

## *Orthodoxy and Nationality in Macedonia 1800-1878*

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The nation-building process among the Balkan peoples resulted in numerous political, ethnic and social problems which have troubled the region up to the present. The national awakening of the Orthodox Slav population of Macedonia occurred within the framework of the *millet* -- a specific Ottoman political, socio-cultural and communal institution based on religion. In the multi-ethnic Orthodox millet, national awakening was linked to the struggle for the power and wealth of the Church, as various socio-economic elements exploited existing ethnic and linguistic differences to assert their influence.

In order to safeguard its economic position and to affirm its social status, the bourgeoisie that emerged in the local Macedonian communities during the economic expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century had to participate in the struggle for control of the property and rights of the Church. The dominant notables, however, opposed the drive for the redistribution of power in the local community. In attempting to win effective external help for their particular aims, these competing local socio-economic factions turned towards far more clearly shaped and developed nationalist movements centered in the Bulgarian Community in Constantinople, the Serbian principality and the Kingdom of Greece. Furthermore, by raising the question of language in ecclesiastical services, they sought to rally wider support among the local population. Therefore, contrary to the predominant views of various Balkan historiographies and some Western writings, it may be asserted that the national ideas and self-identifications among the Orthodox Slav population of Macedonia were dictated predominantly by practical local factors in the period up to 1878.

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This paper deals with the initial stage of the national awakening among the Orthodox Slav population in Macedonia and its interrelationship with the Orthodox Church. The national awakening of Orthodox Slavs in Macedonia took place in a specific Ottoman political, socio-cultural and communal framework based on religion, called the millet system. In this system, the Orthodox Church, manifested through its clerical hierarchy, was the exclusive legal representative of its followers, as well as their unique guide and ultimate authority, the sole voice heard and listened with certain respect both by the population and the Ottoman government. In the Ottoman state, the Church enjoyed ample juridical and administrative rights, as well as control over significant property. This study argues that in the condition of the multi-ethnic Orthodox millet, the initial stage of the national awakening in Macedonia was linked to the struggle for the power and wealth of the Church, as various local socio-economic elements exploited the existing ethnic and linguistic differences to assert their influence. However, in order to embark on a study of this topic, the term “Macedonia” needs to be defined, as well as the methodological approach and concepts used for presenting the nation-building processes in this area.

It should be noted that in the Ottoman Empire, an administrative territorial unit called “Macedonia” never existed. This is also true for other territorial appellations like Bulgaria, Serbia, Romania, and Greece. For centuries, the term Macedonia denoted a territory the extent of which underwent various changes. In the ninth century A.D., the Byzantine province under this name, covering the Thracian districts of modern Bulgaria, had little in common with ancient Macedonia of the fourth and third century B.C. Because of the revival of Classical Studies, by the middle of the nineteenth century foreign representatives in the Ottoman Empire and their respective governments, prominent local Orthodox notables, intellectuals from western and central parts of European Turkey, and foreign travelers, had a clear idea about the location of the territory called Macedonia. As Fikret Adanir pointed out, it was roughly understood that the territory of Macedonia corresponded to the Ottoman provinces (vilayets) of Salonica and Bitola (Monastir), as well as the province of Uskub (Skopje), which in 1867 was reduced to a district (sanjak).

Concerning Macedonia in the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, the next question that emerges is whether its Slav population was an ethnic or ethnographic group, or nationality. Following the argument of P. R. Magocsi, an ethnic group is a population that in most cases possesses a distinct territory, common traditions, and related dialects. An ethnic group could be further divided into ethnographic groups which have closer connections in regard to their language characteristics or material culture. A nationality, which possesses the same attributes as an ethnic group, is further distinguished by awareness or consciousness of the difference between itself and other ethnic or national groups. During the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, the Slav Orthodox population in Macedonia did not acquire the necessary elements needed for becoming a “nationality.” Consequently, it can not be

asserted that explicitly formed national entities or nationalities existed in Macedonia during the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, as some Balkan and Western writings tend to argue. However, in this period an “embryonic” initial emergence of national consciousness started to take place. This nascent nation-building process was closely interrelated with the Ottoman millet system.

