

Chapter Four: A Contest for Souls

4.1 Introduction

EXAMINING THE NATURE of daily Macedonian life in the Bitola region is fundamental to understanding the landscape under which the Balkan churches engaged in a fierce contest for jurisdictional dominance. The religious struggle in Macedonia was conducted primarily through the Greek Patriarchate and the Bulgarian Exarchate. During the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, the Balkan States, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia anticipated the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in Europe. The Empire was already in a state of decline and was commonly referred to as ‘the sick man of Europe’. The struggle for Macedonia took various forms, and the religious rivalry that developed over the Macedonian Christians was the climax of Balkan propaganda activities. As this Chapter describes, the establishment of foreign religious organisations in Macedonia – in particular the Greek, Serbian and Bulgarian churches – aimed at expanding their jurisdiction in line with their respective national states’ territorial ambitions. Effectively, religious jurisdiction was seen as outwardly demarcating people and villages as belonging to the nationality of the church in question. Intense competition among the parties eventually resulted in open armed conflict by guerilla bands sent from the neighbouring states. Each party sought, by any means possible, to obtain religious jurisdiction over Macedonian territory, in order to justify their territorial aspirations. The role of the priest as the principal religious figure in countryside villages is examined in order to evaluate any effect upon the identity of the village community. The lives of Macedonian villagers are scrutinised to ascertain whether relations between adherents of opposing religious jurisdictions had broken down, or whether a common Macedonian identity was in the process of being formed.

Without a recognised independent Macedonian church (previously abolished by the Ottomans in 1767), the Macedonian people were exposed to the activities of the neighbouring religious propaganda. The Balkan churches played a treacherous role, manipulating and coercing the Macedonian Christians to win their adherence, which in fact had nothing to do with the Christian faith but was entirely political in nature. English commentators at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as Brailsford, referred to the Balkan churches in Macedonia as ‘national organisations’, whilst Comyn-Platt referred to them as ‘missionary enterprises’ as well as the commonly used term, ‘propaganda’.¹ Propaganda activity in Macedonia, ‘although political in their ends, are religious and educational in their methods’,² although it was not Christianity itself at fault; the Balkan church leaders rather than attending to the spiritual well-being of the people were ‘the prime movers in every political campaign that it started’.³

The Balkan churches preyed upon the religious disposition of a people who, throughout centuries of Muslim rule, maintained a powerful link to their church and Christian faith. Denied the right to own land, with public gatherings forbidden unless in the confines of their church or to celebrate a religious festival, the people saw the church as the one thing that truly belonged to them. Another early twentieth century English commentator, Abbott, pointed out that ‘even the smallest and most obscure village is sanctified by a place of worship’.⁴ The people accepted their faith without question: being a Christian was an integral part of their identity. However, without their own recognised national church, which before its abolition was a leader of the

¹ T. Comyn-Platt *The Turk in the Balkans*, London, 1904, p. 34. T. Comyn-Platt suggests that Macedonian politics can be summed up in one word: ‘propaganda’.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. T. Comyn-Platt provided a descriptive account of Macedonia at the beginning of the twentieth century: ‘Orthodoxy today, or its prototype, is the horse ridden by every shade of politician in the Near East, and in the race for possession of Macedonia, the entire hierarchical machinery is set in motion by way of advancing the cause of the various claimants. Here then, is material enough for Eastern difficulties. Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbians, and indeed, every Christian element that goes to make up the mosaic of Balkan nationalities, fight among themselves, the Porte knocks their heads together by way of embittering the contest, whilst the Great Powers, from selfish motives, not only prevent an amicable settlement, but add fuel to the fire by furthering their own ends.’ Ibid, p. 45.

⁴ G.F. Abbott, *Macedonia A Plea for the Primitive*, London, 1903, p. 43.

people, their national development was hindered and the Macedonians were left ‘as a flock without their shepherd’.

Throughout this struggle for the souls of Macedonia, the people maintained a powerful link to their church, which was not necessarily expressed as loyalty to the Patriarchate or Exarchate religious organisations, but to the church building itself, which constituted a holy place for them. Brailsford recognised the strong tie to their church when he visited Macedonia just after the Ilinden Rebellion in 1903. In discussions with villagers living in what he described as ‘monotonous exploitation and servitude’, he asked them why they did not leave their villages and emigrate to Serbia or Bulgaria where they might be both prosperous and free. They replied, ‘who would care for the monastery if we abandoned it? The Turks would seize it.’⁵ As he travelled through villages that had been plundered and ravaged by the Ottomans after the rebellion, he ‘was always led first of all to inspect the burned or looted church. Its destruction affected the people far more profoundly than the loss of their homes.’⁶

4.2 Archbishopric of Ohrid

HISTORICALLY, THE MACEDONIAN Archbishopric of Ohrid was a large and important Christian institution in the Balkans, operating as a centre of arts, letters and learning. The historian J. Shea considers that the church played a significant role in ‘defining and in defending’ a uniquely Macedonian culture.⁷ For over eight centuries (from 995 to 1767) the Archbishopric of Ohrid maintained its autocephalous status

⁵ H.N. Brailsford, *Macedonia: Its Races and their Future*, London, 1906, p. 59. Brailsford is perhaps one of the most widely quoted contemporary commentators on Macedonia.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 60. Similarly, the writer found during a field visit to Macedonia in 2000, that the village church was the central object in each village – and it was spoken about with great pride. Often the church was a small simple structure and there was no relevance given to foreign jurisdiction (Patriarchate or Exarchate) during Ottoman rule. In few instances, Greek script remained on frescoes or icons, but this was not seen to be of any consequence and was understood by younger people to have a part in Macedonia's turbulent past. It is interesting to note that no efforts have been made to modify or eliminate foreign script from churches. In contrast, pre-1912 churches in southern Macedonia have had all traces of Macedonian script completely eliminated and replaced with Greek script after 1913.

⁷ J. Shea, *Macedonia and Greece: The Struggle to Define a new Balkan Nation*, 1997, p. 172.

through Serbian, Bulgarian, Byzantine and – for the first three and a half centuries – Ottoman Turkish rule.⁸ During early Ottoman rule the authority of the church was not threatened. Instead, with the support of the Ottoman Turks the powers of the church were substantially increased in order to weaken the authority of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.⁹

General conditions in European Turkey began to deteriorate from the middle of the sixteenth century, initially due to the strengthening of the feudal system and then later as a result of a weakening of the Ottoman Empire. Subject to new and increasing taxes, levies and other compulsory payments to the Ottomans, Macedonians were forced to endure a burdensome financial hardship that directly affected the position of the church, which largely relied on the generosity and donations from its adherents. The Archbishopric began to weaken as the Ottomans ended their religious tolerance and began to attack all things Christian. Sultan Selim II (1566–1574) described himself as sent by God to ‘exterminate the Christian religion’,¹⁰ and thereafter the attack against Christianity intensified.

Seeking support for the Macedonian church, Archbishop Gavril journeyed to Russia in 1585 requesting assistance from the Russian Czar. The Ottomans, enraged at his actions, fined the Archbishopric of Ohrid 16,000 lira.¹¹ Centuries-old churches and monasteries were destroyed in the fierce attack against the Christian faith. Buildings decimated by Ottoman fanaticism included the churches and monasteries

⁸ The Ohrid Archbishopric is generally considered to be identical with and a continuation of the Archbishopric Justinia Prima, founded by the Emperor Justinian in 535 with its ecclesiastical seat in Skopje. Y. Belchovski, *The Historical Roots of the Macedonian Orthodox Church*, Skopje, 1987, p. 142. Also, see D. Ilievski, *The Macedonian Orthodox Church*, Skopje, 1973. To the eleventh century the Macedonian Ohrid church was a Patriarchate.

Following the defeat of Samuels Empire at the hand of Byzantine, it was downgraded to an Archbishopric.
⁹ During the course of the fifteenth century a number of eparchies were subjected to the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. Among them were the eparchies of Sofia and Vidin; the eparchies of the Serbian Patriarchate of Pech; Wallachia, Moldavia, and the Orthodox regions of Italy (Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily), together with Venice and Dalmatia. D. Ilievski, op. cit. pp. 28–29.

¹⁰ D. Ilievski, *Avtokefalnosta na Makedonskata Pravoslavna Crkva* [The Independence of the Macedonian Orthodox Church], Skopje, 1972, p. 45.

¹¹ S. Dimevski, *Crkvena Istorija na Makedonskiot Narod* [The Church History of the Macedonian People], Skopje, 1965, p. 67.

of Saint George (*Sveti Giorgi*), Saint Arhangel (*Sveti Arhangel*) in Reka, Saint John Bigorski (*Sveti Jovan Bigorski*) in Debar, and the church of the Immaculate Mother of God (*Sveta Prechista*) in Kitchevo. Others, such as the cathedral church of Saint Sofia in Ohrid, were transformed into mosques.¹²

As the sole religious institution of the Macedonian people, the Archbishopric of Ohrid actively sought assistance from various European leaders with a clear political aim of liberating Macedonia from Ottoman Muslim rule. During the latter half of the sixteenth century and up to the middle of the seventeenth century, Archbishops of the Ohrid Church travelled to various European countries (Russia, Poland, Bohemia, Germany, and others) seeking assistance for the liberation from Ottoman rule. In 1589 Archbishop Gavril was actively seeking support from Western Europe to drive the Ottomans from Macedonia.¹³ In 1615 Archbishop Atanasius travelled to Italy, Austria and Spain, requesting aid in support of an uprising to free

¹² During the rule of Murat IV (1623-1640) the Ottomans attempted to transform the famous church of Saint Kliment into a mosque. It was only saved after many of its precious treasures were sacrificed in order to buy it back. During travels in Macedonia the writer has on a number of occasions been alerted by locals to mosques which were transformed from churches, or were built on the foundations of a destroyed church. The following story, was told by an elderly local in Ohrid, in 1996 about a mosque known locally as 'krst dzhamija' ('cross mosque'). It was built from the ruins of a church (Saint George) which had been devastated in earlier Ottoman rule. With partially erect walls, the Ottomans commenced to rebuild it as a mosque. Over three consecutive days during construction, in the morning it was found that the work performed the previous day on the walls had collapsed. Rebuilding continued and to prevent further damage occurring an armed guard was stationed at the site. At its completion it was noticed that where there should have been only a crescent symbol on the dome, there was in fact a small cross within it. The authorities promptly replaced the religious symbol, believing that someone had swapped it over. The following day, the cross re-appeared. The authorities, furious that this should happen again, again stationed an overnight guard before the building. The following morning the cross again re-appeared. Unable to explain the event, the Ottoman authorities allowed it to remain and it stands there today.

¹³ Archbishop Gavril described the conditions under which the people were subject to in a letter to the Archduke Ferdinand of Habsburg, dated 8 October 1589: 'We take the liberty humbly to complain to your noble radiance (as a person) loved by God, a Christian and Catholic nobleman, of the tyrant, the bloodthirsty persecutor of Christianity, the Turk, who from day to day has pursued and blackmailed us and our ancestors, not only our Orthodox and old Catholic bishops, monasteries and the like in the whole of Macedonia, Greece and the nearby countries, and our loyal followers as well who we rule and live according to God's will, are also attacked; therefore we receive little tax from them now. On the contrary, we alone have to give to the Turks 18,000 Hungarian ducats in tax, which for us and our followers is a great evil, first of all it is an evil to the name and glory of Christ, preventing the spreading of his teachings.' H. Andonov-Poljanski, editor, *Documents on the Struggle of the Macedonian People for Independence and a Nation-State*, Vol I, Skopje, 1985, pp. 152–153.

Macedonia from Ottoman rule and expressed confidence that the surrounding Balkan countries would join the struggle.¹⁴

During this arduous period for the Macedonian church, the Patriarchate of Constantinople threatened its position by pursuing various intrigues against the Church, with the aim of abolishing its independence as a means to realise its aspirations to dominate the Christian Orthodox Balkans (under Ottoman rule). Signs are evident from the beginning of the eighteenth century that the Patriarchate undermined rival churches in the Balkans and sought to elevate its status through the ideal of the restoration of the Byzantine Empire and the central role the church would take in it.¹⁵ In an attempt to arrogate the autocephalous Ohrid Church in 1737, John Ypsilanti tried to persuade the Porte that Ohrid was a centre of Austrian intrigue and ought to be directly subordinated to Constantinople', according to the historian and former Secretary at the British Embassy in Constantinople from 1893 to 1898, Charles Eliot.¹⁶

The Macedonian church found itself weakening under the financial strain of the Ottomans. Whilst in a vulnerable state with heavy debts owed to the Ottomans, the synod of the Constantinople Patriarchate appealed to the High Porte that the

¹⁴ The following is an extract from a letter by Archbishop Atanasius, seeking assistance to overthrow the Ottoman Turks. The letter is dated June 1615: 'And so I proposed when five or six thousand infantry men would be given to me by his Highness of Spanish and Italian nationality, weapons and ammunition for arming 15,000 men, saddles and harness for 4,000 horses, in a short time I would deliver Macedonia under his rule and power, promising to pay back the aforementioned weapons and ammunition and that food would be given to the soldiers, since those regions are rich and abundant in foods...Hence after this action succeeds, the whole of Bosnia and Dalmatia, Bulgaria and Greece will doubtless raise their weapons against the Turk in order to help us and join our loyalty and obedience without requiring assistance, since they outnumber the Turks.' Ibid, pp. 157–158. Earlier, Archbishop Atanasius raised an unsuccessful rebellion in 1596 without assistance from Western Europe. He maintained a long-term campaign, attempting to rid Macedonia from the Ottomans from 1596 to 1615. For a fascinating account of the Archbishops travels to the European Courts and conditions in Macedonia, see M. Minoski, *Osloboditelne Dvizhenja i Vostanija vo Makedonija 1564–1615* [Liberation Movements and Rebellions in Macedonia 1564–1615], Skopje, 1972.

¹⁵ A. Trajanovski, *Godishen Zbornik (Stremežhot na Carigradskata Patriashija za ukinuvanje na Pechkata Patriashija i Ohridskata Arhiepiskopija i prisvojvanje na nivnite eparhii)* [Annual Codex (The Aspirations of the Constantinople Patriarchate to abolish the Pech Patriarchate and Ohrid Archbishopric and annex their eparchies)], Book 4, Skopje, 1998, pp. 155–156.

