Pomaks, their past and present

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Abstract

The Pomaks are generally defined as a Muslim ethnic group in the Balkans, speaking mostly Pomak language, a Slavic dialect very close to Bulgarian. Turan discusses research on Pomaks.

Full text

Introduction

Through history, the Balkans continued to be at the cross roads of various races, religions and cultures. From time to time peoples of different origins either mixed and lived together in harmony or fell into conflict and fought on this peninsula. As a result of this, after each intense encounter new forms originated from the intermingling of different cultures influencing language, music, arts, literature, etc. Tribes passing across or settling in the Balkans were effected by the local culture and also influenced the local culture and even formed original entities, as in the case of the Bogomils, which is unique to this region. In the area of traditional beliefs, the shared use of the same shrines by Christians and Muslims by ascribing their sacred feelings to the common symbols is typical.1 Thus, in the Balkans, as a result of encounters between various religious, cultural and national groups new groups emerged, such as the Christian Orthodox Turks (Gagauzes), Bulgarian speaking Pomaks, and Serb-Croat speaking Bosnians.

An optimistic view of this situation would describe it as one of variety and richness of culture. But the same situation also causes much difficulty in explanation and interpretation. Another weakness of research in this field is the reality and complexity of the problems. The states in this region interpret the subjects according to their own political interests. Therefore, as the quality of scholarly reports diminishes, subjective speculations increase.

Pomaks are one of the difficult subjects to be studied. Most of the knowledge on Pomaks is derived from other general sources about ethnicity in southeastern Balkans. There are only a few independent serious studies on them. Yet, there are deep differences between the scholars. Many political speculations obscure the research field. An attempt will be made here to provide a clearer view.

Who Are the Pomaks?

The Pomaks are generally defined as a Muslim ethnic group in the Balkans, speaking mostly Pomak language, which is a Slavic dialect very close to Bulgarian, except Serbian Pomaks, who speak Serbo-Croatian. Pomaks have a close affinity to Turks; at least half of them, if not more, refuse to be called Pomak and call themselves Turks. They live in the south and north of Bulgaria, in Macedonia, in the Kosova region of Serbia, northern Greece, and limited numbers in Albania and Turkey. In general they are called Pomaks, but in some parts of the Rhodope region they are called either 'Ahriyanis' or 'Agaryanis'; but in Macedonia they are called 'Torbeshes', and sometimes 'Poturs' or 'Kurkis'; in Kosova and Albania they are called 'Gorans'.

Pomak, as a term, was first used by A. Bone in 1839.2 He came across some Pomak groups living in Selvi and Lofca regions during his trip and he first described them as Pomaks. Before this date, neither the Western sources nor the Ottomans used this term. In the Ottoman administration all of the citizens derived their identity either as Muslim or as non-Muslim. There was no other subdivision based on specific nationalities.3

Pomak as a word appears in the Slavic language meaning 'helper', derived from 'pomocz' as 'pomaci'. According to Kanitz, who for the first time tried to explain this name, during the Ottoman invasion of the Balkans and/or afterwards Pomaks helped and guided the army, and thus they were called 'pomak' (he]per) by their Christian fellow countrymen. Although there are other opinions,4 this is the most generally accepted explanation. However, some Greeks claim that this word comes from

the Greek language.5 In the Rhodope region locally they are also called 'Ahriyani'. Some Greeks say that this word came from 'Grek-Ahriyani' who lived in Greece during the third and fourth centuries BC. But they do not have any evidence that those people lived in the Rhodopes as well. This word might also come from the Turkish word 'ahi' (brother).6

It is interesting to note that almost all different explanations of the name Pomak were related to Bulgarian language and all different explanations of the name Torbes were related to Turkish language. Cilev, Hacivasilevic and Palikuruseva give different interpretations on the origin of the word 'torbes' which they relate to the Turkish word 'Torba' meaning 'bag'.7 Some of the Pomaks living in Vardar Macedonia region explain their torbes name as reference to their changing religion and/or places where they live four to five times. In Turkish `dort-bes' became 'torbes'. However, 'torbes' in Turkish refers to people with deference, who are loyal and do not cause problems. This view is also supported by the historical attitude of Torbes people who never caused any conflict with Ottoman administration and accepted to remain secondary and supportive under all circumstances. However, there is no conflict about the origin of the word 'Goran'. Pomaks from Kosova and Albania derive this name from the Gora mountains in the region and Gora is a Serbian name.

Ethnicity and Identity

These discussions over the word Pomak and its other local variations also involve reference to race and ethnic origins. As a matter of fact all the states where Pomaks are scattered and settled claim that Pomaks are originally from their nation. Bulgarians say that they are Islamized Bulgarians or 'Bulgarian Muhammedans'. Macedonians claim the same that Pomaks are Islamized Macedonians. According to Milivoy Pavlovic,8 these people are a Slavic Macedonian tribe living in the Balkans. D. Obolenski9 and Dimitri Angelov10 say that Torbes people are the last descendents of Macedonian Bogomils. Turks define them as Pomak or Bulgarian speaking Muslim Turks. Serbians refer to Gorans as Islamized Serbians and Greeks claim them to be of Greek origin.11 Even Albanians claim them to be of Albanian descent. All these very different explanations take one of the Pomak, Torbes, Goran or Agaryani definitions, whichever supports their view.