The local community was the basic organizational unit of the Orthodox Christian millet, which acted at the same time as a religious congregation, social entity and administrative segment. The local community meant above everything else a body of persons professing the same faith and in many cases speaking the same language. Moreover, the tenuous lines of communication, roads infested with gangs of robbers, and ineffective bureaucracy further contributed to the isolation of the communities which lived according to their local customs. This situation remained unchanged until the end of nineteenth century. In the early 1860s, according to the reports of the British consuls, on numerous occasions the town of Bitola, the center of the province of Roumeli, was besieged by bandits. This situation produced food shortages in this town, because merchants did not venture into the near-by villages. In these circumstances, the local communities had to rely on their internal unity to safeguard their lives and property. Consequently, the millet system and the general situation in the Ottoman Empire favored the fusion of the family and the community, which in turn provided a sound basis for the preservation of a grass-roots ethnic identity. Furthermore, the state administrative system prevented the fusion of various communities into larger units on an ethnic basis. The basic Ottoman administrative unit, the vilayet, was very large and cut across ethnic boundaries. The smaller units, the sandjaks and kazas, were devised in the same way. As a French diplomatic report, written in the late 1850s in Bitola shows, in the majority of the Macedonian towns and respective kazas, the Muslim population was either numerically predominant over or slightly inferior to the overall sum of Christian and Jewish dwellers. Moreover, according to the report of the English consul from Bitola, written in 1863, “the Muslims in the Sandjak of Ohrid outnumber the Rayahs in the proportion of 461.000 to 106.000.” Consequently, it could be concluded that the social framework in which the Orthodox Christians lived, produced local parochialism. Moreover, following K.Karpat’s argument, it may be asserted that the maintenance of the cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic identity of various Christian groups resulted from the particular millet administrative organization and political situation in the Ottoman Empire.

These isolated social entities were headed by their prominent notables, who distinguished themselves in their locality with their wealth, knowledge, and organizational shrewdness. These leaders were responsible to the prelates and the Ottoman government for maintaining peace and collecting taxes. With the reforms of Patriarch Samuel I, introduced in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, the position of these local leaders gained in importance. Under the new regulations, the local ecclesiastical board, composed from these local lay leaders, started to control the local ecclesiastical property. From the turn of the nineteenth century, more power, rights and duties were transferred to this communal body. After the abolition of the sipahis in 1830, many administrative and police functions were entrusted to the local ecclesiastical board and its heads, the local notables. The responsibilities of the notables started to include the administration of religious schools which had been traditionally

under religious control and were often financed by revenue from church properties. The local ecclesiastical board appointed different committees which supervised the Church property, the schools, the monasteries, and interfered in the process of tax collection. Furthermore, the local parish priests depended on the local ecclesiastical board for their acceptance in the community. Gradually, the lower white clergy came under the control of the communal leaders, without whose recommendation the prelate did not appoint the local clerics. Moreover, this body started to procure money that the candidates for priesthood had to pay to the higher ecclesiastical authorities for their post. Although the Ottoman state did not incorporate this body into the limits of the law until 1865, its existence and influence was recognized by provincial authorities which relied on it for implementing their decisions. These changes gradually catapulted the lay notables to a position of authority, wealth and power unknown in the past. These lay notables exercised their authority and influence over the Orthodox population through their connection with the Ottoman authorities, through their ability to lend money to impoverished Christians, as well as through their responsibilities in the process of tax collection. As a result, the local masses had to deal more with their own communal Christian leaders and ecclesiastical authorities than with the Ottoman officials.

The growing importance and power of ecclesiastical boards produced an increasing dependence and interconnection between the prelates and the local lay notables. The members of this social body and the prelates shared common interests that revolved around extorting money from the Orthodox Christian population. According to the stipulations of the millet system, the prelates were able to shield the notables' financial wrongdoings from the complaints of the harassed Orthodox population to the Ottoman officials. These extortions on the side of the notables resulted from lending money on interest, tax farming and personal use of ecclesiastical property and incomes. According to the documents preserved in the Archives of Macedonia in Skopje, in October 1851 and February 1853, the Ottoman governor ordered the Metropolitan Gerasimos of Pelagonia to control the collection of the poll-tax which was raised by the local Christian notables. Moreover, in these documents the Ottoman official admonished the Metropolitan for collecting sums higher than prescribed, which indicates that the local notables misused their position for personal enrichment. At the same time, the orders of the Ottoman officials elucidated the existing financial interrelation between the prelate and the notables. In the period from 1848 to 1861, the local notable Naum Marin from Struga managed the ecclesiastical property of the Church "St. Georgi" to his own financial advantage. Local Metropolitans Iosif and Dionisii provided their support to this notable against the complaints of the population to the Ottoman and ecclesiastical authorities. As a result, the local population of Struga was unable to remove Naum Martin from his managerial post. In turn, the local lay notables helped the prelates to collect their revenues from the population. Moreover, the notables and the prelates shared other common features, like common language and culture. The prelates mainly originated from the Greek ethnic community. Having been educated in Greek ecclesiastical schools and operating within a commercial sphere dominated by the Greek ethnic community, these local notables belonged to a Hellenic culture and used the Greek language.

