

THE MAKING OF THE RHODOPEAN BORDERS AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE POMAK IDENTITIES IN THE BALKANS

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Abstract: *Nation-state borders are a phenomenon became part of the international relations as well as the everyday lives of people. Even though borders, in theory, are constructed entities state borders directly or indirectly influence identity formation of communities. The Pomaks are Slavic-speaking Muslim population living historically in the Rhodope Mountains region on the Bulgarian-Greek border. In Bulgarian, Greek, and Turkish nation-building processes, Pomak identity was continuously contested by all the three states. For the Bulgarian state, the Pomaks are ethnic Bulgarians who forcefully converted to Islam. Thus, if this process can be reversed, they can become “real” Bulgarians, again. For the Greek state, the Pomaks are descendants of Hellenic tribes who were assimilated by more populous Slavic-speaking populations in the region. In Turkey, the Pomaks are regarded as descendants of pre-Ottoman Turkic tribes, such as Kumans and Pechenegs, who later assimilated by Slavic-speaking populations. This paper discusses how the modern Rhodopean borders were created and how their creation influenced and shaped the construction of Pomak identity in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. The first part focuses on the making of the modern Rhodope Mountains borders between Bulgaria and Greece. The second part evaluates the identity construction processes of Pomaks in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. Finally, the paper discusses how the making of state borders, directly and indirectly, influenced the construction of Pomak identity boundaries in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey.*

Keywords: *Pomaks, Identity, Borders, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, Balkans.*

RODOPLAR SINIRININ OLUŞUMU VE BALKANLAR'DA POMAK KİMLİĞİNİN İNŞASI

Öz: *Ulus devlet sınırları sadece uluslararası ilişkilerin değil aynı zamanda insanların da günlük hayatının bir parçası haline gelmiş bir olgudur. Her ne kadar, teoride sonradan oluşturulmuş da olsalar, sınırlar doğrudan yada dolaylı olarak toplumlulukların kimlik inşasını etkilemektedirler. Pomaklar, Slavca konuşan Müslüman bir nüfus olup, tarihsel olarak Bulgaristan-Yunanistan sınırındaki Rodop Dağları'nda yaşamaktadırlar. Bulgar, Yunan ve Türk ulus kurma süreçlerinde Pomak kimliği sürekli olarak bir çekişmeye maruz kalmıştır. Bulgaristan devleti için Pomaklar zorla müslümanlaştırılan etnik Bulgarlardır. Dolayısıyla, bu durum geri döndürülebilirse Pomaklar yeniden "gerçek" birer Bulgar olabilirler. Yunanistan devleti içinse Pomaklar, zaman içinde bölgedeki kendilerinden daha kalabalık Slavca konuşan nüfusça asimile edilmiş Helen boylarıdır. Türkiye'de ise Pomakların, Osmanlı öncesi Kumanlar ve Peçenekler gibi Türki boyların soyundan geldikleri, daha sonra Slavca konuşan nüfusça asimile edilmiş oldukları kabul edilir. Bu makalede, Rodoplardaki sınırların oluşturulmasını ve bu sınır oluşumunun Bulgaristan, Yunanistan ve Türkiye'deki Pomakların kimlik inşalarını nasıl etkileyip şekillendirdiği tartışılmaktadır. Makalenin ilk bölümü, günümüzde Bulgaristan ve Yunanistan arasında yer alan Rodop Dağları'ndaki sınırın oluşumuna odaklanmaktadır. Makalenin ikinci bölümünde ise Pomakların Bulgaristan, Yunanistan ve Türkiye'deki kimlik inşası süreçleri değerlendirilmektedir. Son olarak ise, ülke sınırlarının doğrudan yada dolaylı olarak Pomak kimliğinin sınırlarının oluşumuna etkileri tartışılmaktadır.*

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Pomaklar, Kimlik, Sınırlar, Bulgaristan, Yunanistan, Türkiye, Balkanlar.*

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“And when we had covered a distance of seven miles in those same mountains and along very arduous paths, we passed through the village called Pashmakli. It is populated by Turks only, but they do not speak their language. Their dialect is, rather, distorted Slavonic mixed with Greek and Bulgarian.”

Paul Lucas, a French Traveler, 1706.¹

Introduction

Nation-state borders are a phenomenon which became part of not only the international relations but as well as the everyday lives of lay people. Particularly with the rise of the nationalism and spread of the idea of territorial integrity, borders started to be imagined as fixed and eternal entities. They started to define not only the limits of the nation-state's sovereignty but also people's identities. Hence, populations in the borderlands are expected to imagine² themselves different from people on the other side of the border even though they are just kilometers away from each other and may be talking the same language, having the same denomination and ethnic identity. On the other hand, people in the borderlands are expected to imagine that they share the same identity with people thousands of kilometers away from them even though they may be sharing neither the same linguistic, religious nor ethnic identity.

Before the idea of impermeable national borders, “frontier” was in use both as a concept and as an everyday life reality. Frontier, briefly, used to define and separate two supposedly different civilizations. However, unlike the national borders, it was not impermeable. It was an ever expanding contact zone where different civilizations intermingle. We see the concept of a frontier in ancient Greece and Rome where it divided the “civilized” world from the “barbaric” one.³

1 As cited in Tsvetana Georgieva, “Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians,” *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, Vol. 12:3 (2001): p. 304.

2 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, Revised and Extended Edition*. London: Verso, 1991.

3 Daniel Power, “Frontiers: Terms, Concepts, and the Historians of Medieval and Early Modern Europe,” in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), p. 1-12. Kemal H. Karpat, “Comments on Contributions and the Borderlands”, in *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat and Robert W. Zens (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003) p. 1-14.

Later frontier was used to separate empires with different religions, such as in the Medieval Spain between Arab Muslims and Christian Castilians until Spanish *reconquesta*,⁴ between Muslim Seljuks of Rum and Christian Byzantium Empire,⁵ or between Muslim Mamluks and Shaman Mongols in the Middle East.⁶ Interestingly, even after Mongols conversion to Islam, this frontier remained based on interpretation of Islam which was also the case in the Ottoman and Safavid or Sunni-Shia frontier.⁷ This kind of frontier can be seen in the Balkans after 15th century between Catholic Hapsburg, Orthodox Romanovs, and Sunni-Muslim Ottomans. For the first time, the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 introduced the idea of the fixed border to the Ottoman Empire instead of the previous idea of the ever-expanding frontier. The treaty of Karlowitz created long lasting and contested border disputes and wars in borderlands between the Ottoman and Hapsburgs Empires in a geography from Croatia to Belgrade and Transylvania.⁸

In this paper, I discuss the making of the modern Rhodopean borders and how borders influenced and shaped the construction of Pomak identities in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. In the first part, I evaluate the historical process of the making of the borders in the Rhodope Mountains which are located between present-day Bulgaria and Greece. I discuss the evolution of the concepts of “frontier” and “borders” from the Roman to the Ottoman rule. Finally, I discuss how the contemporary

4 Eduardo Manzano Moreno, “The Creation of a Medieval Frontier: Islam and Christianity in the Iberian Peninsula, Eighth to Eleventh Centuries,” in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), p. 32-54.

5 Colin Heywood, “The Frontier in the Ottoman History: Old Ideas and New Myths,” in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), p. 228-250.

6 Reuven Amitai-Preiss, “Northern Syria between the Mongols and Mamluks: Political Boundary, Military Frontier, and Ethnic Affinities,” in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), p. 55-79.

7 Heywood, “Frontier in the Ottoman.” Rudi Matthee, “The Safavid-Ottoman Frontier: Iraq-i Arab as Seen by the Safavids,” in *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes*, ed. Kemal H. Karpat and Robert W. Zens (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003) p. , 157-176. Gábor Ágoston, “A Flexible Empire: Authority and its Limits on the Ottoman Frontiers,” in *Ottoman Borderlands: Issues, Personalities and Political Changes*, ed. by Kemal H. Karpat and Robert W. Zens (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), p. 15-32.

8 The legacy of the Ottoman – Hapsburg frontier has remained in the legacy of contemporary nationalist discourses. See for example Milica Bakić-Hayden, “Nesting Orientalisms: The Case of Former Yugoslavia,” *Slavic Review* Vol. 54 (4) (1995): p. 917-931.

Rhodopean borders were established in the 19th and 20th centuries during the era of nationalist movements and modern nation-state. In the second part, I evaluate the identity construction of the Pomaks in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. I conclude that making of state borders, directly and indirectly, has influenced the construction of Pomak identity boundaries.

The Making of the Rhodopean Borders

During the Ancient Greece, the area of the Rhodope Mountains was contact zone between “barbarian” and “civilized Greek” worlds.⁹ Even though Alexander the Great was from Macedonia and Greek mythology incorporated some elements originated from the Rhodopes, such as Orpheus, the Rhodopes was not considered the authentic part of the Greek civilization. The Rhodopes during the Ancient Greece was as a transitory, or “frontier zone” between those two “worlds.” Of course, this analogy would be misleading. Even though the city of Philippopolis (present-day Plovdiv in Bulgaria) lays behind the Rhodope Mountains, this might be considered as an island behind the frontier, instead of neglecting the “frontier” itself. Even during the great expansion of Alexander the Great, the expansion did not direct to the north of the mountains but the East. After the end of Greek and later Hellenistic periods, the Roman expansion finally reached the region. They, however, colonized the area behind the Rhodopes and governed it via a ruler directly appointed by the center. This administrative unit was Moesia which expanded the “frontier” to the Danube. Thus, the frontier between the “civilized” Rome and “uncivilized” or barbarian tribes shifted from the north of the Rhodopes to the north of the Danube.¹⁰

Christianity versus paganism or believers versus infidels dichotomy became the primary character of the frontier when the Christianity became the official religion of the Roman Empire in 391. During the great migration of Germanic and Slavic tribes from the Eurasia to Europe, the region was inhabited by Gothic tribes, and later by Slavs.

9 Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Vol. I.* (Cambridge, New York and Oakleigh-Australia: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

10 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I.* Paul Stephenson, “The Byzantine Frontier at the Lower Danube in the Late Tenth and Eleventh Centuries,” in *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*, ed. Daniel Power and Naomi Standen (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999), p. 80-104.

They lived under the Byzantium rule until the Bulgars¹¹ passed the Danube and settled in the northeastern Bulgaria. They soon expanded their lands to the south and started to threaten the Byzantium's domination in the region. The Bulgars established their state under the rule of Khan Asparukh in 681.¹² Nomadic and warrior Bulgars were assimilated by the more populous and settled Slavic tribes. They have adopted the Slavic language and later officially converted into the Eastern Christianity in 934. In other words, they became part of the "civilized" world. In the "golden age" of the first Bulgarian state, it ruled the territories of present-day Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, and Albania. However, interestingly the Rhodopes remained a borderland region between Byzantium Empire and Bulgaria. In 1018, Bulgaria was occupied by the Byzantium Empire until Simeon II established the second Bulgarian state in the lands of present-day Republic of Macedonia in 1185. Once again the Rhodopes remained a borderland between the Second Bulgarian Kingdom and the Byzantium Empire.¹³

The Ottoman Rhodopes until 1876

The Ottoman Empire occupied the Rhodopes and entire present-day Greek and Bulgarian territories in the first half of 14th century. Because the Ottoman State was established as an "uç-beylik" or borderland state¹⁴ in the borderlands between the Byzantium empire and the Seljuks of Rum in the Western Anatolia, the Ottoman policy of conquest was depended on *ghazi* or conquest ideology. This ideology aimed continuously pushing the frontier. Because the primary goal of *uç-beylik* was protecting the frontier, the principal aim was not necessarily a territorial expansion. Rather than focusing on occupying new lands, *uç-beys* concentrated to the slave trade and looting activities which made them economically and politically powerful and

11 Early Bulgars or "proto-Bulgarians" as they are commonly named by the official Bulgarian historiography, were a Turkic tribe migrated from the Eurasian steppes. There are several theories about their place of origin. First one argues that they came from the Central Asia, and the second one states that they came from the lands of present-day Iran. The first theory, however, is the most cited and accepted one. The second theory on the Bulgars Iranian origins was in use especially when the state-socialist government wanted to eliminate anything Turkish and even Turkic during the forced assimilation campaign in the 1980s against the Turkish minority.

