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CONTESTATIONS OVER MACEDONIAN IDENTITY, 1870–1912

by

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STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Nick Anastasovski, declare that the thesis entitled *Contestations over Macedonian Identity 1870–1912* is no more than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, figures, appendices and references. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work.

Nick Anastasovski

May 2005

DEDICATION

To my wife Sophie
whose support and encouragement
made the study possible

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ABSTRACT

AS A CONTESTED space Macedonia in the late nineteenth century suffered political, religious and paramilitary incursions made upon the population by the neighbouring nascent states and the disappearing Ottoman empire. Territorial claims were rationalised by ethnographic maps and statistical population data. Interested commentators viewed Macedonia in accordance with government policy and presented their studies as academic and scientific, even though these studies were clearly political in nature. The European Powers maintained their own pretence and acted as patrons of the small Balkan States. Although churches, schools and paramilitary bands were the primary instruments of the Greek, Bulgarian and Serb states, expansion into Macedonia was ultimately achieved by a full military mobilisation when the armies of Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia marched into Macedonia in October 1912 and drove out the Ottoman Turks. The territorial division of Macedonia and claims upon the Macedonians have continued to be a matter of contention between the Balkan States into contemporary times.

As the new nation of Macedonia began its independent existence in 1991, its citizens sought to understand this history. For lengthy periods Macedonia was colonised by more powerful neighbours, especially the Turks in the Ottoman period to 1912. The very word 'Macedonia' is a contested category, much like any other post-colonial concept. As each of its neighbours has sought to colonise Macedonia, Macedonian history has become overburdened with the representations of these others. There is no *essential* 'Macedonia' hidden beneath these foreign representations, but there is nonetheless a specific and distinctive history comprised of the everyday life of people in the territory now known as Macedonia.

This thesis seeks to recover that everyday life through an examination of the sources relating to a defining period in Macedonian history, the period from 1870 to 1912 – when Macedonia found herself in a disintegrating Ottoman Empire and the

territorial ambitions of neighbouring Balkan States (Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia) saw them engage in a fierce competition for the hearts and minds of the Macedonian Christians.

This thesis interrogates these sources by using the techniques and strategies of post-colonial scholars. This interrogation reveals, just as surely as the post-colonialists have reinterpreted Western views of Asia and Africa, that views of Macedonia by Greeks, Turks, Bulgarians, Serbs and others are not 'innocent' or 'disinterested'. This thesis argues that, no matter how sophisticated their particular methodology or analysis, these foreign scholars – demographers, historians, anthropologists – brought to their studies of Macedonia late in the nineteenth century an imperial agenda, the ramifications of which continue to influence politics in the region to the present time.

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aga Aga is commonly applied to low ranking officers or elderly respectable men who have no official rank.

Andartes Greek irregular para-militaries.

Arnaut Turkish term for Albanian. Albanians used the term *Skipetar*.

Asker Soldier, soldiers or army.

Badjzhdata An opening in the ceiling of a village home designed to allow smoke (from the home fire) to be released.

Badnik The day before Orthodox Christmas (January 7) was known as *badnik* and was celebrated with a village bonfire in the evening.

Baklava A Turkish sweet.

Barde A clay drinking vase.

Bashibouzouk Armed Muslim irregulars; bandits. Often attacked Christian villages in the wake of the Ottoman army. During the suppression of the Ilinden Rebellion, *bashibouzouks* were known to appear following Ottoman attacks on towns and engage in undisciplined pillaging.

Basmar Medicine woman (can be a male, but rarely).

Bayach Holy woman (can be a male, but rarely).

Bayram A Muslim religious day.

Bedel A personal tax payable for every newborn Christian male.

Beg Common term for feudal landlord but also used by government officials. Similar to the title 'esquire' in the English language. Officers of the army and sons of distinguished persons can also be known as *beg*. Also known as *bey*.

Berat A *berat* is an act by which officials of the Ottoman Empire are appointed.

Bey See *beg*.

Bezisten Covered marketplace.

Blato A large body of water such as a marsh or swamp.

Boza A thick flour-based drink.

Bozhik Christmas.

Butim A yoghurt-making instrument.

Chairo A level, open space in the village of Gorno Aglarci (Bitola region) where *desetok* tax was paid.

Cheta A group of armed fighters. Common term when describing a unit of Macedonian revolutionaries of the IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation).

Chiflik Feudal estate operated by a powerful *beg*.

Defter An Ottoman administrative register.

Dekar One thousand square metres of land.