¹⁶ C. Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*, London, 1965 (1900) p. 251. C. Eliot goes on to state that the Ottomans thought of Ypsilanti's proposition as an intrigue and duly executed him.

debts owed would be covered by the Patriarchate if the Archbishopric of Ohrid were abolished. The Patriarchate argued that under such circumstances the church would come under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate. Under pressure from the Ottomans, Archbishop Arsenius was removed as the head of the Archbishopric of Ohrid on 16 January 1767. This was followed by an *irade* (royal act) from Sultan Mustafa III (1757–1773) abolishing the Archbishopric of Ohrid as an autocephalous institution. The abolition of the church was initiated by the Constantinople Patriarch (Samuil Handzheri 1763–1768), and un-canonically administered by a Muslim ruler. Playing into each other's hands, the Ottoman Turks and Greeks developed a long-standing relationship under which 'the Sultan could never have crushed the heart out of his Christian subjects without the aid of a Christian middleman, and the Greek has used the brute force of his Mohammedan employer to complement his own cleverness and guile'.¹⁷ The abolition of the Macedonian Archbishopric of Ohrid emerged from political manoeuvring, and was motivated by a desire to strengthen the position of the Patriarchate in non-Greek territories under Ottoman rule.¹⁸

4.3 Religious organisations in Macedonia from the 1870s

Greek Patriarchate of Constantinople

FOLLOWING THE ABOLITION of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, the Macedonian church was annexed to the Patriarchate of Constantinople, which took ecclesiastical control of Macedonia and, in place of native Bishops of one interest with the people, Greeks were sent from Constantinople'.¹⁹ Greek bishops and metropolitans

¹⁷ G.M. Mackenzie and A.P. Irby, *The Slavonic Provinces of Turkey in Europe*, London 1866, p. 29. See also Y. Belchovski, 1987, op. cit. p. 147.

¹⁸ Greek Patriarchate aspirations towards spiritual dominance of the Ottoman-occupied Balkans is also evident by a similar process employed a year earlier. In 1766, the Serbian church (Patriarchate of Pech) was abolished and placed under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. Both churches were 'destroyed by the Phanariots, with the double object of extending Greek influence and filling the exhausted treasury of the Constantinople Patriarchate with additional tithes and revenues'. C. Eliot, op. cit. p. 250.

¹⁹ G.M. Mackenzie and A.P. Irby, op. cit. p. 28.

reinforced Greek religious domination in Macedonia by attempting to wipe out traces of the Macedonian character of the Archbishopric of Ohrid. They set upon destroying centuries-old books, records and religious texts and often replaced Macedonian church inscriptions with Greek. In monasteries on the Holy Mountain of Sveta Gora, 'the Greek clergy acted drastically', throwing old Macedonian parchments into the sea or burning them in furnaces, and at the Monastery of Saint Naum on Lake Ohrid, the Greek prior Dionysius burned the manuscripts.²⁰ In Prilep there was a burning of the religious books, whilst the books stored at Veles were destroyed in a bonfire in the marketplace under the orders of the Greek bishop.²¹ As much as 300 kilograms of parchments and religious books belonging to the Ohrid Archbishopric were lost forever.²²

New ecclesiastical tax contributions were enforced under the privileges and wide-ranging powers bestowed to the Patriarchate of Constantinople by the Ottoman Sultan. Macedonians were required to finance the activities of this new oppression that was often collected with the assistance of armed Turkish guards. Eliot described the Greek clergy as 'little more than a body of rapacious and extortionate tax gatherers',²³ who demanded payment for the performance of all religious functions. There was a tax paid for the maintenance of the Patriarch, for the consecration of priests, for saying prayers, for prayers for the dead, for consecrating a church, and for numerous other services.²⁴ The Patriarchate became merely a Turkish deputy,

²⁰ S. Pribitchevich, *Macedonia - Its People and History*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982, p. 108.

²¹ G.M. Mackenzie and A.P. Irby, op. cit. pp. 102 and 111.

The library of the Patriarchs of Trnovo in Bulgaria, although surviving significantly longer, was destroyed by fire in 1825 at the hands of the Greek Metropolitan Hilarion. The journalist, J.D. Bourchier, *The Balkan States - Their Attitude Towards the Macedonian Question*, New York, 1905, p. 52. Vlah texts and documents also met the same fate at the hands of the Greek Patriarchate clergy. The historian, I. Arginteanu, *Istoriya na Armn Makedoncite (Vlasite)*, [A History of the Macedonian Vlachs], 1998, pp. 172-173 [original title in Romanian - *Istoria Romanilor Macedoneni*, Bucharest, 1904].

²² I. Ivanic, *Makedonija i Makedonci* [Macedonia and Macedonians], Novi Sad, 1908, p. 377.

²³ C. Eliot, op. cit. p. 251.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 251.

The historian Vakaloploulos also makes note of the 'oppressive nature' of heavy taxes imposed by the Patriarchate on the Christian population in order to obtain their church dues. K.A. Vakalopoulos, *Modern History of Macedonia 1830-1912*, Thessaloniki, 1988, p. 22.

developing into a royal tax gatherer and regarding its ecclesiastical functions as of secondary importance.²⁵

Under Patriarchate jurisdiction, church services, particularly in the larger towns, were conducted in Greek, a foreign language imposed upon Macedonia. Greek priests and bishops aimed to consolidate Greek religious domination by establishing schools alongside churches. In addition, the young Greek bourgeoisie undertook to expand into Macedonia with the support of the Patriarchate, in the field of business.²⁶ As such, Greek propaganda was given an unobstructed monopoly in Macedonia with the support of the Ottoman authorities. So powerful was the Patriarchate through the centuries that it has been said that it operated as a pseudo-state within the Ottoman Empire.²⁷ Wielding immense power, the Patriarchate church dominated ecclesiastical and educational life in Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia, and assumed administrative control of Romania.²⁸ The object of the Patriarchate 'was to hellenise the Christian races of the Ottoman Empire, which meant that those unfortunate races had to submit to a double yoke – Turkish and Greek'.²⁹ The Porte bestowed a level of authority upon the Patriarchate to the extent that its jurisdiction included matters relating to marriage and succession, the collection of taxes and mediation of disputes. Even criminal matters were handled by the clergy, with Christian criminals being imprisoned.³⁰

Greek political interests and territorial aspirations were represented in Macedonia through the domination of the Greek Patriarchate, which sought to

²⁵ T. Comyn-Platt, op. cit. pp. 39-40.

²⁶ S. Pribitchevitch, op. cit. p. 108.

²⁷ A.N. Karakasidou, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood*, University of Chicago Press, 1997, p. 84. The Ottoman historian, K. Karpat, states that the Patriarchate, 'shielded by Ottoman might, enjoyed power and prestige to a degree unknown even during the heyday of Byzantium'. *Ottoman Population 1830-1914*, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, p. 46.

²⁸ C. Eliot, op. cit. p. 250; K. Karpat, op. cit. p. 46.

²⁹ C. Eliot, op. cit. p. 250.

³⁰ R. Von Mach, *The Bulgarian Exarchate: Its History and the Extent of its Authority in Turkey*, London, 1907, p. 9; A.N. Karakasidou, op. cit. p. 84; and, T. Comyn-Platt, op. cit. p. 39.

modify Macedonian national development and to transform it to reflect a Greek character. The imposition of the Patriarchate and the appointment of Greek bishops was met with a strong wave of discontent in Macedonia from the 1850s onwards. Resentment by the Macedonian movement was also aimed at Greek traders and bankers who entered Macedonia under the authority of the Patriarchate and relied upon its support. Together with pro-Greek Vlachs, they assumed a commanding position in economic life in many parts of the country and enjoyed a special status under the privileges given to the Patriarchate by the Ottoman authorities. The Macedonian intelligentsia and the emerging bourgeoisie in the late nineteenth century struggled to reinstate the Macedonian Ohrid Archbishopric and to end the monopoly of Greek ecclesiastical domination in Macedonia.

Bulgarian Exarchate

SEEKING TO PROTECT Russian interests in the Balkans, Count Ignatiev, the Russian ambassador to Turkey, lobbied the High Porte from 1864 onwards to improve relations with Bulgaria, with the aim of supporting the establishment of the Bulgarian church. Ignatiev instigated the formation of a number of Bulgarian-Greek commissions to review Bulgarian demands for a proposed separate church. Bulgarian Turkish relations dramatically improved in 1868 when the Bulgarian bourgeoisie declared its loyalty to the Ottomans during the Greek rebellion on Crete. Following several years of campaigning, with Russian diplomatic support, a *firman* was issued on 28 February 1870 proclaiming the establishment of the Bulgarian church that was known as the Exarchate.

Although 1870 is widely recognised as the year that the Exarchate was established, it did not actually come into existence until May 11, 1872, following vehement opposition from the Patriarchate, which protested against the name 'Bulgarian Exarchate' and advocated the name 'Exarchate of the Haemus' (or

Balkan).³¹ The Exarchate reclaimed control of religious and educational institutions in Bulgaria, however its jurisdiction was extended to include non-Bulgarian territories, with the Exarchate taking over the Veles Eparchy in Macedonia and the Nish and Pirot Eparchies in Serbia. Furthermore, according to Article 10 of the Ottoman *firman*, any other Eparchy in Ottoman Turkey was free to come under the jurisdiction of the Exarchate if two-thirds of the population voted in favour of union. With this decree the base was laid for Greece and Bulgaria to struggle for the political and ideological contest over Macedonia.

In accordance with Article 10, voting was organised to take place at the Skopje and Ohrid dioceses. In spite of difficulties presented by the Greek clergy of the Patriarchate, notably that the Patriarchate declared all potential adherents to the Exarchate to be schismatic, the population of both dioceses voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Exarchate. The Exarchate was far preferable to remaining with the oppressive and exploitive Patriarchate whose official Greek language was incomprehensible to Macedonians. Macedonians favoured the Exarchate principally due to the similarity of the Bulgarian language to Macedonian. However, in doing so they were exposed to the influence of the Bulgarian government, ‘which used the Exarchate to further its own political ambitions in Macedonia’.³² Bulgarian chauvinists constructed an argument based upon the successes of the Exarchate, as confirmation of the ‘Bulgarian character’ of Macedonia. It is a misleading interpretation, as Eliot states: ‘the Church of the Exarchate was really occupied in creating Bulgarians’.³³ The historian T.R. Georgevitch explained that official church documentation, such as birth, marriage and death certificates, all bore Bulgarian subscriptions and seals:

Persons who could not write were entered in the Osmanli papers (papers giving a person's name, surname, religion, nationality and occupation, and with which every

³¹ R. Von Mach, *op. cit.* p. 18.

³² J. Shea, *op. cit.* p. 173.

³³ C. Eliot, *op. cit.* p. 319.

Turkish subject must be provided) as Bulgars. Thus Macedonia began gradually to be outwardly Bulgarian.³⁴

Table 4.1: Religious and Educational Budget of the Bulgarian Exarchate in Macedonia, 1878–1896

Year	Leva
1878	30,000
1879	30,000
1880	31,000
1881/82	100,000
1882/1883	250,000
1883/1884	517,000
1884/1885	560,000
1885/1886	774,864
1890/1891	5,500,000
1891/1892	5,500,000
1892/1893	5,500,000
1894/1895	5,000,000
1895/1896	5,000,000

Source: A. Trajanovski, *Bugarskata Exarhija i Makedonskoto Nacionalno Osloboditelno Dvizbenje 1893–1908*, Skopje, 1982, p. 44.

Significant inroads were made by the Exarchate in a relatively short period of time. Its expansion was a serious threat to Patriarchate domination, and the Ottomans misjudged the consequences of Article 10, soon realising that it was not in their interests to allow the Exarchate to extend its jurisdiction throughout the country. Although initially pleased to encourage Bulgarian opposition to Greek hegemony, and to divide Macedonia's Christian subjects, the Ottomans did not intend on allowing the Exarchate to become too powerful an organisation.³⁵ In 1873, following Exarchate victories in the Skopje, Ohrid, Bitola and Kukush³⁶ sees, the Ottomans responded by suspending all further plebescites. The Exarchist victories of 1873 went unheeded by the authorities. *Berats* had not been granted for the

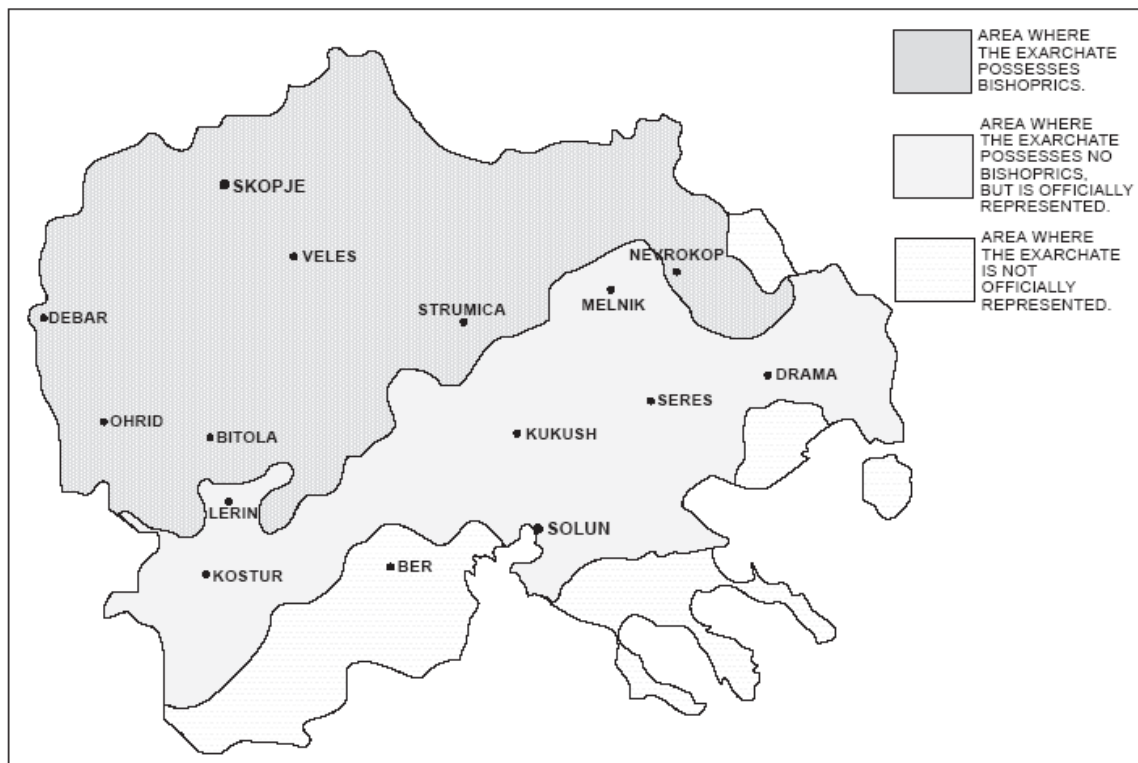
³⁴ T.R. Georgevitch, *Macedonia*, London, 1918, pp. 149–150.