As long as the Greek prelates and the primates had undisputed control over Church property, power and taxation rights, a certain balance and peace existed. However, the economic

changes that took place around the middle of the nineteenth century, distorted the existing equilibrium of power. The appearance of new, wealthier elements that wanted to have a greater control over the communal ecclesiastical property and to curb the arbitrary authority of the Church, broke the old pattern of social and economic life. The question remains whether this Church property, as well as the powers and taxation rights of the local prelates were important enough to divide the local community.

As the documents of the Pelagonian Metropolitanate and reports of the British and French consuls show, in the 1850s the Metropolitanate of Pelagonia, in addition to the money that its prelate obtained through direct taxation, received annual incomes from the main Churches in Bitola and Prilep in amounts of almost 300,000 piasters, or 2,400 pounds sterling. According to Kuzman Šapkarev, in the mid-1860s, Metropolitan Meletii of Prespa succeeded in extracting 400,000 piasters or approximately 3,600 pounds sterling, from his diocese through direct taxation. In the same period, Metropolitan Ioakim of Skopje received from his diocese at least 300,000 piasters per year, or 2,800 pounds sterling. These amounts could be perceived as extremely exaggerated when they are compared with Ubicini's 1854 account. According to his report, local prelates received annual income between 15,000 and 80,000 piasters, or between 130 and 720 pounds sterling. However, in 1868 the British consul in Bitola reported that the Metropolitan of Pelagonia Venedict collected more than 200,000 piasters, or approximately 1,800 pounds sterling, although in accordance with the millet reforms of 1860-1862 his salary was affixed to 80,000 piasters, or 720 pounds sterling per year. In the same dispatch, the British consul informed his superiors that this prelate had already accumulated wealth of 25,000 pounds sterling. Metropolitan Venedict invested this money in loans and different commercial undertakings. As a result, he was "making altogether an income of some 4,000 pounds sterling a year."

Moreover, this diocese had eleven monasteries in the vicinity of Bitola and Prilep. At the same time, approximately 85 priests served in the local town and village Churches. The registers of the local monasteries and village Churches reveal a vivid commercial life. The incomes of one such establishment, the local monastery "St. Arhangel," varied from 58,022 piasters, or 525 pounds sterling, from July 1873 to August 1874. In the period from June 1875 to June 1876 it amounted to 96,334 piasters, or 875 pounds sterling. Approximately fifteen dioceses in Macedonia had more or less territory similar in size and thus received similar incomes, with exception of the Metropolitanate of Salonica which received higher revenues.

Therefore, the income of the entire Church establishment in an average-size diocese was not smaller than seven hundred thousand piasters, or 6,360 pounds sterling. Almost one third of this income went to the personal purse of the local prelate and the central patriarchal treasury. In 1868, the British consul, describing the incomes of Metropolitan Venedict of Pelagonia, stated that "of this ample fortune, it is lamentable to say, not a piastre is devoted to charitable purposes, or the support of the schools and infirmary in his diocese, but, on the contrary, this prelate systematically plunders the poor, often under circumstances of great heartlessness." The remaining two-thirds of an income of a diocese returned to the local communities. This amount was not at all negligible, when it is taken into consideration that in the mid-1860s, in a favorable agricultural year an average five-members peasant family possessing a donkey, pair

of oxen and hectare of land could receive a net income not higher than 300 piasters, or two pounds sterling and 72 pennies, while the taxes imposed on such a household came to approximately 500 piasters, or about four pounds sterling and four shillings.