According to non-Turkish sources the Pomaks were the ancient Slavic or Slavized inhabitants of the Balkans, and were forcibly converted to Islam during the period of the Ottoman dominations which lasted until the nineteenth century. This claim ignores historical evidence that the Ottomans never tried to convert non-Muslims to Islam. If they really had wanted to do so, first they would have attempted to convert their brothers, the Gagavuz Turks, living in northern Bulgaria. The Christian Gagavuz are Turkish, they speak the Turkish language and they remained Christian Orthodox. Even today they speak Turkish and they are Orthodox. Without any suppression, they lived almost 600 years under the Ottoman rule. As S. Shaw pointed out, if the Ottoman state had carried out an Islamization policy, all the non-Muslim peoples of the Balkans could have been converted to Islam during the 600 years of Ottoman rule.12

According to the Turkish view, Pomaks' origin can be traced to the 'Kuman' or 'Kipcak' Turks,13 who came from Northern China in 916. They arrived and settled at first in Ukrania and then descended across Romania to Northern Bulgaria, along the Danube river and in Dobruca during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Meanwhile southward migration continued to the Rhodopes and Eastern Macedonia. They gave their name to the geographic locations where they had settled such as in Macedonia, Kumanova; in Sophia, Kumantski; in Goce Delcev (Nevrokop), Kumanca; in Kesriya, Kumanicevo; in Vidin, Kumani Island; in Varna, Kumanova; in Nigbolu, Kumana; and in Lofca, Kumanitsa.14

Historical Roots

Beginning in 1034 AD, Kumans and another Turkish tribe in the Balkans, the Pecheneks, became very powerful and threatened the Byzantinium Empire. In 1050 Byzantinium made a counter attack but failed. As a result, Byzantinium had to pay taxes to Kuman Turks in 1054. Thus, during the following 30 years the Rhodopes, Western Thrace and Macedonia were left to Kuman occupation. Pecheneks moved out to Kosova, Yeni Pazar and Bosnia. However, by the end of the eleventh century, in 1091, Kumans and Pecheneks lost their powerful position in the Southeastern Balkans. Dominant Pecheneks moved into Bosnia-Herzegovina and Sophia. Kumans migrated into Romania, Hungary, Austria, and Czechoslovakia. During the course of history these Turkish tribes assimilated with local Christian natives and lost their identity. But some Kuman groups who had settled and

remained in Western Thrace, the Rodopes and Pirin Macedonia, continued to live in these regions and to keep their original identity. 15

During the tenth and twelfth centuries the Byzantinium Empire was threatened by Slavs from the North, and by Latins from the West. In order to protect Byzantinium from their enemies in the Balkans, Byzantinium rulers had transported about 60,000 Muslim Turks with promises of exemption from taxation and religious and cultural freedom, and settled them round Ohri and Thessalonika from the middle Anatolia, in Konya. That's why they are called Konyar Turks. Byzantinium sources call them `Vardar Turks'.16 This historical fact that Muslim Turks came and settled to the Rhodopes and Southern Balkans during Byzantinium Empire is accepted by Bulgarian historians, P. Delidarev, Ivan Batakliev, Anna Kaomnena, and K. Jirecek.17

It is also known that in the fourteenth century, before the Ottomans, some Muslim Turkish tribes, Aydin Ogullari and Saruhan Ogullari who had settled in Western Anatolia, attacked the Balkans by sea with their navy. One of their leaders, Gazi Umur Bey, settled some nomadic Turkish groups in the Rodopes and Western Thrace in 1345. This area was called by his name 'Umur Eli' for a while. (aka Bey, another Turkish commander, brought about 50,000 Turkish people from Western Anatolia to the Rhodopes via Kavala and Dedeagac. Thus, between 1065 and 1365 about 200,000 Muslim Turkish nomads immigrated and settled in this region. Jirecek also mentions these Muslim Turkish settlements of the thirteenth century, and emphasizes the role of the Turkish dervishes, tekkes, as Muslim missionaries to Islamize the region during the reign of Byzantinium.18 Therefore, Pomaks are Islamized Kuman Turks in the Rhodopes and Macedonia region who were influenced by the Muslim missionaries during the time of Byzantinium Empire.19

As a consequence of living in Ukrania and Romania, Pomaks were influenced by Ukranian Slavic language. It is said that Pomak language is etymologically based on Cagatay Turkish dialect, and strongly influenced by Ukranian Slavic, Kumanic, Oguz Turkish, Nogayic and Arabic words. We need comparative studies on Pomak language and its relations with other languages. Naturally, Pomak language is also influenced by other neighbouring languages in different regions, and has developed several dialects such as Rhodope-Pomak dialect, Katranci-Pomak dialect, Danubian region Pomak dialect and Macedonian Pomak dialect, etc.20 These different dialects also need to be investigated.

Estimates of Pomak Population

The first British consul in Bulgaria, Colonel Edward Neale, in his confidential report21 in 1858, gives some information about Pomaks, referring to them as `Bulgarian Muhammedans'. According to him they '... chiefly compose the population of the mountain range between Sofia and Alexanitza, on the frontiers of Servia, and including the town of Nissa'. However, Colonel Neale does not provide any further information about how many they were. Furthermore, another British Consul in Bulgaria, Sir R. Dalyell, in his confidential report22 in 1876, uses the term 'Pomak' and while giving the size of the population, counts the Pomaks in Turkish population as `Turks (Asiatic and Slavonic) 1,200,000'. Prince Tcherkasski's `Scheme for Bulgaria', in 1877, though giving a lot of information about ethnicity, nationalities and their numbers in Bulgaria, does not mention Pomaks.23 In June 1878, Bulgarians gave British Ambassador A. H. Layard a statistical report on the population of Manastir and Thessalonika districts to show that there were more Bulgarians than Greeks there. In this report, while giving the size of the population of Goce Delcev (Nevrokop), Debre, and Koprulu (Velesse), they mentioned Pomaks and gave their number in the villages.24 However, while giving the results of 1905 census, the British Consul at Sofia does not mention Pomaks in his 1907 report on Bulgaria.25

In 1876, Jirecek estimated 500,000 total Pomak population including 100,000 in Loves and Pleven.26 In 1877 V. Teplov gave the total number of Pomaks in Bulgaria, Macedonia and Western Thrace as 300,000.27 Gavrilovii's estimation at the beginning of this century was 400,000,28 and Ischirkoff's was about the same.29 Other sources such as the Russian consul at Monastir, N. Skiryabin;30 Timotiyev;31 I. D. R. Karl Poyker;32 Atanos Benderev;33 and Spiridon Gobcevic34 gave various figures on Pomak population in different regions in the Balkans during the second half of the nineteenth century. In Bulgaria, during the Principality in 1891, according to Jirecek, their number was 28,000. However, in 1900 according to the Bulgarian official statistics, there were 279 in the cities and 20,358 in the villages making a total of 20,637 Pomaks.35 In 1905, there were 147 Pomaks in the cities and 19,226 in the villages. Thus a total of 19,373 Pomak population lived in

