

# NATIONALISM AND POWER POLITICS ON BALKAN

Atilla Jorma, page 51-68

## ABSTRACT

Before the Ottomans the Bulgars were the most important Turkic community on Balkan. They were also the only ones who formed a state. Bulgaria stayed as a toponym also when those people were disappeared. Meanwhile, were they assimilated and with whom is total another question. In any case four century passed without any sign or mention of them as a crowd. Just in the era of romantic nationalism those ancient people were found in history and were used for building a new nation. Those tendencies however were intermixed with politics of the superpowers.

**Keywords:** Balkans, Turkic people, Nation building, Misusing history, Nationalism, Panславism, the Other.



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**UDK: 323.14(497)**

**Date of received:**  
15.01.2019

**Date of acceptance:**  
14.02.2019

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**Declaration of interest:**

The authors reported no conflict of interest related to this article.

## **1.INTRODUCTION**

On the 19th century in the Eastern Europe there were three dominions: the Russian Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire or Turkey. At the turn of 19th century, all of these had ethnic Slavs, whereas Turks lived mainly in Russia and the Ottoman Empire area. The Ottoman Empire had received its area and capital straight from Rome, or "East Rome" or "Byzantine". The government and bureaucracy models were also received from the Byzantine, although there is also continuity to an early Oghuz alliance and the Seljuk governance too. To adopt the "place" of the Byzantine state was natural, because the Turks had not suddenly arrived from somewhere, but they had lived in the Roman Empire area for a long time, often as units led by small princes; on the Balkan, they had actually lived for centuries before Asia Minor. When the Sultan Muhammed (Mehmet) II, born in Dimetoka on Balkan, took over the Constantinople in 1453, the Pope suggested the Roman emperor - which is what Muhammed was now - converting to Christianity. (Jelavich 2006a, 43-50. 1) The Ottoman sultan was a sovereign monarch and since 1517 also the spiritual leader of the Islamic world. The Ottoman sultans had not made the Orthodox people of the Balkan areas they had conquered to convert into Islam or to learn Turkish. The Orthodox people were left in the subordination of the Constantinople patriarchate even after the conquest of Constantinople, and it was given wide cultural and religious rights (this is called the millet system). The Balkan Orthodox people saw the sultan as an emperor (or czar), but the "czar" was only a secular ruler, not their religious leader. Jusdanis states that the Constantinople patriarchate influence was greater in the Ottoman era than it had been during the Byzantine era; its responsibility area included the civil administration of the Christian subordinates. (Karpát 2004, 13-18, Jusdanis 1998, 41.) The eastern and western churches had by the mid15th century reached a principled consensus of union as the conquest of Constantinople ended the ambitions. As a consequence of the conquest, Moscow formed a patriarchate of their own that wanted to take the lead from that of Constantinople. The dispute lasted for centuries. During the 19th century, Moscow's patriarchate became an essential part of the Russian supremacy aspirations. The Orthodox faith - lead by the Moscow patriarchate - tsarism and nationalism formed a triple alliance to push Russia's position as a major power. Moscow had become a third

Rome for the Russian elite, one that would stay forever, and a fourth should never come. (Kohn 2007, 137.)

Panslavism, originally born in the Habsburg reigned Austro-Hungarian Empire out of the aspirations of the Slavic subordinates to defend their own culture, became a central ideological weapon for Russia's aspirations to become a super power. Panslavism is defined as an idea of the cultural bond between all Slavic nations that was used to argue the political and national belonging as well. The most powerful pusher of the cultural Panslavism is said to be a Czech poet Jan Kollar, whose enthusiasm for the general Slavism had been awakened by J.G. Herder. Herder's thought of the cultural unity of a nation with a single language offered a basis for political unification and independence demands as well. It lies in the background for example of the unification of Germany, but also of the "finding" of many nations through a common language on several Slav inhabited areas. (Kohn 2007, 23-30.)

Panslavism includes an obstinate myth of the unity of Slavic nations, not only linguistically, but also culturally and ethnically. Actually, related languages only bind Slavs together.

