

## **MACEDONIANS : CONSPICUOUS BY THEIR ABSENCE**

*Abstract:* The rich cultural and historical past of the Balkan nations is inspiring when one writes about the imperialistic strives of the Balkan states towards Macedonia and the Macedonians. The Balkan scientists' research contributed to the megalomaniac politics of the state of their origin. In such conditions, the two Balkan wars and the inexistence of Macedonians when it comes to the public were inevitable.

*Key words:* Macedonia, Macedonians, Alexander the Great, neighbouring Balkan states, propagators, Ottoman Empire

In the Balkans geography has often been smaller than history and it has not been uncommon for the name of a Balkan country to be larger than its territory. Since the dream of every emerging Balkan state had been the conquest of the Golden City, all of them had at one time or another laid claim to Macedonia and had kept emissaries there to win the favour of the population. This watch on the inheritance of the 'Sick Man of Europe' and hopes for the realisation of 'great national ideas' in the shape of Greater Albania, Greater Bulgaria, Greater Greece, Greater Romania and Greater Serbia, were essential elements in the transformation of Macedonia, from the second half of the nineteenth century on, into an arena of political and cultural contention between Balkan states which regarded it as their promised land. It was as if the hopeful sons were called in as physicians to the bedside of the sick man. If Macedonia were double its actual size, it would still not be big enough to accommodate the conflicting claims of its neighbouring states:

In fact, Macedonia is the *sentia gentium* of Europe, the barrier between East and West, civilisation and barbarism, education and ignorance; a very mosaic of peoples, creeds, and tongues; the most prosperous district of a decaying empire, and therefore the coveted of all. And thus it happens that the phrase 'Macedonian Question' has become a generic term for all the problems connected with Turkey in Europe. (Comyn-Platt 1906: 11)

### **A macédoine**

Macedonia owes its name to the ancient kingdom of Macedonia (or Macedon). In the fourth century BC it ruled Greece and conquered lands as far to the east as the Indus River, thus establishing a short-lived empire that introduced the Hellenistic Age. Although this kingdom seems to have been largely Greek-speaking, Thucydides wrote about Macedonians as half barbarians and Demosthenes described their king Philip as a barbarian. The relationship between Macedonians and Greeks was defined by a modern Greek historian as follows:

The root *mac-* is Greek and means *high* or *long*; consequently, *Macedonia* means highland and *Macedon* highlander... According to Hesiod, the father of the Macedonians was Macedon, who was a cousin of Helen's sons, Dorus, Xuthus (Ion's father) and Aeolus. Therefore, Macedon's descendants were cousins of the Dorians, the Ionians, and the Aeolians, the three main Greek tribes... Furthermore, according to Hellanicus, Macedon's father was Aeolus, which indicates a close connection between Macedonians and the Aeolians. (Cosmopoulos 1992: 13)

The invasion of the Balkans by Slavs in the sixth and seventh centuries AD substantially changed the ethnic composition of Macedonia. The area fell under the sway of the Ottoman Empire in the late

fourteenth century and was subsequently colonised by a significant number of Muslims (Slavs, Turks and Albanians). The last Muslims came to Macedonia after the Balkan states gained their independence in 1878 (Mantegazza 1903: 12). They were to be found in all parts of the country, especially in the larger towns and many of the villages in the plain, but they were on the whole outnumbered by Christians who usually inhabited mountainous and less fertile parts of the country (Miecznik 1904: 77).

In Western eyes, the Ottoman idea of government was always simply to take tribute and secure the paramount position of Muslims. Once these goals were achieved, they did not interfere with the ways and customs of their subjects, but treated them with a contemptuous toleration. Thus, according to Western authors, Ottoman rule contributed much to the survival of centuries-old traditions by perpetuating and preserving as if in ‘a vast ethnographic museum’ the different peoples who lived in south-eastern Europe during the last years of the Byzantine Empire (Eliot 1900: 17; Duckett Ferriman 1911: 80; Villari 1905: 121; Baker 1913: 259). No wonder that writers on Macedonia in the early twentieth century used the image of the well-known dessert, *a macédoine* to convey the impression its inhabitants made on them (Goff and Fawcett 1921: 6-7).

### **Sons of Alexander the Great**

Memories of the golden age, especially the time of Alexander the Great, survived the period of Ottoman occupation, for even the Turks had a high opinion of this conqueror (Baudier 1624: 31; Browne 1673: 45; Mahmut 1691: 137; Hill 1709: 69; Madden 1829: I, 74). The memory of Alexander’s valiant deeds was further revived in the nineteenth century when rival Balkan historians, combining their science with their nationalism, battled over classical and mediaeval history, each claiming the famous conqueror as the forefather of his own Balkan people. The Greeks invoked the famous Macedonian kings, proudly claiming that they were Macedonians, ‘children of Alexander the Great’ (Mantegazza 1903: 7; Buxton 1907: 45; Moore 1914: 265; Reed 1916: 14). The Bulgarian historians, no less patriotic, responded by including the kings of ancient Macedon in the list of the ‘Tsars of Bulgaria,’ who, having conquered the whole of Greece, extended the Bulgarian Empire as far as India (Abbott 1903: 278; Durham 1905: 6; Upward 1908: 28, 162). The Albanians, in their turn, agreed that Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander, like all the Macedonians, were not Greeks at all, for in their tradition Alexander’s mother Olympias was an Albanian woman. Therefore, it was the Albanians who were ‘the soldiers of Alexander the Great, who conquered the whole known world of his day’ (Tozer 1869: I, 214; Nušić 1902: 87; Slišković 1904: 86; Dako 1919: 17, 29; Lane 1922: 16; Matthews 1937: 5, 42). Some Serbian authors, too, claimed both Macedonian kings as predecessors of the Serbs (Popović 1879: 281). Lastly, but with no less enthusiasm, the Macedonians wanted the great conqueror for themselves, the ‘descendants of Alexander the Great’ (Kuba 1932: 213).

To prove their possession of ancient Macedon, Balkan nationalists sometimes tampered with history by installing or removing historical monuments that confirmed or refuted their thesis (see e.g. Jireček 1888: 307; Upward 1908: 162-63).