³⁵ R.J. Crampton, *Bulgaria 1878-1914*, New York, 1983, p. 135; and, C. Eliot, op. cit. p. 135.

³⁶ Kukush was renamed Kilkis following Greek occupation of Southern Macedonia.

appointment of Bishops.³⁷ It was not until 1890 that the Porte issued *berats* for Skopje and Ohrid, allowing the bishops finally to proceed to their dioceses after thirteen years. Further *berats* were issued in 1894 in Veles and Nevrokop, and at the time of the Greek Turkish War in 1897 further dioceses were gained in Bitola, Debar and Strumica. But later the Ottomans prevented the Exarchate from spreading any further and no other bishoprics were gained, although the Exarchate did establish lower-ranked representatives in other dioceses.

Figure 4.1: Extent of Bulgarian Exarchate jurisdiction in Macedonia, 1907



³⁷ The situation remained stagnant until 1877 when the Russian Turkish War broke out. According to R. Von Mach, the Greeks and the Patriarchate took advantage of the circumstances and pointed at the Bulgarians as the 'disturbers of the peace'. R. Von Mach, 1907, op. cit. p. 19. The Ottomans suspended the Exarchist Bishop in Veles and the *berats* for the four bishoprics remained un-administered. The Union between the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia in 1885 did not help to improve Bulgarian Turkish relations, instead it brought about a reaction from Russia protesting against the expulsion of all Russian officers and agents in Bulgaria. Russia reacted through her consuls in Macedonia which switched their support from advocating that the Macedonians 'were in reality not Bulgarians but Serbians'. Ibid, p. 26.

Serb religious propaganda

SERBIAN RELIGIOUS PROPAGANDA started to infiltrate Macedonia during the mid-1880s. In areas dominated by the Exarchate, particularly in the northern and central part of the Bitola vilayet, the Serbs sought to replace Bulgarian influence with their own. Owing to friendly relations between the Serbs and Greeks, in 1885 the Serbian government proposed to the Constantinople Patriarch, Joakim IV, that Greek metropolitans be replaced by Serbs in the towns of Skopje, Veles, Debar, Bitola and Ohrid.³⁸ Seeking agreement with the proposal, the Serbian government offered the Patriarchate one thousand Turkish lira annually for each position. Although the Patriarchate conditionally agreed to the proposal, the Serbian government could not agree to the conditions set.³⁹

Disadvantaged by not having a recognised Serbian church in Ottoman Turkey, Serbs relied on political manoeuvring through their diplomatic consulates, agents and agitators. Although primarily focused upon establishing a religious footing in Macedonia through the Patriarchate, Serbs entertained ambitions of the creation of a recognised Serbian church in European Turkey. In August 1887 two Serbian agents, Dr Svetislav Pravica and Shpiro Koprivica, active in the Prilep region, formulated a ten-point plan for the advancement of Serbian national propaganda in Macedonia. Of particular interest are points one, three and seven. Point one recognised the dissatisfaction of the Macedonians under the Exarchate and recommended that they be supported in their efforts to emancipate themselves from Bulgarian influence. Point three provided for financial and material support for priests who declared their

³⁸ The Serbs also proposed the same for Prizren, which was not in Macedonia, but in 'Old Serbia' or Kosovo.

³⁹ The key conditions set by the Patriarch Joakim for the Serbian candidates, involved: 1. That they be Turkish citizens; 2. That they complete theological education; 3. That they have served a term as monks or priests; 4. That they speak the Greek language; 5. That they be of good character; 6. That they have not previously have been compromised before the Turkish authorities; and, 7. That they be eligible for promotion as Bishops in the Patriarchate. S. Dimevski, *Istoria na Makedonskata Pravoslavna Crkva*, [History of the Macedonian Orthodox Church] Skopje, 1989, pp. 537–538.

readiness to leave the Exarchate and join the Serbian – Patriarchate party. Point seven called for Serbian teachers to enter Macedonia via Constantinople where they would receive their credentials via the Patriarchate church.⁴⁰

Serb religious propaganda dramatically increased at the end of the nineteenth century. Advancing Greek Serbian relations saw the Patriarchate recommend that Greek metropolitans co-operate closely with Serbian consular authorities in Skopje and Solun. The relationship was further reinforced by agreement on their territorial aspirations in Macedonia, and the Patriarchate made a significant concession to the Serbian position through the introduction of the ‘Slavonic’ language in church services which were outside the Greek sphere of interest.⁴¹

Various political combinations were entertained between the Serbian and Greek governments in relation to religious jurisdiction in Macedonia. The friendly nature of their relationship was based on a common anti-Bulgarian position. This is clearly demonstrated through an agreement reached between Pezas, the Greek Consul at Bitola and Ristich, the Serbian Consul. The agreement stipulated that in the regions north of Prilep and Krushevo, the Serbian movement could act without hindrance, and the Serbs could rely on Greek support. On the other hand, south of Bitola, Serbian activities would be prohibited, but the Greek movement could rely on

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 543.

⁴¹ K.A. Vakalopoulos, op. cit. p. 183. In 1899, the Greek government instigated a new phase of Greek Serbian relations when it drafted the following arrangement: 1. That the Greek sphere of influence would extend as far north in a line running from Nevrokop, through Melnik, Prilep and Krushevo, to Struga and for Serbian influence to stretch south to Radovish, Veles and Debar. 2. The Greek government undertook to influence the Patriarchate for Serbian Metropolitans to be appointed at Skopje, Veles and Debar, with the understanding that the Serbian government would close its consulates at Seres, Solun and Bitola. 3. Serb schools in the Greek sphere of influence, and Greek schools in the Serb sphere would no longer be subsidised by their respective governments, which would pledge to collaborate in every sector in the future. As a result of a combination of political circumstances, the Greek Serbian arrangement failed to be fully realised. Ibid, K.A.Vakalopoulos, p. 184. According to the historian, L.S. Stavrianos, several years earlier, in 1892, the Serbs and Greeks had tried to reach an agreement. “Their purpose was to combat Bulgarian propaganda and, in their words, to “propagate the idea that there exist in Macedonia only Serbs and Greeks”.’ L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans 1815–1914*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1963, p. 101.

Serbian support. Finally, in the zone between Prilep, Krushevo and Bitola, ‘Greeks and Serbians would work together to subdue the Bulgarian movement’.⁴²

The Greek government was not concerned with the actions of Serbian propaganda in Macedonia, as long as it remained in the northern part of the country outside the Greek sphere of influence. Equally, the Patriarchate was not affected that Serbs used the Patriarchate to agitate for the conversion of the inhabitants to Serbian nationality.⁴³ As the Ottomans previously permitted Bulgaria to establish and expand the Exarchate in Macedonia to compete with the Greek Patriarchate, so too were Serbian interests assisted by the Patriarchate in northern Macedonia to compete with the Exarchate. When the Serbs eventually succeeded in the appointment of their own Serbian bishop (Firmilijan) in Skopje (thanks to Russian aid), the Bulgarians, as well as the Greeks protested. Adherents to the Patriarchate in northern Macedonia were predominantly pro-Greek Vlachs and they came into conflict with the Serbian wing of the Patriarchate⁴⁴: however, they presented a united front in opposition to the Exarchate. All this, of course, was pleasing from the Ottoman perspective, as no single foreign propaganda was permitted to dominate Macedonia on its own.

The most notable success enjoyed by the Serbian propaganda was at the end of the nineteenth century in the Skopje and Debar districts, and to a lesser extent in

⁴² Ibid, pp. 184-185 Vakalopoulos outlined that according to the agreement reached between Pezas and Ristich, the Slepche and Zirze monasteries were ceded to the Serbs in the Pelagonia district in 1901, whilst, Serbian infiltration in the village of Rakovo in the Lerin district was halted, as well as the establishment of a Serbian school in Krushevo. Serb efforts to establish a Serbo-Greek alliance were continued, and, in 1891, the Serbian government sent its envoy Vladan Djordjevich to Athens. The proposal called for common action by the Serbian and Greek governments against the Exarchate and Bulgarian propaganda in Macedonia. M.B. Petrovich, *A History of Modern Serbia 1804–1918*, New York, 1976, p. 497.

⁴³ E. Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia*, Thessaloniki, 1964, p. 29.

⁴⁴ The most notable conflict between the two Patriarchist groups occurred in Skopje for the ‘Sveti Spas’ church. The small colony of colonised Serbs, together with pro Serbian adherents, lobbied for the introduction of services in the Serb language. Resistance was met by the Vlachs. When the Metropolitan Metodi died, the Serbian government pushed for the appointment of a Serbian replacement. The Serbs were successful with the appointment of Firmilijan in 1897 (although he was not appointed until 1902). That date marks a downward slide in Greek religious propaganda in northern Macedonia. S. Dimevski, op. cit. p. 158. Regarding the small colony of Serbs that had migrated to Skopje in the 1890s, see section titled ‘Serbian Policies in Macedonia’, *ibid.*

the districts of Tetovo, Gostivar and Kumanovo.⁴⁵ Nevertheless the Serbs were the least successful of the religious competitors in Macedonia and even in these districts where they did have limited influence, the Exarchate maintained its overall domination. In the dioceses of Debar and Skopje, which directly border onto Serbia proper and Old Serbia (or Kosovo), the Exarchate could claim a population of 228,462, compared to 72,036 Patriarchists.⁴⁶

Romanian activity

ROMANIAN ACTIVITY IN Macedonia was largely organised by Apostol Margarit (1832–1902) with the financial support of the Romanian government, and experienced its most notable successes in the educational sphere. The Romanian position aimed at detaching Vlachs from the Greek influence of the Patriarchate. As allegiance to the Patriarchate implied Greek nationality. The Patriarchate firmly resisted the potential loss of its core supporters. This was particularly the case in the cities where ‘the Greek Patriarchate element consisted almost entirely of Vlachs’.⁴⁷ The fundamental importance of Vlachs to the Greek cause in Macedonia brought an alarmed reaction from the Patriarchate. According to Brailsford: ‘it is only Vlachs who give Hellenism a foothold. Withdrawal from their Greek alliance, and Greece must disappear from Macedonia.’⁴⁸

Vlah appeals in the 1890s to the Porte and the Patriarch for a Vlah metropolitan in Macedonia were unsuccessful. Instead, Vlah priests in the Patriarchate were won over to the Romanian cause by Margarit and his followers. However, as soon as they conducted services in the Vlah language they were

⁴⁵ For a thoroughly Serbian view espousing a Serbian character of these regions see J. Trifunovski, *Makedonizirajne Juzbne Srbije* [Macedonianisation of Southern Serbia], Belgrade, 1995.

⁴⁶ R. Von Mach, op. cit. pp. 78–79. The statistical data are drawn from an internal Exarchate report that was never intended for external use or publication. Exarchate statistics are generally considered by ethnographers and statisticians at the time to have been most accurate. Various historians also support this view. It is interesting to note that historians from the Republic of Macedonia accept the data as legitimate.

⁴⁷ H. Poulton, *Who are the Macedonians?* London, 1995, p. 61.

⁴⁸ H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 188.

‘promptly excommunicated’.⁴⁹ The Patriarchate was forced to tolerate Vlah schools, but displayed no such tolerance for Vlah religious separation. Many Vlah priests who had left the Patriarchate to serve the Vlah community exclusively were forced to return to the Patriarchate as a result of pressure and threats. This occurred to the priests Zisi and Mihailo in Nizhopole, priest Naum in Trnovo and priest Naum in Bitola.⁵⁰ An independent Romanian church was never established in Macedonia, and Vlah bishops were not granted, because in no diocese did the Vlachs constitute a majority.⁵¹ Even with the recognition of the Vlah millet (nationality) in Turkey in 1905 – a recognition obtained as a result of Romanian political lobbying in Constantinople⁵² – only one Romanian Vlah church was established (outside Patriarchate jurisdiction), but as there were no Vlah Bishops it was never consecrated.⁵³ The Romanian government never seriously maintained any territorial ambitions in Macedonia. Its policy was aimed at creating leverage with the Bulgarians.

⁴⁹ I. Arginteanu, op. cit. p. 191, and H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 188.

⁵⁰ K. Bitoski, *Dejnosta na Pelagonskata Mitropolija 1878–1912* [The Activities of the Pelagonia Metropolitan 1878–1912], Skopje, 1968, p. 142. Note that these data are taken from Greek Patriarchate documents.

⁵¹ L. Villari, *Races, Religions and Propagandas*, New York, 1905, p. 155. Villari adds that Apostol Margarit considered converting the Macedonian Vlachs to Catholicism, on condition that the Pope would grant them their autocephalous church. Negotiations were entered into between Margarit and Pere Faveyral, a French missionary in Bitola. However, the movement met with little response and was abandoned. Ibid, pp. 155–156.

⁵² H. Poulton, op. cit. p. 62.

⁵³ The church was constructed in Bitola, and known as ‘Sveti Elena and Konstantin’. Interview conducted 30 March 2000 in Bitola with the prominent retired medical doctor, the Vlah, Konstantin Nicha (born in Bitola 1919). The historian Bitoski adds that the church was not consecrated, even though considerable pressure was exerted by the Bitola *valia* upon the Greek Bishop to do so. K. Bitoski, op. cit. p. 143. The Vlah church in Bitola is rarely mentioned in the literature, but noted in a Serbian military report dated 20 August 1913 (during the Balkan Wars). G. Todorovski, editor, *Srpski Izvori za Istorijata na Makedonskiot Narod 1912–1914* [Serbian Sources on the History of the Macedonian People 1912–1914], Skopje 1979, p. 223.

Table 4.2: Growth of Financial Assistance to the Romanian Cause in Macedonia from the Romanian Government, 1870–1908

Year	Francs
1870	14,000
1879	40,000
1891/1892	250,000
1892/1893	450,000
1899/1900	724,643
1905/1906	821,973
1907/1908	1,336,840

Source: Rubin. A. *Les Roumains de Macedoine*, Bucarest, 1913, pp. 234–235, as cited in K. Bitoski, *Dejnosta na Pelagonskata Mitropolija 1878–1912*, Skopje, 1968, p. 144.

Western church organisations in Macedonia

UNLIKE THE POLITICALLY-ORIENTED Balkan church organisations operating in Macedonia, the Catholic and Protestant missions were not politically motivated and did not have any territorial aspirations. Instead, the Catholic and Protestant missions were purely religious in nature. Early Catholic activity in Macedonia became visible following the Crimean War (1856) and emerged at the time when the Macedonian people intensified their struggle against the Constantinople Patriarchate. In 1879 a detailed plan for the development of Catholic activity was drawn up by the emissaries Paolo Purlang and Giovanni Battista Botca and was ‘founded on respect for the vernacular language and local customs’.⁵⁴ The establishment of missionary centres in Bitola and Solun supported Catholic infiltration into Macedonia and a foothold was gained in the central southern districts of Macedonia, in the Kukush, Doiran and Enidzhe Vardar regions.⁵⁵ At the height of

⁵⁴ M. Apostoloski, D. Zografski, A. Stojanovski and G. Todorovski, editors, *A History of the Macedonian People*, Skopje, 1979, p. 139.