Derudeshiluk A tribute or tax forcibly imposed on entire villages and paid to local *beys* or bandit chiefs for protection from the plunder of bandits.

Desetok The basic agricultural tax constituting a 10 per cent payment.

Dolum Agricultural measurement equal to 920 square metres.

Domashna slava

Literally meaning 'home celebration', the *domashna slava* is a celebration for the patron saint of the family home. It is celebrated annually and is a hereditary tradition handed down from father to son.

Drumo The road separating the village of Gorno Aglarci (Bitola region) with the villages Armatoush, Meglenci and Suvodol was known as *drumo*.

Dudule During long periods of drought when the survival of vegetation and farm animals was in doubt, a rain ritual was performed, commonly known in the Bitola region as *dudule* or *vaidudule*.

Duhovden An Orthodox Christian religious holy day; 'Descent of the Holy Spirit upon Apostle-Holy Pentecost'. *Duhovden* is celebrated fifty days after Easter.

Efendi Lord or master, usually applied to a learned Muslim.

Emir Chief or patron of a defined territory.

Endeze Measuring system - equivalent to three feet.

Eremiya A Macedonian seasonal celebration (13 May).

Esnaf Guild association.

Ethnike hetairia

A Greek organisation founded in Athens in November 1894, the *Ethnike Hetairia* (National Society) was supported by three-quarters of the officers of the Greek army and by wealthy businessmen. It aimed at liberating all Greeks under Ottoman rule and was particularly active in advancing Greek propaganda in Macedonia.

European Turkey

European Turkey refers to the European territories of the Ottoman Empire.

Exarchate Established in 1870, the Bulgarian Orthodox church was known as the Exarchate.

Exarchist Exarchist is sometimes used to describe a village or person under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate church.

Firman An Ottoman written decree.

Giaor A derogatory term for a Christian inhabitant of the Ottoman Empire. Also used to denote 'non-believer'.

Griblo Rake.

Grnchina Cooking utensils - earthenware, copper and clay pots.

Grosh Ottoman Turkish currency.

Gurgovden An Orthodox Christian Holy day celebrated on 6 May each year.

Halva A Turkish sweet.

Harac A capitation tax imposed on all adult male non-Muslims.

Hidjaret When a child turned fifteen his family was required to pay the *hidjaret* tax. The amount paid often depended upon the means of the family.

Idare Medzhlisi Ottoman administrative advisory councils.

Ihtissab *Ihtissab* (or *rusonmat*) taxes were various indirect taxes such as tolls charged by guards on mountain passes, stamp duty, tax on private commercial transactions, a traders' tax based upon the value of their stock, and a fisheries tax.

IMRO Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation. In Macedonian known as *VMRO - Vnatreshna Makedonska Revolucionerna Organizacija.*

Irade A personal decree issued by the Sultan.

Ispoldzhija A *chiflik* worker.

Janichari Pronounced 'Yanichari' – English: Janissaries. Janissaries were Christian children forcibly taken by the Ottomans (as a tax) and raised as fanatical Muslim soldiers. This elite fighting force was disbanded in 1826.

Jataci Collaborators; people who worked secretly with the Macedonian revolutionary movement. Pronounced 'Yatatsi'.

Kaaite *Begs'* representatives in *chiflik* villages, typically residing in the *kula* (tower) during periods over summer and monitor work performed on land. Also known as *kea* or *keata.*

Kadia Ottoman administrator of a *kaza.*

Kadayif A Turkish sweet.

Kaimakam High sheriff.

Katchatci Albanian bandits.

Kaurin An Ottoman term signifying a non-Muslim or 'non believer'. Also known as 'Giaour'.

Kaza Administrative unit in the Ottoman Empire, typically encompassing a region.

Kelijni Initially, *kelijni* schools provided religious-based instruction through remote churches and monasteries. In the nineteenth century they undertook a gradual transition into secular institutions and were administered alongside the establishment of independent Macedonian church-educational councils.

Klanici Stones that were positioned around a fire inside a village home.

Kmet Village headman.

Konak A *konak* can signify an inn or more commonly the residence of a *beg* or a high-ranking government or military official.

Kula Tower. The term is often used in the Macedonian language as *'Turka kula'* (Turkish tower). Typically, towers were erected in *chiflik* villages and provided accommodation for the *begs'* representatives or the *beg* himself.

Kum Godfather.

Kumita Macedonian revolutionary; irregular fighter.

Kuyka Home or house (*Kuykata* – 'the home/house').

Letnik A Macedonian seasonal celebration (1 March).

Lokum Turkish delight.