12 Richard J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 5-8.

13 Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*

14 *Uç-beylik* is semi-autonomous state in the frontier zone between the Christian and Muslim world. While *uç-beylik* was a name of the Muslim entities, its Byzantine counterpart was called *akron*. Both were responsible to protect the frontier, and in return the central states granted them semi-autonomy and other privileges, such as raiding the other side of the border.

influential figures.¹⁵ This policy also included forced deportations and encouraged relocations (*sürgün*) of Turcoman or *yürük* nomad groups to the borderlands where those resettled populations were granted *timars* or lands for the use of their tax revenue. Inalcik (1954) states that most of the *yürük* groups were relocated to the borderland zones, such as Rhodopes, Thrace, southern slopes of the Balkan Mountains, Macedonia, and Dobruca,¹⁶ where they were still able to continue to pursue the *ghazi* ideology and the regime of *uç-beylik*.¹⁷

Although with the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699,¹⁸ the Ottoman Empire for the first time recognized that the borders in question in the treaty were permanent lines instead of more porous and temporary frontier. This recognition was only in theory. In reality, the borderlands between Austria-Hungary and the Ottomans became kept changing within relatively short periods. When the supremacy of the Ottoman Empire in the Eastern Europe was challenged and halted either by rival empires such as Hapsburg and Russia or domestic actors, such as *ayans*, the Ottoman borderlands became more and more zones of warfare and internal conflict. In the Middle Eastern borderlands, the Ottomans had already given some privileges in disputed borderland regions in the East of Anatolia, such as in Diyarbakir to the Kurdish tribes against Safavids.¹⁹ In the Balkans, with the rise of the *ayans*, borderland became more contested. One of the most striking examples is Osman Pazvantoglu, the *ayan* of Vidin in present-day northwest Bulgaria. He established a pseudo-state at the end of 18th and beginning of 19th centuries not only in northwest Bulgaria but also on the other side of the Danube, in the Ottoman vassal territories of Wallachia and through Belgrade.²⁰ He became such an influential figure that he even

15 Halil Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods of Conquest," *Studia Islamica* Vol.2 (1954): p. 103-129.

16 *Dobrudhza* in Bulgarian and *Dobrogea* in Romanian.

17 Inalcik, "Ottoman Methods"

18 The Treaty of Karlowitz (present-day Sremski Karlovci in Serbia) was signed on 26 January 1699. It concluded the War of 1683-1699 between the Ottoman Empire and the Holy League (Austria, Poland, Venice, and Russia). The Ottoman Empire had been defeated and had to transfer the control of Transylvania and Hungary to Austria, Podolia to Poland, and Dalmatia and Peloponnese to Venice. This marked the first large territorial loss of the Ottomans after centuries of territorial expansion in Europe. Gábor Ágoston, "Treaty of Karlowitz," in *Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Gábor Ágoston and Bruce Masters (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), p. 309-310.

19 Ágoston, "Flexible Empire"

20 Virginia H. Aksan, "Whose Territories and Whose Peasants? Ottoman Boundaries on the Danube in the 1760s," in *The Ottoman Balkans 1750-1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), p. 61-86. Rossitsa Gradeva, "Osman Pazvantoglu of Vidin: Between Old and New", in *The Ottoman Balkans 1750-1830*, ed. Frederick F. Anscombe (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), p. 115-162.

independently established diplomatic relations with Napoleon's France, Russia and Austria-Hungary.²¹ Those times were also when *Kırcalı* bandit groups emerged in the Rhodope Mountains.²² The contestation of the state authority in the Balkans usually took place in borderlands and mountainous regions. The turmoil in the Rhodope Mountains was not a direct result of being in the borderlands or confrontation with external powers, but more because of being a mountainous area where local actors contested the power of the central authority.

One of the implications of the creation of borders and frontiers is re-population, de-population and temporary/ permanently abandonment of the regions. For example, during the Hungarian-Ottoman wars in the 16th century, Magyar peasants abandoned parts of Hungarian plains close to the borderlands.²³ According to McNeill, what happened in the Ottoman borderlands was:

“... the armed establishment and administrative bureaucracy which had initially sustained itself in a good part by plundering the borderlands of the Ottoman State shifted the locus of its predation toward the center of the empire as the borderlands became exhausted”.²⁴

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Instead of encouraging settlements in the borderlands as it was the case in the previous *uç-beylik* regime, from the 18th century the Ottoman State started to discourage borderland settlements. Therefore, peasants were prone to move in safer places away from borderlands.²⁵ There was a shift in the character of the Ottoman borderland regime in the Balkans from offensive to defensive one. Thus, previous borderland activities, such as looting and slave trade, became more restricted since they might have triggered international conflicts with neighboring empires and states.

21 Gradeva, “Osman Pazvantoglu”

22 These Muslim bandit groups emerged when there is a power vacuum in the region. Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 52-56. Unlike *uç-bey*s who used to loot non-Ottoman territories, *Kırcalı* bandit groups were looting the Ottoman lands and populations. Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I*. Christine Philliou, “Communities on the Verge: Unraveling the Phanariot Ascendancy in Ottoman Governance,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* Vol. 51 (1) (2009): p. 151-181. Allan Cunningham, “The Sick Man and the British Physician,” *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 17(2) (1981): p. 147-173.

23 William H. McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier 1500-1800* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1964).

24 *Ibid.* 62.

25 *Ibid.* 187.

Special borderland regimes were usually mutually implemented by both sides of the border, as it was between the Seljuks of Rum and the Byzantine Empire.²⁶ It was also a case between the Ottoman Empire and its neighboring empires. When the Ottomans administered its borderlands with special regimes, its neighboring states also established similar regimes. For instance, Austria-Hungary also developed a special militarized borderland regime (*Militaergranze*) along its Ottoman borderlands. In this regime, Austria-Hungary gave self-governing rights to the borderland communities. In return, those communities were responsible for protecting the borderlands from raiders and bandits as well as obliged to support the army during military campaigns. *Militaergranze* was very similar to the Ottoman borderland regime and *tumar* system.²⁷ Self-governing and other promises of the Austria-Hungarian borderland regime attracted primarily Serbo-Croatian groups.²⁸ Russia was another state that established a borderland regime against the Crimean Tatars and the Ottoman Empire by populating its Eastern borderlands (present-day Ukraine) with Cossacks.²⁹

1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War

Starting with the Serbian uprising in 1804, the Balkans became an arena of competing nationalisms. Serbian uprising followed by the Greek insurrection in 1821 and creation of independent Greece in 1826. Other ethnic, religious and linguistic groups in the Balkans followed the example of these two nationalist movements.³⁰ In Bulgaria, nationalism spread among the Bulgarian elite circles and especially among those who were educated in the Western institutions.³¹ Bulgarian nationalism

26 See footnote 14.

27 It is a system which the Ottomans inherited from the Seljuks in which the state grants *tumars* or to the *sipahis* (cavalrymen) and other members of the military class for the use of their tax revenue. In return they were responsible to join the army when it is requested. *Tumars* cannot be inherited and were belong to the state.

28 *Ibid.* Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I.*

29 McNeill, *Europe's Steppe Frontier*

30 In the Balkans, because of the legacy of the Ottoman *millet* system, ethnic identity was always a mixture and interplay of various other identities, such as linguistic and religious. Therefore, stating only ethnicity is not always enough to evaluate the major motive of the Balkan nationalist movements.

31 Those elites were not necessarily educated in the Western Europe, but also in the Western European or North American noneducational institutions in the Ottoman lands. For instance, Robert College was one of the well-known institutions where Bulgarian elite received their education and developed nationalist ideas partly inspired by the liberal environment of the school. Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 75-84.

was strong especially in the centers outside Bulgaria where there were strong Bulgarian merchant colonies, such as Bucharest, Belgrade, Edirne, Istanbul, and Odessa.³² Because of its geographic proximity to Bulgarian lands as well as the semi-autonomous status of Romania, the most powerful Bulgarian nationalist movement was organized itself in Bucharest. They tried to initiate several unsuccessful rebellions by passing the Danube from the Romanian side. They, however, found little support from lay Bulgarians and eventually suppressed by the Ottoman army. The turning point was the start of the revolts in the southwest regions of present-day Bulgaria. The Ottoman authorities could not prevent attacks and massacres of *başıbozüks* (Ottoman Army irregulars) to the Bulgarian-Christian villages.³³ One of the most know and tragic massacres happened in the town of Batak in 1876. *Başıbozüks* killed hundreds of civilians including females and children. This tragedy was used to mobilize the public against the Ottoman Empire in the Western World, especially in the Great Britain and Russia. For example, Gladstone's book about the issue "Lessons in Massacre"³⁴ received a considerable public attention in Britain. It was one of the most important propaganda and public mobilization instruments towards the approaching the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878.

Following the riots in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1875 and Bulgaria in 1876 (the April Uprising), the Great Powers (the Great Britain, Russia, France, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) asked for organizing a conference to find a solution to the so-called "Eastern Question." The conference was held in Istanbul in 1876 in which the Great Powers were asking for reforms in Bosnia and Bulgaria.³⁵ The conference was concluded earlier with the hopes that the proclamation of the first Ottoman constitution in 1876 could eventually solve these issues. Rebellions in Bosnia in 1877 became the last excuse for Russia to declare war to the Ottoman Empire.³⁶ During the war, the Ottoman army lost almost all the battles against the Russian army both in the Balkans

32 M. Vedat Gürbüz, "The Emergence of Bulgarian Nationalism," *Güneydoğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi* Vol.16 (2014): p. 33. Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 63.

33 Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 80-81.

34 W. E. Gladstone, *Lessons in Massacre; or, The Conduct of the Turkish Government in and about Bulgaria Since May, 1876. Chiefly from the Papers Presented by Command* (London: John Murray, 1877).

35 *Tersane Konferansı* in Turkish.

36 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I. Jelena Milojkovic-Djuric, Pan Slavism and National Identity in Russia and in the Balkans, 1830-1880: Images of the Self and Others* (Boulder: Dist. Of Columbia University Press, 1994).

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and in the Caucasus. When the Russian army crossed the Danube, they marched toward the Balkan ranges. Following the surrender of *Plevne* (present-day Pleven in Bulgaria) after a long and tragic siege, the Russian army was able to pass the Balkan ranges which were the last natural barrier before Istanbul. They soon were able to take Edirne and later reached the outskirts of Istanbul. At this point, for the Ottoman Empire, there was no choice other than asking for an armistice. Additionally, the Great Britain also interfered because the fall of Istanbul into Russian control was completely out of British agenda. The first armistice treaty signed in Edirne and a preliminary peace treaty signed in San Stefano (present-day Yeşilköy neighborhood in Istanbul) in 1878.

However, in spite of the preliminary treaty, Pomak groups in the Rhodopes continued their defense under the leadership of a local *derebey* (local notable) Ahmed Ağa of Tamrash and prevented the Russian army from advancing into the area until 1880. They established the so-called “Tamrash Republic.” They even issued passports and border control. Ahmed Ağa and the Pomaks’ rationale was that his forces participated in suppressing the April uprising in 1876. Thus, they feared from the revenge of the Russian army and Bulgarian militia.³⁷ Even after the formation of the autonomous region of Eastern Rumelia³⁸ was formed as a result of the Treaty of Berlin in 1878 Ahmed Ağa and the Pomaks rejected to surrender and be part of the new autonomous province. As the Treaty of Berlin dictates, Eastern Rumeli had to be autonomous but still under the sultan’s control. Its governor had to be appointed by the sultan. The governor had to be an Ottoman Christian, and the signatory states of the Treaty of Berlin had to approve him. For the Pomaks in Tamrash, their lives would be still in jeopardy “under any Christian administration.” As a result of several local Muslim revolts in the area, Smolyan and Kardzhali regions returned to the direct rule of the Ottoman Empire with the Act of Tophane in 1886.³⁹

37 Anonymous [signed as *An Old Diplomatist*] “The Congress of Berlin and Its Consequences,” *The North American Review* Vol. 127: 265 (1878): p.392-405. W. N. Medlicott and Richard G. Weeks Jr., “Documents on Russian Foreign Policy, 1878-1880: Section I: August-December 1878,” *The Slavonic and East European Review* Vol 64(1) (1986): p. 81-99. F. R. Maunsell, “The Rhodope Mountains,” *The Geographical Journal* Vol. 28(1) (1906): p. 7-24. Ömer Turan, *Rodop Türklerinin 1878 Direnişi* (Ankara: Balkan Türkleri Göçmen ve Mülteci Dernekleri Federasyonu, 2000).