⁵⁵ In 1859, Macedonians from Kukush, rejecting the oppression of the Greek Patriarchate, turned to the representatives of the Catholic church in Solun. They requested union with Rome and the termination of their links with the Patriarchate. The inhabitants of Kukush expressed their outrage at the Patriarchate and the activities of the clergy, ‘who expressed greater interest in gathering money than respecting the laws of the Holy scriptures’. In a letter to the Pope (dated 23 July 1859) the citizens of Kukush put forward the following conditions: 1. That the Roman Catholic Church not mix in the internal affairs of the Union; 2. That no

Catholic activity in Macedonia there were 3,950 Catholic households with a total of 20,000 members by 1886,⁵⁶ but by 1897 this number had reduced to 1,021 Catholic households as many transferred to the Exarchate.⁵⁷

The other active non-Balkan Christian church was the Protestant mission, made up of American and British missionaries who first appeared in Macedonia during the 1850s. The Protestant mission was concentrated in the eastern Macedonian districts of Razlog, Bansko, Nevrokop and along the valleys of the Struma and Strumeshnitsa Rivers.⁵⁸ A Protestant campaign was also conducted in Bitola, yet despite the efforts of the missionaries ‘which advocated a purely spiritual propaganda’,⁵⁹ it met with limited success. According to Ivanic, in 1897 there were only 122 Protestant households in Macedonia.⁶⁰ However, the Macedonian

modifications be made to the Orthodox teachings and rites; 3. To have a Bishop of Macedonian origin appointed; 4. That the Macedonian language be used in the church services and education be performed in the mother tongue; and, 5. The clergy to be chosen by the people. In a similar manner, the citizens of Enidje-Vardar, Doiran and Gevgelia also followed suit and went into union with Rome. S. Dimevski, op. cit. p. 372. The Catholic Church in Macedonia was solidly supported by the French Ambassador in Constantinople, Lavalette, and the church was considered pro-Ottoman, as it recognised Turkish rule in the Balkan Peninsula. The Russians reacted to the activity of the Catholic Church in Macedonia. Seeing themselves as the natural defenders of Orthodoxy, they feared their influence was being threatened by the Catholic Church. Brailsford stated that the Catholic Church ‘frightened Russia into the creation of the Exarchate’ and that when that did happen, Macedonians left the Catholic Church for the Exarchate. H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 73. S. Dimevski contends that as a protest to Bulgarianisation (through the Exarchate), in January 1874, six districts – Solun, Dojran, Voden, Kukush, Strumica and Maleshevo – seceded from the Exarchate and joined in union with the Papacy. Op. cit. 1989, p. 574.

Late nineteenth-century attempts to restore the Macedonian Orthodox church through the Catholic Church brought about a rare agreement between the Patriarchate and Exarchate churches, as both opposed such a move. Poplazarov, R. *Grebkata politika sprema Makedonija vo vtorata polovina na XIX vek i pochetokot na XX vek* [Greek policy towards Macedonia in the second half of the XIX and beginning of the XX century], Skopje, 1973, p. 14.

⁵⁶ M. Apostoloski, D. Zografski, A. Stojanovski and G. Todorovski, editors, op. cit. p. 139.

⁵⁷ I. Ivanic, (1908) op. cit. p. 304. Furthermore, according to the newspaper *Makedonski Pregled* (Number 1, 1905, p.3) there were 2,432 Catholic Uniates in Macedonia, primarily in the Kukush, Gevgelija, Solun and Enidzhe Vardar regions, as cited in M. Pandevski, *Nacionalnoto Prashanje vo Makedonskoto Osloboditelno Dvizhenje 1893–1903* [The National Question in the Macedonian Liberation Movement 1893–1903], Skopje, 1974, p. 60.

⁵⁸ I. Ivanic, (1908), op. cit. p. 305. M. Apostoloski, D. Zografski, A. Stojanovski and G. Todorovski, editors, op. cit. p. 139.

⁵⁹ H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 74. Brailsford makes a number of interesting comments regarding the failure of Protestant missions in the Balkans.

⁶⁰ I. Ivanic, (1908), op. cit. pp. 306–307.

newspaper, *Makedonski Pregled* claimed 2,388 Protestants in Macedonia in 1905.⁶¹ Overall, the Protestant mission did not achieve widespread success in Macedonia.

Table 4.3: Location of Protestant Churches in Macedonia and Date Established

Location of Protestant Church	Date established
Bitola	1874
Strumica	1890
Monospitovo (Strumica region)	1890
Solun	1894
Murtino (Strumica region)	1898
Radovish	1889
Koleshino (Strumica region)	1899
Drama	1900
Skopje	1901
Doiran	1901
Enidzhe Vardar	?

Source: *Sto Godini Evangelski Crkvi v Blgaria*, Sofia, 1958, pp. 229–238 (Author unknown).

4.4 Foreign armed bands (1903-1907)

THE ENTRY OF armed foreign bands into Macedonia, particularly after the suppression of the 1903 Ilinden Rebellion, was an extension of the religious struggle in its most extreme form. By itself, religious and educational propaganda failed to achieve desired outcomes. Paramilitary armed bands became a far more effective tool to mould villages into a particular nationality through forced church adherence. Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia each equipped and sent armed bands into Macedonia ‘to forward the rival interests of these land-lustful states’.⁶² The systematic campaign conducted by the neighbouring states brought a new era of misery upon the Macedonian population. In pursuit of their aims, terrible acts of violence and murder were committed, entire villages were set ablaze and destroyed. Armed bands

⁶¹ The newspaper *Makedonski Pregled* (Number 1, 1905, p. 3.) counted 2,388 Macedonian Protestants, primarily in the Razlog, Strumica and Seres regions, as quoted from M. Pandevski (1974), op. cit. p. 60.

⁶² E.F. Knight, *The Awakening of Turkey*, London, 1909, p. 101.

represented the extremes of foreign propaganda in Macedonia, and funded by the state budgets of Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria,⁶³ they represented the government policy of their respective states of origin. These paramilitary units aimed at forcibly transforming Macedonians into ‘Greeks’, ‘Serbs’ and ‘Bulgarians’, destroying the Macedonian revolutionary movement, and creating a sense of instability and insecurity in order to prepare Macedonia for its partition. The influx of armed bands into Macedonia complicated an already difficult environment. A reign of terror fell upon Macedonia whereby law and order deteriorated to such a degree, that H.N. Brailsford commented in 1905 that ‘Macedonia has passed during some eighteen months through a period of anarchy without parallel in its recent annals’.⁶⁴ Similarly, the contemporary commentator, Sir Edwin Pears, stated in 1911 that, according to the records of English and French consular reports, Macedonia was ‘in a condition of anarchy which during the same period had no parallel in Europe’.⁶⁵

There was a systematic rise in the number of murders committed by armed bands in the years preceding the 1903 rebellion. So, from 1 March 1903 to 28 February 1904, there were 350 murders, from 1 March 1904 to 28 February 1905 there were another 468 murders, and from 1 March 1905 to 14 December 1905 there were 685 more murders in Macedonia.⁶⁶ Austrian consular reports confirm that the greatest number of murders and terror inflicted upon the population was due to the

⁶³ According to the historian R. Clogg, ‘initially these rivalries were played out in ecclesiastical, educational and cultural propaganda. But at the turn of the century, this war of words gave way to armed struggle between guerilla bands supported and subsidised by the governments of the respective motherlands’. R. Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece*, Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 70.

⁶⁴ H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 214.

⁶⁵ Sir E. Pears, *Turkey and Its People*, London, 1911, p. 233.

⁶⁶ From a report by Richard Openheimer, Austrian Civil Agent in Macedonia, dated 31 January 1906 (Number 15), from D. Zografski, editor, *Avstriski Dokumenti 1905–1906* [Austrian Documents 1905–1906] Vol I, Skopje, 1977, pp. 126–127; see also G. Todorovski, *Makedonskoto Prashanje i Reformite vo Makedonia* [The Macedonian Question and Reforms in Macedonia], Skopje, 1989, p. 204. The Bulgarian historian, Anastasoff, provides far higher figures. He claims that in the first eleven months of 1905, there were 1,010 murders of civilian villagers (Anastasoff refers to them as ‘Bulgarians’): 330 due to Albanian bands or individuals, 195 to regular Ottoman troops, 451 to Greek bands or agents, and 34 to Serbian bands or agents. Sir Edward Grey, the British Minister of Foreign Affairs, declared in the House of Commons that from 1 January 1906 to 30 September 1906 there were 1,091 political murders in Macedonia. The information was supplied to Grey by consuls in Macedonia. The political murders were broken down into the following: 577 Christians were killed in the vilayet of Solun, 431 Christians were killed in the vilayet of Bitola, and 183 Christians were killed in the vilayet of Skopje. C. Anastasoff, *The Bulgarians*, New York, 1977, pp. 167–168.

activities of the Greek bands.⁶⁷ The rise in murders did not go unnoticed by those foreign governments that maintained diplomatic missions in Macedonia. The Russian government intervened and appealed to the Greek foreign ministry to stop armed bands from entering Macedonia. Great Britain and Austria-Hungary also protested, and the appeal was made to the three interested Balkan States (Greece, Serbia and Bulgaria).⁶⁸

Foreign armed bands also engaged in battle against one another, particularly the Greek and Bulgarian bands. No such animosity existed between Greek and Serb bands, reflecting the political agreement between the two states.⁶⁹ The Macedonian revolutionary movement came under fierce pressure, as it was no longer engaged in battles solely against Ottoman forces and *bashibouzkus*,⁷⁰ but was to become simultaneously engaged in combat with Greek, Bulgarian and Serbian bands. Foreign bands focused upon forcing entire villages to adhere to their respective church organisations and generally avoided encounters with Ottoman troops. In fact, the Ottoman authorities tolerated foreign paramilitary bands in Macedonia, particularly Greek bands after 1903.⁷¹

Greek bands

PARAMILITARY BANDS FROM all the neighbouring Balkan States were guilty of inflicting violent cruelty upon the Macedonian civilian population, but it was the actions of the Greek bands that left the deepest scars. The first armed Greek bands

⁶⁷ Dr Raici from the Austro-Hungarian Consulate in Bitola refers to the Greek activities in Macedonia as 'Greek nationalistic terrorism'. D. Zografski, editor, op. cit. pp. 166–168.

⁶⁸ G. Todorovski (1989), op. cit. p. 206.

⁶⁹ D. Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897–1913*, Thessaloniki, 1966, p. 312. The British Consul General in Solun, provided figures of political crimes committed in 1907. These figures testify to the relationship between the Serbs and Greeks, as there were no murders between the two groups. According to R. Poplazarov, op. cit. p. 153, clear demarcation lines were agreed upon, separating the zones of activity for Serb and Greek bands in the Bitola kaza and the Skopje sandjak.

⁷⁰ *Bashibouzkus* were armed Muslim irregular fighters that typically engaged in undisciplined banditry.

⁷¹ R. Poplazarov, op. cit. p. 157.

to enter Macedonia belonged to the ‘Ethniki Hetairia’ (The National Society) and crossed into Macedonia in 1896 under the leadership of Greek army officers.⁷² According to the French Vice Consul in Bitola, Greek bands were operating in Macedonia ‘to imitate the example of the Bulgarian revolutionaries with the intention of establishing the principles of their pretensions to Macedonia’.⁷³ Largely active in the southern regions of Macedonia and supported by the Greek Consuls, the armed bands of the National Society entered Macedonia to prove that the ‘Greeks too had interests in Macedonia, and not just Bulgarians’. Fearing that Hellenism was in danger of losing Macedonia to the Bulgarians, armed Greek bands terrorised Macedonian Exarchate villages to accept the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate. The National Society was active in the years up to the 1897 Greek-Turkish War, but was to be discredited and dissolved later that year due to ‘the plundering and rape committed by the bands’.⁷⁴

Although Greek bands recommenced incursions into Macedonia during 1903, the year of the Ilinden Rebellion, it was in the very next year that a ‘Macedonian Committee’ was formed in Athens under Dimitrios Kalapothakis, publisher of the newspaper *Ethnos*. The Committee recognised that the old methods of educational and religious propaganda were not sufficiently effective to advance the Greek cause in Macedonia. In support of this view were the Greek prelates in Bitola, Kostur, Seres, Nevrokop and elsewhere who ‘flooded the Patriarchate at Constantinople with

⁷² The ‘Ethnike Hetairia’ was founded in Athens in November 1894. It was an irredentist organisation with over three-quarters of its support derived from Greek army officers. It was an exclusively Greek organisation whose basic aims were ‘undeniably bound up with the Greek territorial claims in Macedonia’. K.A. Vakalopoulos, *op. cit.* p. 201. Furthermore, a 1896 British Consular report by Charles Blunt also confirms that Greek bands crossing into Macedonia were ‘under the leadership of Greek army officers’. Letter by Consul General Charles Blunt dated 13 September 1896, FO 294 / 22.

⁷³ K. Bitoski, *The Attitude of the Kingdom of Greece Toward Macedonia 1893–1903*, Skopje, 1982, p. 147.

That Greek bands entered Macedonia for the purpose of ‘establishing the principles of their pretensions’ is clear, as Vakalopoulos asserts, ‘in some cases [the bands] reached as far into the interior as Demir Kapija – this reflected the maximum extent of Greek territorial aspirations in Macedonia at that time’. K.A. Vakalopoulos, *op. cit.* p. 202.

