia existed, as did the Serbian influence, but was not as strong as Bulgarian. The Bulgarian Exarchate was sending to Pirot well educated metropolitans (Parteniy Zografski, Evstatiy Pelagoniski).⁵¹ Evstatiy Pelagoniski had a strong Bulgarian identity. Influential social strata also supported the Bulgarian Exarchate.⁵² The educational activity of Serbia was hindered with the

⁴⁶ N. Radosavlevich, *Viktor Tcholakov. Taxidiote de Hilendar et métropolitane de Nich*, Bulgarian Historical Review XXXVII, 1–2 (Sofia 2009) 127–142; Цариград, 6. фебруара 1873, *Свети синод митрополиту нишком Виктору Чолакову*, ЦИАИ София, Протокол на екзархиските писма, фонд 1, оп. 1, а. е. 6, № 54, 16.

⁴⁷ Цариград, 16 јула 1873, *Свети синод митрополиту нишком Виктору Чолакову*, ЦИАИ София, Протокол на екзархиските писма, фонд 1, оп. 1, а. е. 6, № 203, 75–76.

⁴⁸ Ђ. Слијепчевић, *Михаило, архиепископ београдски и митрополит Србије*, Минхен 1980, 580.

⁴⁹ Д. Ж. Миретић, *Војна историја Ниша*, Ниш 1994, 167.

⁵⁰ Ђ. Слијепчевић, *op. cit.*, 580, 594.

⁵¹ N. Radosavljevich, *Partenius of Zograf, Metropolitan of Nishava (of Pirot), Supplement to a Biography*, Bulgarian Historical Review XXXIX, 3–4 (2010) 45; Н. Генчев и др., *Евстатий Зографски Пелагониски / светско име Георги Димитракиев*, in: Българската възрожденска интелигенция, София 1988, 233–234; Р. Б. Буганов, *Ефстатий*, in: Православная Энциклопедия, Том 17, Москва 2008, 307–308; З. Маркова, *op. cit.*, 90.

⁵² Ј. Н. Радосављевић, *Митрополит Евстатие и успостављање српске црквене управе у Нишавској митрополији 1878*, 249.

claims that it was the Serbian propaganda directed against the Bulgarians, which was discussed by the Holy Synod and the Mixed Council of the Bulgarian Exarchate.⁵³ Unlike the Metropolitanate of Niš, the measures undertaken by these bodies in the Nišava Metropolitanate were successful. After the entry of the Serbian army in Pirot, the faithful soon got divided into the Bulgarians and those supporting the annexation to Serbia. The temporary Serbian church administration did not manage to impose strict discipline. The names of Prince Milan and Metropolitan Mihailo were not always mentioned in services, and the two opposing parties wrote letters both to the Serbian Prince and the Russian Emperor, with the requests that Pirot should belong to Serbia, i.e. Bulgaria.⁵⁴ The exarchian Metropolitan of Niš Evstatiy took part in it – he supported the Bulgarian propaganda and communicated with the Russian military authorities in Sofia.⁵⁵ He also tried to eradicate the celebration of St Patron's Day, which was a Serbian custom. To that end, he ordered priests to charge more the consecration of the special bread made for St Patron's Day, so that the faithful would give up on it.⁵⁶ The thin ethnic difference among the faithful in the Nišava Metropolitanate is also attested by the fact that the Metropolitan himself often stated that the language spoken by people in villages could not be called either Serbian or Bulgarian.⁵⁷ He had problematic relations with the new temporary Serbian administration, and due to his Bulgarian activity he was interned in Kruševac for a shorter time before conclusion of the Treaty of San Stefano.⁵⁸ After a larger part of the Nišava Metropolitanate was ceded to the Principality of Serbia after the Congress of Berlin, he was offered to get involved in the structure of the Orthodox Church in the Principality. However, he decided to leave Pirot and continued his activity in the Principality of Bulgaria.⁵⁹ After the departure of Metropolitan Evstatiy Pelagoniski to Sofia in 1878, the Nišava Metropolitanate was abolished and was no longer restored. A part of the population of Pirot then moved to the Principality of Bulgaria.