Maalo A town quarter.

Millet Ottoman society was organised into religious communities. As such every Ottoman subject belonged to a recognised ecclesiastical institution, known as *millets*.

Motika Hoe.

Mudir An Ottoman official.

Muftija High-ranking official in the Islamic religion. The *muftija* exerted significant influence and his decisions were compulsorily accepted by the *kadia*. The *muftija* dealt with matters arising about the 'Sheriat'. Most larger towns had a *muftija.*

Muhadjirs Muslim refugees.

Nahia A *nahia* represented the smallest administrative division in the Ottoman Empire. It usually took its name from a town, river or object within its boundaries.

Nalandzhi Wooden-based clogs popular with Turkish women.

Nevrus A Macedonian seasonal celebration (25 March).

Numko Godfather, also known as *kum*.

Ofchar A shepherd.

Ohrid Archbishopric

The Orthodox Christian Ohrid Archbishopric was the church of the Macedonian people. It was abolished by the Ottoman Sultan in 1767 under pressure from the Greek Patriarchate.

Oja A Muslim religious figure - similar to a Christian priest. (The same term is also used for a Muslim teacher).

Oka A system for measuring weight - 1.282 kilogram was equivalent to one *oka*.

Pasha A high-ranking Ottoman. A military general was known as a *pasha*. The title of *pasha* could only be conferred by the Sultan.

Patriarchate The church of the Greek Patriarchate was situated in Constantinople and throughout most of the nineteenth century (prior to 1870) it enjoyed a monopoly over Christian ecclesiastical matters in European Turkey.

***Pechalba*r** Macedonian migratory worker.

Phanariot Phanariots were those Greeks who were descendants of prominent merchant and cleric families associated with the Greek Patriarchate. They took the name Phanariots from the Phanar quarter of Constantinople, which they inhabited.

The Phanariots were a form of Greek aristocracy living in the Phanar district of Constantinople where the Greek Patriarch resided. They were made up of merchants, financiers and clergymen and maintained solid connections with the Patriarchate. From the beginning of the eighteenth century they were utilised by the Ottomans as interpreters with Europeans, however their influence with the Ottomans saw them become powerful and prosperous as they filled prominent civil service positions. Clerical members of the Panariots exploited the Patriarchate church and sought to expand its influence in the Balkans.

Pogon Parcel of land equivalent to 2000 square metres.

Polyak Watchman of the village fields.

Pondila An outer building where farm animals were kept.

Potka A small, erect mound of earth approximately one foot high used to mark the boundary of agricultural fields.

Prekar Typically Macedonian surnames are derived from a father's name or even a nickname *(prekar)*, which becomes a family symbol.

Raguzina A straw sleeping mat. Made by men from the central part of the Bitola Pelagonia plain over the winter months.

Rakia Home-made distilled alcohol.

Raya Ottoman term denoting non-Muslims of the Ottoman Empire in their entirety, literally meaning 'the flock'.

Rayatsko The term *rayatsko* is typically used when referring to land. *Rayatsko* land signifies land that is not *chiflik* land, but denotes land that remained in private ownership prior to *pechalbari* buying *chiflik* land back from the *begs* in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Rufet Traditional clothing in the district of Gorna Reka was known as *rufet*.

Rumelia Denotes Ottoman Turkish territory in Europe.

Rusonmat See *ihtissab*.

Salname Official Ottoman book outlining religious and other significant dates during the course of a year.

Sandjak Large territorial administrative region.

Servia The name Servia was often used by commentators and historians in place of Serbia, during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Shamak A straw-like weed naturally found in the marshland *(blato)* on the Pelagonia plain. Utilised in the manufacture of *zimbili* and *raguzini.*

Sheriat Sacred (Islamic) law.

Shpion A spy or informer for the Empire.

Singir System of measuring agricultural fields. One *singir* was equivalent to 50 metres.

Soi An extended family.

Sokak Street, road or path. For instance, the main road in Bitola was known as *Shirok sokak* (wide street).

Stomni A clay drinking vase.

Stroinik A middle man who organises partners for marriage.

Sursa Entire unarmed Christian villages were known to be held for ransom by armed Muslim bandits (typically Albanians in western Macedonia) who extracted extortion payments. The extracting of extortion payments in this manner was known as *sursa.*

Svatovi In-laws.

Syligos Greek ultra-nationalist organisation. The Syligos outwardly professed to be literary and scientific organisations, intended to advance education amongst Greeks. The Syligos was supported financially by wealthy Greeks, but the organisation was in fact politically motivated and sought as its primary aim to support the Patriarchate attempts to expand throughout the Orthodox Balkans and assimilate the non Greek Orthodox Christian populations under Ottoman rule.