⁷⁴ G.M. Terry, *The Origins and Development of the Macedonian Revolutionary Movement with Particular Reference to the Taina Makedonsko-Odrinska Revolucionerna Organizatsiya from its Conception in 1893 to the Ilinden Uprising of 1903*, Unpublished MA Thesis, University of Nottingham, 1974, p. 111.

reports of the weak position of Hellenism in Macedonia ... Greek consuls in Macedonian cities sent similar reports to the Government at Athens.⁷⁵ The role of the committee was to organise and direct the Greek struggle in Macedonia. With the financial support of the Greek government it organised the formation of armed bands known as *andartes*, whose purpose was to enter Macedonia to advance the Greek cause. The headquarters of the armed struggle in Macedonia was the Greek Consulate in Solun where a new Consul General, Lambros Koromilas, had been installed. Shortly after his arrival in Macedonia in May 1904 Koromilas compiled a report to the Greek government, 'in which he stressed the need for a well organised armed defense of Hellenism in Macedonia and for an intensive propaganda designed to promote the Greek national spirit'.⁷⁶ Greek Patriarchate bishops worked with fanatical activity and were 'largely responsible for the atrocities committed by the Greek bands, and went so far as to draw up proscription lists of Bulgarian schismatics who had to be assassinated'.⁷⁷

From Autumn 1904, Greek bands began to conduct systematic incursions into Macedonia. These bands, largely consisting of men recruited from Crete, were formed and armed in Greece and led by officers from the Greek army. The bands would threaten non-Patriarchate villages and pressure them to declare themselves as Greeks and accept Patriarchate jurisdiction. Threatening letters were sent to villages to encourage their return to the Patriarchate fold. In one such letter from 1908 sent to the village of Arapli (Solun region), the 'Greek Macedonian Defense' states:

You must understand that your only option for survival is for you to become Greeks ... if in your village there are people who are not convinced that you are from a

⁷⁵ E. Kofos, op. cit. p. 34. Commenting on the weak position of the Greek Patriarchate in the Bitola eparchy, the Greek Metropolitan of Bitola stated, 'we must recognise that the field upon which we stand is not as certain as we may think. From the outside today we may appear stable, however in reality our position appears as the graves that Jesus Christ commented on: on the outside they are beautifully adorned, whilst inside are full of bones and uncleanness'. K. Bitoski, citing Greek Patriarchate documents, op. cit. p. 111. Since the Greek government took control over southern Macedonia, the town of Seres is also known as Serrai.

⁷⁶ D. Dakin, op. cit. p. 118.

⁷⁷ E.F. Knight, op. cit. p. 102. High ranking Greek Patriarchate clerics took a leading role in the affairs of Greek armed bands. The infamous Bishop of Kostur, Germanos Karavangelis, actually patronised the Greek armed struggle and actively assisted it. R. Clogg, op. cit. pp. 74–75.

Greek background, then we will teach you ... We will burn you and your children, even your pet cats. I will not leave one of you alive ... We wait no longer.⁷⁸

In a similar letter to the village Nihor (Ber region), dated 19 April 1908:

I wrote to you previously and have waited until today that you declare yourselves as Greeks. Expecting that you would do so, I have left your village unpunished. But understand well, if within ten days you do not become Greek Orthodox, beware; as what will happen to you has not before occurred anywhere. Bayonets will enter all of you, you will all perish along with your families. If within ten days you do not all become Greeks, do not expect to survive ... we will come one night and burn you like mice; we know each of you individually; your only escape will be to flee to Bulgaria.⁷⁹

Greek bands developed a notorious and feared reputation as the most brutal in the Bitola region, and especially in the Mariovo district.⁸⁰ According to Stojche Petkovski, who was born in Makovo village in 1920, and has never left, women and children were not exempt from the brutality of roaming Greek bands:

Nikola Damjanovski's mother was murdered because her family were with the Exarchate party and another young mother was murdered in the village - when her family found her, her baby was still feeding from her breast. In the neighbouring village of Rapeshe three young children aged between ten to fifteen years of age were buried alive, the Greek *cheti* were sadistic in these parts - everyone knows stories about their murdering. Most villages in this district were with the Patriarchate out of fear.⁸¹

Even the church building was not immune from attack. In Makovo the church was burnt down because it was under Exarchate domination.⁸² Born in the village of Makovo in 1913, Petko Atanasovski added that Greek bands often came to the village 'to check whether Bulgarian bands had visited' and, in order to demonstrate

⁷⁸ Letter dated 20 March 1908. K. Bitoski, op. cit. pp. 242–244. The Macedonian village Arapli was renamed by the Greek authorities as Sindos in the 1920s.

⁷⁹ Letter by Captain Joanis Ravnalis. K. Bitoski, *ibid.*, pp. 244–245. The new Greek name for Nihor appears to be Nihoruda, whilst Ber has been renamed Veria by the Greek authorities. Trajan Micevski of Novaci was aware that a Greek band had threatened and pressured the Exarchate village of Novaci to return to the Patriarchate fold. Trajan Micevski (born 1930 Novaci, Bitola region), interview conducted in Novaci on 22 March 2000.

⁸⁰ Respondents in the Bitola region were generally aware that Greek foreign bands were most active in the region, compared to Bulgarian and Serb bands. Those interviewed were also aware of Macedonian revolutionaries actively operating in the region and the majority of those interviewed knew of at least one individual fighting in the ranks of the IMRO, either coming from their village or from a neighbouring village.

⁸¹ Stojche Petkovski (born 1920 Makovo, Bitola region), interview conducted in Makovo on 18 March 2000.

⁸² Stojche Petkovski interview, *ibid.*

their fearlessness, they set fire to a Turkish tower in the village.⁸³ In the nearby Mariovo village of Beshica during 1907–08, a total of eighteen people ranging from 17 to 65 years of age, including a 50-year-old woman Mitra Spasova, were murdered by Greek bands.⁸⁴

The suffering experienced in the Mariovo district at the hands of Greek armed bands was expressed through traditional folk songs calling for the revered regional IMRO leader Giorgi Sugarev and his detachment to rescue the people from their terror:

<i>Zaplakalo e Mariovo</i>	Entire Mariovo cried
<i>Za toj mi Giorgi Sagarev:</i>	For Giorgi Sugarev:
<i>Kade si strashen vojvodo,</i>	Where are you fearsome vojvoda
<i>Od Greci da ne kurtulish!</i>	To rescue us from the Greeks!

Another brutal example of violent terror occurred in the Lerin region. The mountainous Exarchate village of Rakovo had approximately 7–8 men kidnapped by a Greek band and taken up into the mountain where they were decapitated and their heads delivered to the village as a warning to others to renounce the Exarchate church. From that moment onwards the village adhered to the Patriarchate.⁸⁵

Finally, there is the story of Kochishta. Kochishta was a small village of 15–16 homes in the Bitola region, located along the hillside approaching the upper villages. Kochishta was not considered an upper village, even though it was above the Pelagonia plain and was not a *chiflika* village. According to Stojan Vasilevski, who was born in Kukurechani but whose heritage is from Kochishta, the village church Sveti

⁸³ Petko Atanasovski (born 1913 Makovo, Bitola region), interview conducted in Makovo on 14 March 2000. According to interview with Konstantin Nicha (*ibid*), Greek bands also entered Vlah villages to intimidate pro-Romanian villagers into remaining with the Patriarchate. In retaliation for the murder of Vlachs by Greek bands, Romania expelled a number of Greek subjects from the country. A diplomatic conflict followed which saw peaceful relations between Greece and Romania broken off in October 1905. H.N. Brailsford, *op. cit.* p. 218.

⁸⁴ During the same period in the neighbouring village of Manastir there were three murders, a 27 year-old male and a 45-year-old father were murdered, together with his 23-year-old son. Bulgarian Exarchate document number 01.0491.0007.0062/0189-0190, dated 4 November 1909. Regarding Greek armed terror in Mariovo, see R. Poplazarov, *op. cit.* pp. 152–160.

⁸⁵ Kocho Duakis (born 1934 Petoraci, Lerin region) interview conducted on 20 January 2001 in Melbourne. Following the division of Macedonia Rakovo was renamed as Krateron by the Greek authorities.

Atanas was ‘neither with the Exarchate or the Patriarchate parties, there was only a Macedonian party in the village’.⁸⁶ One particular night in 1907 a Greek band attacked the village. Two villagers (Ilo Trajkovski and Krste) secretly owned rifles and they engaged the Greek band long enough to allow the villagers to escape into the mountains. The people returned to their village the following morning to find that it had been largely destroyed by fire, however the church was left untouched. The village was deserted after this incident and the people moved into neighbouring villages.⁸⁷

Bulgarian bands

BULGARIAN BANDS ALSO operated in Macedonia and were particularly active during the years 1904–1905. As with the Serb and Greek bands, they also sought to win over villages to the Exarchate by forceful means. There was, however, another aspect to the presence of Bulgarian bands in Macedonia, which involved ‘assuming control of the organisation and to subsume it to the requirements of the Bulgarian state’.⁸⁸ The Bulgarian bands did not only single out Patriarchate villages in order to

⁸⁶ Stojan Vasilevski (born 1937 in Kukurechani, Bitola region), interview conducted on 4 March 2002 in Melbourne. Stojan's father Riste was born in Kochishta in 1904. Stojan recalled hearing stories about the village from his grandfather Ilo (Stojan's father's uncle).

⁸⁷ Stojan Vasilevski interview, *ibid.* Following the devastation of Kochishta the bulk of the villagers settled into the nearby *chiflik* village of Kukurechani after agreeing to do so through the two village *begs* (the two *begs* were related, otherwise there were four *chiflik*-owning *begs* in the village). Each *beg* took half of the new village inhabitants as workers on their respective *chiflik* land. Of the remaining Kochishta villagers - two families resettled in Krklino village, one family in Dragozhani, one family in Sekirani and one family moved to Bitola. Stojan's family resettled in Kukurechani. Stojan Vasilevski described the *beg* that his family worked for as 'not creating any problems for us'. The *beg* resided in Bitola and only came to the village at harvest time, when he would stay for a few days in his *kula* (there were four *kuli* in the village, one belonging to each of the four *begs*). He travelled to the village with a horse-driven cart, the driver would return to Bitola. The *beg* also owned *chiflik* land in the nearby village of Trn. He had had two daughters and one son (Hussein). They all returned to Turkey several months before the outbreak of the First Balkan War in 1912 after selling off the *chiflik* land. Although there were no *pechalbari* in Stojan's family (Kochishta was not a *pechalbarstvo* village), they did buy land from the *beg*, with money they had saved from selling sheep and goats in the Bitola marketplace (from the period when they lived in Kochishta).

A small portion of land in Kukurechani was made up of *rayatsko* land and belonged to a handful of families. Stojan's traditional family name (*soi*) was Trajkovci, however, after moving to Kukurechani, it became Kochishti after their original village.

⁸⁸ M. Apostoloski, D. Zografski, A. Stojanovski and G. Todorovski, editors, *op. cit.* p. 181, and I. Mihailov, *Macedonia A Switzerland of the Balkans*, St Louis, 1950, p. 70. In an open letter by the Regional Committee of the Seres Revolutionary region dated December 1907, outlining the policy of Bulgaria in relation to the Revolutionary Movement, Bulgaria was accused of bringing armed foreign national propaganda into Macedonia

bring about an allegiance to the Exarchate, but they also attacked villages which were loyal to the IMRO, regardless whether they were under Exarchate or Patriarchate jurisdiction. They singled out IMRO members in the villages using torture and murder, and even against teachers and priests who worked with the organisation.⁸⁹ The attempted infiltration of the IMRO by the Bulgarian state dated to the pre-Ilinden period, and intensified after the Ilinden Rebellion.

Bands entering Macedonia from Bulgaria were known as Supremists and were supported by the Bulgarian military. Often led by Bulgarian army officers and equipped with the latest standard-issue Bulgarian military rifles,⁹⁰ Bulgarian bands did not engage in indiscriminate murder of civilians as did Greek bands.⁹¹ Interviews conducted in the Bitola region did not reveal stories of multiple killings in a single village as perpetrated by Greek bands. Ljuba Stankovska (born in Gorno Aglarci) was aware that a Bulgarian band set fire to Patriarchist homes in Bilyanik, as her grandfather was the band's guide.⁹² Giorgi Dimovski Colev, historian and respondent, was aware that Bulgarian bands were active in the Bitola region, and

and turning it into an arena of incessant destruction. 'In order to diminish the significance of the organisation and deflect it from the road of its natural development, Bulgaria uses all means to create discord among the activists of the Internal Organisation, aiming in this way to turn it into an instrument... [Bulgaria] has the need of acquisition of new territories for political and economic exploitation, so it uses all kinds of methods and means to infiltrate the organisation and direct it from within in conformity with its own interests'. H. Andonov-Poljanski, editor (1985), op. cit. p. 539.

⁸⁹ See I. Katardzhiev, *Borba do Pobeda* Vol I, Skopje, 1983, pp. 664-670.

⁹⁰ Each rifle also had the Bulgarian Kingdoms coat of arms inscribed upon it. From a telegram dated 22 March 1905 from Heindrich Miller (Austrian civilian agent) in Solun to the Austrian Foreign Minister. D. Zografski, editor, op. cit. p. 35.

⁹¹ The fate of the village Zagorichani in the Kostur district is well known and particularly tragic. On 25 March 1905 Zagorichani was surrounded and attacked at dawn by an armed band of 300 men under the command of Vardas. Old and young alike were massacred and the village was set ablaze. The European press reported the event and it was made public that the notorious Greek Metropolitan of Kostur, Germanos Karavangelis instigated the massacre. Karavangelis hailed the massacre as a great victory. The attack upon Zagorichani was committed with the complicity of the Ottoman authorities. Other Greek terrorist bands committed despicable atrocities in the southern and central regions of Macedonia in 1905-1906. Most were veterans from the Cretan campaign or volunteers from Athens, and worked closely with the Greek consulates and the Patriarchate church. Another notorious bandit was Pavlos Melas who was known to subject innocent civilians to horrendous acts of violence. Melas was killed in Macedonia in a rare Greek skirmish with the Ottoman Turks.

⁹² Luba Stankovska (born 1923 in Gorno Aglarci, Bitola region), interview conducted on 15 March 2000 in Dedebalci.

knew of the *cheta* leader Toma Davidov operating in the area.⁹³ Nikola Giorgievski from Gorno Aglarci recalled that a Bulgarian band contacted the village and instructed the villagers, ‘Do not declare yourselves as Macedonians, you are all Bulgarians’. Nikola stated that people followed the advice of the bands – ‘What could they do? They feared them, and feared losing their lives.’⁹⁴

Serbian bands

SERBIAN BANDS APPEARED in Macedonia in the beginning of 1904, under the direct control of the Serbian government and military circles. Serbian paramilitaries were sponsored by the government and ‘after 1903 Serbian activity in Macedonia went beyond the educational and religious sphere into political action and the direct financial aid of guerilla bands’.⁹⁵ The following year, in 1905, Serbian armed action in Macedonia intensified and the systematic dispatching of bands was placed under the authority of the ‘Serbian Defense Chief Committee’ (*Srpska Odbrana Glavni Odbor*) in Belgrade. A strategically placed committee was also situated in Southern Serbia at Vranje near the Macedonia border.⁹⁶

In support of Serbian policy in Macedonia, in 1905 there were eleven bands of more than a hundred men active in Macedonian territory. Serbian bands were active along the border regions,⁹⁷ particularly in the Kumanovo and Kriva Palanka areas, where the Serb campaign was directed at Macedonian Exarchate villages. Similar to

⁹³ Giorgi Dimovski-Colev, historian and lifelong resident of Bitola (born 1929, Bitola), interviewed on 13 March 2000 in Bitola.