In the first Slavic congress held in Prague 1848, the national questions already arose: the Slavs under the Habsburg regime were demanded autonomy. (Kohn 2007, 89-114.) In Russia, Panslavism was understood as Russian lead Slavic coalition. In the Slavic congress held in Moscow 1867, the non-Russian Slavs criticized the Russian understanding of Panslavism, which is that for Russians, Panslavism meant Panrussism. The view matched the facts: Panslavism had become an instrument of Russia's power politics. Russia aimed at getting a dominant position in the world for its language and the Orthodox religion. In Austria-Hungary and Turkish Balkan, a similar Russianisation was supposed to be executed as had been in the Ukraine and Poland. (Kohn 2007, 164-180.)

The Panslavist ideology naturally worked against the Ottoman Empire on the Balkan. Also the Greek ambitions of independence from the Ottoman authority was originally started by Russian initiative. A friendship society was founded in Odessa "Philike Hetaeria" (Society of Friends, 1814) that was meant to defend the Balkan Orthodox people. The society caused before all the anti-Turkish rebellion of the Greeks in 1821. Support for the Greek independence aspirations was received from the western, British Philhellenism that was not religiously emphasized. One can say that the Greeks found the idea for identifying with the antique Hellas from the

west. (Jusdanis 1998, 56-63.) The rebellion led to the independence of Greece in 1829. The newborn state was still lacking a culturally united nation. The building of a united Greek Nation started only after this. The Greekifying policy included mandatory Christianity among others. Istanbul remained for a long time after Greece's independence a center for Greek ("Roman") culture, where for example most of Greek literature was printed. (Jelavich 2006a, 239-258.)

At the same time that Russia tried to divide the authority sphere of the Turkish Empire by fanning the Balkan nations into nationalist rebellions disguised as religion defense, it pushed the Slavic language speakers into unifying in the name of Pan-Slavism on the Habsburg empire area. A unified Orthodox Russianism was meanwhile built within the Russian empire. (Kohn 2007, 115-131.)

The Pan-Slavist ideology combined with Russia's power political ambitions on the Turkish dominated Balkan forms a background for the birth of the state of Bulgaria. Ethnic Bulgars had of course existed long before Bulgaria, but paradoxically they were not Slavic but Turkic. Thus, the birth of Bulgaria as a Pan-Slavist achievement and as a - non-deliberate - result is a multiple historical paradox.

## 2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Most English dictionaries present the headwords Bulgars and Bulgarians separately. Bulgars are told to be Turkic people that founded a state on South Balkan 600 BC. Bulgarians are a nation living in (current) Bulgaria speaking a south Slavic language. A Hungarian Turkologist Gyula Németh has in the 20th century determined the etymology of the word Bulgar. It is originally Turkish, and its primitive is the verb *bulga* "mix up, stir", added with an aorist suffix -r. Németh's analysis was left unfinished when he gave the word a meaning "mixed". He corrected and completed the explanation himself later, but the correction was published in a Bulgarian publication and has been left unknown. (Németh 1978.) With the suffix -r the word turns out to be a derivative of an active verb, so it means "mixer" or "rebel". As such, the word is rather typical for the contemporary appellation conventions. (Ercilasun 2004, 201, Tekin 1987, 62-63, Caferoğlu 2001, 83-102.) The word's first meaning had however managed to spread wide, and it related to typically projected modern ideological meanings and explanations. So, for example R.J. Crampton

writes: “Proto-Bulgars, a group of Turkic origin [...]. The Proto-Bulgars originated in the area between the Urals and the Volga and were a potpourri of various ethnic elements, the word Bulgar being derived from a Turkic verb meaning ‘to mix’.” (Crampton, 1997, 8-9.) Bulgars were, however, no more “potpourri” than the other nomad peoples of the steppe.

There had in fact been several Bulgar realms. During the 400-600's, there had been Greater Bulgaria on the north side of the Black Sea. It collapsed as the Bulgars migrated at the pressure from Khazars to the Volga bend on the one hand and to the lower course of the Danube on the other. So, there was a Bulgaria of the Danube and that of Volga in the 7th century. The awareness of a shared origin and of the other branch lasted for a very long time in the midst of Bulgars. (Stojkov 2003.)