Bulgaria.36 In 1910, according to the same sources, there were 21,146 Pomaks, 122 of them in the cities and 21,024 in the villages.37

After the Balkan Wars the Bulgarian border extended southward. In 1917, Pomak population in Bulgaria, according to Ischirkoff, was 121,000.38 However, according to Bulgarian official sources, in the 1920 census, the number of Pomaks was 88,399; in the 1926 census, 102,351 and in 1934, 134,125. Of these only 5% lived in the towns and the rest, 95%, lived in the villages.39 Vucinich's estimate of Pomak population in Bulgaria in the 1960s is 180,000.40 However, for the same years Schopflin gives a figure of 300,000 Pomaks.41 Kettani's estimation is around 370,000 Pomaks in 1982.42 The latest number which has been quoted by the local authorities and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Bulgaria, on 1 January 1989, is 268,971.43 Their actual number for Bulgaria is thought to be about 600,000. Thus, estimates of the Pomak population of Bulgaria through most of twentieth century vary according to sources, as shown in Table 1 above.

Estimates of Pomak population in Macedonia varies only somewhat, as indicated in Table 2 below, by source and year of estimate.

In Aegean Macedonia (today's Greece), in 1912 just before the Balkan Wars, the Pomak population was estimated to be 40,921.44 In Western Thrace their number was given as 11,739, in 1927; and in Thrace 75,337.45 Kettani's estimation is 40,000, in 1982.46 However, official Greek sources in the 1980s estimate 30,000 Pomaks in Greece.47 In Albania, it is impossible to give even their approximate number, as there are contradictory estimations ranging from as little as 3000 to 100,000.48

It should not be forgotten that between 1877 and 1912 in the Balkans, like all other Muslim populations, the number of Pomak population changed several times. During the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878, almost all Pomak people fled from the Danube region to Macedonia. Though most of them returned in 1880, but due to the suppression policy of the Bulgarian government, they migrated to Turkey soon after. The union of Eastern Roumeli with Bulgaria in 1885 also caused many Pomaks to migrate to Turkey. Furthermore, during and after the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, many Pomaks migrated to Turkey. These are the biggest waves of Pomak migrations. During these years and afterwards Pomak migration from Bulgaria continued, but demonstration and even estimation of their exact numbers are almost impossible.

Apart from migrations, another important reason for the varying estimates of the Pomak population is diverse interpretations of Pomak identity. As mentioned earlier, all the Balkan nations claim that Pomaks belong to their nationality. During the censuses of 1919 and 1921 in Macedonia, Pomaks were recorded either as Turkish or Albanian. During the census of 1992 in Bulgaria, census results of the Smolyen region were cancelled, because 100,000 Pomaks of this region declared to be registered as Turks. Thus it is possible that in some areas they might not be considered and officially registered as Pomak. During a field study in Bulgaria in August 1992, we observed that some Bulgarians still were uneasy at accepting Pomaks as a different group. These people were with the government in Bulgaria until 1989. In this sense Pomak attitude is also very obscure. They do not like to be called 'Pomak' and when they are asked they might give different answers, as we shall see later. Therefore, all these numbers given above about Pomak population are only estimations. I am also a bit sceptical especially about the numbers which the Bulgarian official census presents. In my opinion they must be higher than the official estimates.

View Image - TAL 1.

During the Bulgarian Principality in 1881, Bulgarian authorities attempted to teach Bulgarian to Pomak children in the schools in the region of Qepni. In spite of working hard to achieve their aim for a long time, they couldn't succeed. During Stambulovski's government Pomaks were allowed to teach Turkish49 language to their children. Through the 1907-1908 academic year there were 23 Pomak primary schools with 31 teachers and 1206 students.50 And during the 1909-1910 academic year they had 23 teachers and 859 students in 15 schools.51 Later, students at these Pomak schools were transferred to Bulgarian schools.

As we have seen, the historical origin of Pomaks is still very puzzling. Therefore, I believe it is much better to deal with who they are rather than making speculations on who they were. The best way to learn who they are is, of course, simply to ask them. As far as I know, until now they have never been asked who they are. Yet, without asking them or listening to them, correct interpretation cannot be made.

The Basis of Pomak Identity

There is no doubt that the main component of Pomak identity is religion, which means being Muslim. They are the most religious ethnic group in the Balkans. National obscurity pushed them to identify themselves closely with Islam. This belief and principles encircle their life and protect them from all different aspects. Their national identity was constructed on religion and it is a sort of religion based nationalism.

View Image - TABLE 2.

When their origin or identity is asked they answer: 'I am a Muslim'. But when you ask their religion, their standard answer is: 'We are Pomaks'. Pomak and Muslim are equivalent terms in their consciousness. Islam is a nationality as well as a religion in their mind. Sometimes they answer as 'Muslim Turk', and in Macedonia exceptionally few would say 'Muslim Albanian'. The interesting point is, they search for an identity from the Muslim nations and stay away from non-Muslims. However, since the return of Ottomans to Anatolia, for almost the last 100 years there has been a lot of political pressure on Pomaks, concerning their nationality by the new Bulgarian, Greek, and Macedonian governments. So it should not be surprising to hear them saying that they are Bulgarian or Macedonian or Greek.52

Bulgarian historian Yordan Ivanof in 1915 said that Pomaks know their national origin but they do not want to speak about it. According to Ivanof, `Pomaks give more value to religion than nationality and they like to be called Turk'. Ivanof counted 100 Pomak villages in the Rhodopes, saying this is the region where Pomaks are the most concentrated. He also observed that in these villages Pomaks speak two languages, Bulgarian and Turkish.53

Spiridan Gobcevic, on his trip to Ohri in 1880, says that most of the Pomak people identified themselves as Turkish even though they could not speak Turkish. He said that religion formed their national identity. However, he still claimed that they were `Islamized Serbians'.54 In 1890, Gobceviq in his book Macedonia and Old Serbia says that Pomaks living in Macedonia describe themselves as of Turkish origin. Another Bulgarian historian, St. N. Siskov, describes Pomaks as `Bulgarian Muhammedans' who always held religion before nationality.55 Gligor Todorovski says that `we should admit, even-though we define these people as Serbians and Bulgarian Muslims, because they are Muslim, their neighbours call them Turks. Consequently, Muslim Macedons living in Depreste, Lajani, Tirnova, Pestalevo, Pirlepe describe themselves as Turk and their Macedonian neighbours call them Turks as well'.56 An American Protestant Missionary report from Thessaloniki to their headquarters in Boston, in 1909, mentions that around Daridere they met Bulgarian Muhammedans who were called Ahiyani and `of course they wish to be classed as Turks and not as Bulgars'57