Tapiya Property or land title.

Teke A Muslim monastery or a religious meeting place.

Tovar Measuring system - 100 *oka* was equivalent to one *tovar*.

Trem Church outer building where various customs and traditions are commonly held. Often used as a school class room. An outer building in a village home is also known as a *trem*.

Trska Cane. In the Bitola region it was found in the *blato*.

Turkey in Europe

Identical to the term 'European Turkey', denotes Ottoman territorial possessions in Europe.

Vakaf Land belonging to a religious institution was known as *vakaf* land. Any land, including buildings, donated to a religious institution was transferred through a legal act before the *kadia*, known as *vakafname* or *vakafie*.

Vali Governor of province or vilayet.

Varvara An Orthodox Christian religious holy day.

Vasilica Orthodox New Year (Jan 14).

Veligden Easter.

Vergia An Ottoman personal wealth tax. Also known as *vergi*.

Vilayet Large Ottoman administrative region. There were six vilayets in European Turkey in 1900.

Vila Pitchfork.

Vizier A Minister of public affairs in the Ottoman Empire. The Grand Vizier was the Sultan's representative for secular matters. Imperial orders were passed down to the provinces via the Grand Vizier.

VMRO See IMRO.

Vodar A male designated to water the village fields.

Vodici A Christian holy day; 'Epiphany of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Vojvoda Leader of a Macedonian Revolutionary unit.

Zapatki The day before the religious day of Gyurgovden was known as *zapatki* in the Reka district. On *zapatki* young girls from the village walked through the village fields, pastoral lands and forests to gather herbal plants.

Zaptiehs Ottoman police officers.

Zbor Engagement of a couple. Literally meaning 'word' - to give 'word'.

Zimbili Straw carry bags made during the winter period by men from villages situated in the central part of the Bitola Pelagonia plain.

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Introduction

Context

THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE has its roots in the Seljuk Sultanate in northwestern Asia Minor in the thirteenth century. Osman I was the first Ottoman to take the title of Sultan at the beginning of the fourteenth century and the dynasty ruled the Empire until its demise in the early twentieth century. A well-organised military command saw Ottoman rule expand over the coming centuries west to Austria, southwest to North Africa (as far as Algeria) and south into the Middle East, including large parts of the Arabian Peninsula. Ottoman rule extended into the Balkans under the reign of Murad I (1362–1389) and during the course of the fifteenth century the wider Balkan Peninsula was to fall under complete Ottoman rule. The Ottoman presence in Macedonia commenced from the late fourteenth century and the land remained an integral and strategic part of the Empire until 1912.

In the early period, Ottoman rule was tolerable for the Christian subjects so long as they paid their taxes and remained submissive. Defeat at Vienna in 1683 marked the beginning of the Ottoman Empire's gradual decline, while successive military defeats in the eighteenth century to Russia and to Austria sent the Ottoman Empire spiralling further downwards. With the end of Ottoman expansion came an economic downturn. The Empire was economically linked to Europe: raw materials were exported to Europe, whilst European goods were imported into the Ottoman Empire. Combined with general Ottoman financial mismanagement, the stature of the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century had vastly diminished in comparison to that of the early Ottomans.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, with the aid of the European powers, Greece, Serbia and Romania achieved their independence. Bulgarian independence followed in the second half of the nineteenth century. By the late nineteenth century Macedonia remained firmly entrenched under Ottoman rule

largely due to its geo-strategic importance.[1] Throughout the turbulent second half of the nineteenth century the European powers engaged the Balkan States in various combinations, seeking to expand their own spheres of influence in what remained of European Turkey. Strategic Macedonia, with its access to the Aegean Sea, particularly through the ports of Solun[2] and Kavala, became the principal object of their designs. As the liberated Balkan States were constructing their nation states and developing a collective national identity amongst their people, Macedonia remained a feudal agricultural state entrenched in an Empire that was in a process of slow decay.