Thus, the population had to find other avenues for obtaining additional income for paying the taxes, meeting their necessities, and supporting the communal needs. In this respect, the local Churches and monasteries under the control of local notables acted as saving and credit unions, providing financial support for the local population, local educational establishments and different communal undertakings. For example, in Salonica the community maintained a hospital, while in Bitola the ecclesiastical board provided charity for prisoners. Local merchants and craftsmen gave donations and free labor to the Church establishments, in turn depending on their support in time of financial duress. The lay population received small incomes from working on ecclesiastical land, keeping monasterial cattle and sheep, and providing various craft and labor services to ecclesiastical establishments. At the local fairs, held in the local monasteries and Churches, the peasants and townspeople sold their products and handcrafted goods, buying in return the things that they needed in their everyday life. Therefore, prelates, local clergymen, local notables, petty craftsmen, town-dwellers and peasants perceived the ecclesiastical establishments as an important resource of revenue.

During this period, the Macedonian communities were affected by a number of economic and social changes, as well as external influences. The internal administrative integration of the Empire, return of certain legal order after the period of anarchy, improvement of the status of non-Muslim citizens, as well as large-scale entry of European companies in the provinces, facilitated the development and growth of urban settlements and the emergence of local rich Christian Orthodox merchants. By the mid-1870s, according to the reports of the British consuls in Bitola and Salonica, nine-tenths of the commerce was in the hands of Orthodox Christians. These people entered into the lucrative trade in agricultural products, which were exported on a large scale from Macedonia. Exports surpassed imports, producing positive overall financial balance for the local commercial establishments. Wealth was amassed through retail of leather, cotton and grain, as well as through tax farming and land leasing. Some of these merchants succeeded in developing large international companies with representative branches in Vienna, Constantinople, Athens, and Belgrade.

However, constant personal and legal insecurity, numerous robber gangs on the roads, lack of a banking system, opening of the markets to European goods, arbitrary and corrupt rule of the Ottoman officials, and high taxation put a heavy burden on the emerging merchant class. Their wealth was accumulated slowly and tediously but often lost fast. As the bankruptcy proceedings in the towns of Bitola and Veles indicate, in the mid-1860s the merchants were often financially ruined if their goods were pillaged and destroyed on the roads, or remained unsold for a couple of months. As a result, there were no businesses that remained financially solvent and prosperous for more than one generation. According to the financial records preserved in the Archives of Skopje and Sofia, the family trade companies of the brothers Paunčev from Ohrid, the brothers Šulev, the brothers Rizov, the brothers Mašov, and the brothers Kirkov from Veles, flourished only for approximately fifteen to twenty years. Even the most prominent merchant house, that of the brothers Robev from Ohrid, which by the mid-

1860s obtained an annual gross income of almost ten thousand pounds, disappeared from commercial life due to financial difficulties by mid-1870s.

Consequently, these newly emerging social elements needed better access to the resources of the communal property and power centered on the ecclesiastical board. Membership or leadership in the local ecclesiastical boards meant not only recognition of a certain social status in the local community, but also a personal, legal, and financial security. However, rising to a prominent position in the local community, these people met an older, well-established stratum of town-dwellers who had already distributed the communal micro-powers among themselves, exercising influence over the population, the communal organizations, the resident prelate, and the management of ecclesiastical property. This stratum of local notables was reluctant to relinquish their influence and power to the new social elements. These town-dwellers, a part of the waning medieval world, belonged to the Greek cultural milieu maintained and cultivated through the Orthodox Church. Their allies and powerful partners were the prelates who also did not want to yield their arbitrary power that brought them financial and social advantages. In order to gain control over the ecclesiastical property and subdue the arbitrary authority of the Church, the new local social elements needed a wider popular support and external allies. In order to attract more numerous supporters from their locality, the prominent members of this emerging social element, originating from the local peasant communities inhabited to a great extent by people of Slavic ethnic background, turned to the ideas of local Slav-minded intelligentsia.