During my trip to Macedonia in July 1992, I visited Tirebiste and the surrounding Torbes villages. I observed that they were uneasy at being called Torbes and considered this as degrading. Particularly the older generation identified themselves as Turk, and referred to Gorans living in Kosova region as Torbes. In addition, people of these villages were complaining at not being able to speak Turkish. They want to learn Turkish. They also want to have public or private school instruction in Turkish language. The Democratic Party of Turks supported them in their efforts to establish Turkish private schools. However, the Macedonian government refused and declared that they were Muslim Macedonians and had nothing to do with Turkish.

The attitude of Pomaks was clear during the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 and the following years. They had fought against the Bulgarian and Russian forces during the war. After the war Pomaks objected to the San Stefano agreement of 1878 which required them to live under the

Bulgarian rule. In the years that followed they resisted against the new situation. As a result of this, an international commission was formed to investigate their situation and to find solutions.58 The Bulgarian Crackdown

Bulgarian nationalist administrators were uneasy with this Pomak attitude of defining themselves as Muslim and especially as Turkish. They were forced to convert to Christianity and to accept being Bulgar. Since receiving Bulgarian independence in 1908, four main eras of pressures have passed. Between October 1912 and July 1914 it was mainly concerning name, religion and vestment. From 1937 to 1945 it was vestment and name; from 1962 to 1964 vestment and name; and from 1971 to 1990 name, religion, language and vestment were the main areas in which Pomaks were coerced. During the Balkan wars the head of the General Staff, General Savof, ordered the Bulgarian occupation forces in Pirin Macedonia and Rhodopes, to forcibly convert Pomak Muslims into Christianity and the Bulgar nation. All the resisting Pomaks were to be eliminated.59 On 5 November 1912, the Mayor of Istrumica ordered Orthodox Greek Metropolitan to convert all the migrants to Christianity.60 Many mosques were converted into churches, and Muslims were coerced to go to church every Sunday. Anybody who resisted was punished or killed.61 Those from the Pomak villages such as Bouynove, who didn't accept the Bulgarian names or Christianity, fled to Greece and stayed there hoping for the situation to improve. Their names were forcibly and systematically changed. During this period 200,000 Muslim Pomaks were forced to change their names to Slavic-Bulgarian names and were forced to accept Orthodoxy. During World War I, when Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire were allies, the situation calmed down somewhat. Pomak Muslims reconstructed their mosques and reinstated their Muslim names.

In 1920 the Bulgarian administration entered into a new attempt at Bulgarization of Pomak Muslims. Pomaks were restricted from attending Turkish schools and were forbidden to open private schools. Then Muslim school boards were abolished and unified with Bulgarian school boards.62 In July 1942 the Bulgarian Parliament passed a new law which commanded Pomak names to be changed to Bulgarian ones. During this period about 60,000 Pomak names were changed. Between 1942 and 1944 about 2000 Turkish and Pomak village names were changed from Turkish to Bulgarian.63 In most cases those names were just translated into Bulgarian. In 1944, the Communist regime came into power. In order to achieve the support of the minorities, the Communists delivered Pomak names back to them in 1947. However, as part of the assimilation policy, we also notice that some Pomak villages from the Rhodopes region, and around Mousevo, were forced to resettle in Northern Bulgaria during 1948-1952, alongside the traditionally settled group around Lovetch, such as the Hadjiyska.

In April 1956, the Bulgarian Communist Party Central Committee Plenum decided to create a unified socialist Bulgarian public as their achievement goal. Therefore, while curtailing Muslim minorities' religious life, they started to change their Muslim names to Bulgarian. Before World War II, Turkish and Pomak villages in Bulgaria averaged between four and eight hodjas (Muslim priests) in each village. Between the end of World War II and 1956, the total number of hodjas in these villages was 2,715. Of these, 2,393 of them were working among the Turkish population, and 322 hodjas were among the Pomaks, yielding a ratio of one hodja for 430 Pomaks. But in 1961 this ratio decreased five times with only one hodja for 1,459 Pomaks.64

As a first step, in the 1960s Muslim Gypsies were forced to change their names. After completing this process, the Bulgarian Communist Party Central Committee and Polit Bureau announced on 17 July 1970, their decision to Bulgarize the Muslim Pomaks in the Rhodope region by terror. It was openly discussed at the Bulgarian Communist Party Regional Congress of Pasmakli on 3 August 1973.65 During 1971-1974 all Pomaks were subjected to change their Turkish Muslim names to Bulgarian under the so-called `Process of Rebirth'. But it did not work as easily as with the Gypsies. The Pomaks resisted strongly as they did not want to take Bulgarian names. Many of them were wounded, and a large numbers of Pomaks were sentenced to 3-15 years' imprisonment. Many more were deported to other areas of Bulgaria, and even killed.66 It was clear that the suppression by the Bulgarian government was not only for their Turkish Muslim names but also for their religion, vestment, tradition, feasts, etc. Thus all their non-Bulgarian daily life was subjected to censure. Their mosques were destroyed, circumcision was prohibited, and even the people who circumcised their sons were sentenced.

After their 'success' with the Pomaks, the Bulgarian government started to work in the same way on the Turks in the 1980s. However, soon it proved to be a more difficult task as compared to Gypsies and Pomaks. Again the use of Turkish language was prohibited. Many people were wounded, deported, sentenced, even killed. In the summer of 1989 more than 300,000 people were deported to Turkey. The exiles included at least 5,400 Communist Party members as well. In August 1989 to stem the tide the Turkish government closed the border.