Unlike the Balkan States, which enjoyed the characteristics of free nations, Macedonia had much earlier lost its principal religious and cultural institution, the Archbishopric of Ohrid (abolished by the Ottomans in 1767). In place of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, other foreign churches were permitted to expand their jurisdiction in Macedonia, initially the powerful Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople church and later, in 1870, the Bulgarian Exarchate. Although a distinct Macedonian identity was apparent from the middle of the nineteenth century, the people's identity was typically designated through loose labels related to religious adherence as well as socio-economic status. As an Empire based upon religion, the Ottomans recognised religious groups (known as *millets*), but politically each group was perceived to be ethnically connected to the national church to which it adhered. Therefore, whilst under the jurisdiction of the Constantinople Patriarchate, Orthodox Christians were perceived as 'Greeks', whilst those under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate were 'Bulgarians'. Later Serbia and Romania (for strategic purposes) also established church organisations in Macedonia. The actual 'ethnicity' of the subjects was of no

[1] The Balkan lands of Albania and Thrace also remained under Ottoman rule at the end of the nineteenth century.

[2] Following the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 and the division of Macedonia all toponyms in southern Macedonia that fell under Greek political rule underwent a process of hellenisation. The central Macedonian city of Solun was officially renamed Thessaloniki, however it is also known as Salonika. A similar process also occurred to a lesser degree in Bulgarian occupied Macedonia.
The reader should also be aware that this thesis is using the Macedonian convention in relation to the spelling of place names. Some specialists consider this method to be contentious and prefer alternative systems. For the ease of readability popular terms are used in the way that they are used by Macedonians in Australia (for example 'ch' or 'tch' instead of 'č').

consequence to the Ottomans. Indeed, permitting the establishment of competing churches in Macedonia proved that the Ottomans were skilled at playing one state against another for the purpose of prolonging their own existence. In turn, this state of affairs was favourable to the Balkan States as it formed the basis of their territorial pretensions over Macedonia.

In the closing decades of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, a bitter rivalry developed for the religious adherence of the population that would be principally played out between the Greek Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate. National churches were used as the primary tool of the young nationalist Balkan States whose expansionist policies saw Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia engage in a fierce competition, attempting to prove that the Macedonian land and people were an integral part of their respective states. In pursuit of territorial expansion, the principal strategies employed in transforming the Macedonian people into Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs, were the development of national churches and educational institutions, and the infiltration of paramilitary bands. This present work examines the impact of 'denationalisation' and assimilation strategies upon the Macedonian Christian population with the aim of investigating the effects upon the development of Macedonian identity, particularly in the village environment in the heavily contested Bitola sample region.

From a post-colonial perspective, it is evident that the contemporary accounts published at the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were generally supporting a position maintained by one or another of the existing or nascent Balkan States. As such, the literature was generally partisan in character: for every publication espousing one position there was another supporting an opposing view. Contradictions were common, and often data on matters such as ethnic composition and population were presented in an unscientific or unscholarly manner. Inconsistencies occurred even in successive publications by the same author, often

due to a shift in government policy on Macedonia. The unreliability of statistical data did not prevent the interested parties (Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria) from using such information to promote their own position.

The present work, *Contestations over Macedonian Identity, 1870–1912*, seeks to examine conflicting ethnographic data and population statistics on Macedonia compiled and promoted by the Balkan States; the religious rivalry between the Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian churches for the adherence of the Christian population; and the establishment, form and role of foreign educational institutions in Macedonia. It will do this by concentrating on a typical Macedonian Orthodox Christian village in the Bitola region, in order to obtain a detailed ethnography of the lives of ordinary people in Macedonia in the late nineteenth century and the personal impact of Balkan rivalry on individuals, families and whole villages.

Although largely concentrating on Balkan rivalries over the Macedonian Christian inhabitants, the present work does not intend to present an exclusively Christian view of a Muslim-dominated land, but instead also inquires into Muslim perspectives of Christians, as well as Muslim views of Ottoman rule. The position of the Muslim community, particularly the Macedonian Muslims, is significant to my fundamental theme. Although not a point of contention for the competing Balkan Christian Churches, the conversion of Christians to the Muslim religion is explored as an Ottoman political and religious strategy aimed at consolidating Muslim rule in Macedonia. Macedonian Muslim perceptions of their identity, and perceptions of neighbouring Macedonian Christian villages that were under opposing church jurisdictions, add important dimensions to the problems investigated here.

The link between Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian paramilitary bands and the spread of religious jurisdiction is more important than previously recognised. Traditionally historians have considered teachers and priests to be the front-line

political agitators on behalf of foreign interests in Macedonia, but an extensive range of contemporary literature points to the critical impact of the paramilitary bands.