When the national consciousness of the Balkan peoples began to crystallise during the nineteenth century, the European powers found that drawing international frontiers along strategic or economic lines could not easily be reconciled with ethnic considerations. While Macedonia was under Turkish dominion its entire Slav population regarded itself and was regarded by the world as Bulgarian (see e.g. Walsh 1828: 168; Boué 1840: II, 5; Moore 1914: 181; Carnegie Endowment 1914: 26, 30; 1925: 12; Diplomatist 1915: 89). Then, following the Balkan Wars, the Balkan allies took Macedonia away from Turkey and divided it unequally among themselves, drawing arbitrary boundaries through its territory regardless of the ethnic identification of its people. Automatically, all those Slavs who came under Greek jurisdiction became ‘Bulgarophone Greeks,’ those under Serbian became ‘South Serbs’ and those under Bulgarian jurisdiction remained Bulgarians.

## Balkan geography and statistics

For decades, Macedonia was a political problem rather than a geographical entity. For convenience, at the beginning of the twentieth century Western authors made the boundaries of Macedonia coincide with three *vilayets* of the Ottoman Empire (Skopje, Bitola and Thessaloníki) (Mantegazza 1903: 2; Lynch 1908: 12-3). However, this satisfied neither the Greeks, nor the Bulgarians nor the Serbs. The majority of Greek authors preferred ‘historical Macedonia.’ This was the most restricted delimitation of Macedonia, including only the two southern *vilayets*. The Bulgarians favoured ‘geographical Macedonia,’ which left out certain districts in the west where the population was overwhelmingly Islamised and a corner in the south-west which was exclusively Hellene. The Serbs proclaimed that the Skopje region in the north-west was not part of Macedonia at all, but of Old Serbia (Miecznik 1904: 5; Upward 1908: 26; Zotiades 1954: 12).

Indeed, there was no consensus as to the exact borders of Macedonia, nor was this the only point of disagreement. The interested parties were at even greater variance over the size and ethnicity of the population, each exaggerating the number of its own members and diminishing the claims of the other nationalities. The glorious end justified every means. Thus, Turkish experts produced maps coloured red as far as Vienna and population censuses listing more Muslims in European Turkey than there were inhabitants (Moore 1906: 156). Balkan nationalists soon began to do the same thing and each nation concerned could supply a shoal of facts to prove its own claims and its rivals’ mendacity. They did not worry much about the accuracy of the figures, which they took with deadly seriousness, however. Thus the numbers given tell their own story, quite an amusing one for outside observers. The Serb Gopčević (1889: 501-3), the Bulgarian Kunčov (1900: 289) and the Greek Nicolaides (1903: 25-8) reported a total of, respectively, 2,880,420 and 2,258,224 and 1,825,482 inhabitants of Macedonia, comprising

	Gopčević	Kunčov	Nicolaides
Turks	231,400	499,204	620,491
Bulgarians	57,600	1,181,336	427,544
Serbs	2,048,320	700	9,831
Greeks	201,140	228,702	647,384
Albanians	165,620	128,711	NONE
Vlachs	74,465	80,267	18,769

Thus the Bulgarians, the Greeks and the Serbs drew up population statistics for Macedonia reflecting their authors’ patriotism more than reality to support their respective aspirations to expand their national territory. Each figure they gave was different and they only agree on one which was conspicuous by its absence: there were no Macedonians in Macedonia.

The Greek statistics were specially remarkable. In Macedonia the word ‘Greek’ had an ecclesiastical rather than ethnic connotation: allegiance to the Greek Patriarchate or the Bulgarian Exarchate was accepted as a criterion for Greek or Bulgarian ethnicity. Some Greek nationalists even claimed the Serbian communities of Macedonia as Greek because the Serbs had no autocephalous Church. The Greeks also claimed the Vlachian communities, the Orthodox Albanians and the Bulgarians who did not adhere to the Bulgarian Exarchate: these they called Albanophone, Bulgarophone or Vlachophone Greeks (Chirol 1881: 74; Mantegazza 1903: 232; Villari 1905: 138; Moore 1906: 156; Amfiteatrov 1912: 247; Baker 1913: 235-36; Reed 1916: 319; Buxton 1920: 146-47; Durham 1920: 93-4; Sís 1924: 151; Christowe 1935: 45-6; Matthews 1937: 215; Cosmopoulos 1992: 86-7).

In Ohrid during the summer of 1861 the secretary of the Constantinople Synod issued a pamphlet reviewing the history of the Bulgarians' relationship with the Greek Church and showing the groundlessness of their demands and grievances. The writer argued that the Bulgarians made up only a small part of the population of western Macedonia and that many of them were Bulgarian-speaking Greeks. He even asserted that the physical appearance and customs of the Bulgarians in those parts proved them to be of Greek, not Bulgarian, origin (Tozer 1869: I, 182). Even now Greek authors are adamant that at the beginning of the twentieth century Hellenism overwhelmingly prevailed in Macedonia and the Macedonians were Greek. They cite as their trump card the official Turkish statistics of 1905 compiled by Hilmi Pasha for the *vilayets* of Thessaloníki and Bitola, listing 678,910 'Greeks' (adherents of the Patriarchate) and 385,729 'Bulgarians' (adherents of the Exarchate). More specifically, in the *vilayet* Thessaloníki these were 395,222 'Greeks' to 207,073 'Bulgarians,' and in that of Bitola 283,683 'Greeks' to 178,412 'Bulgarians' (Vavouskos 1973: 9; Martis 1984: 109; Cosmopoulos 1992: 57). Even in 1973, the Institute for Balkan Studies in Thessaloníki issued a publication which states that, 'the Vlach-speakers are Greek, as are the other inhabitants of Macedonia, whatever their language.' The author cites a petition submitted to the French government in 1903 by the inhabitants of the Bitola region, stating that, 'We speak Greek, Vlach, Albanian, and Bulgarian, but nevertheless we are all Greeks, and we refuse to allow this to be questioned' (Vavouskos 1973: 22-3).

The Ottoman Empire only carried out censuses in relation to military service, counting Muslims liable to conscription and Christians who were liable not to conscription but to a special tax instead. In 1881 the Rumelian government issued detailed statistics giving Macedonia a total of 1,863,382 inhabitants, comprising 1,251,385 Slavs, 463,839 Muslims and only 57,480 Greeks (Laveleye 1887: 290). A Greek ethnographic map of Macedonia, however, showed many districts coloured blue (the Greek colour) although not a single Greek was to be found there. Dr Cléanthes Nicolaides even gave Kosovo the Greek name of *Kossyphopédon* (1903: 25).