Freedom to Name

In Bulgaria, on 10 November 1989 a new era started with the fall of the regime of racist dictator Jivkov. At that time 400,000 Turkish people were waiting to receive permission to go to Turkey. As a result of this democratization process which had started in Bulgaria, on 6 March 1990 a new law was passed allowing people who were forced to change their Turkish names to Bulgarian to change their names back to Turkish. Another law was passed on 15 November 1990 to revert their Turkish names while dropping the Slavonic (-ov/-ova) suffix from the surnames. However, since 1912, very dramatically, four times the Pomaks were forced to give up their Turkish names and accept Bulgarian ones. Five times they changed their forced Bulgarian names back to Turkish ones as soon as they could and for the last and latest change they could even drop the Salvonic -ov or ova suffix from their surnames. An example of sequence of name change follows:

Ali Osmanov Bairamov (pre-1912) - Iliya Ognyanov Bogdanov (1912-1913) -9 Ali Osmanov Bairamov (1913-1937) -9 Iliya Ognyanov Bogdanov (1937-1945) -4 Ai Osmanov Bairamov (1945-1962)<Iliya Ognyanov Bogdanov (1962-1964) -o Ali Osmanov Bairamov (1964-1971) - Iliya Ognyanov Bogdanov (1971-March 1990) Ali Osmanov Bairamov (March-November 1990) - Ali Osman Bairam (November 1990-).67

Thus, for a Pomak who was born before 1912, and lived until after 1990, the name was changed nine times, making a total of 10 times that a person was given a name starting at birth.

After all these harsh experiences the Pomak have become very cautious and prudent. They do not trust outsiders anymore. While making interviews and collecting information during the field study in August 1992, many respondents did not want us to note their names as a source of information. They said `we trust you but you will go back to Belgium, USA, England and these papers will stay in Sofia, and you never know'. We were a group, including Bulgarians and other foreigners. However, many respondents recognizing my Turkish identity preferred to speak to me about what they faced and how they were suppressed by Bulgarian authorities during the rebirth process.

As a result of all these hardships that the Pomaks faced during the last 80 years, they have learned to cope with their difficulties. Since the beginning of 1960s, Pomaks have developed a new anthroponymic strategy which is called `compromise name and naming behaviour'. After the 1971-1974 renaming process, new-born children were given an official Bulgarian name like Anatoli Gerasimov Balabanov and a domestic name like Sukru. Outside home they are addressed with their official names but at home with their domestic ones. All Pomak children learn very well how to keep and even deny their domestic names. Although they are now free to use their Turkish names, generally, when Pomaks meet strangers they give their Bulgarian names. Moreover, they rely on a clipped version of the name, which is not recognizably Turkish (Veli, Osi, etc.), or a name which belongs to the Bulgarian name list but is Turkish or looks Turkish at the same time (Aldin, Demir, etc.).68

However, according to the results of a field study in Hadjiyska, III Lle summer of 1990, Konstantinov reports that 70.9% of Pomaks show Turkish radical behaviour with varying degrees of consistency (taking the Turkish names back); 16.1 % indicate compromise behaviour with varying degrees of consistency; and in the same manner, 13.0% show Bulgarian oriented radical behaviour (keeping the Bulgarian names). However, if only consistent behaviour is isolated, the figures would be as follows: Turkish radicalism, 45.1%; compromise, 9.6%; Bulgarian radicalism, 6.5%; inconsistent anthroponymic behaviour, 38.8%.

In another field study of Pomaks villages in the Rhodope region older people showed more radical attitude than the younger generation, who are still working or studying, and thus more inclined to compromise. Moreover, as we noted in the example of Ali Osman Bayram above, starting in November 1990, Pomak people have been allowed to drop their Slavonic (-ov/-ova) suffixes, and they rapidly did so as a reaction to forced Bulgarization process. It should be added that Ahmet

Dogan, the leader of the Movement for Rights and Freedom, DPS, made a statement saying that `The DPS has committed itself before Parliament not to accept the (-oglu, -kuzu) suffixes, which are typical of Turkey, but to preserve them (surnames) in their pure form'.69 In one way it can also be said that the movement also makes compromise. They don't want to go so far as to become all Turkish.

In each village there are some former Communist Party members, or representatives. Pomaks are still afraid to speak about their harsh experiences under the Bulgarian regime when these people are present. I was told that they still feel threatened by the Socialist Party (former Communist Party) members, fearing that one day Communists will be in power again and then they will force them to take back their Bulgarian names. In Bulgaria, to become Communist and be a part of the system does not only mean to appropriate an ideology, but also to deny their non-Bulgar Muslim identity and to accept and actively take part in forceful assimilation policy of the Bulgarian authorities. Therefore, in practice Communism is the name of an ideology of Bulgarian extreme nationalism which aims to Bulgarize non-Bulgars, especially the significant Muslim minorities including the Pomaks, Turks and Gypsies.

There appears to be an interesting correlation between their electoral behaviour and their ethnic or ideological orientation. If in a Pomak village most of the people voted for DPS (Movement for Right and Freedom), it would show that in that village most of the inhabitants have taken back their Turkish names, even without Slavonic suffixes and their general behaviour is Turkish oriented. On the other hand, if in another village most of the people voted for BSP (Bulgarian Socialist Party-former Communist), it means majority of them would retain their Bulgarian names and their behaviour is Bulgarian oriented, etc.70 We observed this in many Pomak villages in the Rhodope region.

Conclusion

Although the government has changed in Bulgaria, for Pomaks the harsh reminders of the former regime still remain. Local policemen and local security forces who had forced them to take on Bulgarian names have not been changed. Like other Muslim minorities in Bulgaria, the Pomaks still have to do their military service in construction camps. It is still impossible to find a single Turk or Pomak or Muslim Gypsy in the Bulgarian army as a regular soldier. Since 1990 there have also been Christian missionary activities led by Ivan Sariyev, directed at the Pomaks.71 While the Pomaks want their children to learn Turkish in their primary school, which is now theoretically possible, in practice local education directors don't allow them to do so-as experienced in Satofca, a large Pomak village near Goce Delcev. It is the same situation in the case of Macedonian Pomaks (Torbes) as well. Here Nijazi Limanovski, supported by the Macedonian government, is working to persuade them to accept that they are Macedonian Muslims and have nothing to do with the Turks. In spite of all these systematic pressures, Pomaks of Bulgaria or Torbes of Macedonia keep their distance and try to avoid involvement in any sort of governmental business or meet any officials in the government. They prefer to live within their own community. They set up large antennas to watch Turkish television in all their villages, Almost all of them do not like to be called 'Pomak'. In Bulgaria, some of them prefer to be addressed as `Bulgarian Muhammedan' because it is safe. However, it seems that one day if they still feel really secure, they will want to be called 'Turk'. This is what I was able to observe and what I was told. Many of the Pomaks already believe that they are Turkish, though a few of them also say that they are Bulgar, and they are the living reminders of the Bulgarization policy which for a century dominated them and dictated their identity and sense of self.