⁹⁴ Nikola Giorgievski (born 1927 in Gorno Aglarci Bitola region), interview conducted on 17 March 2000 in Gorno Aglarci. Nikola Giorgievski, further added that later during the Balkan Wars when Serbian soldiers entered the village and asked the inhabitants what their nationality was, they replied ‘Bulgarians’ – ‘However they soon were forced to declare themselves as Serbs!’

⁹⁵ B. Petrovich, op. cit. p. 546.

⁹⁶ S. Pribitchevich, op. cit. p. 134.

⁹⁷ Encounters between the IMRO and the Serbian bands largely occurred in the northern border region between Macedonia and Serbia, particularly in the Kumanovo district during 1904. The historian, G. Todorovski (1989), op. cit., examines the conflict in the northern border regions through British diplomatic documents.

the Greek bands, the Serbs attempted to ‘encourage’ villages to renounce the Exarchate. The historian Dakin claims that by April 1905 ‘they had persuaded twenty-four villages to petition for Patriarchistic registration’.⁹⁸ Systematically penetrating from the north towards central Macedonia, ‘the principal goal was to secure by force of arms Serbian predominance in those parts of Macedonia on which she had designs and which would provide her with an outlet to the Aegean’.⁹⁹ Serb bands established control in the northern districts of Macedonia, mainly in the villages north of Kriva Palanka, Kumanovo and Kratovo.¹⁰⁰ Villages were forced to adopt the Patriarchate church and the Serbian party, and during a single week in early 1905 twenty villages were forced to transfer jurisdiction and accept the Serb party. Serb bands operated under the patronage of the Serb Consul in Skopje, whilst the Ottoman authorities quietly tolerated their activities in the villages.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ D. Dakin, op. cit. p. 241. Dakin claims that the Serbian bands were received so well that ‘on the whole they adopted gentle methods, avoiding force, paying for their food and distributing arms so that the villages could have their own defences’. (Ibid, p. 142). Research conducted by the author in Northern Macedonia during 1991 indicated that Serbian armed activities were of a violent nature in the Kumanovo, Kiva Palanka and Kochani regions and Serbian brutality continued in these areas well into the twenties and thirties of the twentieth century. Ivan Mihailov, a Macedonian revolutionary of the late Ottoman era, stated that Serbian armed bands that appeared in Macedonian villages near the Serbian frontier were made up of ordinary agents of the Serbian Ministry of War and the Interior. ‘The Serbian bands had to rely exclusively upon bayonets and money in order to assure for themselves shelter within the poor border villages.’ I. Mihailov, *Macedonia: A Switzerland of the Balkans*, St Louis, 1950, p. 69. The British diplomat, Sir Robert Graves commenting on Serbian armed action in northern Macedonia, stated that ‘no great success attended this movement’. Regarding the incorporation of the north central part of Macedonia into the Yugoslav Kingdom after the Balkan Wars, Graves added that this ‘was due, not to a propaganda which never had any hold on the people, but to the good fortune of the Serbs in finding themselves on the winning side at the end of the Great War’. R. Graves, *Storm Centres of the Near East: Personal Memoirs 1879–1929*, London, 1933, p. 224.

⁹⁹ M. Apostoloski, D. Zografski, A. Stoyanovski and G. Todorovski, editors (1979), op. cit. p. 182.

¹⁰⁰ S. Dimevski (1989), op. cit. p. 721.

¹⁰¹ From a Consular Report by the Austrian consul (Para) in Skopje to the Austrian Foreign Minister, dated 24 March 1905. D. Zografski, editor, op. cit. pp. 35-36. In an earlier report, to the Foreign Minister, dated 11 January 1905, similar details are provided regarding the activities of Serb bands in Northern Macedonia. The report outlines that the Serbs were forcing villages into the Patriarchate; that they forced villagers to declare themselves as Serbs; that they were attempting to Serbianise villages; and, that the bands operated under the patronage of the Serb Consul in Skopje. Ibid, pp. 9–13.

4.5 Ottoman policy

THE RULING OTTOMAN Turks were renowned for playing the Balkan States and their church organisations against one another. Although both the Patriarchate and Exarchate enjoyed favour with the Ottoman rulers during certain periods, it was the Patriarchate that maintained long-standing ties with the Ottoman Turks and the relationship especially flourished after the 1903 Ilinden Rebellion. Of particular significance was the 1904 report by Hilmi Pasha, Inspector General of the Roumelian vilayets, to the Sublime Port, recommending measures to prevent Patriarchists from joining the Exarchate:

Petitions are constantly arriving with requests to joining the Exarchate, but since force was used, and owing to other considerations of state, it is not in the interests of the state to increase the number of Bulgarians. For this reason, such requests are not complied with, and, at the same time, confidential advice is given to the Greek metropolitans as to how they should proceed in such cases ... To prevent the Patriarchists from going over to the Exarchate, the churches and the schools in such villages should not be given to the Bulgarians and they should not even be allowed to go to church.¹⁰²

It is widely accepted that after 1903 the Ottoman authorities worked in co-operation with the Greek cause in Macedonia.¹⁰³

By supporting one church organisation against another, above all else, the ruling Ottoman Turks sought to protect their own interests in Macedonia without allowing any of the Balkan churches obtain too powerful a position. Seeking to control the outward appearance of the Macedonian population, the authorities exerted the power to influence the extent of religious jurisdiction maintained by the neighbouring Balkan States of Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. That the Ottoman administration was a factor in the approval of the transferring of religious jurisdiction of village churches is apparent and appears to have been a long-standing practice.

¹⁰² V. Bozhinov and L. Panayotov, editors, *Macedonia, Documents and Material*, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, Sofia, 1978, pp. 545-546.

¹⁰³ At the end of the nineteenth century, the Bulgarians temporarily gained favour with the Ottomans due to the Greek Turkish War in 1897, otherwise it was the Greeks who enjoyed a privileged status under the Ottoman Turks.

Requests by villages to change from one church to another appear to have been common, and usually directed to the Bitola valia or in some instances directly to Constantinople. For instance, in 1898, the villagers of Meglenci sent a letter to the Bitola valia declaring themselves as Exarchists and requesting the valia to prevent the Patriarchate from taking over the village.¹⁰⁴ Similarly, in 1911, the villages of Ivanec, Oleveni and Metimir sent a joint petition to the Ottoman authorities in Constantinople declaring that they reject the Patriarchate and seek to come under Exarchate jurisdiction.¹⁰⁵

Although the Patriarchate enjoyed the support of the Ottoman authorities, by all accounts the general trend was away from the Patriarchate and towards the Exarchate.¹⁰⁶ In 1904 in the Bitola eparchy, 26 villages transferred to the Exarchate, in the Kostur eparchy 39 villages, the Lerin eparchy 24 villages, and 17 villages in the Ohrid/Prespa eparchy.¹⁰⁷ However, Ottoman support for the Patriarchate also saw Exarchate churches and schools forcibly closed in many villages and towns and handed to the Patriarchate.¹⁰⁸ In 1906, Exarchate churches and schools were closed in 130 villages, some for months, others for years.¹⁰⁹ Applying for the restoration of a destroyed Exarchate church could be impeded for years.

Patriarchate villages wishing to transfer to the Exarchate were presented with obstacles preventing this from occurring. When a village did transfer from the Patriarchate to the Exarchate, and there was only one church in the village, the

¹⁰⁴ Bulgarian Exarchate Document, number 01.0491.0001.0101 / 0319-0319, dated 17 October 1898.

¹⁰⁵ Bulgarian Exarchate Document, number 01.0491.0007.0140 / 0643-0647, dated 1 January 1911.

¹⁰⁶ C. Eliot, *Turkey in Europe*, London, 1965 (1900), p. 272.

¹⁰⁷ Consular report from the Austrian General-consul (Oscar Prohaska) in Bitola to the Austrian Foreign Minister, dated February 14, 1905. D. Zografski, editor, op. cit. pp. 19-24. The report also indicates that a number of villages (no number specified) were pressured to transfer their allegiance as a result of intimidation from Bulgarian bands.

¹⁰⁸ B. Tatarcheff, *Turkish Misrule in Macedonia*, New York, 1905, p. 172.

¹⁰⁹ R. Von Mach, op. cit. p. 93. Citing a 1905 French diplomatic source, Exarchate churches and schools were closed in 63 villages in the vilayet of Solun, 61 in the Bitola vilayet and 6 in the Skopje vilayet. Many churches did not reopen for several years. The villagers of Papradishte sent a letter to the Bitola valia in 1911 appealing that church services be permitted to recommence. The church was closed down by the Ottoman authorities. Bulgarian Exarchate, document number 01.0491.0007.0141/0648-0648, dated 1 January 1911.

authorities gave control of the church back to the Patriarchate, effectively leaving the village without the use of the church. In other villages where there was only one church and the majority of the village transferred its allegiance to the Exarchate, leaving a minority with the Patriarchate, the Ottoman authorities took the step of granting both parties use of the same church. There is no evidence that the same was true when the Exarchate party found itself in the minority of a particular village. Every attempt was made to thwart the progress of the Exarchate. As the German contemporary commentator, Von Mach remarked, ‘all the disadvantage is on the side of the Christian who shows signs of leaning to the Exarchate, all the advantage is on the side of the Patriarchists’.¹¹⁰ Having travelled extensively through Serbia, Macedonia, Albania and Bulgaria, the Englishman John Fraser commented on Ottoman favouritism at the beginning of the twentieth century, stating that ‘a change in religion is the only means of securing comparative immunity from the Turks oppression - because the Turk is, for the time being, favourable to the Greeks’.¹¹¹

The Ottoman position regarding the construction of new churches and monasteries appears at times to have been based on an anti-Christian attitude as well as politically motivated. Prior to the religious competition emerging between the Bulgarian Exarchate and Greek Patriarchate, Priest Peco from Berovo obtained approval from the authorities for the construction of a monastery in 1818 subject to certain conditions. It was to be built within a period of forty days, its height was not to be above the level of the road leading to the springs of the Bregalnica River,¹¹² and the priest was to give his youngest daughter to the harem. Conditions relating to the

¹¹⁰ R. Von Mach, *op. cit.* pp. 88–89.

¹¹¹ J.F. Fraser, *op. cit.* p. 208.

¹¹² It was common during the Ottoman period for churches to be built below ground level. The Ottomans did not favour churches being built on higher ground than mosques. It made churches less prominent, they were less likely to detract from local mosques, and generally the structural requirements appears to have been intended to undermine the Christian faith.

construction were met but the priest failed to give his daughter to the harem and was duly imprisoned.¹¹³

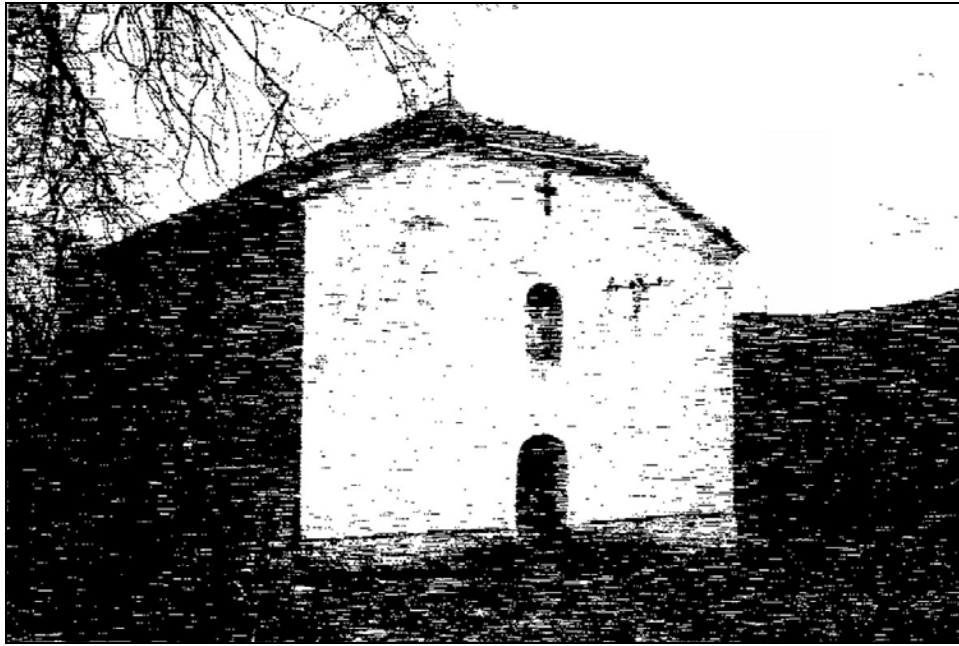
Similarly, before the onset of the Exarchate-Patriarchate rivalry, obstacles were placed before the villagers of Gradeshnica (Bitola region) by the regional authorities over the construction of a village church.¹¹⁴ Having agreed to construct a church the villagers sought approval from the *muftiya* (Ottoman official) in Bitola. Permission was given for the church to be constructed on the condition that it lay two metres below ground level. In addition the *muftiya* stated that the church roof was to be completed in a period of two hours, otherwise the building could not gain approval to function as a church. When construction of the roof took pace the *muftiya* sent his representative to ensure that the task was completed in the set time frame. The villagers failed to complete the job within the two-hour period. Dejected, they returned to the *muftiya* and appealed for another opportunity to complete their church. He agreed to their request, however, the same time frame applied. On the second attempt the villagers gathered assistance from the villages of Dragosh, Lazhec and Velushina and completed it within two hours.¹¹⁵

¹¹³ D. Cornakov, *Makedonski Manastiri* [Macedonian Monasteries], Skopje, 1991, pp. 167–169. Inscriptions in the monastery appear in Old Macedonian text. It is worth mentioning the motivation behind the building of particular monasteries and churches. Often inspired by a dream or vision, the individual in question is thereafter spiritually compelled to build the holy structure, usually with the help of co-villagers. Numerous stories abound throughout Macedonia of such instances. In the village of Visheni, in the Kostur region, a small church was built (*Sveti Bogorodisa*) after Pandovitsa (Pando's wife), Milova, saw Saint Mary in her dream. She appeared to her in a particular place known as *dabbo* (the Oak). This event occurred in the late 1920s. M. Prstnarov, *The History of the village Visheni* [English translation], no date or place of publication, pp. 12–13. In the village of Suvodol (Bitola region), in 1931, 'excavations, undertaken not in consequence of an aerial survey but on the inspiration of a local peasant's dream, disinterred the ruins of an early Byzantine basilica'. R.F. Hoddinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia*, MacMillan and Co Ltd, London, 1963, pp. 202–203. A more recent example is the construction of a monastery outside the village of Novaci (Bitola region), inspired by the recurring dreams of a housewife in the late 1980s.