Although even the most favourable statistics for the Greeks gave them only one-tenth of the population, Athens asserted that Greeks predominated in Macedonia. At the end of the nineteenth century, for instance, Professor Saripolos, a correspondent of the French Institute, quoted the following figures as reliable: 500,000 Greeks, 100,000 Slavs and 40,000 Jews. Some influential inhabitants of Thessaloníki sent an address to the Patriarch and the Ottoman government in the name of 800,000 'Greeks' living in the province, a figure produced from the returns given by the ecclesiastical authorities counting all members of the Greek Church as Greeks. According to this definition Bosnia would have more 'Greeks' than Catholics amongst its Christians (Laveleye 1887: 290-92).

Greek propagandists worked hard to influence the international community in the drafting of Greece's borders. They produced statistics to prove their claims to the lands inhabited by Slavs, supporting them with the theory of their 'ethnocratic pre-eminence.' According to this theory, the Greeks were nobler than the Macedonian Slavs who ought to submit them, being 'devoid of culture, barbarians, with incoherent speech, coarse, slave' (Misheff 1917: 31). As a person of rank from Athens put it in a letter to Baron Laveleye:

You are mistaken about the Bulgarians; they are barbarians, and such they will remain. They are of Tartar race, and consequently not readily civilized. Christianity itself is not enough to soften them. They have some good qualities, but they are those of beasts of burden, including the instinct to store like the animals. Whilst I am writing to you I have half a score of Bulgarian masons working at the house which I have given to my daughter Athené as dowry; they work well, but are stupid. (1887: 293)

A further argument was put forward by the Greek ambassador in London in 1885. He argued that as the land had formerly belonged to the Hellenes, its present occupation by Bulgarians did not justify its being assigned to them because the right of the Greeks was imprescriptible. A Belgian baron refuted this argument as follows:

It would therefore follow that New Holland, New Zealand, Tasmania, having been discovered by

the Dutch, ought to belong to Holland, because these countries have Dutch names. The English have colonized them, but that gives them no right of possession. It is difficult to discuss such theories, and distressing even to have to notice them. (Laveleye 1887: 293)

During the 1780s, Catherine the Great devised her ‘Greek project,’ intended to supplant the crescent on the dome of St Sophia with the cross and to restore Byzantine Empire with a Russian prince on the throne. Her second grandson was named Constantine to mark him for the role. In preparation, Greeks were brought to nurse him, so to suck in the Greek language with his milk (Habesci 1784: 289; Bisani 1793: 129; Hughes 1820: I, 442; Ross 1836: 273; Stuart-Glennie 1879: 189; Gossip 1878: II, 300; de Lusignan 1885: 10; Young 1926: 164-65; Edib 1930: 53; Wolff 1956: 71; cf. Mastnak 1998: 122). The plan fell through, but the ambition remained.

When nationalism spread from western Europe to the Balkans, the Greeks were the first to come under its influence and claim their freedom as a nation (Toynbee 1922: 17). The abolition of the Serbian Patriarchate in Peć and the Bulgarian Archbishopric in Ohrid in 1766 and 1767 respectively, left all of Macedonia under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. This meant the Greek liturgy was celebrated in churches and Greek education was given in schools. Thus the people of Macedonia were subjected to an unchallenged process of Hellenisation. They might have become completely Hellenised, had not the noble Greek prelates and teachers looked down on the poor and miserable peasants of Macedonia, speaking of them as ‘animals’ (Hamlin 1878: 268) or ‘wearers of sheep skins’ (Carnegie Endowment 1914: 22; 1925: 3) who spoke unintelligible Slavic dialects and were unworthy of their efforts to teach them to read and write: ‘it was humiliating for a lover of the muses to dwell in a barbarian world’ (Carnegie Endowment 1914: 22). As a consequence, they remained largely untouched by Greek culture (Stavrianos 2000: 518).

Neighbouring independent states also cast covetous eyes on Macedonia and tried to prove that part or all of it was theirs by natural rights. The Bulgarians claimed Macedonia as ‘the cradle of the Bulgarian nation for which a river of blood has been given.’ Bulgarian patriots maintained that when and how the Bulgarians reached Macedonia did not matter; all that mattered was that a majority of the population yearned for union with the mother country, that Macedonia ‘weeps like a child for its mother’ and would not be satisfied to live under any rule other than that of Bulgaria. The other Balkan states have of course never accepted or admitted Bulgaria’s claim to Macedonia (Bercovici 1932: 93-4; Zotiades 1954: 57). The Greeks considered Macedonia theirs for historical reasons although in the classical age the claim of Macedonians to enter the sacred circle of Hellas was received with some jealousy and the kings of Macedon were required to prove their Greek descent before being granted the privilege of competing in the Olympic Games. But Macedonia was indispensable to the realisation of ‘the great Hellenic idea.’ The Serbs, in their turn, had attempted to prove to the world that Macedonia should belong to Serbia alone on the grounds that it was the ancient centre of the empire of Tsar Dušan. Its own pretensions towards Macedonia, ‘on ethnographic grounds,’ had even Romania because of a number of Vlachs who lived in Macedonia. The Albanians used the same basis for a similar claim to the territory (Chirol 1881: 64, 168; Abbott 1903: 79; Mantegazza 1903: 265; Miecznik 1904: 4; Buxton 1907: 49; Le Queux 1907: 147; Lynch 1908: 34-5; Upward 1908: 179; Moore 1914: 171-72; Reed 1916: 305; Bercovici 1932: 90, 93).

After Austria-Hungary received the mandate to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878, it soon turned a jealous gaze on Macedonia and the port of Thessaloníki (Laveleye 1887: 290; Samuelson 1888: 218; Barlett 1897: 45; Barry 1906: 251; Comyn-Platt 1906: 51; Buxton 1907: 55; Townshend 1910: 321; Cosmopoulos 1992: 74).

In such circumstances it came as no surprise that the Macedonian question became a problem of international magnitude ‘that nobody could solve’ or that the land itself was destined ‘almost inevitably in future to become one of the great battlefields of Eastern Europe’ (Hulme-Beaman 1898: 137). A British author who travelled in Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Albania, Romania and Macedonia at the start of the twentieth century, and made a thorough investigation of the question, came to the conclusion that:

‘The Macedonian question is the burning question of to-day, and one that can only be solved in one way - by a fierce and bloody war’ (Le Queux 1907: 285).