The Bulgaria of the Danube lasted relatively independence for a long time on the Byzantine area, and the pagan state did not convert to Christianity. The Volga Bulgaria instead adopted Islam. By the 11th century, the Danube Bulgaria had ceased to be an independent entity. The Volga Bulgaria remained until the Mongol invasion, when a considerable number of Turks from the steppe had fled there to get away from the Mongols. During the Mongol invasion, the capital Bolgar was destroyed and the nation, whose new capital became Kazan, belonged to the subordination of the Golden Horde. As Russia expanded on the 16th century, Ivan the Terrible conquered the area. The Turkic language remained on the area, as did the Bulgar identity. (Ercilasun 2004, 205. Stojkov 2003.)

On the 13th century, there were several Turkic little princes in the Bulgaria of the Danube - roughly the modern Bulgaria - whose attitude towards the churches on the area was primarily strategic. These princes both competed against one another and pursued independence from the Byzantine Empire and at times gained it, too. "Bulgaria" remained the name for that area, although there was no united Bulgar nation. One must note that the Danube's Bulgar realm of both the 7th and 13th centuries was a state in that dynastic sense that the Turkic originated Bulgar and Cuman families formed dynasties. However, it was not a question of a modern sense realm formed by the Bulgar nation. In the 14th century, the area became a part of the Ottoman empire. (Vasary 2005, 166-167.) Vasary states that between the years 1185 and 1330, the influence of Turkic Cumans on the political history of the Balkan was extremely significant.

The Cumans were the founders of the three dynasties of Bulgaria's second realm (Asen, Terter and Shishman) as well as Valakia (Basaraba), in addition to which their wide settling on different sides of the Balkan prepared a basis for the Ottomans. Karpát states that this was crucial for the formation of the Ottoman Turkish Rumelia. Vasary too says at the end of his book that this fact "may disperse the rosy clouds of nostalgia that hang over the medieval golden age of the pre-Ottoman Balkans, depicted with so much zeal by the historiographies of the Balkanic nation states."

The name Bulgaria remained in the writings of history to usually mean the ancient Bulgaria of the Danube. Later, the Bulgaria of the Danube would be including within Rumelia, or "Rome's land", which is what the Balkan was called from the 14th century on. The name Balkan, which originally meant the mountains, became a name for the area only at the end of the 19th century, when it replaced the name Rumelia. (İsen 1997, 74.) History does not know the word "Bulgar" as a name for any group of people during the time between the 15th and 19th centuries on the Balkan. People, who traveled the Balkan, do mention Serbs, Bosnians, Valaks and so on, but there are no known references of "Bulgars". The Volga Bulgarians are, however, talked about in Russia and even in the Soviet Union until the times of Stalin, when the name Bulgar was at Stalin's orders replaced with the name Tatar. (Devlet 1999, 121-133, Karpát 2004, 55.)

### **3. BUILDING IDENTITY WITH RECONSTRUCTION OF THE PAST**

In the 18th century, the word Bulgar comes to use in a new meaning on the Danube Bulgarian area. In its new meaning it refers to the Slavic population living on the lower course of the Danube. Although in this meaning the use of the word can be traced back to the 18th century, it only becomes significant as it becomes a tool of the Panslavist nations politics on the 19th century. (Şimşir 1989b, 88.)

Still in the 18th century and at the beginning of the 19th, the Orthodox Slavs of the Ottoman Empire had been willing to adopt the Greek identity, because it was more valued to be Greek than Slavic. The "Bulgar Slavism" was born as a construction against Greekism. As the Constantinople patriarchate began its Hellenizing politics after 1767, including among others the demand to only have church services in Greek,

the Slavic language men of religion arose in opposition. (Jusdanis 1998, 57, Karpat 2004, 53.)