38 *Şarkî Rumeli vilayeti*.

39 G. Scelle, “Studies on the Eastern Question,” *The American Journal of International Law* Vol. 5 (1) (1911): p. 144-177.

The Treaty of San Stefano created an independent Bulgarian state whose territories included not only the present-day Bulgarian lands but also the present-day Macedonian, the Western Thracian (northern Greece) and Romanian Dobrogean lands.⁴⁰ Creation of an independent Bulgarian state with such large territory⁴¹ alarmed the other European powers. They were afraid of that independence of the new Bulgarian state will be symbolic and in reality, Bulgaria will likely to be under Russian influence. The fear was that this would change the balance of power in the Balkans.⁴² Therefore, they called for a joint conference in Berlin in 1878. Instead of an independent state, the Treaty of Berlin established an autonomous principality of Bulgaria on lands which lie on the northern side of the Balkan Mountains and the Danube. In the south, between the Balkan and the Rhodope mountains, an autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia was established. In theory that province would be under the direct jurisdiction of the Sultan but will be governed by a Christian governor, appointed by him. Both the Western Thrace and Macedonia, however, was to remain the Ottoman Empire.⁴³ However, in practice, the term “autonomous principality” did not have any specificity in the international law. Bulgaria became an, in reality, *de facto* independent state.⁴⁴ In the case of Eastern Rumelia, a joint commission of the European powers wrote the province’s civil and criminal codes. Therefore, they all put their administrative traditions in it, and the system became too complex for the province to be implemented.⁴⁵ When the Western Thrace including Smolyan and Kardzhali remained in the Ottoman Empire, the Rhodopes became a border between the Ottomans and Eastern Rumelia, which was expected to be unified with Bulgaria, soon.

40 The American Journal of International Law, “Preliminary Treaty of Peace between Russia and Turkey: Signed at San Stefano, February 9/ March 3, 1878, Supplement: Official Documents,” *The American Journal of International Law* Vol. 2(4) (1908): p. 397-401.

41 This state later named as “the Great Bulgaria.” It has become the ultimate goal of the Bulgarian expansionism during the Balkan Wars and the two World Wars.

42 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I.*

43 *Ibid.* The American Journal of International Law, “Treaty between Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Russia, and Turkey for the Settlement of Affairs in the East: Signed at Berlin, July 13, 1878, Supplement: Official Documents,” *The American Journal of International Law* Vol. 2(4) (1908): p. 401-424.

44 Scelle, “Studies on the Eastern Question”

45 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I.*

Formation of the Bulgarian Nation State 1878-1909

Eastern Rumelia was formed to guarantee the proportional representation of all the ethnoreligious groups, such as Bulgarians, Greeks, and Muslim. This idea of proportional representation, however, was manipulated by the Bulgarian representatives by putting as many as ethnic-Bulgarians in the administrative posts. The province was working very similar to the Bulgarian Principality, such as regarding of education and military education. Both Bulgarian representatives in the administrative posts and paramilitary units were working on the unification of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia.⁴⁶ The Bulgarians' goal was to annex Eastern Rumelia to Bulgaria, which finally happened in 1885. Although the Ottoman Empire had a right to send troops to the province if it sees there is a threat to its internal stability, in reality, it did not have means to prevent the annexation.⁴⁷ However, fearing from Bulgaria's increasing domination in the region, Serbia launched an attack on Bulgaria. The Ottoman Empire was anticipating that Serbia will defeat Bulgaria and prevent unification. The Sublime Porte was planning to interfere only upon Serbian advance to prevent the total defeat of Bulgaria. Thus, the Ottoman Empire halfheartedly warned Serbia that it would consider any offense against Bulgaria as against the empire itself. Even though Bulgaria was acting like a *de facto* independent state, the empire's rationale was to emphasize that Bulgaria was still part of the Ottoman State.⁴⁸ However, unexpectedly, Bulgarian forces defeated the Serbian army in 1886 and started to march towards Belgrade. Austria-Hungary which was the guarantor of Serbia according to the Treaty of Berlin interfered to stop the Bulgarian advance. A treaty signed between Serbia and Bulgaria in which both sides returned to the *status quo ante bellum*.⁴⁹ Later, in 1886 with the Act of Tophane, the Ottoman Empire recognized Tzar Ferdinand as the governor of Eastern Rumelia for two consecutive five-year periods. In return, Bulgaria accepted the returning of Smolyan and Kardzhali areas to the Ottoman Empire. However, the Ottoman Empire's diplomatic maneuvers to retain the Principality of Bulgaria and the autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia as two separate entities were not successful. Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia acted not as two separate entities but as a single entity, while the

46 Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 93-99.

47 *Ibid.*

48 Ebru Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and The Balkans: Empire Lost, Relations Altered* (London and New York: Taurus Academic Studies, 2007).

49 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I.*

parliament of Eastern Rumelia dissolved itself after the annexation in 1885.⁵⁰

After the Treaty of Berlin and with the creation of the Principality of Bulgaria, “the Macedonian question” emerged as the most important issue in the Balkans. According to the Ottoman *millet* system, Christian Orthodox Ottoman subjects regardless of their ethnic identities were self-governed by the Greek Orthodox patriarch of Fener in Istanbul. However, starting with the second half of the 19th century and with the rise of the nationalism in the Balkans, non-Greek Christian Orthodox Ottoman subjects began to demand their churches. Serbs and Romanians established their churches following their independence. Bulgarian elites also started to lobby to establish the Bulgarian Exarchate which was finally granted in 1870 through the firman of Sultan Abdülaziz.⁵¹ The Greek Patriarch in Fener opposed to this implementation. Although Russia had supported the appointment of Bulgarian-speaking clergy to the Bulgarian speaking lands, it was against the establishment of a separate Bulgarian Church.⁵² The Bulgarian Church played a crucial role in Bulgarian nationalism. First of all, the Bulgarian Church contributed to the emergence and spread of linguistic nationalism against the Greek Patriarchate which used to force education and liturgical services only in the Greek language even in non-Greek speaking regions. And finally, the Bulgarian Church both directly and indirectly supported ethno-religious based nationalism against the Ottomans.

After the establishment of the Bulgarian Principality in 1878, the next struggle was over the domination of Macedonia and Macedonian Christian Orthodox people. The Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian, and Serbian churches were active in the region trying to convince people to join their churches. Ethnic identity in Macedonia became associated with to which Christian Orthodox church a person is registered.⁵³ Thus, if a person was registered to the Greek Patriarchate, s/he was considered as Greek. If s/he was registered to the Bulgarian Exarchate, s/he was considered as Bulgarian. These implementations created awkward situations. For instance, based on their church registrations, there were

50 *Ibid.*

51 Although the liturgy still had to mention the patriarch, with this implementation the Bulgarian Church became autocephalous, which means it received the right to elect its head by itself, train its clergy and perform the religious ceremonies in Bulgarian language. Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 65-75.

52 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol.*; Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 65-75.

53 *Ibid.*

siblings among whom one was Greek and other was either Bulgarian, Romanian, or Serbian.⁵⁴ All the four churches were acting parallel to the interests of their respective states. For instance, Bulgaria's goal was to reclaim Macedonia which was one of the territories in the Treaty of San Stefano together with the Romanian Dobrogea and the Western Thrace.⁵⁵ The main argument of Bulgaria, Greece, and Serbia were that the Christian Orthodox population in Macedonia was either Bulgarian, Greek or Serbian. Therefore, Macedonia should be annexed to Bulgaria, Greece, or Serbia.⁵⁶ By contrast, some members of the IMRO (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization) were supporting the establishment of an autonomous Macedonian province under the Ottoman rule.⁵⁷ In August 2nd, 1903 during the Ilinden (The Day of St. Elijah) IMRO launched a revolt in Macedonia, Thrace, and the Strandzha Mountains which was suppressed by the Ottoman forces.⁵⁸

The restitution of the Ottoman parliament and the constitution following the Young Turk revolution in 1908, promised greater freedoms and rights to the all Ottoman subjects. However, the terror in Macedonia continued even during the second constitutional period. There were around 250 Bulgarian, Greek, Serb and Vlach⁵⁹ bandit groups who were fighting either with each other or against the Ottoman Empire.⁶⁰ Those bandit groups were forcing people to change their denominations. Thus, a village might become Bulgarian one day and Greek, Serbian or Vlach another day.⁶¹ The major battles, however, were between patriarchist Greek bands which were forcing people to register themselves as Greek Orthodoxes and exarchist Bulgarian bands who were forcing people

54 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Other Balkan Wars: A 1913 Carnegie Endowment Inquiry in Retrospect with a New Introduction and Reflections on the Present Conflict* by George F. Kennan (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1993 [1913]).

55 The Bulgarian expansionist movements throughout the history have always perceived the borders created with the Treaty of San Stefano as the "real" or "promised" territories of the "Great Bulgaria."

56 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I.*

57 *Ibid.*

58 *Ibid.*; Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 126-131.

59 Vlachs speak an Eastern-Romance language which is very similar to the modern Romanian. Because of their language they were associated with Romanian ethnic identity. There are still Vlach minorities in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Macedonia, and Serbia.

60 Emre Sencer, "Balkan Nationalisms in the Ottoman Parliament, 1909," *East European Quarterly* Vol.37 (1) (2004): p. 41-64.

61 E.H.W., "The Macedonian Question: A Note on the Historical Background," *Bulletin of International News* Vol. 22(12) (1945): p. 509-515. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Other Balkan Wars*.

to register themselves as Bulgarian Orthodoxes.⁶² The Young Turk revolution was followed by the proclamation of independence by Bulgaria and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary in 1908. The Ottoman State was engrossed in its internal affairs, especially in Macedonia, and did not have any power to respond to these two events. In 1909, with the Treaty of Istanbul, the Ottoman State recognized the independence of Bulgaria.⁶³ Thenceforth, the Rhodopes became the state border between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire. Even after the restitution of the parliament and constitution, the insurgencies in Macedonia remained. The Bulgarian, Greek, Vlach, and Turkish-Muslim representatives of the region continuously discussed the issue in the Ottoman parliament.⁶⁴

The Balkan Wars 1912-1913

In 1912, the Balkan states started to sign bilateral military agreements with each other. Bulgaria and Serbia's goals were to seize the Ottoman lands in Europe before there was time for reform by the Sublime Porte or any potential intervention by the Great Powers.⁶⁵ Bulgaria and Serbia signed an alliance in which they agreed that in a possible war with the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria would take Western Thrace and present-day Greek Macedonia, while Serbia will take Kosovo. They could not reach an agreement on the status of the present-day Republic of Macedonian lands. They left this issue to the arbitration of the Russian Tzar.⁶⁶ Russia and Austria-Hungary did not want another escalation in the region, and they tried to prevent it. They assumed that the Ottoman army would easily suppress the Balkan states. Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Russia had already agreed in *Dreikeiserbund* that any change in territories for the Ottoman Empire would not be allowed, but changes for the Balkan states would be accepted.⁶⁷

During the first Balkan War, Bulgaria occupied all the Western Thrace up to the city of Kavala as well as the Eastern Thrace from Edirne up to

62 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I*. Joseph S. Roucek, "The Eternal Problem of Macedonia," *International Journal* Vol. 2 (4) (1947): p. 297-307.

63 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. I*.