Two national ideas, Serbian and Bulgarian, existed in parallel in the Skopje Metropolitanate, without major conflicts until the end of the 1860s. A focus was placed on cooperation to prevent the Hellenisation of the Slavic population. The fact that a very small number of households related to the Ecumenical Patriarchate remained in the Skopje Metropolitanate after the faithful stated they would join the

⁵³ 135. Засъданіе на Святий Синодъ, 1873, 8. декемврий, ЦИАИ София, Св. кодикъ на синодалнитъ дѣяния на Бълг. екзархия, Фонд 2, оп. 1, а. е. 2, 318.

⁵⁴ J. H. Радосављевић, *op. cit.*, 257.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, 256.

⁵⁶ J. H. Радосављевић, *Нишавска митрополија од ослобођења од османске власти до Берлинског конгреса*, 112.

⁵⁷ J. H. Радосављевић, *Митрополит Евстатије и успостављање српске црквене управе у Нишавској митрополији 1878*, 256.

⁵⁸ J. H. Радосављевић, *Нишавска митрополија од ослобођења од османске власти до Берлинског конгреса*, 112.

⁵⁹ J. H. Радосављевић, *Митрополит Евстатије и успостављање српске црквене управе у Нишавској митрополији 1878*, 263.

Exarchate 1873, while only later, when the Serbian and Bulgarian national propaganda efforts were strictly opposed, this number rose to a third – indicates that both currents, Serbian and Bulgarian, at the beginning saw the Bulgarian Exarchate as their own, national Slavic church.⁶⁰ The non-existence of a strict division between the two currents also suggests that some of their leaders were switching from one side to the other.⁶¹ The situation gradually changed in the seventies as the public on both sides showed reservations in terms of further cooperation. In regard to the creation of national identity in Macedonia, the question of the name of the language was also sensitive. A change in this regard was gradual. In the Bulgarian archival records and press articles from this period it is possible to see a gradual change in the term they used to denote the language used in the territories of the Bulgarian Exarchate, including mixed eparchies. The “native tongue” was first mentioned, followed by the “mother tongue” and, finally, a language with a particular national name. Due to different influences, it was even called differently (Bulgarian, Serbian-Macedonian, Bulgarian-Macedonian, Bulgarian-Serbian).

The situation in Vranje was particularly delicate. The Serbian influence was strong there, as well as the Bulgarian endeavours to suppress it. The extreme example was the burning of Serbian books and the map of the Principality of Serbia, which took place in this town in 1868.⁶² The so-called “Bulgarian party” and “Greek party” were also strong in Vranje.⁶³ The Slavic population (the Serbs, Bulgarians) was divided into the supporters of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate, and the divisions were so deep that neighbours and acquaintances with different affiliation did not even go to each other’s funerals.⁶⁴ The Bulgarian Exarchate did not manage to impose its full supremacy in ecclesiastical terms, and the liturgy was often served in Greek.⁶⁵ On the eve of the Congress of Berlin, the Slavic population of Vranje was interesting even to foreign consuls. The British consul, on his visit to Vranje, asked the gathered inhabitants what their ethnicity was. The majority of them answered

⁶⁰ P. Василев, *Църковно-народната борба в Скопската епархия*, in: 100 години от учредяването на Българската екзархия, София 1971, 267–269; Ст. Новаковић, *Епархијалници Рашко-призренске и Скопске епархије*, Балканска питања, Београд 1906, 527–537.

⁶¹ In Skorje, Kara Jovo, the leader of the exarchian faction, claimed that he “was a Serb”, but did not receive the requested help from the Principality of Serbia in the form of school and church books, and joined the Bulgarian Exarchate in order to prevent the Hellenisation of the local population. J. Хаџи Васиљевић, *Скопље и његова околина*, Београд 1930, 531.

⁶² *Македонија*, бр. 31 (29. јун 1868); Ст. Райчевски, *op. cit.*, док. 87, 113.

⁶³ Врање, 11. фебруара 1878, *Синђел Фирмилијан Митрополиту Михаилу*, АСПЦ, Конзисторија Митрополије београдске, Ф I–1878.

⁶⁴ Врање, 16. маја 1878, *Синђел Фирмилијан Митрополиту Михаилу*, АСПЦ, Конзисторија Митрополије београдске, Ф I–1878.