The starter of the "Bulgarian national awakening" – or in other words, the inventor of the Slavic Bulgar identity – is used to be thought of as Paisi, the monk from the Athos mountain. However, Antero Leitzinger thinks that the original inventor of the "Slavic Bulgarism" might have been another monk called Ioann Raich (Jovan Rajic), who had discovered the Bulgars from the history and been inspired to explain that they were originally a Slavic nation. Raich's book on the matter was published in St. Petersburg in 1795. Before that, Raich had already in 1758 met monk Paisi, who he had spoken of the idea with, and who had handled the matter in his manuscript called "The history of Slavic Bulgars" from the year 1762. (Leitzinger 2006, 74.) Hand copied excerpts of this manuscripts spread for decades until it was published for the first time in 1844, anonymous at the time. In 1871, the first Slavic Bulgar historian Marin Drinov identified Paisi as its author. Paisi's piece had been written in a Russian redaction of the church Slavic that was used on the Balkan in the mid 18th century; from a later nationalistic Slavic Bulgarian point of view the language has been defined as Bulgarian (as had the church Slavic that was altogether interpreted as an older form of Bulgarian). (Nuorluoto 2003, 117-121.) Thus, the primary other that Slavic Bulgarianism was defined against, was Greekism with Paisi.

Another important constructor of the Slavic Bulgarian identity was a Ukrainian national poetry collector and historian born under the Habsburg regime, Georg Huca or Juri Venelin (1802-1839). Venelin had moved from Austria-Hungary to Russia. Russia's academy sent him back to the Balkan to Dobrudža, apparently to collect folklorist material concerning the "Slavic Bulgars". In 1829 he published a book "Old and new Bulgars in political, ethnographic, historical and religious relationships to the Russians". The meaning of the book was to prove that the Bulgars were of Slavic and not Turkish origin. Venelin died in Moscow, and the Odessa Slavic Bulgar community gave him a memorial that thanked him for "summoning up" the Bulgar forefathers. (Kohn 2007, 87.) Crampton states that "The importance of Paisi and his fellow awakeners lay not so much in their roles as creators of the national revival as in the fact that they provided post facto explanations for it." (Crampton 1997, 49.)

It should be added that Raich's, Paisi's and Venelin's books were read widely and that they had a large influence, although their "explanations" were not scientifically valid. In them, a Slavic Bulgar identity is built for the "others": For Raich and Paisi the "Other" is the Orthodox Greek identity, for Venelin Turkishness. Their position is different to Slavic Bulgarianism in that in the former case, Slavic Bulgars are demanded to defend their own identity against a culturally stronger other group of "orthodoxes", whereas in the latter it is about the dispute within the concept of Bulgar and excluding "Turkishness" from "Bulgarianism".

In the Ottoman archive documents, the word Bulgar is first presented in 1794 or 1795 in a writ addressed to Mihal, the voivoda of Bogdan. (Ergenç 1989, 1, Refik 1989, 1.) Now, the name apparently refers to Slavic Bulgars. The invention of Slavic Bulgarianism was a prerequisite for the birth of the state of Bulgaria in 1878. At the same time, the birth of the state of Bulgaria was a result, although not an objective, of the Russian Panslavist politics. Russia's power politics aimed at something else, namely to reach Russia's realm into the Ottoman Empire area all the way to Constantinople. (Şimşir 1989b, 54-58)

At first, the Panslavist and nationalist thinking had only been adopted by a group of intellectuals. The school system and people's education were in a key position in spreading the thinking. In Russia, the changes in this matter also had a direct influence on the Slavic language school system on the Ottoman area. In Russia, Sergei Uvarov acted as an ideological architect for the conspirative police state that Nikolai I created. He brought up in 1832 the idea of "a holy trinity" including autonomy, Orthodox faith and nationalism. (Luukkanen 2001, 117, Kohn 2007, 144.) Uvarov pushed into the schools a Panslavist (in reality Panrussist) and nationalist syllabus. He became the Minister of Education and a protector of the Panslavists. With his support, the first Panslavist publication, *Moskovityanin* -began to publish in Moscow. Russianisation did not become the official state policy until some decades later during the time of Alexander III. (Kohn 2007, 146-147.) Russian Panslavists were active both in Russia and outside of it. M. P. Pogodin (1800–1875) wrote grand duke Alexander in 1838 of his thoughts concerning the future Russia:

“What an excellent phenomenon is Russia on the stage of the world... What state could possibly compare itself to Russia in greatness? A population of 60 million... in the near future it shall be 100 million! Let us unite all our 30 million Slavic brothers spread throughout Europe... The Slavs that regardless of the geographical or political obstacles form a spiritual connection with us... As this is the state of things, Slavs must be disconnected from the populations of Austria, Turkey and the rest of Europe, and bound to us. What then will be left of those states and what shall be our power? This dazzling perspective confuses the human mind.” (Kohn 2007, 148-149.) The grand duke, who the letter was written to, as the Czar of all Russians crossed the Danube forty years later on his way to "rescue" the Slavs from the Ottoman Empire's subordination.

The Panslavist thinking spread early on also to the Ottoman Empire's Slavic school system. Before this, the Slavic school system in the Ottoman Empire had included church schools, where reading and writing church Slav was taught. These schools still existed at the beginning of the 19th century, although the Constantinople patriarchate had tried to shut down all Slavic language teaching in the year 1800 and to bring only Greek teaching instead. A merchant who had made a fortune in Russia, Vasili Aprilov founded the first new, Panslavist-nationalist schools on the Ottoman Empire area. He had joined a Greek nationalist society founded in Odessa 1814, and having been an active Hellenist for more than a decade, he turned Panslavist after reading Venelin's book and founded a Slavic language school into his home town of Gabrovo in 1835. Here, the Bell-Lancaster teaching method was used, where older students continued to educate younger ones. By 1840, Aprilov had opened altogether 12 of these schools. (Şimşir 1989b, 66-69) The Russian Panslavists started to recruit Balkan Slavic youth as stipendiates into Russian schools. Those educated in Russia acted as teachers in Bulgar schools. Before the 1877-1878 war, four fifths of teachers in the Danube province had studied in Russia. Einaud, the French consular in Ruse (the capital of the Danube province) states in 1869 what the teaching in these schools was like:

“The teachers train the children by the system that was used upon themselves. Teaching is but a political tool. Their teaching is more simple than simple, but they will rant long and hard about the goodness of the Czar and the future of the great Slavic fatherland. The Ottoman

government will be proved as an oppressor of the Bulgar nation, the western powers an enemy only trying to delay the day of salvation for the Bulgar nation. Lessons begin and end with a prayer for the Czar. The sultan's name will only be mentioned in official ceremonies such as presentation where a Turkish government official is present.” (Şimşir 1989b, 77-78)

At the end of the 19th century, Russia's Foreign Minister Gortşakov and several others were not Panslavists. Count Nikolai Ignatyev, who became Russia's Istanbul ambassador, however, was. He acted to widen the Slavic school system on the Balkan and as the head organisator for the Balkan Panslavist network. (Şimşir 1989b, 85-87)

Panslavists hoped there would be national rebellions on the Balkan, through which Slavic states could be born. The attempts shrank to not being able to get the people to join the rebellion: even though the schools taught Panslavism, the group of Panslavist nationalists was very small. They were, however, able to bring on agitation during 1876, so that it received international attention. The Panslavist propaganda machinery's aim was just that, to create agitation to entitle foreign powers to step in, foremost Russia, whose financial and strategic advantages were in question. In this situation, Russia attacked Turkey, in order to "defend the Christians". The Russians attained victory, as a result of which a large portion of Turkey, especially the Bulgarian area, was supposed to be subordinated to the control of Russia. However, Bismarck, Germany and other western superpowers, who did not think highly of the growth of Russia's authority, intervened in the matter. The Treaty of Berlin of 1878 that was thus created, decided that the Bulgarian principality mainly covering the Danube province would remain in name in the subordination of Turkey, but temporarily under Russia's military control. During the state of war, more than a million ethnic Turks were banished from Bulgaria. (Karpat 2004, 55.)