64 Sencer, "Balkan Nationalisms"

65 Crampton, *Concise History of Bulgaria*, 131-137.

66 Barbara Jelavich, *History of the Balkans: Twentieth Century, Vol. II* (Cambridge, New York and Oakleigh-Australia: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

67 *Ibid.*

Çatalca and Gallipoli (present-day Gelibolu in Turkey). Greece seized Salonica and Thessaly. Serbia obtained Kosovo and part of Vardar Macedonia. Montenegro held Novi Pazar together with Serbia.⁶⁸ The Ottoman army could stop the Bulgarian offense in Çatalca which is located only fifty kilometers to Istanbul. The Ottoman Empire had to accept the Midye-Enez line as a border to sign an armistice. Following the division of the European territories of the Ottoman Empire among the Balkan states, Greece, Romania, and Serbia allied against Bulgaria, which was the primary winner regarding territorial advances. Bulgaria was aware of that alliance, and instead of waiting for an offensive campaign of its rivals, it preferred to make the first move and attacked Serbia. Following the Bulgarian offensive against Serbia, Greece, Romania, and Turkey launched attacks against Bulgaria. Bulgaria's defeat was inevitable. As a result, in 1913 with the Treaty of Bucharest, Bulgaria left Kavala to Greece, Vardar Macedonia to Serbia, and Southern Dobrudhza⁶⁹ to Romania and maintained the Western Thrace. With the Treaty of Istanbul in 1913, the Ottoman Empire were able to take back Edirne and the Eastern Thrace from Bulgaria.⁷⁰ The statue of the Western Thrace remained in ambiguity for awhile. The Turks and Muslims of the region did not want to be given to the Bulgarian control. They established the short-lived Western Thrace Provisional Government on 31 August 1913. Their goal was to prevent Bulgarian occupation and eventually annex the Western Thrace to the Ottoman Empire. It was, however, occupied by the Greek forces and returned to Bulgaria following the Treaty of Bucharest.⁷¹ The war left behind numerous atrocities, massacres, rapes, mass exiles, forced "re-conversions" and economic problems.⁷² The Rhodopes which served as a border between the Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria since 1878 were incorporated into Bulgaria following the Balkan Wars.

68 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. II.*

69 Dobruca in Turkish or Dobrogea in Romanian.

70 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol II.* H. Charles Woods, "The Balkans, Macedonia and the War," *Geographical Review* Vol. 6 (1) (1918): p. 19-36. W. L. G. Joerg, "The New Boundaries of the Balkan States and Their Significance," *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* Vol. 45(11) (1913): p. 819-830.

71 Richard C. Hall, *The Balkan Wars 1912-1913: Prelude to the First World War* (New York and London: Routledge, 2000).

72 Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *Other Balkan Wars.*

The World War I and II

Greece and Bulgaria remained outside of the First World War during the first years of the war. Bulgaria was in very strategic geographic location to connect Germany and Austria-Hungary to the Ottoman Empire. Bulgaria's primary motivation joining the war was to reach to its San Stefano territories.⁷³ However, being aware of its strategic importance Bulgaria requested a full control over Maritza⁷⁴ railways which runs through the Dedeağaç (present-day Alexandroupolis in Greece) port in the Aegean Sea, and a portion from Edirne *vilayet* of the Ottoman Empire.⁷⁵ When its conditions were fulfilled, it launched a campaign against Serbia and occupied Macedonia. Greece remained out of the war in the first years, too. There was a significant disagreement between the Prime Minister Venizelos who was supporting that Greece should join the War on the side of the Allied Powers and King Constantine I who was against it. Finally, when the King was dethroned, the new king, his son Alexander, led Greece to join the war in the summer of 1917.⁷⁶

The defeat of the Central Powers followed by peace treaties with the Allied Powers.⁷⁷ Bulgaria signed the Treaty of Neuilly in 1919 in which it left some parts of its western territories to the newly established the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.⁷⁸ Parties could not reach an agreement over the Western Thrace, and it left to the French protectorate.

73 The First Balkan War began when Bulgaria, Greece, Montenegro, and Serbia attacked the Ottoman Empire on 8 October 1912 and concluded with the signing of the Treaty of London on 30 May 1913. The Second Balkan War began on 16 June 1913 when Greece, Serbia, Romania, and Turkey attacked Bulgaria.

74 Maritza is the name of the river in the Thrace which has its origins from the Rila Mountains in Bulgaria. After flowing through Plovdiv and the entire Bulgarian Thrace, it sets the present-day border between Greece and Turkey since the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. It is *Meriç* in Turkish and *Evros* in Greek.

75 Jelavich, *History of the Balkans, Vol. II.*

76 *Ibid.*

77 The Central Powers were consisted of Germany, Austria-Hungary, the Ottoman Empire, Bulgaria, while the Allied Powers were consisted of the Great Britain, France, Italy, Russia, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Belgium, Romania, Japan, and the United States.

78 The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes established following the World War I. It was formed by a merger of It was formed in 1918 by the merger of the provisional State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs which was formed from territories of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire and with the Kingdom of Serbia. The Kingdom of Montenegro unified with Serbia several days before the establishment of the new kingdom. The Kingdom included present-day states of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, and Serbia. In 1929, it was renamed as the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and later as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1945.

The Making of the Rhodopean Borders and Construction of the Pomak Identities in the Balkans

The region was finally annexed by Greece in 1920.⁷⁹ With the end of the Turkish War of Independence in 1922, the issue of the Western Thrace was once again on the table during the Lausanne Peace Conference. The Turkish delegate insisted for a referendum to decide the status of the region, but this proposition was rejected by Lord Curzon and the Greek representative. By losing the Western Thrace, Bulgaria remained without any outlet in the Mediterranean. During the peace talks, Bulgaria demanded that Dedeağaç and its port should be returned to Bulgaria. The Allied Powers, however, proposed to give Bulgaria right to use only the port of Dedeağaç which was rejected by Bulgaria.⁸⁰ The Treaty of Neuilly did not satisfy Bulgaria similarly as other defeated Central Powers dissatisfied with their peace treaties.⁸¹ This dissatisfaction became a reason for its revanchist claims on the region.

During the World War II, Bulgaria was Nazi Germany's ally and once again attempted to annex the Serbian-controlled Macedonia and the Greek-controlled Western Thrace.⁸² The defeat of Nazi Germany and the Axis Powers, and the victory of the Allies redrew the European borders. In the postwar period, with the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences, the Allies divided Europe into spheres of influence between the Soviet Union and the Western bloc. Greece left to the Western World while Bulgaria together with other Eastern European countries left to the Soviet influence. Eventually, after the proclamation of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in 1944, the Rhodopes became not only a state border but also heavily militarized ideological border between socialist and capitalist blocs. The impermeability and militarization of the Rhodopean borders further advanced after the Greek Civil War of 1944-1949. The Rhodopean region was declared a special border region by Greece where only those with proper residence documents could enter.⁸³

79 Geographical Review, "The New Boundaries of Bulgaria," *Geographical Review* Vol 9 (4) (1920): p. 299-305. Hamilton Fish Armstrong, "Bulgaria and the Aegean," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 5(1) (1926): p. 148-151.

80 Armstrong, "Bulgaria and the Aegean." Harry N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey: A Diplomatic History 1913-1923* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1966).

81 The Treaty of Versailles with Germany, The Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye with Austria, and the Treaty of Trianon with Hungary.

82 Dimitris Livianos, *The Macedonian Question: Britain and the Southern Balkans 1939-1949* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Christopher Catherwood, *The Balkans in World War Two: Britain's Balkan Dilemma* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003).

83 Lois Labrianidis, "'Internal Frontiers' as a Hindrance to Development," *European Planning Studies* vol. 9 (1) (2001): p. 85-103.

Part B: Construction of Pomak Identity Boundaries Across Borders:

Territorial borders and borderland identities have long been associated with ambiguity, marginality and hybridity, and lately with fluidity.⁸⁴ “Hybrid identities” and “marginal territories” are perceived as threats to the national unity and used to legitimize territorial claims and efforts to impose “pure” ethno-national identities on those populations with “polluted” identities.⁸⁵ For nationalism, liminal identities have been obstacles achieving homogeneous nation.⁸⁶ Liminal identities, however, at the same time were used to legitimize assimilatory implementations in the nation building process.⁸⁷

The Balkans also have groups whose identities were perceived as in-between by the majority. They usually share one important identity marker with the majority while at the same time have a different one, such as Bosniaks (Serbo-Croatian-speaking Muslims), Gagauzes (Turkish-speaking Christian Orthodoxes), and Pomaks (Bulgarian-speaking Muslims). In this part, I discuss identity construction of the Pomaks across the borders. The Pomaks concentrated in three countries in the Balkans: Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. I focus on the state policies of Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey towards their Pomak communities and evaluate how such policies perceived and negotiated by themselves.

- 84 John W. Cole and Eric R. Wolf, *The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley* (New York: Academic Press, 1974). Sarah Green, “Lines, Traces and Tidemarks: Reflections on Forms of Borderli-ness,” *COST Action IS0803 Working Paper* (Nicosia, 2009) accessed on September 7, 2011, www.eastbordnet.org/working_papers/open/documents/Green_Lines_Traces_and_Tidemarks_090414.pdf.; Donna K. Flynn, “‘We Are the Border’: Identity, Exchange, and the State along the Bénin-Nigeria Border,” *American Ethnologist* Vol. 24(2) (1997): p. 311-330.; Peter Thaler, “Fluid Identities in Central European Borderlands,” *European History Quarterly* Vol.31 (2001): p. 519-548.
- 85 Anastasia N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood: Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997). Veena Das and Deborah Poole, *Anthropology in the Margins of the State* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press and Oxford, UK: James Currey, 2004).
- 86 Robert M. Hayden, “Mass Rape and Rape Avoidance in Ethno-national Conflicts: Sexual Violence in Liminalized States,” *American Anthropologist* Vol. 102 (2000): p. 27-41.; Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York and London: Routledge, 2002 [1966]).
- 87 Alexander Jr. Alland and Sonia Alland, *Catalunya One Nation Two States: An Ethnographic Study of Nonviolent Resistance to Assimilation* (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Laurence Cole and Hans Heiss, “‘Unity Versus Difference’: The Politics of Region-building and National Identities in Tyrol, 1830-67,” in *Different Paths to the Nation: Regional and National Identities in Central Europe and Italy, 1830-70*, ed. Laurence Cole (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) p. , 37-59. Anna Millo, “Trieste, 1830-70: From Cosmopolitanism to the Nation,” in *Different Paths to the Nation: Regional and National Identities in Central Europe and Italy, 1830-70*, ed. Laurence Cole (New York and Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 60-81.

Dissimulation and Fluid Identities as Alternatives to the Assimilation vs. Expulsion Dichotomy:

Unlike the multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multilingual empires, nationalist movements aimed to create ethnically and linguistically homogeneous nations.⁸⁸ Depending on whether the character of the movement is secular or not this homogenization practices may also include religious identities. While French nationalism was mainly a secular one, the Balkan nationalist movements have integrated religion into their discourses and practices. Once a dominant or majority group forms its nation-state, the expectation was that minority groups should melt into the national identity. This new national identity may depend on single or multiple identity markers. Traditionally, the new nation-state treats minority groups differently based on their identity markers. It perceives certain groups as having more potential to be assimilated into the new national identity than others.⁸⁹ Because of the legacy of the Ottoman *millet* system, the primary identity marker of the Balkan nationalist movements which defines whether the given minority group can be assimilated or not is religion.⁹⁰ Minority groups who share none of the identity markers with the dominant group have two main options. The first one is that they can accept the domination of the majority or the dominant group. The second option is to migrate to another country. If they have a kin-state, their destination was usually to that state.⁹¹ Minorities which did not migrate but also did not accept the domination of the majority group were most likely expelled forcefully. That forceful expulsion does not need to be only through using physical force, but it may also be through various other forms of violence, such as economic, political, and symbolic.⁹²

Assimilation and acculturation theories tried to explain how minority groups respond to the assimilation and expulsion pressures coming from

88 Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Annual Review of Sociology* Vol.19 (1993): p. 211-239.