### **The megale idea**

When Greece became free, its inhabitants considered the process of emancipation only half complete as they aspired to the annexation of a much larger portion of Turkish territory. Many of the ruling and political class dreamed of Greek reunion and repossession of Byzantium (Gordon 1832: I, 321; Senior 1859: 358-59, 364; Bremer 1863: II, 85, 285; Arnold 1868: I, 11-3; Stuart-Glennie 1879: 244; Kesnini bey 1888: 209; Samuelson 1888: 216; Horton 1896: 9; Edwards 1902: 248; Villari 1905: 137; Upward 1908: 26; Douglas 1919: 67; Ostrorog 1919: 178; Volonakis 1920: 50; Price 1923: 52; Armstrong 1925: 233). The king of Greece had the same title, *Basileus*, as the Byzantine emperor, and the first son of King George was christened Constantine to give a dramatic flourish to his recovery of the throne lost in 1453 (Temple 1836: I, 22; Arnold 1868: I, 119, 124; Dwight 1881: 243). This was the so-called *megale idea*, which meant the unification of all the ‘Greeks’ in one state. In consequence the Greek state adopted an aggressive policy, with the aim of ‘liberation’ of Macedonia, Epirus, Thrace and Crete, ‘the adored daughters of Greece’ who were ‘ever looking to the mother to free them from the Turkish yoke’ (Vaka 1913: 2-3).

Since propaganda did not bear the expected fruits, Greece from the south and, to a lesser extent Serbia from the north launched armed bands into Macedonia to ‘liberate the land of Alexander of Bulgarians,’ with the result that a proselytising war was carried on for national and political ascendancy. The Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians and Romanians all endeavoured to increase the number of their compatriots by means of churches and schools, financed largely by the respective governments. The schoolmasters vied with each other in offering inducements to attend their school, so much so that parents could sometimes not only have their children clothed and educated for nothing, but could also make an income out of them, for instead of paying for their schooling they received a fee. Occasionally, they even resorted to killing village leaders and forcing the local people to declare Greek or Serbian nationality. Greek priests were forced upon Bulgarian villages and Greek schools multiplied all over the country. When these territories were occupied by the Greek army during the Balkan Wars, they gave the unhappy people twenty-four hours to renounce their nationality and proclaim themselves Greek, although they did not understand the most common Greek words, such as *kalispera* (good evening). Bulgarian schools were closed and unless the teachers undertook to teach in Greek, they were exiled or imprisoned. Bulgarian priests given the choice of death or conversion to the Greek Church. The Greek army entered villages where no one spoke their language. ‘Don’t speak Bulgarian: we are in Greece,’ cried the officers, ‘and anyone who speaks Bulgarian shall be off to Bulgaria.’ Refusal to do so meant death or flight. ‘What a shame,’ cried the Greek gendarmes at Gorno Kufalovo on 25 March 1912. ‘We have freed you. The voice of Alexander the Great calls to you from the tomb; do you not hear it? You sleep on and go on calling yourself Bulgarians!’ (Chirol 1881: 79, 86; Buxton 1907: 49-50; Le Queux 1907: 294; Lynch 1908: 35; Amfiteatrov 1912: 254; Carnegie Endowment 1914: 56; 1925: 43; Reed 1916: 319; Buxton 1920: 146-47).

The ethnic structure of the inhabitants of Macedonia changed substantially after 1918: the number of Greeks increased while that of almost all the other nationalities decreased. During the wars and immediately after them many Slavs were killed or forced to flee. The same fate befell the Turks, the Albanians and to some extent the Kutsovachs. Some years later, the ethnic composition of the population of Greek Macedonia changed radically as a result of the settlement of about 800,000 refugees from Asia Minor and Russia after the Greek defeat in 1922, followed by the emigration in 1923/4 of 348,000 Muslims. The sole reminder of its Slavic past were the remaining Slavic toponyms.

### **Nationality and religion**

After the conquest of Byzantium in 1453 the Ottomans did not attempt to impose Turkish state institutions on their new subjects or to assimilate the Christian populations they had conquered. Though despised and humiliated, the *rayah* continued to enjoy a certain degree of autonomy. The rulers of the conquered peoples were replaced by representatives of their religious organisations. Sultan Mehmet II, conqueror of Byzantium, conferred upon the Patriarch of Constantinople the title of *milletbaşı* (chief of the nation) and allowed its Orthodox citizens to retain some of their churches and free exercise of their religion. Besides he entrusted to the patriarch the administration of the spiritual and secular needs of his flock. In this way, the clergy formed a body of functionaries invested with broad administrative and judicial powers. All cases involving marriage, divorce and inheritance were tried before an episcopal court and in matters of a civil nature Christians did not have to go to Ottoman tribunals. Every religious community was entrusted with the collection of taxes from its members and their payment into the state exchequer. The same prerogatives were also granted to the Bulgarian patriarchs of Turnovo and Ohrid, as representatives of the Bulgarian nation.

In the Ottoman Empire there was no visible dividing line between secular and religious law. The Ottoman state divided its subjects according to their religion into *millets* or ‘communities, as consisting of a lay and an ecclesiastical council, which dealt with the internal affairs of the people. These *millets* or ‘church nations,’ as a Turkish professor of Western literature translates it (Edib 1930: 68), were the only subdivisions recognised by the state. The diverse Muslim elements (Slavs, Turks and Albanians) had no community of ethnicity. They spoke their own languages in their homes, Turkish being an acquired tongue. But they were Muslims and all were ‘Turks’ in a political sense: they belonged to the dominant caste, they were the declared rulers of the infidels and were bound together by a shared interest since they formed the minority exploiting the subject peoples and living off the various informal tributes paid by the Christian majority.

Millet-i-Rum (*Rum* is a Turkish corruption of *Romaios*, the Greek name for a subject of Byzantium; this is the name the modern Greeks gave themselves down to the beginning of the twentieth century) was all that remained of the Eastern Empire. Under bishops and patriarchs it carried on the life of the Byzantine court and preserved the Greek nationality with the Greek form of Christianity. The entire Christian zone within the Balkan Peninsula had been termed ‘Rumi vilayets’ (Greek districts) by the Turks. Until the mid-nineteenth century the Ottomans regarded Orthodox Christianity as ‘Roman,’ *i.e.* the same as the Graeco-Byzantine faith. Whoever was not a ‘Turk’ was a *Rumi* or ‘Greek,’ designation which was applied to Albanians, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Serbs, Vlachs and Greeks, and only implied only a recognition of the authority of the Patriarch of Constantinople (Layard 1903: II, 125; Ivanić 1906: 98, 126; Amfiteatrov 1912: 244-45; Baker 1913: 54-5; Maliszewski 1913: 41-2; Gordon 1916: 258; Douglas 1919: 59). Thus, a British traveller in the 1790s wrote in his letters that since leaving Hermanstadt in Transilvania he had been travelling ‘in a Greek country’ (Morritt 1914: 60). And a French traveller in Plovdiv and Sofia ‘could not hear of any person having become regular inhabitants of those places, independent of the natives, Turks and Greeks’ (Hervé 1837: II, 286).