The Russian occupation quickly made the Bulgarians define themselves Slavs but not Russians. (Kohn 2007, 88.) They wanted to get rid of the Russian occupation and the supremacy of the Russians. In this situation, Bulgaria chose itself a German ruler from the German small princes. Only in 1908 did Bulgaria, who was then only formally subordinate to Turkey, declared it an independent kingdom. (Jelavich

2006a, 396-403, Jelavich 2006b, 41.) During the years 1912-13, Bulgaria together with Serbia, Montenegro and Greece attacked Turkey in an aspiration to gain control of Macedonia. In the second Balkan war in 1913, the same states were at war with each other for the control of their plunder, Macedonia. In the Great War, Bulgaria then allied with Turkey. (Uğurlu 2007, 7-10.) After the communist era after the Second World War, Bulgaria became the most devoted ally of the Soviet Union. It petitioned twice to become a Soviet republic. (Crampton 2007, 167.) So, on the other hand, the sovereign state of Bulgaria was born as an accomplishment of Panславists whose ideology originated in Russia, and on the other hand Russia's military stepping in and, at the end, of the western intervention. One must think that Russia ultimately did not pursue the founding of an independent Slavic Bulgar state. The Russian aspiration was more Panrussist: The Russian Empire had to be reached all over the Slavic areas. In the least phase, the aim was at conquering Constantinople and creating a third Rome.

Considering the crucial effort of the Russians in the birth of Bulgaria, it is interesting to compare this to the fate of the other Bulgar state left in Russia's territory, Volga Bulgaria. In Volga Bulgaria, since 1920 called Tatarstan, the Turkic language has been preserved until today, as well as the Bulgar identity. While Russia was conquering the Balkans from the Turks, Russian Bulgars reminded that they are a Turkic people. Now they feared that the Balkan nationalism would seize the Bulgar history to its own use. If the Bulgars were banned from being Turkish, perhaps soon the Volga Bulgaria would be explained to be a Russian created state and its Bulgars an originally Slavic people. (Leitzinger 2006, 77.) Until the 1920's, the Muslim Turks on the Volga riverfront were called Bulgars and the Christian Turks Chuvashes. Of these the former were mostly urban citizens, the latter rural peasantry. The Chuvash language was a direct continuation of the Bulgar Turkish, which had been the language of the first Bulgar people in the 5th-7th centuries. The Bulgar language, however, had come closer to the general Turkish because of the Turks from the steppe that had fled the Mongols. General Turkish was not only the language of the Ottoman Empire but also the common communicating language of other Turkish clans. (Ercilasun 2004, 199-211, 359-371.)

In Russia, there had already been plans to Russianize Turks in the 19th century. Priest Nikolai Ilminskiy (1822-1891) who worked in the University of Kazan, whose goal was to convert Russia's Turks into the Orthodox religion and to russianise them, had proposed a strategy to dismantle the Turkish language at first into separate dialects. Everyone would have to use the Cyrillic alphabet and the differences in writing the different dialects would be made with different diacritic markers. While Russian would be proposed as a general language, this would before long replace the use of small group dialects. Contrary to this, a Turk, İsmail Gaspıralı had in his magazine publications written about the linguistic unity of all Turkish ancestry peoples and practically also applied his thoughts in his writings. Ilminskiy was aware of Gaspıralı's actions and he wrote prosecutor Pobedobčev some letters of complaint: "He is trying in his own publications to make Ottoman Turkish a shared language of all Turkish ancestry Muslims". Ilminskiy was worried about this development: "I have heard that in Kazan, the number of Turkish magazines and in addition school books is increasing from year to year. The contents of the books are European and language Ottoman Turkish." (Kurat 1993, 361. Kengerli 2005, 141-144.)

Ilminskiy could not stop Gaspıralı, but after the revolution in 1917, the Soviet government executed Ilminskiy's program. This did not only apply to Turkish peoples, but was a general policy concerning minority nationalities: publishing in their own languages was allowed but it was at the same time limited to such a narrow realm that its significance was mainly folkloristic.