NOTES

1 In literature, Nobel winning work of Ivo Andric, The Bridge of Dnna, mentions the same local shrines shared by different ethnic and religious groups. In August 1992, when I visited Sofia, in Bulgaria, I saw a place which is called Ali Baba Tekkesi, where Muslims, Christians and especially Gypsies come and pray at the tomb of the same person. There was a tomb (turbe) where Christians put candles and Muslims just pray. There was an Orthodox Church converted from a mosqueas well. Ekrem Hakki Ayverdi, in his very valuable book, gives similar information about the same place which he had seen in 1964 where all Muslim, Orthodox and non-Muslim Gypsies came to pray. According to his information which he finds from old sources this place was originally called 'Seyh Bali Efendi Zaviyesi, Mescidi, and Tekyesi' (Mosque and Dervish Lodge of Master Bali Efendi). Bali Efendi was born in Strumica then settled and later died in Sofia in 1553. Those buildings were

constructed by Kadi Abdurrahman bin Aziz Efendi. See Ekrem Hakki Ayverdi, Avrupa'da Osmanli Maman Eserleri, Bulgaristan Yunanistan. Arnavutluk (The Ottoman Architectural Buildings in Europe, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania), Vol. IV, Istanbul: Istanbul Fetih Cemiyeti, 1982, pp. 100 lol

- 2. A. Bone, Die Euronaische Turkei (The European Turkey), Vol. 1, Wien, 1889, p. 351.
- 3. Although in the Ottoman year books of Danube Vilayet (Bulgaria) in 1870s some Circassian and Tatar villages were mentioned, it was unusual and temporary. The reason was that they had recently arrived to the area and were exempted from taxation for a while. However, by this sort of temporary reason, sometimes, in the Ottoman sources it is possible to find the names of nationalities mentioned such as Jewish, Gypsy, Armenian, Serb, Bulgar, etc., but there is no mention of Pomak. Salname-i Tuna, Ruscuk, 1290.
- 4. F. Kanitz, Donau Bulgarien und der Balkan, Vol. II, Leipzig: Rengersche Buchhandlung, 1882, p. 162. However, Jirecek didn't find this explanation satisfactory. See C. Jirecek, Das Ferstentum Butgarien (The Bulgarian Principality), Prag: Wien, 1891, p. 104. Ischirkoff also said that in Bulgarian language 'mak' means `to force', and because Pomaks were converted to Islam by using force, they are called Pomak. A. Ischirkoff, Bulgarien, Land und Leute (Bulgaria, Country and People), Vol. II, Leibzig: Iwan, 1917, p. 15. Some of the Bulgarians try to link between pomak and the word 'mica' meaning `to suffer'. Izminatoto na Bilgarite Muhammedani v Rodopite (History of the Bulgarian Muhammedans of the Rhodopes), Sofia, 1958, p. 24. Lekov claims that the word pomak comes from the Bulgarian word 'poturnjak' which means `one made a Turk'. See I. Lekov, `Kam Vapros za Imeto Pomak' (`On the Question of the Name Pomak'), in Sbornik Poluvekovna Bilgarite, Sofia, 1933, pp. 38-100. For all these explanations of Pomak word, see: Fehim Bajraktarevic, Encylopedia of Islam, Vol. VI, 1987, p. 1074. Also for other explanations of Pomak word, see Huseyin Memisoglu, Pages of the History of Pomac Turks, Ankara, 1991, pp. 17-20.
- 5. Amandos says that this word might come from ancient Thracian city 'oma'. Magriotis claims that this word means heavy drinker and comes from the ancient Greek word apomakus which means fighter. See G. Magriotis, I'omaki i Rodopei (Pomaks or Rhodopians?), Athens: Risos, 1990, p. 35.
- 6. As is well known, Ahi organization played a very important role in the conquest of Southeastern Europe by the Ottomans. There is a city called Ahi-Celebi in the Rhodope region, set up by the Ahis. Therefore, probably ahnyani came from the Persian plural form of this word, ahiyan.
- 7. Cilev claims that this name comes from a Turkish word 'torba' meaning 'bag'. Because they sold their soul for a bag of wheat they were referred to torba-torbes. P. Qilev, 'Obikolka iz Albanski Selica v Pristinako, Prizrensko, Debarsko I Ohridsko' ("I'he Settlement of Albanian Villages in Ohrid, Debre, Prizren and Pristina'), in Izvestija na Narodnija Etnografski Muzej v Sofia (The Yearbook of Sofia Museum of Ethnographia), Year VI, Vols V-VI, Sofia, 1926, p. 110. According to Hacivasilevic the origin of this word is in Persian from 'torbekes', meaning `with a bag'. The Torbes people in general live in the mountains and raising herds and working in construction. They carried their tools always in a sack besides them and were referred to as a people with a bag. Yovan Haci Vasiljevis, Muslimani Nase Krvi u Juznoj Srb:ji (Our Muslim Brothers in Southern Serbia), Belgrade: Bratsvo, 1924, p. 34. Palikurusefa brings an explanation for them from Ottoman Empire as an army branch. 'Torba acemi' branch or 'Torba group'was a special class in the central Ottoman administration body. Galaba Palikuseva, 'Islamizacija na Torbesite I Torbeskata Subgrupa' ("I`he Islamization of Torbes and Torbes Subgroups'), unpublished PhD thesis, Skopje, University of Cyril and Methodius, 1965, pp. 132-137.
- 8. Milivoy Pavlovic, 'Skopski Torbesi-Najstrarije Pleme na Balkanskom Poluostrvu' [`The Oldest Skopje Torbesis which Comes from Serbian Origin in the Balkan Peninsula'), Juzna Srbija (Southern Serbia), Skopje: No. 94, November 1939.
- 9. Dimitri Obolenski, The Bogomils, London, 1948.
- 10. Dimitar Angelof, Bogomil&tvoto v Bilgarja (The Bogomils in Bulgaria), Sofia, 1969, p. 150. 11. See Magriotis, op. cit., p. 14; also Polys Mylonas, I Pomaki tie Thrakis (Pomaks of Thrace), Athens: Livanis, 1990.
- 12. Stanford J. Shaw, 'Osmanli Imparatorlugu' nda Azinliklar Sorunu' ('The Problem of Minorities in the Ottoman Empire'), in Tanzimat ian Cumhuriyet e Turkiye Ansiklopedisi (Encyclopedia of Turkey