Until the beginning of the twentieth century it was commonly supposed ‘throughout Europe’ that the Slavs of Macedonia and even Bulgaria were Greeks and every educated person coming from those countries called himself a Greek as a matter of course (Vivian 1897: 100; 1904: 227; Eliot 1900: 347; Edwards 1902: 123, 248; Baker 1913: 239). They affected to be Greeks as *Bugar* (Bulgarian) was a term of contempt: the people were known as *hondrokefatos* and the Bulgarian language was supposed to be, ‘as their very name tells, “vulgar,” boorish.’ Some of them even adopted the Greek language, as fluency in Greek was considered a sign of an educated person in eastern Macedonia (Misirkov 1903: 123; Garnett 1904: 160-1; Ivanić 1906: 16, 72-3, 105; Plut 1913: 126; Tomitch 1918: 110). Thus ‘Greek’ denoted a ‘member of the Orthodox Church’ or ‘townsman’ because townspeople were ‘Greeks’ and villagers were ‘barbarians’ (Amfiteatrov 1903: 26). Or, as a member of the Parnassus Philological Society put it, ‘For the Slave it is promotion to become a Greek, as it is promotion for the Hindu to become a Briton’ (Upward 1908: 76).

Religion was the basis for these divisions; language and ethnological theories played merely a secondary part. A Bulgarian could become a Turk whenever he pleased by embracing Islam, as a Greek could become a Bulgarian by joining the Exarchate. One man might have entered the Romanian fold and his brother the Serbian. The system lasted in its entirety until the beginning of the twentieth century, when there were still towns in Albania with no civil court where the Koran was the only source of law. At the beginning of the twentieth century this system was abolished amid extensive reforms of the political system in Turkey and a code based on the Napoleonic model was introduced instead. At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, the idea of nationality was so new to the Turks that they still confused it with religion. Serbs, Vlachs, Orthodox Albanians and Bulgarians who have not joined the 'schismatic' Bulgarian Church were still classified in the census under the comprehensive title 'Rum' (Brailsford 1906: 63; Buxton 1907: 52; Franck 1928: 316).

The rationale for this state of affairs was the system of government. Turkish law was a religious code which could not be imposed on unbelievers, who could not be recruited into the army. The true believers, the followers of the Prophet, were declared rulers of the *giaours* (infidels). These purely theocratic principles of state organisation formed the basis of the Ottoman Empire. However, owing to the peculiarity of this policy, the Christians in the Ottoman Empire enjoyed relative independence and were able to preserve their nationality, language and customs. These exceptional historical circumstances also explain why, for these Christians, patriotism was transformed into attachment to their religious communities and national Church. Contemporary Western authors found this concept of nationality extraordinary, and wondered that in the Balkans race and language were not factors in nationality, which was decided by which Church a person belonged to. 'It is much as though a London-born Roman Catholic were called and counted an Irishman, or a Presbyterian in New York, though his ancestors came from Germany, were called and counted a Scotsman' (Fraser 1906: 11).

A new spirit of national consciousness awoke among the peoples of the millets with the attempt to create civil laws to replace religious ones. They had to reorganise themselves on national lines if they were to hold their own at all in modern international politics because nationality was the contemporary basis of Western states and, owing to the ascendancy of the west in the world, the relations of non-Western peoples to each other and to Western powers had to approximate to the forms which the Western world took for granted. However, according to Arnold Toynbee, this principle of nationality in politics was taken for granted in the Western Europe simply because it had grown naturally out of their special conditions, not because it was of universal application (1922: 15-6).

### **The descendants of the French crusaders**

Thus, till the beginning of the twentieth century the Slavic people in Macedonia developed no clear consciousness of nationality. A Russian traveller reported that many people simply could not understand the concept of nationality and explained: 'I am an Orthodox, I was an Exarchist, but now I am a Serb.' Only when directly asked again whether they were Bulgarians or Serbs, might they answer: 'I was a Bulgarian, now I am a Serb' (Vodovozov 1917: 76-7). The vital element of their identity was their Christianity and when asked about their nationality, they declared themselves as *rayah*, *kaur*, as the Turks used to call them, or as Bulgarians, Christians (Gopčević 1889: 325; Amfiteatrov 1903: 17; Misirkov 1903: 122). The Russian consul in Bitola, Rostkovski, for example, in spite of his seven-year stay in Macedonia, used the 'Turkish' method and divided the inhabitants of Macedonia into Slavic Patriarchists, Slavic Exarchists and Slavic Muslims, because he could not decide whether they were Bulgarians or Serbs. Amfiteatrov, who spent three years there, came to the conclusion that the Macedonians themselves did not know what they were. So he called them a 'nation without national consciousness' (1903: 13).

On account of specific conditions in Macedonia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, national affinities were decided on political grounds (Brailsford 1906: 101; Tomitch 1918: 118). In Macedonia there was Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian and Romanian propaganda, each with its own ideals and aspirations. It was the object of each party to make as many converts as possible. If

propaganda alone was not sufficient, these attempts to reorganise the political map of Macedonia on European lines were carried out by more procrustean methods of expropriation, eviction, and hostile interference with worship and the use of the mother-tongue. The business of targeting communities was expensive and did not always yield profit proportionate to the outlay, and the little Balkan states whose resources were as meagre as their ambitions were great would hardly have been able to stake their claims without monetary aid from one of the interested powers (Abbott 1903: 77; Moore 1906: 187).