Information derived from archival material in the form of Bulgarian Exarchate documents (obtained from the Archive of Macedonia) and British Foreign Office Reports (obtained from the Archive of Macedonia), as well as published Turkish, Serbian, Austrian and Greek Patriarchate documents, is essential to understanding the political environment of late Ottoman Macedonia. For example, published Turkish documents provide an insight into the economic position of villages, through taxation records, and these can be compared to the religious orientation of the villages to determine the relationship between these two factors. Other documents demonstrate the relationship between the Ottoman administration and the respective Balkan Churches in Macedonian villages, providing evidence of political favouritism, and the manner in which local Ottoman functionaries influenced the outward appearance of villages. The Ottoman concept of religion as a marker for nationality can be investigated through these sources. Documents relate to commercial transactions, legal documents from Ottoman courts and an extensive range of taxation data, including different tax categories, the collection of various taxes, including overtaxing of individuals (an instance of Ottoman corruption).

Earlier published Ottoman documents from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries are drawn upon to examine the changing ethnic structure of specific villages. Turkish census documents are also a rich source of material regarding internal migratory workers, as well as workers who left to work in other parts of the Empire. Migratory workers generally aimed at returning with enough money to purchase land from the feudal landlords during the period of Ottoman economic and political deterioration. The thesis also relies upon original unpublished Ottoman land

titles in order to understand the breakdown of the *chiflik* land system (the feudal estates) and the transition to private land ownership.[3]

Besides written sources, including archival material, Turkish and consular documents, and unpublished Ottoman land documents, this thesis also utilises oral histories, the importance of which has been overlooked even by Macedonian historians. Numerous interviews, primarily conducted with elderly Macedonians (both Christian and Muslim), but also with members of the Vlah and Albanian minorities, draw upon the personal recollections and stories passed down regarding the lifestyle and general political, religious and economic environment of Ottoman Macedonia.

Oral history is an important tool in this study because it gives us access to those stories a culture tells of itself. A culture is defined in part by these stories. The La Trobe University sociologist John Carroll has argued that this story-telling is at the very heart of culture. He would contend that the stories coming out of late-nineteenth century Macedonian experience give us insights into the archetypal narratives that animate Western cultures generally. On the other side of the Greek border there are historians who have concluded that the nineteenth century was the period when Greece was successfully 'dreamed' into nationhood. Nineteenth-century Australia has been understood the same way – the late historian Russel Ward wrote the controversial account, *The Australian Legend* (1958), which describes the stories told of nomadic 'bush workers' (rural labourers) as making up the essence of that young nation's formation. The Macedonian stories are similarly important not merely in what they relate, for the content must be constantly triangulated with other sources, but in the fact of their continuous re-telling.

In this contentious and highly politicised field of study, this present work attempts to transcend the many generalisations, commonly–held assumptions and

[3] Ottoman land titles referred to in this thesis relate to original documents in the possession of the writer.

misconceptions concerning the period of late Ottoman rule Balkan rivalry. It presents new perspectives and evaluates Macedonian village life at a crucial juncture in the history of that land and people.

A post-colonial analysis helps us understand in a new and positive way the response of the Macedonian peasantry to the various strategies of foreign powers to win them over to their allegiance. In what is otherwise one of the best accounts of this history, Danforth (1995) explains the changeability of these 'illiterate peasants' as a constant process of negotiating identities in a manner designed to serve their interests most favourably. The post-colonial reading of this peasantry provided by this thesis stresses the strength of their oral culture rather than emphasises their lack of formal education. It also sees these negotiations as an intelligent response to a highly contestable situation and invests in these 'illiterate peasants' an agency lacking in other accounts. Danforth's corollary argument, that Macedonian nationalism was not attained until after the 1940s, assumes an essentialist view of that nationalism which is not supported by the current work.

Summary:

Chapter One examines the colonising nature of the Ottoman invasion of Macedonia, which brought with it, from the end of the fourteenth century onwards, favourable conditions for the conqueror to Islamicise elements of the indigenous Macedonian Christian population. Strategic colonisation and Islamicisation, in varying intensities, was a process that lasted to the end of Ottoman rule early in the twentieth century, and brought lasting changes to the ethnic and religious structure of the land. The methods applied in the conversion of Christians to the Islamic religion, the role of new colonising peoples in this process, as well as forms of resistance to conversion, are all investigated.

The investigation indicates how, although in other respects identical with their Macedonian Christian cousins, Islamicised Macedonians were outside of the contest for Macedonia that was directed by the Balkan States only at 'Christian souls'. This particular Muslim group was nevertheless a political factor from the Ottoman perspective - just as Macedonian Patriarchists and Exarchists were used by the Bulgarians and Greeks in the promotion of their own position in Macedonia. For the purposes of population statistics, the Ottomans treated all Muslims as one group regardless of ethnicity, and exaggerated their true number to promote their own position aimed at extending their rule in the land.