89 Mesut Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'len Sözde Vatandaşa: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* [From Potential Turk to Pseudo Citizen: The Republic and the Kurds] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006).

90 Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'len Sözde Vatandaşa.*; Baskın Oran, *Türkiye'de Azınlıklar: Kavramlar, Teori, Lozan, İç mevzuat, İçtihat, Uygulama* [Minorities in Turkey: Concepts, Theory, Lausanne, Domestic Legislation, Interpretation, Implementation] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınevi, 2008).

91 In some instances, the kin-state can be perceptual. For example, some non-Turkish Muslim groups from the former Ottoman lands, such as Bosnians, Albanians, and Pomaks perceived the Republic of Turkey as their kin-state.

92 Pierre Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991).

dominant groups.⁹³ Although these theories were mostly useful explaining migration waves before the World War II, they are still important to evaluate contemporary global migration flows and the identity construction of the transnational immigrants.⁹⁴ During nation-building, assimilation was utilized by the nation state as a policy to make its citizens to imagine themselves as a single and homogeneous nation.⁹⁵ The concept and theory of assimilation, however, cannot fully grasp majority-minority relations and identity construction practices in societies with deep ethnic, religious and linguistic polarization, such as those in the Balkans and the Middle East. In some cases, dominated groups have responded differently to the assimilation policies of the nation-states. Instead of being assimilated or migrating, less powerful groups may try to make their identities invisible, or dissimulate by hiding their identities via mimicking some of the identity markers of the dominant group, such as their religion and language.⁹⁶ This imitation serves to maintain their minority group identity while avoiding persecution or expulsion by the dominant group.⁹⁷ However, there is no guarantee that this imitation, which can be explained as a ‘boundary crossing’ in the Barthian sense,⁹⁸ can deceive the dominant group.⁹⁹

93 See, Robert Park, *Human Communities: The City and Human Ecology* (Glencoe: Free Press, 1952). Ernest Burgess and Donald J. Bogue (eds.), *Urban Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967). Milton M. Gordon, *Assimilation in American Life: The Role of Race, Religion and National Origins* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964). Alfred L. Kroeber, *Anthropology: Race, Language, Culture, Psychology, Prehistory* (New York and Burlingame: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc, 1948). Mischa Titiev, *Introduction to Cultural Anthropology* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1958).

94 Richard Alba and Victor Nee, “Rethinking Assimilation Theory for a New Era of Immigration,” *International Migration Review* Vol.31(4) (1997):p. 826-887. For instance, on Mexican-Americans, see: Susan K. Brown, “Structural Assimilation Revisited: Mexican-Origin Nativity and Cross-Ethnic Primary Ties,” *Social Forces* Vol. 85(1) (2006): p. 75-92. On African-Muslims in France, see: Trica Keaton, “Arrogant Assimilationism: National Identity Politics and African-Origin Muslim Girls in the Other France,” *Anthropology and Education Quarterly* Vol. 36(4) (2005): p. 405-423.

95 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

96 Hande Sözer, *Managing Invisibility: Dissimulation and Identity Maintenance among Alevi Bulgarian Turks* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014).

97 Rogers Brubaker, “The Return of Assimilation? Changing Perspectives on Immigration and its Sequels in France, Germany, and the United States,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 24(4) (2001): p. 531-548.; Sözer, *Managing Invisibility*.

98 Fredrik Barth, “Introduction,” in *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: the Social Organization of Culture Difference*, ed. Fredrik Barth (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 1998 [1969]), p. 9-37.

99 For example, in the case of post-*reconquista* Spain in the 16th century, the Catholic administration found that some of the Muslim and Jewish groups who converted to the Catholicism were actually dissimulating and secretly practicing their former religions and thus, maintaining their former religious identities. Roger Boase, “The Muslim Expulsion from Spain,” *History Today* Vol. 52(4) (2002): p. 21-27, accessed April 10, 2013, <http://www.historytoday.com/roger-boase/muslim-expulsion-spain,>

Houseman¹⁰⁰ states that dissimulation creates a mutual deception between actors. Therefore, dissimulation is not a one-sided performance, but it includes different and complex relationships between various actors. For instance, it can be as a dissimulation and deception of thinking that the other party is being deceived (by the performers) vs. decoding¹⁰¹ or deception being deceived (by addressees). Previous studies usually focused only on the one aspect of dissimulation, such as religion,¹⁰² ethnicity,¹⁰³ or gender.¹⁰⁴ However, in the case of Pomaks, at least three major identity markers are in complex and interdependent play in different contexts. For example, it can be religion (Christianity vs. Islam), ethnicity (Turkish vs. Pomak; Bulgarian vs. Pomak; Greek vs. Pomak), and language (*Pomakcha*¹⁰⁵ vs. standard Bulgarian; *Pomakcha* vs. Turkish; *Pomakcha* vs. Greek). Therefore, the case of Pomaks has the potential to reveal alternative explanations on complex relationships between ethnic, linguistic and religious identity performances of dissimulation.

Dissimulation as a strategy has its strength from the idea that social identities are fixed or should be fixed. In spite of the impossibility of achieving the goal of a homogeneous nation, nation-states continue their policies to make their citizens imagine themselves as they are single and homogeneous nation.¹⁰⁶ It is well argued by many social scientists, however, that nation-states usually do not treat their subjects as homogeneous, but recognizing, often negatively, minorities as being different. On the one hand, nation-states assume social identities to be fixed for certain minority groups. On the other hand, yet they may also try to change identities of other minorities, therefore acknowledge that identities are flexible, as well. Since Barth,¹⁰⁷ we know that social

100 Michael Houseman, "Dissimulation and Simulation as Forms of Religious Reflexivity," *Social Anthropology* Vol. 10(1) (2002): p. 77-89.

101 Susan Gal, "Language Ideologies Compared: Metaphors of Public/Private," *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* Vol. 15(1) (2005): p. 23-37.

102 Shafiqe N. Virani, (2011) "Taqiyya and Identity in a South Asian Community", *The Journal of Asian Studies* Vol. 70(1) (2011): p. 99-139. Sözer, *Managing Invisibility*.

103 Tejel J. Gorgas, "Understanding Ethnic Conflict in Post-Colonial Societies," *Nations and Nationalism* Vol 3(4) (2006): p. 631-665.

104 Julie Billaud, "Visible Under the Veil: Dissimulation, Performance and Agency in an Islamic Public Space," *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol. 11(1) (2009): p. 120-135.

105 Pomak or Rhodopean dialect of Bulgarian. Some members of the Pomak community tend to see this dialect as a different language rather than a dialect of Bulgarian language.

106 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

107 Barth, "Introduction"

identities are in fact potentially flexible, situational and contextual. There are number of studies on fluidity and flexibility of the various identity markers, such as gender,¹⁰⁸ ethnicity,¹⁰⁹ nationality,¹¹⁰ religion,¹¹¹ language,¹¹² and trans-nationality.¹¹³ These studies, however, put more emphases on contextual changes, such as migration, border alterations, regime changes, revolutions and state formation, as determinants of manifestations of identity. However, in such models, the question of “agency” is tacitly attributed to the contexts in which identity changes happen since people are seen as merely reacting to their changing circumstances. A better model would consider whether there is a way through which minority communities may take a more direct and active agency in managing and controlling their identity change processes. The case of identity construction of the Pomaks in Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey reveals different strategies in group identity formation, such as dissimulation in Bulgaria, making their identities strategically unfixed and situational in Greece, and strategically modifying their identity markers to better fit the national identity in Turkey.

- 108 On on flexible masculinity, see: Adina Batnitzky; Linda McDowell and Sarah Dyer, “Flexible and Strategic Masculinities: The Working Lives and Gendered Identities of Male Migrants in London,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* Vol. 35(8) (2009): p. 1275-1293. On fluid lesbian identity, see: Lisa M. Diamond, “A New View of Lesbian Subtypes; Stable Versus Fluid Identity Trajectories over an 8-Year Period,” *Psychology of Women Quarterly* Vol. 29 (2005): p. 119-128.
- 109 For example, on Garifuna flexible ethnic identity, see: Linda M. Matthei and David A. Smith, “Flexible Ethnic Identity, Adaptation, Survival, Resistance: The Garifuna in the World-System,” *Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* Vol. 14(2) (2008): p. 215-232. On fluid ethnic boundaries of Thakali community in Nepal, see: William F. Fisher, *Fluid Boundaries: Forming and Transforming Identity in Nepal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).
- 110 On fluid German, Polish, Lithuanian and Slovene identities, see: Thaler, “Fluid Identities”
- 111 On fluid religious identities in the U.S., see: Wade Clark Roof and Mark Silk (eds.), *Religion and Public Life in the Pacific Region: Fluid Identities* (Lanham: Altamira Press, 2005).
- 112 On flexible linguistic identities, see: Mary Bucholtz and Kira Hall, “Identity and Interaction: a Sociocultural Linguistic Approach,” *Discourse Studies* Vol. 7(4-5) (2005): p. 585-614.
- 113 On fluid identity of third generation Mexican-Americans, see: Cristina Bradatan; Adrian Popan and Rachel Melton, “Transnationality as a fluid social identity,” *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture* Vol. 16 (2) (2010): p. 169-178. On fixed and fluid Caribbean identities, see: Monika Kaup and Robert Mugerauer, “Reconfiguring the Caribbean’s Sense of Place; From Fixed Identity to Fluid Hybridity,” in *Transculturation: Cities, Spaces and Architectures in Latin America*, ed. Felipe Hernández; Mark Millington and Iain Borden (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005), p. 2-21. On fluid immigrant identities in Australia, see: Hazel Easthope, “Fixed Identities in a Mobile World; the Relationship between Mobility, Place, and Identity,” *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* Vol. 16(1) (2009): p. 61-82. On flexibility citizenship, see: Aihwa Ong, *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality* (Durham: North Carolina University Press, 1997).

The Pomaks in Bulgaria:

The Pomaks are Bulgarian-Slavic-speaking Muslim community who converted to Islam during the Ottoman period. The majority of Pomaks lives in Bulgaria which is their historic homeland. The population of the Pomaks in Bulgaria is estimated to be around 150.000 and 250.000.¹¹⁴ Unfortunately, the Bulgarian National Institute of Statistics (NIS) do not make the census data on the Pomaks available to the public.¹¹⁵ The Bulgarian state does not recognize the Pomaks as a distinctive ethnic group. Officially, the Pomaks are considered that they are ethnically Bulgarian, speak a dialect of Bulgarian language, and are Muslim in faith. Therefore, Pomak is not an available option on the census forms. The only way to guess their numbers is to know the number of people who declared themselves as Bulgarian in the ethnicity option and Muslim in the religion option. Although NIS has such data, it intentionally does not make it public.¹¹⁶ From NIS data of the Census 2001, the Pomak population is calculated as 83.000.¹¹⁷ Because this number is based on post-census calculations and not self-declarations during the census data collection, it not fully reliable.

There are Pomak communities all around the country, but they concentrated mostly in the southern parts of Bulgaria especially in prefectures of Smolyan, Blagoevgrad, and Kardzhali in the Rhodope Mountains region. Before the Bulgarian independence and the Russian-Ottoman War of 1877-1878, there used to be a large Pomak population in the Balkan ranges, especially around the city of Lovech.¹¹⁸ During and after the war they forced to leave their homeland and fled to Turkey.¹¹⁹ There are also small Pomak communities in the Northeast Bulgaria in Razgrad, Ruse, Targovishte prefectures.

114 Asen Balikci, "Visual Enthography Among the Balkan Pomak," *Visual Anthropology Review* Vol. 23(1) (2007): p. 92-96.

115 The Bulgarian National Institute of Statistics, "Население по местоживееене, възраст и вероизповедание," 2012, accessed February 24, 2017, <http://censusresults.nsi.bg/Census/Reports/2/2/R10.aspx>.

116 Interestingly, this situation is not perceived as a problem for many Bulgarian social scientists. *Op cit.* Ruben Srebranov, "Bulgarian Muslims from the Chech Region and Their Linguistic Self-Identification," *International Journal of Sociology of Language* Vol. 179 (2006): p. 131-143; Georgieva, "Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians."