If at the beginning of the twentieth century the people of Macedonia were constant in their Orthodoxy, according to Western writers, they were correspondingly inconstant in their national affinities. It was quite possible for a Slavic village in Macedonia to be one thing in the presence of a Serbian consul and another in the presence of Bulgarian agent (Amfiteatrov 1903: 17). When a Russian author asked peasants in Skopska Crna Gora if they were Serbs, they answered in the affirmative. But when he immediately asked them if they were Bulgarians, the answer was in the affirmative again (Rittih 1909: 199). When he put the same question to the peasants of Bašino Selo near Veles one half told him that they were Serbs and the other half that they were Bulgarians (Rittih 1909: 214). Some researchers were able to find cases where one brother claimed to be a Bulgarian and the other a Serb. In addition, some people claimed to be Greeks, although they could not speak the Greek language (Hulme-Beaman 1898: 143; Abbott 1903: 110; Amfiteatrov 1903: 14; Buxton 1920: 146-47). In Bitola, for instance, in 1905, the three Talevtchiné brothers, Stevan, Nikola and Dimitrie, notable merchants, were respectively Bulgarian, Romanian and Greek (Tomitch 1918: 118). And since nationality was by no means immutable in this part of the world, but changed according to conviction, individuals and even whole communities that were Greek yesterday might become Bulgarian today and perhaps Serb tomorrow (Eliot 1900: 298; Villari 1905: 122).

For Western authors of that period, who understood nationality not as a cultural construction, but as a biological, somehow ‘natural’ category which was constant and unchangeable, such a situation was unprecedented. They commented with sublime contempt that nationality in the Balkans was ‘a variable quantity, largely depending on considerations with which sentiment, blood, or language have little or nothing to do’ (Abbott 1903: 9-10). Their opinion of the patriotism of the inhabitants of Macedonia was just as low. In the Balkans, they claimed, patriotism was purse-deep. For instance, a French consul declared that with a fund of a million francs he would undertake to make all Macedonia French. He would preach that the Macedonians were the descendants of the French crusaders who conquered Thessaloníki in the twelfth century and the francs would do the rest. However, the author who quoted this statement immediately added that the Greeks disposed of ample funds but had lost Macedonia (Brailsford 1906: 103).

Where choice is free it will sometimes be governed by personal interest. As reported by some authors, money played an important role in determining the national consciousness of the people. Allegedly a Serbian consul once mentioned to a certain ‘Serb’ that they had quite a lot of money and the time had come to do something for free for the fatherland, in the name of patriotism. The answer was: ‘Oh, Mr Consul!... it’ll be very unpleasant for you, since when I get money from you, my patriotism says that I am a Serb, but as soon as my pocket is empty it begins to assure me that I am a Bulgarian’ (Amfiteatrov 1903: 20).

The truth is that, on the whole, the Macedonians have shown remarkable steadfastness in the face of corruption and terrorism.

### **The Bulgarian threat**

The Bulgarians’ patriotism which from 1770 had been so far crushed by the Greek clergy as to make the people forget their identity and regard themselves as Greek was reawakened during the second half of the nineteenth century. There were Bulgarian enthusiasts who, inspired by the traditions of the doubtful glories of a somewhat hypothetical past, looked forward to the day when a Bulgarian empire

might be re-established, including all of Macedonia, with Constantinople as its capital (Dicey 1894: 104, 123; Kirkness 1933: 104, 123). In 1893 the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation was founded with the aim of liberating Macedonia from the Ottoman occupation under the motto 'Macedonia for the Macedonians.' In practice, the *komitadjis* (the armed members of IMRO) pursued a policy of extermination of Greek and Serbian teachers and clergy. Before the creation of the Exarchate, when there was only one Orthodox Church in European Turkey, the Greek clerics strove to destroy the Bulgarian language, banning its use in schools and churches. When the new Church was established the Patriarch of Constantinople responded to the *firman* by excommunicating all adherents of the Exarchate. Many Bulgarians were afraid to leave the old Church and remained faithful to the Patriarchate - and the Greek community (Hulme-Beaman 1898: 143; Abbott 1903: 110; Moore 1906: 157; Bruce 1907: 64; Upward 1908: 21-2; Garnett 1911: 124).

The Bulgarians claims on Macedonia were based on the fact that in the eleventh century King Samuel had briefly occupied it and, in consequence, the population of Macedonia had been Bulgarianised and was almost exclusively Bulgarian. Bulgaria became increasingly involved in Macedonia in the 1870s when the Bulgarian Church seceded from the Patriarchate in Constantinople and laid claim to the villages of several provinces of Thrace and Macedonia. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Exarchate in Macedonia held jurisdiction over seven dioceses (Skopje, Ohrid, Debar, Bitola, Veles, Nevrokop and Strumica) (Le Queux 1907: 207). Religion became the symbol of ethnicity: Greeks belonged with the Patriarchate and Bulgarians with the Exarchate. The Bulgarian Church started a process of enforced Bulgarisation of the country, persecuting Greek teachers and priests and replacing them with Bulgarians (Cosmopoulos 1992: 72). The so-called Bulgarian threat produced a serious response in Greece, which, in 1895, began to send armed bands to Macedonia to resist the enforced Bulgarisation by waging guerrilla war on the Bulgarians and Serbs. The Greeks hoped eventually to win a section of the country, although its inhabitants could not speak Greek. The most effective guerrilla group was the *Ethnike Hetairia* (National Society), whose troops became active in Macedonia during the Cretan Revolution but despite its initial successes, the defeat of Greece in the Graeco-Turkish war of 1897 was a major blow to the 'Greeks' of Macedonia who temporarily lost the support of the Greek state (Barlett 1897: 16-23, 125-27; Bigham 1897: 3-4; Mantegazza 1903: 226; Lynch 1908: 35; Cosmopoulos 1992: 74-5).