⁶⁵ Врање, фебруар 1878, *Синђел Фирмилијан митрополиту Михаилу*, АСПЦ, Конзисторија Митрополије београдске, Ф I–1878.

that they were the Serbs, but the Bulgarian current in the town was very strong.⁶⁶ In this area as well, the question of ethnic affiliation was resolved with the ceding of one its part to the modern Serbian state in 1878, while in the areas which remained in the Ottoman Empire, the Bulgarian Exarchate was more successful in its activity.⁶⁷

The opening and development of the Bulgarian church question brought about a more clear national self-determination of the Balkan Orthodox Christians. The division into the Greeks and Slavs was clear and was not hard to achieve. However, a number of questions opened between the Serbs and Bulgarians, which led to the clash of the two national ideas which used to be compatible in the past. This particularly came to the fore in the broad transitional dialectal zones between them. The two peoples that shared the same religion and had a similar spoken and literary language were separated by different church and state borders.

⁶⁶ Врање, 11. јуна 1878, *Синђел Фирмилијан митрополиту Михаилу*, АСПЦ, Конзисторија Митрополије београдске, Ф I–1878;

⁶⁷ В. Стојанчевић, *op. cit.*, 129.

Jelena Radosavljević

**L'AUTOCEFALIA DELLA CHIESA BULGARA E LA FORMAZIONE DELLE NAZIONI
NELLA PENISOLA DEI BALCANI 1870–1878.**

Riassunto

Durante il XIX secolo, i processi di rinascita nazionale ebbero luogo tra i popoli balcanici, i quali includevano delle attività culturali e letterarie, la standardizzazione delle lingue letterarie, ma anche la lotta armata contro il dominio ottomano. La rinascita nazionale bulgara portò alla formazione della propria chiesa, l'Esarcato bulgaro, nel 1870. L'avvio della questione dell'autocefalia della chiesa bulgara ebbe una grande influenza sulla formazione della coscienza nazionale dei cristiani ortodossi nell'Impero ottomano. Nella maggior parte dei casi, religioni o lingue diverse contribuivano a una differenziazione più rapida su basi etniche. Questo non fu il caso dei serbi e dei bulgari, poiché erano popoli slavi geograficamente ed etnicamente vicini, con lingue parlate simili. Le tre diocesi di Niš, di Nišava e di Skopje, sono esempi di quanto complesso fosse il processo di graduale orientamento nazionale in quelle aree nelle quali operavano, sia il Principato di Serbia che l'Esarcato bulgaro, con successi alterni. Dopo il Congresso di Berlino del 1878, i due popoli furono separati dai confini di stato, mentre la loro propaganda nazionale nelle aree slave rimaste nell'impero ottomano continuò a essere presente.

Parole chiave: Patriarcato ecumenico, Esarcato bulgaro, Principato di Serbia, Impero ottomano, Ortodossia, Slavi.

Јелена Радосављевић

**БУГАРСКО ЦРКВЕНО ПИТАЊЕ И ОБЛИКОВАЊЕ НАЦИЈА
НА БАЛКАНСКОМ ПОЛУОСТРВУ 1870–1878.**

Резиме

Током 19. века код балканских народа су се одвијали процеси националног препорода. Они су подразумевали културну и књижевну активност, стандардизацију књижевних језика, али и оружану борбу против османске власти. Бугарски национални препород резултирао је формирањем сопствене цркве, Бугарске егзархије, 1870. године. Покретање бугарског црквеног питања имало је велики утицај на формирање националне свести православних хришћана у Османском царству. У већини случајева различита вероисповест или различит језик доприносили су бржој диференцијацији по етничком основу. Код Срба и Бугара то није био случај, с обзиром да су у питању били географски и етнички блиски словенски народи, сличног говорног језика. Три епархије, Нишка, Нишавска и Скопска, су примери колико је био сложен процес постепеног националног опредељења у тим крајевима. У њима је са променљивим успехом деловала и Кнежевина Србија, али и Бугарска егзархија. По Берлинском конгресу 1878, два народа раздвојена су државним границама, док су њихове националне пропаганде у словенским областима које су остале у Османском царству наставиле да постоје.

Кључне речи: Васељенска патријаршија, Бугарска Егзархија, Кнежевина Србија, Османско царство, Православље, Словени.