At the same time as Volga Bulgaria turned into the autonomous Tatarstan soviet republic in 1920, the appellation Bulgar was banned at the order of Stalin. From then on, the word "Tatar" had to be used, which in the Russian language had a pejorative, conqueror Mongol reference. In Russian and Soviet school teaching there were mentions of the "yoke of the Tatars", referring to the Mongol conquering. (Leitzinger 2006, 78-79.) The Bulgar identity still was not forgotten. According to Leitzinger, there were at the census of October 2002 a great number of citizens speaking a language related to Turkish, who wanted to define themselves Bulgars instead of Tatars. (Leitzinger 2006, 80.) During Putin's period, in 2003, the "Tatars" have made an official petition for restoring their honor and the name "Bulgar". In the reply from the Russian federation's commission

for defending the rights of persecution victims number A 19-3-12, 15/04/04, it is said that the petition has been forwarded. (<http://www.mi.ru/~bolgar> 02.03.2003.)

While the Volga Bulgarians tried to remind people of the original meaning of the word Bulgar, the state of Bulgaria has worked determinedly to build a far-reaching history for the Slavic Bulgar nation. (Karpat 2004, 329.) When Bulgaria after the Treaty of Berlin was left to live as an independent unit, the construction of the nation was severely unfinished. The new Bulgarian identity was created in a hurry, and as for the other new states on the Balkan, the identity was desired to be simplified into a single (Slavic Bulgarian) element. This is why it was filled with distortions, conflicts and anachronisms. The most important part of the Slavic Bulgar nationalism was to present the Slavic Bulgar "nation" as eternal, to achieve which, continuity was needed. The "eternal" Slavic Bulgar nation construction began when Panslavistically oriented intellectuals were invited to Sofia to build a Slavic identity with the guidance of Russians. A Czech historian was selected as Minister of Education, and the Ministry of Education founded in 1878 had a central mission of formulating a national Bulgarian history and to create national literature. (Şimşir 1986, 33-40.)

Useful in building a national identity was the Russian model, where the identity was built for an opposing identity. This happened with the ambiguity of the word Tatar: "Tatars" were now interpreted as Ottoman, and as the Russians complained having been under the yoke of Tatars or Mongols for centuries, it was now complained that the Bulgarians have been under the yoke of the Ottoman. Thus the first Bulgarian novel is Ivan Vazov's *Under the Yoke* from 1894. Vazov wrote his piece in Russia and it is about "the last years under the yoke and the nation preparing for battle". There never was such a battle or preparing for one. Vazov's construction of the Bulgarians happens on an artificial analogy and it is situated in the 19th century.

When they wanted to use history as an argument for the Slavic Bulgarianism, the use of the word "Bulgarian" became a stumbling stone. In the 20th century it was no longer possible to deny the fact that the Bulgars that history knows had been a Turkic people. When the newer studies' results had been brought to the general awareness of the scientific world, nationalists could no longer invalidate them, no matter how

inappropriate for their causes they were. Since then, the solution has been to speak of the Turkic Bulgars the history knows as "proto Bulgars" and say that these Proto Bulgars had merged with Slavs, which had resulted in a nation that was Slavic although named Bulgarian. No specific attention has been paid to the "scientific" proving of the merging claims. This is seen in for example that the "merging" in the Bulgarian history descriptions seems to have happened in an instant, as in a single strike (even within a year). Constructing the Slavic history beyond the 19th century is simply creating myths. The nationalist ideology has contorted the Balkan historiography throughout and continues to do so as we speak. One of the most significant sources of contortion has been projecting the nationalistic thinking and people into times where they did not exist. So, all these projections are unfounded. None of these claims that consider the discovery of the "original" people behind centuries, are based on original data; on the contrary, theory severely conflict the sources and zeitgeist. (Stojkov 2003.)

One of the paradoxes related to the establishment of the Bulgarian state was that to create a Slavic state, the population structure was the least favorable on all of the Balkans in the Turkish Danube province left in Russia's occupation: there were fewer Slavs in relation to Turks than anywhere else. Ethnically the Turkish Gagauzes are of the oldest derivation in the Bulgarian area. If "Bulgarianism" was to be searched in the area's oldest people, it would be the Gagauzes. The same trail on the north side of the Black Sea that the first Bulgars (who were ethnically Turkic) had used, several Turkish clans had followed: Pechenek, Oghuz, Cuman. The southern route through Asia Minor had been trodden with the permission of East Rome's Emperor in the 13th century by the Oghuz who traveled, lead by the Seljuk ruler. The Seljuk dynasty had adopted Islam, but after arriving in their new homeland, the Oghuz largely converted to Christianity. Permanently Islam came to the area with the Ottomans on the 14th century. (Stojkov 2003.) The Bulgars had settled in Dobruja and a part of Misia, where there had been no Slavic population before the 19th century. The population was ethnically Turkic Christians and Turkish Muslims. There is no righter way to see the origins of the area's Turkish population than to see descendants of the Turks king Asparuh lead to the country in the 9th century. A large part of these had kept their ethnic self-consciousness still in the 19th century. "They called themselves