In the period after the 1830s, the first members of indigenous Macedonian intelligentsia started to emerge under the influence of far more developed Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian national movements. The belated appearance of a weak national movement in Macedonia resulted from the relatively isolated position of the Macedonian Slav population, predominance of the Muslim and Greek ethnic elements in the major towns, slower economic changes, absence of good communication lines and lack of direct western intellectual contacts. At the same time, lack of a distinct Slav Macedonian historical background, recorded cultural heritage, literature, language, and state tradition produced hazy and shifting feelings of national belonging among the emerging intelligentsia. In other words, the Macedonian Orthodox Slavs did not have a sound basis on which they could build their romantic national myths and national consciousness. The ancient Macedonian history was clearly perceived as a part of the Greek historical heritage, while the medieval kingdom of Samuel at the turn of the eleventh century was too short-lived and culturally indistinct to leave any lasting trace on folk memory. Furthermore, each local community had its own Slavic dialect. Consequently, Slav-minded intellectual J. Hadži Konstantinov-Džinot, a prominent teacher in various Macedonian towns, who in the early 1850s published articles in the Constantinople newspaper "Carigradski vestnik," described the local inhabitants as "Macedonian Bulgarians." At the same time, he used local appellations ("Velešani," "Skopjani," "Prilepčani," etc) for the Slav inhabitants of Macedonia. In the mid-1850s, J. Hadži Konstantinov-Džinot frequently corresponded with the Belgrade's Learned Society, describing the inhabitants of the local communities as Serbians from Macedonia. Before his death, he became a Catholic, growing indifferent towards national labels. The Russian scholar Victor Grigorovič pointed that during his visit to the town of Ohrid in 1845, he met D. Miladinov who later became a prominent



pan-Slavic advocate, when the latter was still as an enthusiastic teacher of Greek. In 1855, D. Miladinov served as a secretary to the Greek prelate in Bosnia. In the following year, he tried to find employment in Serbia as a teacher of Greek. In the official Serbian registers, taken during his stay in Belgrade, D. Miladinov declared himself as a Greek. Another prominent advocate of the same Slav cause, G. Prličev, succeeded in winning some literary fame writing in Greek. After an intellectual shift, he returned to his locality in Macedonia, attempting to invent a common Slavic Esperanto, in which he wrote his poetry and works. In due time, the common denominators of men like J. Hadži Konstantinov-Džinot, D. Miladinov, and G. Prličev, became clear local Slav identity, demand for the use of local Slav vernaculars in the emerging school establishments and in Church services.

The new strata of notables used the intellectuals' idea of the employment of local vernacular in the emerging educational establishments and Church Slavonic in the ecclesiastical services to obtain wider popular support in their fight for the redistribution of the power and wealth controlled by the Church and the older strata of notables. Peasants, village notables and petty townsmen, who maintained their Slavic vernacular in everyday communication, rallied behind this simplified and easily comprehensible idea, envisaging a possibility to overthrow the heavy taxation and arbitrary authority of the Patriarchate, the prelates, and their local lay allies. At the same time, the prelates and the prominent local Hellenized notables who exercised power and controlled the local ecclesiastical property, gradually came under the influence of the national ideas and political plans of the Greek nationalist movements, centered in Constantinople and in the independent Greek state. The higher ecclesiastical authorities entered into closer political and social connection with the Hellenized notables in the clash that started to develop in the local community. Therefore, the factions that were competing for the property and the power of the Church in the Ottoman millet system took on national labels.

The Slav Orthodox population and its leaders who started to assert their non-Greek identity were mainly concerned with their locality, being unable at this point of national formation to form any kind of idea of distinct "imagined community." They focused their interests on redistribution of power and wealth on their immediate place of living, asking for external help in their local struggles. Therefore, they could easily flirt with Catholic missionaries in the hope of obtaining Austrian or French aid, or occasionally even turning towards Protestantism to attract the attention and interference of Great Britain. At the same time, along with appellations denominating their locality, they labeled themselves Slavs, playing on Russian pretensions, Bulgarians, in order to gain the support of the Bulgarian community in Constantinople, or Serbians, to receive financial and political help from the autonomous Serbian principality. As the Serbian and Bulgarian archival sources indicate, these policies were rewarded financially and politically. During the second and third quarter of the nineteenth century, the Serbian principality, the Greek independent state and the Bulgarian colony in Constantinople lavishly bestowed money and charities, sent pre-paid teachers, dispatched newspapers, primers, and books to the Macedonian local communities. Guided by practical local factors, entire communities, like the one in Prilep in the mid-1860s, sent appeals both to the Serbian prince and to the leaders of the Bulgarian movement in Constantinople, labeling themselves Serbians and Bulgarians respectively.

In this process, a distinct “public sphere” started to be formed in the Macedonian communities, which had further implications for the national awakening of the Orthodox Slav population. According to J. Habermas, the term “public sphere” encompasses “first of all a realm” of “social life in which something approaching public opinion can be formed ... A portion of the public sphere comes into being in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body.” Moreover, in its modern concept, public sphere “aimed at transforming arbitrary authority into rational authority subject to the scrutiny of a citizenry organized into a public body under the law.” For the Christians in the Ottoman Empire at this stage of social development the arbitrary authority was not the Ottoman state, but the Orthodox Church represented by the clerical estate of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. The local ecclesiastical boards, formed by prominent lay notables, began to play the role of a public body which was trying to overturn the control of the Church and to secularize the society. At the same time, this public sphere became a fertile ground for disseminating divergent national ideas.