117 Margarita Karamihova, "One Anonimous Group: the Pomacs in Bulgarian Political Life After The Collapse of Totalitarian Regime," *Islamic Perspective* Vol. 3 (2010). p. 148-163.

118 *Lofça* during the Ottoman period.

119 Kemal Gözler, *Les villages pomaks de Lofça aux XVe et XVIe siècles d'après les tahrir defters ottomans* (Ankara: Publications de la Société turque d'Histoire, 2001).

The state of their language is controversial. Most of the Pomaks in Bulgaria prefer to call their language as a Rhodopean dialect of Bulgarian. However, especially in the post-1989, there is a tendency among some Pomak members in Bulgaria to call their language as “Pomakcha” as an indication that it is different from the standard Bulgarian.¹²⁰ The Pomaks in Greece and Turkey overwhelmingly prefer to call their language *Pomakcha*, as well. On the other hand, Bulgarian authorities actively reject that the language of the Pomaks is a separate language, but a dialect of Bulgarian.¹²¹ However, it is the politics and politicians rather than science and scientist that decides whether it is a language or dialect. For example, while Bulgaria recognized the Republic of Macedonia as a sovereign state, it does not recognize Macedonian as a separate language. The official position of the Bulgarian state is that Macedonian is a dialect of Bulgarian. There is a similar tension between Romania and Moldova on whether Moldovan is a separate language or a dialect of Romanian.

Because of the legacy of the Ottoman *millet* system, religion has remained as one of the primary group identity markers in the Balkans. Later with the emergence of the Bulgarian nationalism, religious identification was intertwined with ethnic identity. Ethnic identification of the Bulgarian nationalism was influenced by the German romanticist nationalism in which language is the key denominator of ethnic identity.¹²² Thus, the Bulgarian national identity construction is based on speaking Bulgarian and being Christian Orthodox in faith.¹²³ Minority groups which have only one of these identity markers became the primary targets of assimilation attempts of the Bulgarian state. For example, Christian Orthodox Macedonians who speak Macedonian (according to themselves) or a dialect of Bulgarian language (according to the Bulgarian state) were the group who were targeted primarily by

120 Srebranov, “Bulgarian Muslims from the Czech.”

121 Domna Michail, “Migration, Tradition and Transition among the Pomaks in Xanthi (Western Thrace),” LSE PhD Symposium on Social Science Research on Greece, Hellenic Observatory, European Institute, and London School of Economics, June 21, 2003, accessed March 1, 2010, http://www.lse.ac.uk/europeanInstitute/research/hellenicObservatory/pdf/1st_Symposium/donnaMichail.pdf. Srebranov, “Bulgarian Muslims.”

122 Miroslav Hroch, “Introduction: National Romanticism,” in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe, Vol. II National Romanticism: The Formation of National Movements*, ed. Balázs Trencsényi and Michal Kopeček (Budapest: CEU Press, 2007).

123 Mary C. Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011). Maria Todorova, “Identity (Trans)formation Among Pomaks in Bulgaria,” in *Beyond Borders: Remaking Cultural Identities in New East and Central Europe*, ed. Laszlo Kurti and Juliet Langman (Boulder and Oxford: Westview Press, 1997), p. 63-82.

the Bulgarian nation building policies. The Bulgarian state continuously denies Macedonian ethnic identity and their minority rights because they are in reality ethnic Bulgarians speaking the Macedonian dialect of Bulgarian language.¹²⁴ The Gagauzes, a Christian Orthodox and Turkophone minority, were also targets of assimilatory policies of the Bulgarian state. The Gagauzes share the same religious denomination with the ethnic Bulgarian majority which makes them be perceived as potential ethnic-Bulgarians.

In Bulgaria, the Pomaks experienced mass and forced religious conversions as well as forced name changing campaigns in 1912, 1936, 1972, and 1984.¹²⁵ The Bulgarian authorities later restored their changed names and allowed practicing Islam. However, after the dissolution of state-socialism in Bulgaria in 1989, despite having the right to restore their names some of the Pomaks have kept their Christian-Bulgarian names. By this way, they aim to escape stigmatization and discrimination because of being Muslim. Bulgaria's first policy is to assimilate Pomaks into the mainstream ethno-national Bulgarian identity through stressing their Bulgarian language and claiming that they are ethnically Bulgarian. For the Bulgarian state, Pomaks are "Bulgarian Muhammedans" or Bulgarian Muslims. This naming has a purpose to assert that they are ethnically Bulgarian. The state tries to be certain of that the Pomaks will identify themselves with Bulgarianness. Until the 1980s, during the state socialist period, Pomaks even had their separate religious institution. The grand mufti of the Pomaks used to be separate from that of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria. In the post-socialist era, religious life of all Muslims, including Pomaks and Turks is administered by a single Grand Mufti.

This assumed "Bulgarianness," however, still does not grant them all the privileges of being ethno-national Bulgarianness. The Pomaks still face discrimination even though they have Bulgarian-Christian names.¹²⁶ This state policy came into the surface during the Census of 1992. In the Census of 1992, around 35.000 Pomaks in the Blagoevgrad region

124 Bernd Rechel, "State Control of Minorities in Bulgaria," *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* Vol. 23(3) (2007): p. 352-370.

125 Neuburger, *The Orient Within*

126 Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation (IEIHRF), *Alternative Report to the Bulgarian State Report, Pursuant to Article 35 Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for The Protection of National Minorities*, October 2003, Sofia: IEIHRF, accessed December 13, 2012, http://www.minelres.lv/reports/bulgaria/Bulgaria_FCNM_NGO_2004.doc. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), *Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2000, Annual report of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee*, March 2001, Sofia: BHC, , accessed May 11, 2007 <http://www.bghelsinki.org/frames-reports.htm>. Bulgarian Helsinki Committee (BHC), *Human Rights in Bulgaria in 2001, Annual report of the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee*, Sofia: BHC, 2002, accessed May 11, 2007, <http://www.bghelsinki.org/frames-reports.htm>.

registered themselves as ethnically “Turks” instead of “Bulgarians.” When this situation was realized it created a hot debate which led to the nullification of the census results in the region by the Bulgarian National Parliament in 1993. It was important because not the Bulgarian National Institute of Statistical which had administered the census in 1991 nullified the results, but a political body.¹²⁷ This example shows while the Pomaks are considered to be a group that can be assimilated into the ethno-national Bulgarian identity, they are also seen as different from other Bulgarians as being Muslims. The census debate also created a nationalist hysteria among the Bulgarian nationalists that Movement for Rights and Freedoms (MRF), a Bulgarian political party whose main supporters were Muslim minorities including the Turks, the Pomaks, and the Roma, tries to “assimilate” the Pomaks into “Turkishness.”¹²⁸

Bulgarian state has manifested contradictory attitudes and policies towards the identity of the Pomaks. It has insisted that the Pomaks are in reality ethnic Bulgarians who speak “the purest” form of Bulgarian language. On the contrary, this position also assumes that the Pomak identity to be malleable, thus fluid or flexible. Because the Pomaks converted to Islam in 18th century, there have been numerous attempts by Bulgarian governments to “reinstate” the putative Bulgarian identity of Pomaks by forced religious conversions to Christian Orthodoxy or changing Pomaks’ names into Christian-Slavic names.¹²⁹ The Bulgarian nation-state has strategically and paradoxically instrumentalized both fluidity and fixity of social identities.

The Pomaks in Greece:

There are around 40.000 Pomaks in Greece, who live almost entirely in the Western Thrace region.¹³⁰ In Greece, Pomaks are part of the

127 Ali Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities of Bulgaria* (New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 111.; Georgieva, “Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians.”; Karamihova, “One Anonimous Group” 155.

128 Karamihova, “One Anonimous Group” 155-160.

129 Ulf Brunnbauer, “Diverging (Hi-)Stories: The Contested Identity of the Bulgarian Pomaks,” *Ethnologia Balkanica* Vol. 3 (1999): p: 35-50.

130 Labrianidis, “Internal Frontiers” 94.; Evangelos Karagiannis, “The Pomaks in Bulgaria and Greece: Comparative Remarks,” *Euxeinos* Vol. 8 (2012): p: 12-24.; Nikolaos T. Kokkas, “Islam and Ethnic Delimitation: The Case of the Pomaks of Thrace,” *International Conference Folk Cultures and Boundaries in the Balkans, Volos, 6-8 June 2008*, University of Thessaly, School of Humanities, Department of History, Archaeology and Social Anthropology, 2008, accessed February 24, 2017, https://www.academia.edu/6177248/Islam_and_ethnic_delimitation_The_case_of_the_Pomaks_of_Thrace, accessed February 24, 2017.

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officially recognized “single Muslim minority.” Their minority status is defined according to the Treaty of Lausanne of 1923 which established the legal statuses of Muslim minorities in Greece and non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. Greece interprets the treaty as it covers all Muslims communities under a single “Muslim minority” concept regardless of their ethnolinguistic identity. This understanding dates back to the Ottoman *millet* system in which communities were defined through their religious affiliations. However, instead of receiving education in their first language, the Turkish language was proclaimed the medium of instruction for the supposedly undifferentiated Muslim minority. Even though the mother tongue of many Pomaks is Bulgarian/ *Pomakcha*, Pomaks together with Muslim Roma receive education in Turkish in “Muslim minority schools.” Thus, Pomaks have become literate mainly in Turkish and in the Latin script, and in Greek and the Greek script, but not in Bulgarian and Cyrillic.

Following the post-World War II Eastern and Western blocs confrontation as well as the Greek Civil War between 1946 and 1949, the Greek state saw utility in promoting assimilation of the Pomaks as Turks. During the Greek Civil War, Pomak areas in Xanthi were under control of the communist Democratic Army of Greece’s (DSE). Some sources claim that there were around 3000 Pomak members in the army.¹³¹ Despite the 1955 pogroms against the Greek minority in Istanbul,¹³² for Greece, promoting Turkish identity of the NATO ally Turkey among Pomaks was a better option instead of promoting Bulgarian identity of the communist Bulgaria.¹³³ Slavic and Bulgarian identifications became targets of Greek assimilation policies during the Cold War, thus Pomak dialect and Macedonian language, as well. Macedonian minority in the Aegean (Greek) Macedonia was included in the assimilation agenda of the Greek state because of being Orthodox Christians.¹³⁴ The Pomaks, on the other hand, are Muslims and non-Greek speakers, which left them outside of the Greek assimilation agenda.

The Greek policy of supporting Pomaks’ Turkification changed after the Turkish-Greek confrontation over the Cyprus in 1974, and following the declaration of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in 1983. Even

131 Nikos Marantzidis, *Dimokratikos Stratos Elladas 1946-1949* [Democratic Army of Greece 1946-1949] (Athens: Ekdotis Alexandria, 2010), p. 52-62.

132 Dilek Güven, *6-7 Eylül Olayları Cumhuriyet Dönemi Azınlık Politikaları Bağlamında* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2005).

133 Dimitris Antoniou, “Western Thracian Muslims in Athens: From Economic Migration to Religious Organisation,” *Balkanologie* Vol. 9 (1-2) (2005): p. 79-101.