Bulgarians and were considered as ancestors of the Turkish Bulgarian from the Middle Ages, also recorded are their historical legends, such as the one for the existence of two Bulgarian capitals, something which the historical science at the end of the 19th century was not able to foresee.” (Stojkov 2003; footnote 17: quotation of K. Shkorpil.) The Ottoman population count was not done on ethnical but religious grounds. Still on the 19th century, the divide into Christian and Muslim centrally defined the people's way of understanding their identity: in addition to Slavs there existed both Muslim and Christian Turks. Back then the Bulgarian identity did not exist, but it was given birth to, as depicted above, artificially by Russian-lead Panslavists during the 19th century. Still in 1960 it was possible even officially to bring up the historical truth that conflicted the new Bulgarian identity. For example, in the foreword to a Bulgarian-Turkish anthology from 1960, its editor, a Bulgarian-Turkish literature professor İbrahim Tatarlı states:

“A part of Bulgarian-Turks, especially many of the North-East Bulgarian Turks have come here by the Black Sea north coast in several different phases before the Ottoman Turks arrived on the Balkan. A large part of these Turks had become Slavs and a part has remained minority groups. This is proven by some linguistic special features of the northern Turkish peoples and the existence of such Turkish geographical names as Deliorman before the Ottoman Turks arrived. Later, after the Ottoman Turks arrived on the Balkans, people have come here from Anatolia who has mixed with the earlier population. Later this combination has been added with Turkified Slavic clans.” (Tatarliyef 1960, 9.)

The name used for Slavic Bulgars, even today by the Gagauzes is *Tukan*. Slavic Bulgar language has been and is called simply Slavic. The origins and etymology of the word Gagauz is unexplained. It is a fairly new name, only generalized in the 19th century, at the same time as Slavs adopted the name Bulgar. The identity created by Bulgaria's ultra-nationalistic school education, paralleling Bulgarianism to Bulgarian Slavs, is naturally not met among southern Slavs outside Bulgaria. In 1765 – 1812, Balkan's Christian Turks - Gagauzes - moved a lot to Bucak (nowadays an autonomic area in Moldova). (Tatarliyef 1960, 9.) Even after this move Deliorman's population structure was Turkish in majority. A Bulgarian Slavic writer Anton Strashimirov (1872-1937) tells about his childhood on the Bulgarian Turkish area at the end of the 19th century:

“In our childhood in Varna, whose 20 000 inhabitants only included seven Bulgarian families, we spoke Turkish. My grandmother from Razgrad taught me a Slavic prayer “otšen naš”. But my grandmother's daughters, including my mother, had become Gagauz. They were born and raised in Varna. As my Razgradian father died I was only five years old. By what coincidence, I don't know, but from a folksong book by brother Milyadinov we had at home, I started to learn Bulgarian well. What a shame that even after Bulgaria had become independent, even educated kids spoke Turkish in Varna...” (A. Strašimirov: Biblioteka za učenika. Sofia 1985, 264. quotation translated by Zeynep Zafer.)

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

We have to conclude that the ethnic problems on the Balkan are badly investigated and sometimes even fake, thus the ethno-genetic processes are not studied from scientific position. The misuse of history has been the most significant element in the creation of national myths, and through them in the modeling of the national consciousness. Developing in the national states, the historiography often was made to be a maid of the national doctrine. The consequences are huge in all areas of the historiography but are especially hard in the research of those historical periods, in which there was no nationalism. The last developments show that the ultranationalist drifts are in use of the right-side populist movements. Same time they are more fantastic than ever.

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