In due course, some members of the Macedonian intelligentsia started to notice the existing linguistic and to certain extent cultural differences between the Slav population of Macedonia and the people living in the other parts of the Balkans. In 1860s, P. Zografski, one of the first native Slav bishops in Macedonia, raised the question of the literary language among the Southern Balkan Slavs in the Bulgarian Constantinople newspapers. He unsuccessfully tried to incorporate Balkan Slav western vernaculars into the Bulgarian literary language. P. Zografski also prepared a number of primers written in the local vernacular of Western Macedonia. In the early 1870s, V. Mačukovski, a teacher in Ohrid and Salonica, prepared one of the first primers that used the western Slav Macedonian dialects. The failure of the Bulgarian Exarchate, which was formed in 1870 under Russian influence, to take under its jurisdiction the bulk of the Macedonian dioceses, produced wide discontent among the Macedonian Slav population. As a result, a number of Slav Macedonian intellectuals attempted to form an independent national movement. As P. Slavejkov reported from Veles to the Bulgarian Exarch, already some activists “speak about Macedonian movement.” These activists even voiced the idea of “accepting the local Macedonian vernacular as a literary language” and organizing a local ecclesiastical hierarchy.

While this process was still in its inception, in 1878 Russian and European interference in favor of the Bulgarian movement brought into the existence an autonomous Bulgarian Principality. The main national goal of the new Bulgarian principality became an annexation of Macedonia and Thrace. These tendencies marked the beginning of the so-called “Macedonian struggle,” since Greece, Serbia and even Romania also had expansionist policies with respect to European Turkey. Moreover, the intelligentsia, coming under direct pressure of the Ottoman authorities who perceived its members as potential dissenters and instigators of popular revolt, started leaving Macedonia on a mass scale. This process was further facilitated by the lack of any prospects for advancement, change, and better living in this part of the Ottoman Empire. As recent research indicates, out of 959 people in Macedonia who could be perceived as members of the intelligentsia in the period before 1876, only 111 remained after 1878, out of which only seven had some kind of higher education. In the period following,

immigrants were replaced with people sent from and financially supported by the Bulgarian Principality, the independent kingdoms of Greece, Serbia, and Romania. Their main task was linguistic and cultural assimilation of the Macedonian population in favor of their respective patrons. An era in the Orthodox Slav national awakening in Macedonia had ended.

Therefore, it could be asserted that in order to safeguard its economic position and to affirm its social status, the bourgeoisie that emerged in the local Macedonian communities during the economic expansion of the Ottoman Empire in the mid-nineteenth century had to possess control over the property and powers of the Church. The dominant notables, however, opposed the drive for the redistribution of power in the local community. In attempting to accomplish their aims, the new social elements used the ideas of the emerging Slav intelligentsia, whose common denominators were clear Slav local identity, demand for the use of local Slav vernaculars in the emerging school establishments and in Church services. By raising the question of language in schools and ecclesiastical services, the new social elements that fought for redistribution of the power and property of the Church, sought to rally wider support from the local population. However, the Orthodox Slav population of Macedonia did not have a pre-modern national development and state tradition. As M. Hroch pointed out, the nation-forming process "is a distinctively older phenomenon than the modern nation and nationalism: any interpretation of modern national identity cannot ignore the peculiarities of pre-modern national development, or degrade it to a level of a mere myth." As a result, more developed national movements made their intellectual inroads and exercised significant influence on the national awakening of the localized Slav ethnographic groups in Macedonia. The opposing factions in the local communities turned towards far more clearly shaped and developed nationalist movements centered in the Bulgarian Community in Constantinople, the Serbian principality and the Kingdom of Greece, which provided financial and political support. Therefore, contrary to the predominant views of various Balkan historiographies and some Western writings, it may be asserted that in the period up to 1878 the national ideas and self-identifications among the Orthodox Slav population of Macedonia were dictated predominantly by practical local factors. This situation influenced the national development of Orthodox Slav ethnic groups in Macedonia, opening numerous avenues for scholarly disputes and conflicting interpretations.