134 Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat*.

though the Greek state does not actively seek to assimilate Pomaks into the mainstream ethno-national Greek identity, it has started to ensure that Pomaks will not identify themselves with either Bulgarianness or Turkishness. One of the first efforts to towards this goal was to ban usage of “Turk and Turkish” in the names of the minority organizations.¹³⁵ Consequently, the Xanthi Turkish Youth Union (*İskeçe Türk Gençler Birliği*), the first minority association in Western Thrace which was founded in 1927, was closed in 1986. Despite the ruling of the European Human Rights Court against this action, the organization still cannot officially use the word “Turkish” in its name.¹³⁶

In the post-1989, Greece started to promote a separate Pomak identity among Pomaks in Greece. Despite strong state-level objections from Bulgaria that there is no separate Pomak language but a Bulgarian dialect is spoken in the Rhodope mountains in Bulgaria and Greece, a Pomak-Greek dictionary and later a textbook was published in Greece.¹³⁷ This dictionary was not published using Cyrillic letters but rather Latin ones, which also became a point of criticism in Bulgaria.¹³⁸ The Turkish minority and some of the Pomaks in Greece have also seen this revitalization of Pomak identity and language by the Greek state as a tactic to “divide and rule” the minority.¹³⁹

Greece also re-implemented the structure of the Muslim minority’s religious institutions and appointed two muftis, instead of letting the Muslim minority to elect their muftis as it was asked in the Treaty of Lausanne. This implementation created two parallel and alternative religious bodies: appointed muftis with official status and elected muftis who are not recognized by the Greek state but were elected by the community unofficially. Greece recognizes only the appointed muftis while Turkey establishes relations only with elected muftis. When the Greek law does not prohibit or sanction dealing with elected muftis

135 Antoniou, “Western Thracian Muslims”

136 *İskeçe Türk Birliği*, accessed December 18, 2012, <http://www.iskeceturkbirligi.org>.

137 Petros D. Theoharides, *Grammatike tes Pomakikes glossas phraseis kai keimena: Pomakoellenika-Hellenopomakika: Pomachtskou-Ouroumetskou, Ouroumetskou-Pomachtskou [Grammar of the Pomak Language]* (Salonica: Aigeiros. 1996). Petros D. Theoharides, *Hellenopomakiko lexiko: Ouroumetskou-Pomachtskou leksiko [Greek-Pomak Dictionary]* (Salonica: Aigeiros, 1996). Petros D. Theoharides, *Pomakoelleniko lexiko: Pomachtskou-Ouroumetskou leksiko [Pomak-Greek Dictionary]* (Salonica: Aigeiros, 1996).

138 Madeleine Danova, “Transformations of Ethnic Identity: the Case of Bulgarian Pomaks,” in *Parallel Cultures: Majority/Minority Relations in the Countries of the Eastern Bloc*, ed. Christopher Lord and Olga Strietska-Ilina (Aldershot, Burlington, Singapore, Sydney: Ashgate, 2001), p. 147-175.

139 Antoniou, “Western Thracian Muslims”

instead of appointed ones, the Muslim community also usually follows the elected muftis. If one visits “official” websites of “elected” and “appointed” muftis of Xanthi and Komotini, it can be seen that, interestingly, none of them have a Bulgarian or Pomak language version. Another interesting fact is that the website of the elected mufti office of Xanthi, where most of the Pomaks in Greece live, entitles itself as “the Xanthi Mufti Office of Western Thrace Turkish Minority.”¹⁴⁰ But the website of the elected Mufti office of Komotini, where most of the Turks in Greece live, does not have the statement of “Turkish,” but only the statement of “elected.”¹⁴¹ If we recall that Xanthi is where Pomaks mostly live and that using “Turkish” in the names of associations is forbidden in Greek law, these practices and choices seem revealing.

The Pomaks in Turkey:

The Pomaks in Turkey are descendants of immigrants from the Aegean Macedonia and Bulgaria, who came to Turkey as a result of migrations, deportations and forced population exchange between Greece and Turkey in 1926. Since the centralization and nationalization of education in 1924, Pomaks are educated only in Turkish. The stigma of talking a Slavic language which is associated with Bulgarianness and Christianity has also prevented the maintenance of Pomak language among new generations. Therefore, younger generations have become less proficient in their Slavophone language and are mainly illiterate in Bulgarian Cyrillic.

Unlike in Bulgaria and Greece, the Pomaks in Turkey are mostly immigrants or people who fled from Bulgarian and Greek territories as a result of wars and population exchanges or are the descendants of such people. They live in very widespread areas all around western Turkey, such as Eastern Thrace (Edirne, Kırklareli, Tekirdağ and Çanakkale), the Aegean Region, and the Central Anatolia. Keeping collective memories of exile affect their imagining of the Turkish state as the last refuge, as has been seen among other immigrant ethnic groups in Turkey, e.g. Turks from Bulgaria, and various Circassian immigrants.¹⁴² Thus,

140 Batı Trakya Türk Azınlığı İskeçe Müftülüğü, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://www.iskecemuftulugu.org>.

141 Gümülçine S. Müftülüğü, accessed March 11, 2017, <http://www.gumulcinemuftulugu.info/default.aspx?Id=0>.

142 Alexandre Toumarkine, “Kafkas ve Balkan Gocmen Dernekleri: Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik,” *Türkiye’de Sivil Toplum ve Milliyetçilik*, ed. Stefanos Yerasimos, Günter Seufert and Karin Vorhoff (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), p. 425-450.

they have exceptional loyalty to the Turkish state which prevents them from demanding any minority rights.

Turkey, in practice, defines the “ideal” citizen as the one who identifies himself/ herself as ethnically Turkish and religiously Sunni Muslim.¹⁴³ For example, Gagauzes, Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians in Moldova, were not considered as being of “Turkish origin” by the Turkish Law on Settlement of 1934.¹⁴⁴ On the contrary, although not speaking Turkish, Bosnian Muslims, and Albanian Muslims in Kosovo and Macedonia were considered among potential “ideal citizens” because of being Muslim. Similar to Bulgaria and Greece, because of the legacy of the Ottoman millet system, Turkey also does not recognize any Muslim minority. Only three non-Muslim groups have a minority status: Greeks, Armenians, and Jews, and any Muslim minority group, regardless of their language, are considered as “potential Turks”¹⁴⁵ by the state, such as Kurds and Alevis.

The Pomak Revival in the Post-socialist Period

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The end of the state socialism in the Eastern Europe, the expansion of NATO towards the East and the EU membership processes of Bulgaria and Turkey altered states’ minority policies as well as have created new strategies for minorities. Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey responded similarly but also differently in their minority politics to the political changes in post-Cold War era. In general, however, all three states have continued to contest Pomaks’ ethnic identity. This makes Pomaks a double-stigmatized minority in Bulgaria and Greece, which may explain why they would try to control and manage their collective (in)visibilities,¹⁴⁶ either in public or private spheres,¹⁴⁷ via dissimulation.

The new 1991 Constitution of Bulgaria has vague terms on minorities. It does not officially recognize any ethnic minority, but guarantee only education of their languages. Article 36 (2) of the Constitution states that “citizens whose mother tongue is not Bulgarian, along with the

143 Oran, *Türkiye’de Azınlıklar*.

144 Erol Ülker, Assimilation of the Muslim Communities in the First Decade of the Turkish Republic (1923-1934), *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, 6 (2007), accessed November 21, 2012, ejts.revues.org/index822.html.

145 Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk’ten Sözde Vatandaş*.

146 Sözer, *Managing Invisibility*.

147 Gal, “Language Ideologies”

compulsory study in the Bulgarian language, have a right to learn and use their languages.”¹⁴⁸ A closer look at that article reveals that it has some strategy by emphasizing only the language and not ethnicity. By emphasizing language, it indirectly states that the Pomaks and Macedonians are neither “minority” nor can demand education in their languages. It also prevents the Pomaks pupils to study and learn Turkish by enrolling in Turkish language courses at primary and secondary schools.

However, in the post-socialist era, many people in the younger Pomak generation have kept their Slavic-Bulgarian names to escape stigmatization and gain access to better opportunities. Many have been using Bulgarian names in public or outside their localities, and their original names at home or in their regions.¹⁴⁹ Pomaks with Slavic-Bulgarian names cannot be differentiated easily from Christian ethnic-Bulgarians because their mother tongue is also Bulgarian. For example, the Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation¹⁵⁰ reported ‘covert’ discrimination cases against Pomaks, which led them to change their names, sometimes several times in their lives. The same report also states that there is “self-censorship” among Pomaks to escape from discrimination based on their names in education and work, and from the stigma of being Pomak, thus “nothing, neither a Bulgarian nor a Turk.” The case of “self-censorship” is very likely to refer to their dissimulation and invisibility practices.

In another example, in Smolyan which is a region with the largest Pomak population, 15% of people did not declare their religion in the Census 2011. This number was even higher in the previous Census 2001 in which 28% of people in Smolyan opted not to declare their religion.¹⁵¹ Smolyan has the highest nationwide percentage in this category. There might be various reasons for this phenomenon. However, one of them is ongoing fear of discrimination. If one makes his religious identity invisible, and if s/he has a Christian-Slavic name and speaks Bulgarian, in theory, there is no way to differentiate him/her from ethnic-

148 Narodno Sabranie na Republika Balgariya (1991) *Konstitutsiya na Republika Balgariya*, accessed August 12, 2007, <http://www.parliament.bg/?page=const&lng=bg>.

149 Neuburger, *Orient Within*. Kristen Ghodsee, *Muslim Lives in Eastern Europe: Gender, Ethnicity, and the Transformation of Islam in Postsocialist Bulgaria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

150 Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation, *Alternative Report*

151 Natsionalen Statcheski Institut (NSI), *Prebroyavane 2011: Okonchatelni Danni* [Census 2011: Final Data] (Sofia: National Statistical Institute, 2012).

Bulgarians. Similarly, in Greece, Pomaks have Turkish-Muslim names and can speak Turkish that they learn at schools. Speaking Turkish makes them indistinguishable from ethnic-Turks if they want to claim that they are ethnic-Turks in public and before official bodies.

The official terminology for the Pomaks in the Bulgarian official discourse is “Bulgarian Mohammedans.” This term started to be used in the 1930s with the establishment of Association “Rodina.”¹⁵² By using the term “Mohammedan” it aims to separate the Pomaks from other Muslims in Bulgaria, and by emphasizing “Bulgarian,” it states that their ethnicity is Bulgarian. There are many problems with the term. First of all, it’s an outdated orientalist term which assumes Muslims are followers of Mohamed similar to Christians are followers of the Jesus Christ. It also has little use among the community itself. The community mostly prefers using “Pomak” or just “Muslim.” The use of “Pomak” or “Muslim” among the community members also has significance. Pomak is mostly used among more secular but “cultural Muslims” or non-practicing members while “Muslim” is preferred by more religious members.

It seems that Pomaks do not want to be conspicuously visible in the institutional sphere. Only in the last decade, in October 2012, an association with “Pomak” in its name is founded, which immediately received negative criticism from the Bulgarian media and politicians. The Pomaks are underrepresented in the parliament and MP candidates of the political parties. MRF (DPS, Movement for Rights and Freedoms), a Turkish and Muslim minority party, is supposed to be natural representative of the Pomaks but it was only in the general elections in 2009, for the first time, two MRF MPs were elected from Smolyan. There was not any significant voting bloc in favor for MRF among Pomak voters in previous post-1989 elections. MRF is continuously accused by the right-wing politicians, media, and academicians of “Turkifying” Pomaks.¹⁵³

In Greece, there is also only a single association with ‘Pomak’ in its name, which is criticized by the Turks in Greece. In Greece, Pomaks are active in minority associations, but under the name of “Turkish Minority.” After the collapse of Eastern European state-socialist regimes, Greece has started to promote distinctiveness of Pomak and Roma

152 Druzha Rodina <http://drujbarodina.org/about>

153 Inter Ethnic Initiative for Human Rights Foundation, *Alternative Report*

identifications while has been continuing to oppress ethnic-Turkish identification. For example, in Greece, despite the decisions of the European Human Rights Court, it is still prohibited to establish an association with “Turk” on its name; however, there is not such a ban on Pomak and Roma associations.¹⁵⁴ There are interesting and contradictory politics on the Greek side, as well. For instance, a former Greek MP in the European Parliament and the head of the radical right-wing populist political party The People’s Orthodox Rally (LAOS), Georgios Karatzaferis supports Pomaks to have their associations and a department at the University of Thrace of Xanthi.¹⁵⁵ He accuses Greek governments of contributing the assimilation of Pomaks into Turkishness. It is apparent that concerns of Bulgarian and Greek politicians to prevent assimilation of Pomaks are not against the assimilation itself, but assimilation to any identity other than the Bulgarian or Greek ones.