- From Tanzimat to the Republic), Vol. V, Istanbul, 1985, pp. 1002-1006. 13. Memisoglu, op. cit., pp. 11-12. 14. lbid., p. 11.
- 15. Munir Aktepe, `Osmanli Turkleri'nin Rumeli'ye Yerlesmeleri' (`The Ottoman Turkish Settlements in the Balkans'), unpublished PhD thesis, Istanbul: Faculty of Arts, University of Istanbul, 1949, p. 27.; 'Bulgarlar' (Bulgars), in Tark Ansiklopedisi (Enyclopedia of Turks), Vol. VIII, Istanbul, 1976, p. 398.
- 16. Tayyip Gokbilgin, Rumeli'de Yorukler, Tatar Lar ve Evlad-i Fatihan (Nomads, Tatars and the Descendants of the Conquerors in the Balkans), Istanbul: Faculty of Arts, University of Istanbul, 1957, pp. 9-10.
- 17. P. Delidarev, Prinos kim Istoriceskata Geografiya na Trakiya (The Narrative of History of Thracian Geography), Vol. II, Sofia, 1953, p. 11; also Bulgarski Dialekticeski Atlas (The Atlas of Bulgarian Dialect), Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science, 1964; K. Jirecek, Puovanya (Travel), Sofia, 1901, pp. 461-462; from Memisoglu, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
- 18. K. Jirecek, Istorija na Bilgarite (History of the Bulgarians), Sofia, 1978, p. 151; from Memisoglu, op. cit., p. 15.
- 19. Memisoglu, op. cit., pp. 15-17.
- 20. Ahmet Cevad, Balkanlarda Akan Kan (Shedding Blood in the Balkans), Istanbul: Samil Yayinevi, 1977, pp. 190-191; Ahmet Aydinli, Bati Trakya Faciasinin yz (The Reality of Tragedity of Western Thrace), Istanbul: Akin Matbaasi, 1971, p. 34. 21. Public Record Office, Foreign Office, Confidential Prints, No. 78/624, p. 7. 22. Ibid., No. 881/2956, p. 3. 23. Ibid., No. 888/3549. 24. Ibid., No. 881/3655, pp. 15, 21, 22. 25. Ibid., No. 881/9140, p. 18.
- 26. Constantin Jirecek, Geschichte der Bulgaren (History of the Bulgarians), Prag: F. Tempsky, 1876, p. 578.
- 27. His work was based on the Ottoman Official statistics of 1873, 1874 and 1875. Because of the same reason, the Ottoman sources, especially year books, never spoke about nationalities. I am quite sceptical about how Teplov separated Pomaks from other Muslim populations. V. Teplov, Materiali, Dlistatistiki Bulgaria. Trakia I Makedonia si Karti Raspredelenija Narodnonaselenja po Vjeroispovedamja (Materials, Statistical Distribution of People in Bulgaria, Thracia and Macedonia According to Their Religion), St. Petersburg, 1887, p. 28. 28. M. Gavrilovic, La Grande Encylopedie, Vol. 27, pp. 475476. 29. Ischirkoff, op. cit., pp. 14-17.
- 30. N. Skiryabin says that Pomaks were Slavic origin Muslims and gives some information about Pomaks in Debre and Radika valley. From Gligor Todorovski, 'Verskiot Faktor Kako Islamiziranite Makedonci' (`The Factor of Religion on the National Identity of Islamized Macedonians'), in Istorija Folklor i Etnologija na Islamiziranite Makedonci (History, Folklore and Etnology of Islamized Macedonians), Skopje: Scientific-Cultural Activities of Islamized Macedonians in Macedonia, 1987, p. 70.
- 31. Timotiyev describes them as Slav origin Muslims and gives some information about Pomaks of Monastir. See Niyazi Limanovski, Islamizacijata I Etnickite Iromeni vo Makedonija. Makedonci Muslimani (Macedonian Muslims, Ethnic Changes and Islamization in Macedonia), Skopje, 1984, p. 54
- 32. In his book about statistics on population in Macedonia and Old Serbia, D. R. Karl Poyker says that they were Islamized Macedons and around Thesselonika there were 100,000 Pomaks, and in the district of Manastir there were 230,000 Pomaks. See Hristo Andonovski, 'Strancite za Makedonija I Makedoncite' (`Foreigners and Macedonians in Macedonia'), Skopje, 1917, p. 14. 33. Atanas Benderev, Voenaja Geografija I Statistika Makedoniji (The Military Geography and Statistics in Macedonia), St. Petersburg, 1890, p. 592. He calls them Islamized Macedons and in district of Thesselonika there were 86,501; in Vidin 16,768; in Kukus 11,456; in Doyran 2763; in Ustumca 11,823; in Tikves, 47,938; in Keprilf, 4253; in the district of Skopje 20,870; in Kumanova 800; in Radoviq 5387; in Ko*ani 7930; in Katova 5000 Pomak. In the district of Manastir their number was 35,423 and 5000 of them in the centre; in Pirlepe 8000; in Resen and Prespa 4000; in Lerin (Aksehir) 7423; in Kostur 5000; in Debre-i Zire 6000.
- 34. Spiridon Gob*evic, Stara Srbija i Makedonija (Old Serbia and Makedonia), Belgrade, 1890, p. 54. According to him, Pomaks were Serbian origin Muslims. There were in Resen 750 Pomaks; in Ohrid