## Greater Serbia

When, after 1878, the Serbs were obliged to seek their Greater Serbia elsewhere they turned towards the south and conceived the idea of a Serbian Macedonia with Thessaloníki as its seaport. For the previous century Serbian scientists and political leaders had recognised that Macedonia had a Bulgarian ethnic physiognomy and even in the treaties of the Balkan Alliance that preceded the war of 1912 Serbia recognised Macedonia as Bulgarian (Buxton 1907: 48; Carnegie Endowment 1914: 25-6; 1925: iv, 6; Reed 1916: 317; Misheff 1917: 29; Valoušek 1999: 49). However, at the end of the nineteenth century some nationalists began to promulgate a new truth: that Macedonia was and always had been a Serbian land (Villari 1905: 83; Upward 1908: 271). They cited evidence from geography, ethnology, philology and history. In the beginning, the Serbs themselves derided their overzealous scientists, but eventually Macedonian fever seized the Serbian intelligentsia and even important scholars such as Stojan Novaković and Jovan Cvijić had either to remain silent or to compromise their integrity by inventing new arguments for Serbian character of Macedonia. The Macedonians were said to be 'an amorphous mass of people,' with no specific sense of nationality but with a predisposition to assimilate with Serbs or Bulgarians (Cvijić 1906: 5). Ingenious philological and historical arguments were devised by patriots to prove that those 'who speak such a pure Serbian language and observe *slava*, cannot be Bulgarian.' To substantiate the assertion that Macedonian Slavs were Serbs, it was even claimed that the ethnic name *Bugar* was Serbian, not Bulgarian (Veselinović 1888: 3; Gopčević 1889: 37; Cvijić 1906: 12; Balkanicus 1915: 230-31).

In Serbian schools the children were taught the geography of not only Old Serbia ‘but of all the Serbian lands, *in order of their redemption* - first Macedonia, then Dalmatia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Croatia, Banat, and Batchka!’ (Reed 1916: 55). Schools in the Balkans taught their pupils not merely the usual subjects but also the crucial issue of their nationality. Thus schools in Macedonia became ‘factories of *kannonenfutter*’ (Durham 1905: 91-2).

Secret societies were founded in the major Serbian towns to propagate the idea that Macedonia belonged to Serbia. In addition Serbian schools were established and the Serbian language was disseminated in the north-west of Macedonia. By the end of the nineteenth century the Serbs had more than 200 schools in Macedonia and a Serb bishop was appointed at Skopje under the auspices of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Ambitious Serbian nationalists also sent *komitadjis* there to fight Bulgarian influence. According to the author of *Portraits and Sketches of Serbia*, they discharged their duties with great fervour. One of their leader, the schoolteacher Stefanović, told her: ‘We had no wine - our wine was the blood of the Bulgarians’ (Wilson 1920: 64; see also Carnegie Endowment 1914: 180).

As a result of the two Balkan Wars of 1912/13, Serbia gained Kosovo and northern and central Macedonia. The campaign medal referred to the 1389 battle of ‘Kosovo Avenged,’ but this military success left Serbia with the task of assimilating a heterogeneous population, which included a high proportion of Muslim Albanians as well as many Orthodox Slavs, many of whom still looked to Bulgaria. Serbian government declared that ‘the level of culture’ was not sufficiently high among the Macedonians and their ‘state consciousness’ was not sufficiently developed to permit the immediate grant of full political rights (Carnegie Endowment 1914: 164). Intensive Serbianisation took place in the part of Macedonia under Serbian authority, aimed first of all against the Bulgarian Exarchate and Bulgarian schools in the country. The Serbian authority also forcibly modified Macedonian surnames by adding to them the Serbian suffix *-ić* (Carnegie Endowment 1914: 174-77; Reed 1916: 319; Vodovozov 1917: 82; Kuba 1932: 38, 211; Christowe 1935: 145; Pavlowitch 1999: 177).

If Turkey acknowledged the Macedonians as Bulgarians and Greece acknowledged them at least as Slav-speaking people, Serbia denied that they had any Bulgarian identity whatsoever and banned any outward expression of such an identity. The people of Macedonia were not allowed to commemorate the brothers Miladinov, which they had been allowed to do even during the Ottoman occupation (Kuba 1932: 40, 226). An American author recorded how a Serbian king had used his hands to help to deprive the Bulgarian population of their nationality. In 1912, during the First Balkan War, King Alexander of Yugoslavia, then crown prince, stopped a little girl in a street in Prilep and bending over her, asking her her nationality. The little girl said: ‘Bulgarian.’ Alexander, later called the Unifier, slapped her face with his royal palm (Christowe 1935: 45).

According to Vasil Vodovozov, the Serbian authorities were not without experiences. After Serbia annexed the counties of Niš, Pirot and Vranje (with a Bulgarian-speaking population) in 1878, the authorities carried out an agrarian reform, introduced Serbian schools and subordinated the Church to the Metropolitan of Belgrade. In fact, Serbia did the same here as it did later in Macedonia. The result was that in the space of less than twenty years the people forgot the Bulgarian language and began to speak and feel themselves to be Serbian. When Vodovozov visited these countries in 1894 there were no signs of national or religious discontent, for the ‘uncompromising Bulgarian elements who in any case constituted but an unimportant part of the population’ moved away; the remaining Slavs had already become reconciled to the fact that they were ‘Serbs’ (1917: 76, 90). Their success in this process led the Serbian authorities to expect similar results in Macedonia where the existing differences between the ‘Serbs’ and the ‘Bulgarians’ were ‘almost entirely a matter of education.’ People there had ‘duplicate religions, similar ideas, identical customs. The peasants dress alike, and only the partisans and propagandists are distinguishable by their attire. A European cut of clothes is worn by those who attend the Bulgarian gymnasium, while a military jacket attests the adherents of the rival school’ (Moore 1906: 185-86).

However, the Macedonian people were not as easily Serbianised as those of Niš and other

formerly Bulgarian places. A British correspondent reported in the *Standard* that the Serbian element in Macedonia was practically non-existent (Hulme-Beaman 1898: 146). A few years later, during a visit to Bitola the Serbian assistant minister of education, Dr Stevanović, tried to find out how far the idea of Serbian nationality had been disseminated. With this in mind, he asked pupils he met on their way to the school about their nationality. They answered that they were Macedonians. In response to further questions, he found out that their parents were Slavs. Only one out of five said that he was a Serb; when asked what his father was, he answered: 'A Tsintsar' (Popović 1937: 276-77).

For Macedonians the concept of being Yugoslav held much more appeal than the concept of being Serb. A Croatian petrographer travelled through Macedonia soon after the establishment of the State of the South Slavs following the First World War. The people he met there who were 'unusually hospitable, but in their statements very reserved.' They were partisans of national unity, 'which is not odd at all, for Yugoslavism is here an idea that gathers together, unites, that calms passions and raises faith in the future of the nation.' As a man from Kavadarci explained to him, the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were 'old men at their last gasp, as a powerful, strong Yugoslav is being born' (Tućan 1920: 96).