The Ottoman concept of religion as equivalent to nationality is relevant in Macedonia primarily within the Christian sphere. However, in Chapter One the concept of religion equating nationality is investigated from a Muslim perspective, using Macedonian Muslims from the Dolna Reka district (Debar region) as a sample group. The impact of the new religion upon perceptions of their identity, and the fundamentally crucial question of whether Macedonian Muslim villagers distinguished between Macedonian Exarchate and Patriarchate villagers are two of the main issues dealt with here.

Religious identity was not a matter for the people simply to determine for themselves. As a land and a population subjected to the rivalries of the Balkan States, Chapter Two examines the inconsistencies and contradictions of ethnographic data on Macedonia. Contemporary accounts of population statistics and ethnographic data published at the turn of the nineteenth century were generally supporting a position maintained by one or another of the Balkan States. Unsurprisingly, the literature was usually noticeably partisan in character. Contradictions were common, and each of the Balkan States used ethnographic and statistical data to present Ottoman Macedonia as essentially a Greek, Bulgarian or Serbian land. A wide range of statistical data is examined, as well as the methods employed by ethnographers, and

the motivation behind their necessarily subjective results. This thesis will attempt a more accurate outline of the ethnic composition of Macedonia, in particular within the primary sample region of Bitola, through the compilation of a detailed ethnographic table of the region.[4]

Chapter Three outlines demographic data of the Bitola region and geographically treats the region as comprising three distinct zones – the Pelagonia plain, the upper villages and the Mariovo district. The economic, religious, political and ethnic elements of the three zones are analysed and compared. A detailed ethnography of the lives of ordinary people in a typical late nineteenth-century Macedonian Orthodox Christian village is undertaken. Constituting a dominant part of life in the rural sector, the *chiflik* agricultural system (feudal estates) is explored, including the relationship between the villagers and the feudal landlord (*beg*), as well as the issue of taxation as a major point of conflict. Village social structure, status systems and ritual celebrations all provide an insight into the unique character of the Macedonian people and the fabric of their village life. As the principal economic and administrative centre, and seat of the opposing religious organisations in the region, Bitola town is examined in order to draw a contrast between rural and urban lifestyles, the naming systems of town quarters, ethnic composition, and religious-political rivalry.

The chapter also describes how political insecurity created by the rivalry of the Balkan States and general economic instability gave rise to the emigration of temporary workers known as *pechalbari*. Mechanisms and patterns of emigration are investigated and the political, social and economic repercussions of large-scale emigration from the Bitola and western regions of Macedonia are explored. Migratory labour is viewed as a movement. Significant aspects of the process of migratory

[4] As there is no shortage of claims relating to the origins, purity of race, and unbroken 'racial' descent over thousands of years amongst the respective Balkan peoples (for instance, there are at least four contrasting theories on the origins of the Vlah minority), this thesis has deliberately avoided making firm statements on the historical ethnic origins of the peoples of Macedonia.

labour being interrogated include who migrated, how and why. The socio-economic background of migratory labourers is viewed independently through each of the three distinct categories found in the Bitola region - the Pelagonia plain, the upper villages and the Mariovo district. The manner of the decision-making process is explored, along with the goals of the migratory workers and the extent of their politicisation upon their return to Macedonia.

Exploring everyday life in the Bitola region provides an understanding of the ethnographic terrain under which the Balkan churches engaged in a fierce contest for jurisdictional dominance in the region. Chapter Four provides an overview of the establishment and role of foreign religious organisations in Macedonia in the form of the Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople, the Bulgarian Exarchate, Serb and Romanian religious activities and Western church organisations. Religious jurisdiction was the primary instrument utilised by the Balkan States to support their claims to Macedonia. As such, jurisdiction over a village church outwardly registered the village as belonging to that particular 'nationality', giving rise to an intense political-religious struggle between the Greek, Bulgarian and Serb churches for adherence of the population. In line with this principle, an exclusively Macedonian populated village with three village churches under separate jurisdictions could 'officially' be regarded as a 'Greek, Bulgarian and Serb populated village'. It was not unusual for commentators in the late nineteenth century to subscribe to this method of identifying the population, and this greatly facilitated the promotion of an ambiguous view of Macedonian identity.