In Turkey, the first registered association with “Pomak” in its name, founded in 2009 in Eskişehir, Central Anatolia. Later, several other Pomak associations were established in places where Pomaks live, such as in Istanbul, Edirne, Bursa, İzmit, İzmir, and Çanakkale. This mushrooming of Pomak associations were followed by the creation of a federation of Pomak associations (PODEF) in 2013.¹⁵⁶ The majority of the mainstream parties does not recognize Pomaks as a minority, but part of the “cultural mosaic” of Turkey. The rhetoric of “cultural mosaic” is used to keep Pomaks and other minorities “silent” and “invisible” by halfheartedly mentioning their existence without officially recognizing them.¹⁵⁷

There are some interesting similarities between the post-socialist Pomak revival and the 20th-century nationalist movements. In Marxist analysis, the Pomaks lacks their bourgeoisie. Like many 19th and 20th century

154 Azınlıkça, “Karayusuf’tan ‘Hronos’a verdiği demeç hakkında açıklama” [Disclosure from Karayusuf on his statement to ‘Chronos’], *Azınlıkça.Net*, 2012, accessed December 6, 2012, <http://www.azınlıkca.net/bati-trakya-haber/karayusuf-hronos-demec-aciklama-12062012.html>.

155 European Parliament, *Written Question by Georgios Karatzaferis (IND/DEM) to the Commission, Parliamentary Questions*, 23 May 2007, accessed December 12, 2012, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+WQ+E-2007-2622+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>.

156 POMAK DERNEKLERİ FEDERASYONU – PODEF, <http://podef2014.blogspot.com.tr/>

157 Burak Cop and Janet Barış, Geçmişten Bugüne Egemen Siyasette Azınlıklar [Minorities in the Dominant Politics from Past to Present], *Bianet*, accessed December 19, 2012, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/azınlıklar/129445-gecmisten-bugune-egemen-siyasette-azınlıklar>.

Balkan nationalist movements, however, they have diasporas outside the Rhodopean Mountains region, especially in Turkey. One of the strategies that the Pomak diaspora uses is the idea of “Pan-Pomak” identity among Slavic-speaking Muslim communities in the Balkans, which are the Torbeshis in Macedonia and the Goranis in Kosovo. The Torbeshis are Macedonian speaking Muslims. Similar to the Bulgarian censuses, Macedonian statistics have registered Torbeshis as ethnically Macedonian and religiously Muslim. Lack of census data prevents us from having a precise number on their population. Similar to the Bulgarian cases of Macedonians and Pomaks, Macedonian state also tries to promote Macedonian ethnic identification among the Torbeshis. It is reported that some Torbeshis have a tendency to define themselves with various identities, such as Macedonians, Turks or Albanians.¹⁵⁸

Some of the Torbeshis believe that they came to Macedonia from the Central Anatolian region of Turkey during the Ottoman Empire. They believe that when the Ottoman Empire had to leave the region, they stopped speaking Turkish because of fear of prosecution and lack of proper Turkish education. One of the Bulgarian sources listed them under the category of Bulgarian Muslim, but with their name Torbeshis, together with Pomaks.¹⁵⁹ Also, similar to the Bulgarian “Druzhba Rodina” case, there is a state-supported “Association of Macedonian Muslims” founded in 1970, who also promotes the idea that not only Torbeshis but Kosovar Goranis are also Macedonians. The association’s public support is dubious, but their appearance on media is quite often. There is a similar belief among some of the Pomaks in Bulgaria.¹⁶⁰ This strategy is to escape from liminality. Their lack of Turkish speaking skills prevents them to be seen as “real” ethnic-Turks among the Turkish minorities in the Balkans. Their religious beliefs also prevent them to be seen as “real” ethnic-Bulgarians, ethnic-Macedonians, or ethnic-Greeks, as well. And if they do not want to stuck with an unrecognized Pomak identity, they strategically create such myths to justify the lack of shared identity markers with the group they associate themselves.

158 Ali Dikici, “The Torbeshes of Macedonia: Religious and National Identity Questions of Macedonian-Speaking Muslims,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 28(1) (2008): p. 27-43.

159 Vasil Kanchev, *Makedoniya: Etnografiya i Statistika*, reprint. Sofia: Akadamichno Izdatelstvo “Prof. Marin Drinov,” 1996 [1900].

160 Srebranov, “Bulgarian Muslims.”; Georgieva, “Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians,” 309.

The Pomak diaspora also uses “Tamrash Republic”¹⁶¹ to create an idea of ancient Pomak state. Searching for an ancient state is mimicking the 19th and 20th-century Balkan nationalist movements. Previous Balkan nationalist movements also built their claims for separate nation-states based on their preexisting real or mythical ancient states. It is common to see glorification of the Tamrash Republic in online forums and social media posts.¹⁶² Furthermore, in order to get public attention as a prosecuted minority, the Pomak diaspora calls for recognition of “the Pomak genocide.”¹⁶³ The Pomaks in Greece still identify themselves with the Western Thracian Turkish identity. “We are Turks, but we speak *Pomakcha!*” is a common phrase to illustrate this identification. The rationale is strategic, as well. The community was convinced that the promotion of a separate Pomak identity in the Western Thrace would only serve to diminish the socio-political influence of the Muslim minority. They believe the Greek state supports the Pomak identity in order to weaken communal ties among the minority as well as their ties with Turkey. On the Bulgarian side of the Rhodopes, however, Pomak identity is usually kept in private conversations or the peripheral cities. In public, more regional sounding and less politically charged term “Rhodopean” is more common not only among Pomaks but also among the Christian Orthodox Bulgarians.

Conclusion: Contested Borders and Boundaries

As Neuburger¹⁶⁴ points out, liminality¹⁶⁵ of Pomaks serves as being “Oriental others” within the Bulgarian mainstream society. Beginning from the 18th century, when the first interest on Pomaks started to appear, they were regarded as “strange” community who speak “distorted Slavic, mixed with Greek and Bulgarian.”¹⁶⁶ Their linguistic features also caused confusions. According to romantic Balkan nationalisms “pure nation” should be homogeneous both in language,

161 Angel Valchev, *Tamrash*, Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Otchestveniya Front, 1973.

162 Pomakların Sesi 2014 “Timraş’ın Kuruluş Yıldönümü Kutlandı,” 6 March 2014
<http://www.pomaklarinsesi.com/hello-world>.

163 Demokratik Pomak Hareketi, 2016 “Neden 10 Aralık?”
<https://www.facebook.com/D.Pomak.Hareketi/photos/a.195677560538369.35180.174493709323421/989167227856061/?type=3&theater>

164 Neuburger, *Orient Within*.

165 Douglas, *Purity and Danger*.

166 Luca, 1706, as cited in Stoyan Raichevsky, *Mohammedan Bulgarians (Pomaks)*, trans. Maya Pencheva, Sofia: National Museum of Bulgaria, 2004.

religion, and ethnicity. For example, Aprilov in 1841¹⁶⁷ states that “at home, they speak Bulgarian as they do with the rest of the Bulgarians, and with the Greeks and the Turks they speak in Turkish.” While, in 1860, Verkovich states that¹⁶⁸ “they don’t know any other language than their native Bulgarian.” In an article published in “Danube Star” “they [Pomaks] adopted the religion [of Islam] but hated the Turkish language.”¹⁶⁹ All these accounts are to state their “forced” conversion and highlight them as “passive subjects” if not as “traitors” who opted to convert into the oppressor’s religion and cooperate with invaders against their Bulgarian Christian Orthodox brothers and sisters. Finally, regarding their language, Karavelov, again, states that “... the language of the Lovech Pomaks is pure – with no Turkish words and constructions, melodious, preserving most of the Old Bulgarian forms, the language of the Orthodox Bulgarians. I’m not saying that the language of the Pomaks does not contain Greek words or Greek influence, introduced by the so-called Greek education among the Orthodox Bulgarians.”¹⁷⁰ This purity and beauty of their language or dialect is still stated even by contemporary post-socialist ‘liberal’ Bulgarian scholars.

Therefore, there are multiple claims by parties over each other’s identities. Bulgaria claims Pomaks are ethnic-Bulgarians. Greece insists that they are either Slavophone Muslims or Slavophone Hellens. Turkey tries to prove that Pomaks are descendants of Turkic tribes such as Pechenegs and Kumans. Similarly, Pomak activists from Turkey claim that the Torbeshis of Macedonia and the Goranis of Kosovo are Pomaks. Nationalism instrumentalizes or contests ethnic identities to put claims over certain territories, but here, we can also see “schizophrenic”¹⁷¹ faces of nationalism. On the one hand, nationalism claims that identities are “primordial” or “fixed.” For example, once one was Bulgarian, Turkic or Hellen, s/he remains Bulgarian, Turkic or Hellenic, forever. Therefore, Pomaks are Bulgarians, Hellens or Turkic people. On the other hand, these nationalisms also see identities as “flexible”,¹⁷² for example, a Pomak can be true Bulgarian by religious conversion, or a

167 As cited in in Raichevsky, *Mohammedan Bulgarians*.

168 *Ibid.*

169 Karavelov, 1867 as cited in in Raichevsky, *Mohammedan Bulgarians*.

170 Raichevsky, *Mohammedan Bulgarians*.

171 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Edipus*. trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London and New York: Continuum, 2004 [1972]).

172 Ong, *Flexible Citizenship*.

Slavic speaking Christian Orthodox can be Greek if s/he switches to be Greek speaking.

Since the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the independent Balkan nation-states in the 19th and 20th centuries, the Pomaks found themselves living in three different states: Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey. Their identities altered in reaction and adaptation to the social, economic, and political changes in the region and their respective countries. They developed strategies to cope with border changes, regime changes, and assimilation policies of the newly founded nation states. In Bulgaria, they have strategically used dissimulation as a strategy to avoid prosecution and discrimination from the majority ethnic-Bulgarians as well as the state authorities. They use various tactics to dissimulate. For instance, the Pomaks in Bulgaria use Christian-Slavic personal names, avoid talking and expressing their Pomak or Muslim identity in public, and even do not register their religious affiliation in the censuses. The Pomaks in Greece, however, use a strategy to change their identities situationally. Among themselves, they speak in their Pomak dialect, but among the Turkish minority and strangers, they speak in Turkish. Similarly, the Pomaks in Turkey, from fear of discrimination and stigma of Slavic and Bulgarian languages as languages of infidels or non-Muslims, opt to talk in the Pomak dialect only in private spheres. In public and among non-community members, they prefer to use Turkish. In Turkey, they created a new “*Pomak Türkü*” or Turkish-Pomak identity.¹⁷³ This new identification accepts the Turkish official thesis that the Pomaks are descendants of the pre-Ottoman Turkic tribes. They use this *Pomak Türkü* identity strategically to perform two identities simultaneously. In the end, they can claim their Pomak identity freely. Because most of the new generation of the Pomaks in Turkey cannot speak the Pomak dialect, this new *Pomak Türkü* identity has been reduced to only folkloric elements, such as food, folk costumes, folk songs, and some idioms and expression in Pomak dialect. With this new folklorized *Pomak Türkü* identity,¹⁷⁴ they will be less likely to be stigmatized and accused of being against the “national unity of Turkey.”

173 İnegöl Pomak Türkleri Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği, accessed March 11, 2017, <https://www.facebook.com/inpodinegol>.

174 Christopher B. Balme, “Dressing the Hula. Iconography, Performance and Cultural Identity Formation in Late Nineteenth Century Hawaii,” *Paideuma: Mitteilungen zur Kulturkunde*, 45 (1999) 233-255.; Mark Rogers, “Spectacular Bodies: Folklorization and the Politics of Identity in Ecuadorian Beauty Pageants,” *The Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology*, 3: 2 (1998) 54-85.

In sum, in this paper, I argued that first, newly emerging or accelerating nationalisms still follow the old nationalist models to claim that their identities are homogeneous. Secondly, the new nationalist movements or communities with contested identities, are also following a similar way by contesting other groups' identities. Finally, these identity claims and contestations go hand in hand with territorial claims or their self-imaginings of their identities.

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