- 1500; in Serez 4000; in Radovic 1500; in Razlog 3500; in Petric 1600; in Gostivar and Kircova 1200; in Struga 1000; and in Debre 4000 Pomaks.
- 35. Directorate Generals de la Statistique, Annuaire Statistique du Royaume de Bulgaria Quatrieme Annee
- 1912, Sophia: Imprimerie de L'etat, 1915, p. 46.
- 36. Directorate Generale de la Statistique, Annuaire Statistique du Royaume de Bulgaria Deuxieme Annee 1909 (hereafter ASRB 1909), Sofia: Imprimerie de L'etat, 1910, p. 42. 37. Directorate Generale de la statistique, Annuaire statistique du Royaume de Bulgarie Deuxieme Annee 1910 (hereafter ASRB 1910), Sophia: Imprimerie de l'Etat, 1911, p. 52.
- 38. Ischirkoff, op. cit., p. 16. 39. Bajraktarevie, op. cit., p. 1074.
- 40. Wayne S. Vucinich, `Islam in the Balkans', in Religion in the Middle East, Vol. II, ed. A. J. Arberry,

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969, p. 236.

- 41. George A. Schopflin, `National Minorities under Communism in Eastern Europe', in Eastern Europe in Transition, ed. Kurt London, Johns Hopkins Press, 1966, p. 124. 42. M. Ali Kettani, Muslim Minorities in the World Today, London: Mansell, 1986, p. 31. 43. Yulian Konstantinov, Gulbrand Alhaug and Birgit Igla, `Names of the Bulgarian Pomaks', in Nordlyd Tromso University Working Papers on Language I_' Linguistics, No. 17, eds. Ernst Hakon Jahr, Toril Swan, Oddleif Leirbukt and Ove Lorentz, Institutt for Sprak og Litteratur, Universiteit I Tromso, 1991, p. 103.
- 44. Hugh Poulton, The Balkans, Minorities and States in Conflict, London: Minority Rights Publications, 1991, p. 175.
- 45. Bajraktarevi7, op. cit., p. 1074. 46. Kettani, op. cit., p. 45. 47. Poulton, op. cit., p. 183. 48. Ibid., pp. 201-203.
- 49. Ali Kemal Balkanli, Sarki Rumeli ve Buradaki Trkler (Eastern Roumelia and Its Turks), Ankara: Elhan Kitabevi, 1986, p. 286. 50. ASRB 1909, p. 438. 51. ASRB 1910, p. 457.
- 52. As a matter of fact, during the field study in August 1992, in the Rhodopes region, at the Greek border, in some Pomak villages such as Kozhare and Yagodina we met some people saying they were not Turk, not Muslim, not Pomak but Bulgar and Christian. But in the Pomak population, generally they are a very small minority. This field study was organized by the Bulgarian Society for Regional Cultural Studies and sponsored by the Open Society Foundation in Sofia, the Program for the Study of Human Intellect, and the Academic Foundation. I would like to thank all these institutions for organizing such an important and useful field study. Most of my observations in this article on Bulgarian Pomaks were made during this trip and are confirmed by previous research. 53. Ivanov, op. cit., p. 86. 54. Gobcevic, op. cit., p. 58
- 55. See Yovan F. Trifunovski, Prinskiot del na Makedonija (Pirin Region of Macedonia), Skopje, 1967, p. 38.
- 56. Todorovski, op. cit., p. 78.
- 57. Harvard University, Houghton Library, Papers of the Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions,

Reel 579, pp. 328-331.

- 58. Public Record Office, Parliamentary Papers, 1876 (Turkey, No. 49); 1878 (Turkey, No. 31); 1878 (Turkey, No. 50); 1878 (Turkey, No. 51); 1880 (Turkey, No. 51); 1880 (Turkey, No. 10); 1880 (Turkey, No. 14). I have been working on these reports of the Commission on the Rhodope district, Kircaali and Aidos regions as a separate study.
- 59. 'Rodop Bulgaristan Turklugu Faciasinin Isyuzu' (`The Reality of the Tragedy of the Turks of Rhodope Region of Bulgaria'), in Turk Dnyasi (Turkish World), Vol. XXV, Istanbul: 1972, p. 13. 60. Henri Nive, Balkan Ehli Salip Sefeinde Avrupa Siyaseti ve Trklerin Felaketi (European Policy During the Balkan Wars and the Tragedy of Turks), trans. Ragip Rifki, Istanbul: Ikbal, 13291331, p. 137.
- 61. Ilker Alp, Bulgarian Atrocities: Documents and Photographs, London: K. Rustem, 1988, p. 27. 62. Memisoglu, op. cit., p. 33.

63. See N. Michev and P. Koledarov, Rechnik na Selistata I Selistnite Imena v Bulgaria 1978-1987 (The

Dictionary of Villages and Districts in Bulgaria 1978-1987), Sofia, Naouka i Izkoustvo, 1989. 64. Nikola Mizov, Islam in Bulgaria, Sofia: Bulgarian Academy of Science, 1965, p. 195. 65. Ahmet Kayihan, 'Rodoplar Neresidir'(`Where is the Rhodopes?'), Turk Dunyasi (Turkish World),

Vol. VII, No. 27, 1972, p. 27.

- 66. Amnesty International, Bulgaria: Imprisonment of Ethnic Turks, Human Rights Abuses During the Forced Assimilation of the Ethnic Turkish Minority, Amnesty International: London, 1986, pp. 2728.
- 67. Yulian Konstantinov, `The Bulgarian Pomaks-Their Names and Problems of Self-Definition', unpublished paper, presented at the First International Seminar on the Problems of the Pomak Minority, Kovachevitsa, Bulgaria, 7-9 August 1992.
- 68. Konstantinov, Alhaug and Igla, `Names of the Bulgarian Pomaks', op. cit., pp. 42-57. 69. Ibid., p. 91.
- 70. Konstantinov, op. cit., pp. 42-57.
- 71. See omer Turan, 'Bulgaristan Turkleri'nin Bugunki Durumu' (The Actual Situation of Bulgarian Turks'), in Yeni Tilrkiye (New Turkey), Mart-Nisan, 1995, No. 3, pp. 294-301.

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