¹¹⁴ Although the village did not have its own church, there were several small monasteries around it that did not come under the religious rivalry of the Patriarchate or Exarchate. They simply 'belonged to the villagers'. These are not really monasteries, but are small shrines. Villagers do not use them as places of assembly.

¹¹⁵ From interview conducted with Stojan Spasevski (born 1922 in Graeshnica, Bitola region), interview conducted on 30 March 1999 and 18 February 2002 in Melbourne. Regarding the story of the construction of the village church (*Sveta Prechista*), Stojan Spasevski stated that he heard the story directly from his father Petre (who was born in 1876 and lived to 92 years of age). Further examples of constraints and requirements placed on the construction of churches in Macedonia during the nineteenth century can be found in A. Matkovski, *Kanuni i Firmani* [Canons and Firmans], Skopje, 1990. The following examples are drawn from official Ottoman documents, pp. 467–475. Firmans were issued approving the construction of new churches, and outlined the

Illustration 4.1: A typical village church in the Bitola region



Two further instances demonstrate Ottoman religious intolerance (and were possibly connected to Exarchate-Patriarchate religious political rivalry). In the non-*chiflik* Exarchate village of Dragozhani the village church *Golema Bogorojca* was originally situated on high ground above the village. Having attracted the attention of a Turkish official, he demanded that the church be relocated to a less visible site so that it would not be viewed from afar.¹¹⁶ In the predominantly *chiflik* Exarchate

required dimensions - specifying the length, width and height of a church. In some cases, approvals appear to have been granted directly from the Porte in Constantinople, and contained conditions that were to be confirmed by the local Ottoman authorities, most usually the kadia or the valia. Official approvals granted for the construction of new churches in the city of Prilep (Firman dated 27 October 1869) and the Bitola region village of Krklino (Firman dated 3 July 1875) were on the condition that they not be located in the 'Islamic quarters (*Islamsko maalo*) of the city and village respectively. In the Bitola region village of Dragosh, a Firman dated 3 November 1870 specified that the new church was to be 17 metres in length, 7.5 metres wide and 3 metres high and was to be built upon the ruins of the old village church. Firmans often specified the type of material the church would be constructed of, including the number of doors and windows it would have. A Firman, dated 21 May 1884, granting approval for the construction of a new church in the village of Budimirovci (Prilep region) specified that the new church was to be of timber construction. Similarly, a Firman dated 20 May 1900 for the construction of a church in the village of Tomino (Kitchevo region) specified that it would have one door and two windows.

¹¹⁶ Goce Domazetoski (born 1950 in Dragozhani, Bitola region), notes of interview, 11 June 2002, Melbourne. Goce Domazetoski added that the original site of the church remains untouched and is recognised by the villagers as *vakajsko* land.

village of Makovo (Mariovo district) the village church was located in the vicinity of the Turkish tower. When the *beg* stayed in the tower during the harvest season, he found it irritating being so close to the church and listening to women crying during funerals. He therefore demanded the church be relocated elsewhere and to this end he donated a parcel of land on an alternative site on the fringes of the village.¹¹⁷

Firmly in the hands of the Patriarchate, the Sveti Dimitrija Cathedral church was the sole church in Bitola servicing the needs of the Orthodox Christian inhabitants from 1830 to the 1860s. A strong desire for the conducting of church services in Macedonian saw the establishment of the Sveta Nedela church on the outskirts of Gini male in 1863. An agreement with the Patriarchate Bishop Benedict for consecration of the church in fact saw it deceptively placed under the jurisdiction of the Sveti Dimitrija church and church services conducted in Greek.¹¹⁸ In response to the protests by the people of Bitola, Bishop Benedict replied: *‘Ovde ne e Rusia i ne e Srbija, ovde ne e Bosna i ne e Crna Gora, ne e Bugarija; zemjata ce vika Makedonija, vo koja zhiveat Grci ...’*¹¹⁹ (‘This is not Russia and nor Serbia, not Bosnia and nor Montenegro, it is not Bulgaria; this land is called Macedonia, and Greeks live here ...’). The struggle for the introduction of Macedonian continued and was first introduced in the church service on 19 July 1864. It drew a violent reaction from the Patriarchist party, serious enough to warrant the intervention of the local Ottoman police.¹²⁰ Continued intense anti-Patriarchate agitation by the Macedonian population of Bitola, prominent individuals, guilds, as well as the village councils of Lopatica, Mogila, Dolno Orizari, Sekirani and Kukurechani, eventually resulted in the Sveta

¹¹⁷ Petko Atanasovski interview, op. cit. The original church site continued to be recognised by the villagers as *vakafsko* land. For more than a century women from the village would light candles on the ground, at the site of the original church. In the 1990s a monastery was erected on the site.

¹¹⁸ A. Trajanovski, *Crkovno-Uchilishnite Opštini vo Makedonija* [The Parish Educational Councils of Macedonia], Skopje 1988, pp. 175–176.

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 176.

¹²⁰ Ibid, p. 177.

Nedela church breaking free from Patriarchate jurisdiction and becoming a self-administered Macedonian parish educational institution as of 23 October 1869.¹²¹

Under the initiative of the Sveta Nedela church council, preparations were soon after undertaken for the construction of a second Macedonian church in Bitola independent of Patriarchate jurisdiction. Appeals were made to the Ottoman authorities but were rejected. Nevertheless construction commenced without the relevant authorisation. The first to protest about the construction was the Greek Bishop of Bitola who reported it to the Turkish valia. The valia sent his representative to investigate. He determined that it was not a church because it did not possess an altar, and the workmen informed him that it was a private home. The Greek Bishop again protested to the valia, stating that it was in fact a church. This time the valia heeded the Bishop's warning and sent his men to demolish it. Upon their arrival at the site they instructed the Macedonian workmen to destroy the church. Hesitant to do so out of superstitious fear, the workmen requested that the Turk swing the first hammer, and they would thereafter demolish the structure. However, Turks were also wary of destroying a holy building, albeit a Christian one, and refused to do so. After returning to the valia, and reporting on the events at the church, the valia declared that it should be left alone and permitted to operate.¹²² The Sveta Bogorojca church was completed and commenced functioning as of 21 September 1871.¹²³ The single Romanian church (Vlah) in Bitola, *Sveti Konstantin i Elena*, appears to have been constructed in a similar manner. According to a 1904 Greek publication, 'the suspicions of the public were confirmed by the fact that the said propaganda is building a house which has the strange resemblance to a chapel'.¹²⁴

¹²¹ A. Trajanovski (1988) op. cit. p. 178. Trajanovski outlines numerous similar instances of Macedonians struggling for the control of churches under Patriarchate jurisdiction throughout Macedonia, to the 1870s.

¹²² G. Dimovski-Colev interview, op. cit.

¹²³ The Sveta Bogorojca church was situated in the *Chinarot maalo* nearby to *Gini male*. Both the Sveta Bogorojca and Sveta Nedela churches were later to be usurped by the Exarchate.

¹²⁴ H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 190

Illustration 4.2: Sveta Bogorojca church, Bitola



It was not uncommon for the authorities to prevent villagers from repairing or constructing an Exarchate church. The historian Crampton states that many new churches completed after 1878–79 remained unconsecrated, forcing the villagers to conduct religious services either in the Patriarchate church or in a school or alternative building.¹²⁵ In 1905 Villari stated that in some villages people were not even allowed to use the school buildings or alternative sites, often using the village cemetery to conduct religious services.¹²⁶ In the town of Resen permission was obtained to construct a new church after 20 years of agitation.¹²⁷ As there were no Exarchate Bishops in Macedonia after 1878–79, new village priests could not be ordained, with few villages able to finance the journey to Constantinople or Bulgaria. Therefore in a number of villages the inhabitants were left with no other option than to continue using the Patriarchate church. Effectively, and this position was taken up

¹²⁵ R.J. Crampton, *op. cit.* p. 161.

¹²⁶ B. Tatarcheff, *op. cit.* pp. 172-173.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

by the Ottoman authorities, the local church, its funds and the cemetery remained in the possession of the Patriarchate, even though only a small minority or a few scattered houses in the commune belonged to it.¹²⁸

Opposed to Greek language services in the Koleshino (Strumica region) village church, a group of villagers unable to take control of the church actively sought to construct another church in the village which would come under Exarchate jurisdiction.¹²⁹ Construction commenced with foundations set and walls partially erected before the church conflict intensified and the Exarchate church was demolished. Another group of people in the village, centred around the charismatic Mane Izev, perceived the Exarchate-Patriarchate struggle as political rather than spiritual. It was from this conflict, and their association with the Protestant mission in Macedonia, that the idea was born for the construction of a Christian spiritual church in the village where services would be conducted in the Macedonian language. Word of the intention to build an alternative church reached the Greek Bishop in Strumica, who was outraged to learn that a Psalter (Mane Izev) was gathering villagers and reading the Bible to them in Macedonian and that people had obtained Macedonian language bibles.¹³⁰ The Greek bishop sent individuals into the village to intimidate the villagers to hand over their bibles. Those relinquished were destroyed by fire. However, Mane was not easily frightened and refused to part with his. An evangelical

¹²⁸ From a diplomatic report (dated 29 August 1890) by the Austro-Hungarian consul in Bitola, Pogacher, to the Minister of Foreign Affairs about the state of the population in the vilayet as regards the church question. V. Bozhinov and L. Panayotov, editors op. cit. p. 410.

¹²⁹ Jovan (John) Izev (born 1943 in Koleshino village, Strumica region), interview conducted on 4 June 2002 in Melbourne. Jovan Izev is a Macedonian of the Protestant faith. Jovan's grandfather Mane Izev was a central Protestant figure in the Strumica region.

¹³⁰ Jovan Izev explained that 'the villagers could not understand church services. Due to being conducted in Greek, they had no concept of the teachings of the bible and that this left the people spiritually empty. Therefore, when villagers were given the opportunity to understand the bible in their own language, they rejoiced, as the holy message became clear.'

Mane Izev was given a 'Macedonian language bible by a Macedonian from Solun', according to Jovan Izev. Mane first commenced reading the bible to his family, and later to friends in the village. Gradually the group grew and over the summer months Macedonian, American and English missionaries, some from the Protestant 'Robert College' in Constantinople, would visit Mane Izev.

church was constructed in the village on land donated by a villager¹³¹ and the first official service was held in May 1890. Services were conducted in Macedonian and a local (Temkov) served as pastor. Opposition to the church remained, and Mane Izev was to be persecuted as much as anyone associated with the Exarchate-Patriarchate rivalry. The Greek Bishop activated the village priest to harass Mane and the miserable campaign forced Mane to flee the village for some months. He sought protection from the Russian consul in Bitola and also reported the matter to the Ottoman authorities. Whilst absent from the village the Protestant church in Koleshino was completely destroyed by fire, Mane's field of mulberry trees were also completely destroyed and an attempt was made to burn down Mane Izev's family home.¹³² The Greek Patriarchate did not tolerate any religious opposition, not Exarchate, Protestant or any other Christian denomination. Both alternative churches to the Patriarchate church in Koleshino met the same fate.

In the village of Vrajnevci there was originally a single church (Sveti Todor) situated above the village. After the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate the people in the village felt it appropriate that the Patriarchate church hand over jurisdiction to the Exarchate. The majority of villagers were in agreement, however 'the Greek church was too powerful and would not allow this to occur'.¹³³ The people in the village, led by the village *kmet* (headman) agitated for the establishment of an Exarchate church for a long, arduous period. After a number of years they finally received permission to build their own church on the opposite end of the village. The new church (Sveti Dimitrija) was built in a similar style as the existing

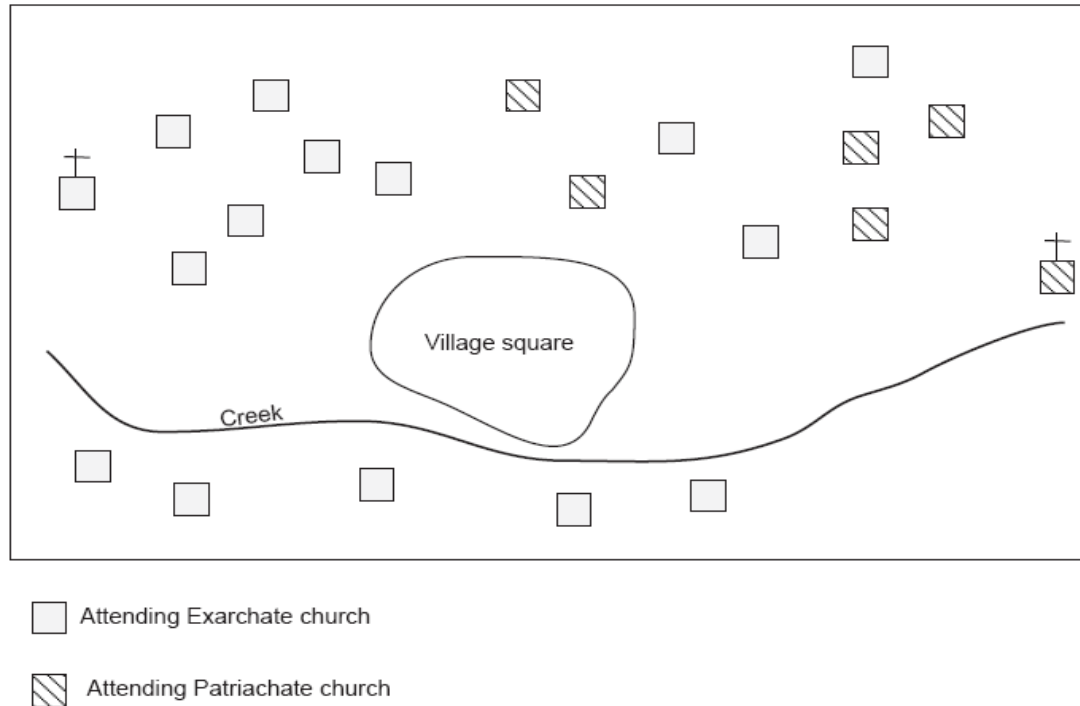
¹³¹ The Protestant church was built on land donated by a member of Jovan Izev's grandmother's family. Jovan Izev interview, *ibid*.

¹³² The home was saved when an adult male member of the household produced a rifle and stood up to the arsonists. Jovan Izev interview, *ibid*.