After the Second World War Bulgaria dropped the Macedonian question as far as Greece was concerned. After the Greek Civil War and the departure of the Slav minority from Greece the Macedonian question only affected Bulgaria in relation to Yugoslavia, mainly because of the de-Bulgarisation of the population of Yugoslav Macedonia on one side and denial of the existence of a Macedonian minority in Pirin Macedonia on the other. But in neighbouring states of Macedonia the existence of a Macedonian nation continued to be denied. Since the Second World War the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences has published a large number of documents to demonstrate that Macedonian nationality was an artificial construct and that the people of Yugoslav Macedonia are Bulgarian. Even today some Greek authors believe that the Macedonians are Greek (cf. Martis 1984: 109; Cosmopoulos 1992: 57). The very existence of the Macedonian nation was denied by many Westerners as well, perhaps most explicitly by the British author of *Pictures from the Balkans* who claimed that, 'You will find Bulgarians and Turks who call themselves Macedonians, you find Greek Macedonians, there are Servian Macedonians, and it is possible to find Roumanian Macedonians. You will not, however, find a single Christian Macedonian who is not a Servian, a Bulgarian, a Greek, or a Roumanian' (Fraser 1906: 6).

Notwithstanding the long oppression the inhabitants of Macedonia have endured and the propaganda persuading them they were not who they thought they were, Macedonian consciousness has survived. Gorgi Puljevski in his trilingual dictionary defined *narod* (nation) as a group of people of the same origin and language who live together and share common customs, songs and holidays; he states, 'Thus the Macedonians are a nation and their place is Macedonia' (Puljevski 1875: 49). According to Krste Misirkov, at the end of the nineteenth century the national awareness of Macedonian Slavs was 'very widespread and clear' (1903: 101). As other authors noted, they openly declared that they were not Bulgarians or Serbs, but Macedonians (Miecznik 1904: 66; Upward 1908: 59, 204; Laffan 1918: 66). Thus, the Father Superior of the monastery of Lešok near Tetovo, Father Jezekiel, proclaimed himself 'a pure-bred Macedonian' (Rittih 1909: 178) and a teacher from Ohrid declared: 'I am not a Bulgarian, nor a Greek, nor a Tsintsar; I am a pure Macedonian, as were Philip and Alexander of Macedon and Aristotle the philosopher' (Salgundžijev 1906: 34-5).

Individual representatives of Macedonian intelligence also insisted that the Macedonian dialect, though related to Bulgarian and Serbian, was not identical to them and that the Macedonians were an autonomous nation of Slavic origin (Vodovozov 1917: 30).

Western authors gave much attention to Macedonia at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries on account of its explosive and murky political situation. Many wrote about it, still more toured it. They grasped the countless ins and outs of the Macedonian question and its deep historical roots. They became profoundly aware of the highly complicated political and ethnological situation due to the many different and conflicting interests at stake. Only the fact that the Macedonians lived in Macedonia somehow escaped their notice. Macedonians were conspicuous by their absence in their

writings:

Converse with a Roumanian consul, say at Monastir. ‘True, these people talk Bulgarian or Greek,’ he says; ‘but they are really Roumanian, though they don’t know it. Therefore, when Macedonia is freed from the Turk, its natural and proper ruler is Roumania.’ Interview a Servian. ‘Before the coming of the Turks,’ says he, ‘the Servian Empire stretched south to the sea.’ Seek the views of a Bulgarian. ‘It is obvious,’ he tells you, ‘that practically all Macedonia is filled with Bulgarians. They speak Bulgarian, and are adherents of the Bulgarian Church. Many people who speak Greek and are Orthodox have been coerced; but they are Bulgarian. Macedonia is the rightful heritage of Bulgaria.’ ‘Nothing of the kind,’ retorts the Greek; ‘the Bulgarians are schismatics, and are not even entitled to the name Christian. They compel villages by threats to renounce the Orthodox Church, and then they are reckoned Bulgarian. Bah on the butchers!’ (Fraser 1906: 6)

It did not make much difference, if it was so because of their taking side with one of the Balkan states or it was just too difficult for them, accustomed to connect space and number with greatness, to suppress the feeling of contempt suggested by the smallness of the people of Macedonia in comparison with the greatness of Balkan empires and their pretensions. It was of no consequence what people thought and said:

In truth, the difficulty of the situation is not surprising when it is remembered that, since the Empire of Philip, Macedonia has been subject to Greeks, Servians, Bulgarians and Turks. The peasant, therefore, may well be excused if he has lost count of his true ancestry. And thus it happens that such words as ‘race,’ ‘nationality,’ ‘lineage,’ or whatever be the expression most suited to differentiate between a Macedonian and the rest of the Balkan world, have lost their savour, with the result that the peasant is ready to adopt any nationality as his own, provided the arguments sufficiently plausible are advanced in the process of conversion. (Comyn-Platt 1906: 33-4)

Because the Ottoman Empire had laid great stress upon religious difference, nationality had been considered secondary and less important. When the notion of nationality developed in western Europe as a substantial element of human identity, even more important than religious difference, it ran into major obstacles in the Balkans. It might never have found its way there, had it not been sponsored by the European powers. For circumstantial reasons consciousness of a specific national identity was the least developed among the Slavic population of Macedonia. The neighbouring Balkan states tried to turn this situation to their advantage, each anxious to enlarge its own national territory. Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia were particularly anxious to enforce their territorial claims, maintaining that the people of Macedonia were really Bulgarians, Greeks or Serbs. However, none of them ever really succeeded in assimilating the people of Macedonia whom they subdued by fair means or foul. But their success in representing the people of Macedonia to Western observers as a people without national consciousness was quite another story. According to a British author who found the stories invented by Balkan propagandists more interesting than reality, in one and the same Macedonian household one could occasionally come across ‘representatives of all the branches of the human family,’ that is a father claiming Serbian descent, his son swearing that only Bulgarian blood flowed in *his* veins, while the daughters, if allowed to speak, would be equally positive of their descent from Helen of Troy or Catherine of Russia or Aphrodite of Melos. The old mother was generally content to express her national convictions in the declaration that she was a Christian. After presenting this vivid picture of total confusion as reflecting actual reality, he gave his diagnosis: ‘A true comedy of errors in which no one knows who is who, but everybody instinctively feels that everybody is somebody else. Verily no country ever was in such sore need of a herald’s office, or of a lunatic asylum, as Macedonia. It may be described as a region peopled with new-born souls wandering in quest of a body, and losing themselves in the search’ (Abbott 1903: 80).

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