Factors influencing religious jurisdiction in villages are examined through the role of the village priest, political agitators and foreign-armed paramilitary bands from Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The effect of religious rivalry upon the unity of the Macedonian people is examined in the form of relations between adherents to the Patriarchate and Exarchate churches (within a single village) and relations between

neighbouring villages under opposing jurisdictions. Perceptions of others as well as of themselves are both investigated from the perspective of the Exarchate and Patriarchate religious jurisdictions. In addition, modifications to cultural traits, customs and traditions as well as to systems of marriage are explored for any evidence of successful assimilation by the rival church organisations. Contrasts and comparisons are drawn with an exclusively Macedonian-populated village with Protestant, Exarchate and Patriarchate churches (Koleshino sample village, Strumica region). The rivalry between the Greek and Romanian churches for the adherence of the Vlah population forms a point of comparison to the general Greek-Bulgarian struggle for the adherence of Macedonians. Interviews with ethnic Vlahs, from the sample Bitola region (specifically from Gopesh village and Bitola town) provide a rich source for understanding these issues. We will discover a level of cultural unanimity that belies the potential for religious diversity.

Educational institutions were often established alongside churches in villages with the intention of attracting Macedonian children to be educated in the Greek, Bulgarian and Serb languages. The impact of schools in both the Bitola rural environment as well as in the urban centre is analysed in Chapter Five to determine what effect foreign education had upon Macedonian identity and the creation of new identities. Using various sources, including contemporary literature, Exarchate documents and oral accounts, the number of schools and students, and student composition are tabulated. Due to the conflicting nature of opposing educational data, this chapter explores whether statistics were exaggerated to support territorial claims on Macedonia. Where did the schoolteachers come from? If they were locals, to what extent were foreign educational systems practically used in place of Macedonian schools? Furthermore, what was the language of instruction in the schools? An examination of literacy levels in foreign languages in Bitola region villages at the beginning of the twentieth century will confirm whether foreign

schooling accomplished its objective of creating Greeks, Bulgarians and Serbs out of Macedonian schoolchildren.

Of course, Macedonian schoolchildren were not a blank canvas, and Chapter Six seeks to evaluate the impact of Islamicisation upon identity, social structure, and village rituals in the sample Dolna Reka district villages (Debar region). A contrast is drawn between a Macedonian Muslim village in the Dolna Reka district and a typical Macedonian Christian village in the Bitola region, in order to compare village rituals, social structures and systems of marriage. As two distinct religious communities of the one ethnicity, each were subjected to religious domination by foreigners who intended on creating new entities out of these populations. A comparison of their village rituals, social structures and systems of marriage is made in order to ascertain whether culturally these two groups were moulded into different entities via the church and mosque respectively, or whether identifiable features of their Macedonian culture remained.

An ethnically and religiously mixed village is examined, specifically Macedonian Christian and Turkish Muslim, for the purpose of analysing social interaction between the two groups - one as the colonising population and the other as the subjugated Christian *raya*.[5] The thesis seeks to compare co-habitation in religiously and ethnically mixed villages (Macedonian Orthodox - Turkish Muslim, and Macedonian Orthodox - Albanian Muslim) in contrast to a religiously mixed village of the same ethnic group, Macedonian Orthodox Christian with Macedonian Muslim. As the contest for Macedonia was underpinned by religion, the issue of physical segregation in the broader Christian – Muslim sphere provides an alternative perspective on whether segregation occurred on religious or ethnic grounds. This method of investigation is explored to provide an alternative insight of the depth to which Islamicisation shaped the identity of those Macedonians and their relations

[5] *Raya* is an Ottoman Turkish term referring to any Christian inhabitant of the Ottoman Empire. See Glossary of terms for this or any other foreign word or phrase.

with Christian Macedonians in comparison to Christian Macedonian co-habitation with other Muslim groups.

Original and novel features of this present work include the attention paid to the role of Albanian Muslims in the contestations over Macedonian identity in the late nineteenth century. The debates involving Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians – important though these were – obscure the role played by Albanian Muslims. Moreover, the ethnic identity of the dominant element, that is to say, the Macedonians themselves, becomes overburdened with the narratives of the smaller groups jostling for a place in the territory known as Macedonia. Without unduly essentialising the 'identity' of 'Macedonians', the last decades of the nineteenth century saw a crystallization of a recognisable group who came to represent the category 'Macedonian'. But the story is a very complicated one, as this work will describe. There is always the danger in this kind of analysis of essentialising what needs to be articulated. Just as the critics of Ward's *The Australian Legend* contended that he asserted the existence of a 'national identity' without proving its existence in the first place, so too we need to be careful about locating a 'Macedonian' identity when it was, in a postcolonial sense, still in the process of construction.