¹³³ Atanas Vasilevski (born 1928 in Vrajnevci village, Bitola region), interview conducted on 16 March 2000 in Bitola.

one, but was larger in size.¹³⁴ A minority of villagers remained with the Patriarchate church (approximately 20 percent) and some animosity developed because of it.¹³⁵

Figure 4.2: Vrajnevcı village church adherence, 1912



Bitola region villages typically contained a single church and it was rare to see two churches in the one village. Dobromiri was a medium-sized village of approximately 30 exclusively Macedonian households along the Pelagonia plain. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a single household (the Popovci family) was under the influence of the Patriarchate Church, yet the Patriarchate maintained jurisdiction over the village church.¹³⁶ Similarly in Novaci, the village was made up of approximately seventeen families (*sojovi*). Only two to three families came under the

¹³⁴ It is interesting to note that village churches, regardless whether they were built under Exarchate or Patriarchate patronage, were architecturally similar, the main difference being the script appearing on the internal walls and icons.

¹³⁵ Atanas Kotevski (born 1923 in Vrajnevcı village, Bitola region), interview conducted on 13 March 2000 in Bitola. Atanas Kotevski stated that although a handful of families continued to use the Sveti Todor church (Patriarchist), they did not consider it be foreign. The priest was a local Macedonian and 'he used our language when conducting services in the church as well as everyday communication with the people'.

¹³⁶ Nikola Giorgiovski interview, op. cit.

influence of the Patriarchate church, however jurisdiction over the church could not be removed from the Patriarchate.¹³⁷ Circumstances were similar in numerous Macedonian villages in the Bitola region as well as in Vlah villages attempting to break away from the bondage of the Greek Patriarchate church. In the Vlah village of Gopesh in the upper zone of the Bitola region, the village church Sveti Sotir became the central point of dispute between the minority Patriarchist Vlah element and the majority pro-Romanian Vlachs. Due to the aggressive anti-Romanian position of the Patriarchate, an alternative church was not constructed. Instead, the matter was settled to the dissatisfaction of the majority group with the existing church being shared between the two parties. Icons and frescoes were modified with one side containing Greek inscriptions and the other Romanian.¹³⁸

4.6 Priests and agitators

INITIALLY THE CHURCHES of the Balkan States sent bishops and priests into the cities of Macedonia and sought to recruit priests from the local population in order to expand their church presence into the countryside. Native Macedonians were considered essential, as foreign priests would have been ineffective in the countryside villages – and an absence of foreign priests in the Bitola countryside at around 1900 is testament to this view. The recruitment of priests by the Exarchate and Patriarchate does not appear to have been a difficult task, as entering the priesthood was a hereditary profession. Most villages contained a family known as Popovci (*Pop*, priest in Macedonian), and in such families it was an expectation that

¹³⁷ Trajan Micevski (born 1930 in Novaci, Bitola region), interview conducted in Novaci on 22 March 2000. According to Trajan Micevski, the oldest families in the village are Krushkovci, Masnikashovci, Tantarovci, Sankevcı, Bozovci, Glamnovci, Patorovci, Slabovci, Begovci, Suvodolci, Vrajnjata, Dukovci, Trapchanovci, Kerimovci, Gorgevci, Kolarovci and Kavedzhiovci. Trajan is from the Masnikashovci family.

¹³⁸ Simo 'Hemtu' Simonovski (born 1925, in Bitola), interview conducted 30 March 2000 in Bitola. Simo Simonovski's parents were from the Vlah village of Gopesh.

one of the sons would become a priest.¹³⁹ For example, the Popovci family in Suvodol claims ninety-nine consecutive generations of priesthood.¹⁴⁰

Table 4.4: Monthly Income of Patriarchate Priests in Bitola Region, 1901–1902

Village Priest	Payment in Turkish Lira
Krklino	6
Dobromiri	5
Egri	6
Dedebalci	3
Paralovo	6
Ribarci	3
Srpci	6
Trn	6
Dihovo	8
Makovo	3
Bitusha	6

Source and notes: K. Bitoski, *Dejnosta na Pelagonskata Mitropolija (1878–1912)*, Skopje, 1967, pp. 105–107. The official wage received by Patriarchate priests was considerably less than that received by Patriarchate schoolteachers at the time.

Generally priests were not permanently located in the one village, but conducted religious services in a group of villages. The administered villages were in the general surroundings of the priest's native village, and he would visit them on a rotational basis perhaps every six or seven weeks. Events such as wedding ceremonies and christenings were normally organised by the villagers to coincide with his visit, however, the priest would make exceptions and attend the village earlier for matters such as funerals and village religious days.¹⁴¹ Priest Riste from Suvodol administered

¹³⁹ The surname 'Popovski' is a common Macedonian surname and typically signifies a tradition of priesthood in the family. In the Orthodox religion a man cannot be ordained as a priest if he is not married.

¹⁴⁰ Kosta Markovski (born 1930 in Suvodol village, Bitola region), interview conducted in Bitola on 20 March 2000.

¹⁴¹ Trajanka Talevska (born 1925 in Vrajnevci village, Bitola region), interview conducted in Novaci on 10 March 2000. Trajanka Talevska married into Novaci village.

six villages – Iveni, Grumazi, Dolno Orhovo, Paralovo, Vrajnevcı and his native Suvodol.¹⁴² In the Mariovo district a group of five villages were administered by the Chanishte priest; these were Makovo, Orle, Rapeslı, Brnik and Chanishte.¹⁴³ Villagers aid the priest for services conducted such as a wedding, a christening or the blessing of one’s home. ¹⁴⁴ The priests otherwise drew a regular monthly income from the

¹⁴² Kosta Markovski interview, op. cit.

¹⁴³ Stojche Petkovski interview, op. cit.

¹⁴⁴ The amount of payment made to a priest for services conducted was not a set amount. People gave whatever they could afford. Payment was not necessarily monetary, but could be in the form of wheat, eggs, flour, etc. Trajanka Talevska interview, op. cit.

church organisation they were employed by. In the Bitola region the average monthly income for a Patriarchate priest was between 3 to 6 Turkish lira during 1901–1902.¹⁴⁵

Communication between priests and villagers in the Bitola region villages was exclusively in the Macedonian language, regardless of which respective church the priest was employed by. In all village interviews conducted there were no instances of village priests speaking any other language in their everyday dealings with their co-villagers or in the neighbouring villages they serviced. Regarding language used during village church services, in the case of Exarchate priests church services were routinely conducted in Old Macedonian,¹⁴⁶ and other parts of the service were conducted in the everyday Macedonian language. It was uncommon for Exarchate village priests to conduct services in other languages. Some Patriarchate priests appear to have been fluent in Greek and conducted at least a part of the service in the Greek language, but it was also common for Patriarchate priests to include everyday Macedonian in the service. It was reported that in Vrajevci the Patriarchate priest conducted services exclusively in Macedonian.¹⁴⁷ According to the ethnographer, V. Kanchov, services were similarly conducted by Patriarchate priests in the villages of Logovardi, Sekirani,

¹⁴⁵ K. Bitoski (1968), *op. cit.* pp. 105-107.

¹⁴⁶ Old Macedonian is generally referred to as Church Slavonic or Old Church Slavonic. Data derived from oral sources asserted that the language of church services, and in particular Exarchate church services in the countryside villages was Macedonian (interviewees typically did not distinguish between Old Macedonian and everyday Macedonian). This issue is a point of contention with some specialists in the field.

¹⁴⁷ Atanas Vasilevski interview, *op. cit.*

Optichari, Dalbegovci, Radobor, Trap, Dolno Charliya and Gorno Charliya.¹⁴⁸ Vlado Jankulovski, born in Novaci in 1921, recalled that the older people in the village found it amusing that the village priest Jovan Popovski ‘mixed both Macedonian and Greek during church services’.¹⁴⁹ In the Suvodol church it appears that priest Riste may have conducted the service in Greek, as according to Kosta Markovski, who could trace his heritage in the village back six generations, ‘Priest Riste knew Greek well, the service was probably in Greek’.¹⁵⁰ In the village of Krpeshina (Lerin region) the Patriarchate Priest Tome (there was also an Exarchate church in the village) conducted services in Greek, but everyday communication with villagers was exclusively in Macedonian.¹⁵¹

Macedonian villagers did not understand services conducted in Greek. Generally village priests appear to have poorly understood the official languages of the churches they were employed by. Brailsford considered the average village priest to be not a particularly distinguished individual. Most were totally uneducated and led the life of the peasants and could ‘read enough to mumble through the ritual, and write sufficiently well to keep the parish registers; but there their superiority to the average peasant ends’.¹⁵² Nevertheless, village priests were utilised practically by villagers in other areas outside their religious functions. Due to the priest at times being the sole literate person in the village, he would read and write letters on behalf of villagers, and other times the priest wrote letters on behalf of the village as a

¹⁴⁸ V. Kanchov, *Bitola, Prespa i Obridsko* [Bitola, Prespa and Ohrid], Sofia, 1970 (1891) pp. 389-394. In the text Kanchov states that services were conducted in ‘Slavic’ (Old Macedonian).

¹⁴⁹ Vlado Jankulovski (born 1921 in Novaci, Bitola region), interview conducted in Novaci on 11 March 2000. Vlado Jankulovski is from the ‘Tantarovci’ family, the surname Jankulovski appears to have been derived from his grandfather, Jankula (pronounced Yankula). Vlado has lived in Novaci village continuously.

¹⁵⁰ Kosta Markovski interview, op. cit.

¹⁵¹ Velika Spirova (born 1911 in the village of Krpeshina, Lerin region), interview conducted on 19 January 2002 in Melbourne. Velika Spirova moved to Nered village (Lerin region) with her family as a young child and later married Vasil Spirov (from the ‘Mrkovci’ family – ‘soi’) from the village. Velika arrived in Australia in the early 1940s. Krpeshina was renamed Atrapos and Nered as Polipotamos by the Greek authorities in the 1920s.

¹⁵² H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 69. Vane Tancevski advised that in Lopatica there were two village priests (one church in the village with two Popovci families) and he believed they had a minimum level of literacy. Vane Tancevski interview, op. cit.

whole.¹⁵³ In all instances, regardless of whether a priest was connected to the Exarchate or Patriarchate churches, interviewees stated that village priests spoke Macedonian at home with their families.¹⁵⁴

According to De Belle, a contemporary French commentator who had travelled to Macedonia at the beginning of the twentieth century, the lower levels of clergy were not dissimilar to the peasantry, often with a bare minimum of education. If a church parish found itself without a priest, the villagers sought out an upstanding male with some level of education. Schoolteachers were highly sought after in such circumstances, but not always available. *Pechalbari* were highly considered for this function because of their worldly experiences. De Belle referred to them as '*Amerikancite*' ('the Americans') and tells of one such individual who once worked in a port in Montreal (Canada) unloading boats. Once appointed as a 'new priest', he was sent to a monastery for some weeks in order to familiarise himself with church dogma and services. Following a short period of training he could immediately take up his position and conduct all religious services. For the adherents of the Orthodox Church it was only the priest who was able to perform services such as christenings, weddings and funerals.¹⁵⁵

In large urban centres such as Bitola, it was the Bishops who were the primary political movers. Propagandistic religious activities were most prevalent in the towns where churches operated with large budgets and attempted to win people over using financial means. The Exarchate, Patriarchate and Serb church organisations all engaged in this practice, but it was generally accepted that the Patriarchate stood apart from their rivals. Respondents were in general agreement that the Patriarchate

¹⁵³ Nikola Giorgiovski interview, op. cit.

¹⁵⁴ It was typical of interviewees to mention that they personally knew the village priest's family and were sometimes friends with his children. Subsequently, as a result of direct contact, they were aware that the priest and his children did not know of or use any other languages.

¹⁵⁵ E. Bouchie de Belle, *Makedonija i Makedoncite*, [Macedonia and the Macedonians], Skopje, 1992, pp. 58-59. Original title *La Macedoine et les Macedoniens*, Paris, 1922. A significant, yet largely unknown publication, E. Bouchie de Belle's work gives an interesting insight into village life, drawn from his first-hand experiences in Macedonia, mainly in the Lerin region in 1918, where he also wrote the book.

operated with the greatest financial resources, paying individuals to agitate and attract adherents to the church. Born in 1911, Vasil Petrov commented, ‘the Exarchate and Patriarchate competed for adherents, but it was easier for the Greeks because they had more money; they could find a poor family and get them to attend their church through the payment of money and food’.¹⁵⁶ Circumstances were similar in the Vlah community, in Gopesh. There were those with the Patriarchate whom ‘were bought in all manner of ways. The Greeks (*Patriarchate*) had the most money and influence, including having most influence with the ‘Turks’.¹⁵⁷

Priests were not necessarily the prime political agitators. For instance, the Patriarchate employed a handful of agents in the Bitola region whose purpose was to socialise with the local population in city inns and at village religious celebrations in order to propagate the idea that they were Greeks.¹⁵⁸ There was no shortage of spies and agitators in Bitola at the beginning of the twentieth century according to Hristo ‘Caki’ Dimitrovski, a lifelong resident of Bitola, born in 1893. ‘Their role was to draw people into the respective competing churches.’¹⁵⁹ Conflict between people was therefore more likely to occur within a large urban environment where a concentration of rival propagandas, agitators, bishops and consulates were based. There was greater intensity of political rivalry in Bitola in comparison to the countryside villages. As there were no armed bands operating freely in Bitola, the competing propagandas relied on their network of spies and agitators and these were the main cause of tensions between the people.¹⁶⁰ Hristo Dimitrovski recalled that Greek teachers in Bitola encouraged their young students to fight with students of the Exarchate school. Hristo had himself been involved in such fights.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁶ Vasil Petrov (born 1911, in Bitola), interview conducted in Bitola on 1 April 2000. Vasil's father, Giorgi, moved his family to Bitola, from the village of Tepavci (Bitola region) at the end of the nineteenth century. Although living in Bitola most of his life, Vasil Petrov has also lived in Australia.

¹⁵⁷ Simo ‘Hemtu’ Simonovski interview, op. cit.

¹⁵⁸ K. Bitoski, citing a Greek Patriarchate document (1968), op. cit. p. 105.

¹⁵⁹ Hristo Dimitrovski interview, op. cit.

¹⁶⁰ Hristo Dimitrovski interview, *ibid*, Vasil Petrov interview, op. cit., Giorgi Dimovski-Colev interview, op. cit.

¹⁶¹ Hristo Dimitrovski interview, op. cit.

In the countryside villages of the Bitola region, priests were generally cautious not to be seen openly agitating party politics. The prevailing opinion of respondents in the villages was that the priest did not publicly meddle in political matters. Village priests appear to have treaded carefully. According to one respondent, if the priest was seen to be stirring political conflict in the village he faced the threat of being murdered by the *komiti*.¹⁶² Ilija Najdovski from Suvodol village recalled hearing from his grandfather that Bulgarian *komiti* murdered a Patriarchist priest in the village of Brod.¹⁶³ In the Lerin mountainous village of Krpeshina (non-*chiflika*), the village contained both an Exarchate and Patriarchate church, and both priests were native to the village. Tome the Patriarchist priest was seen by the villagers as a ‘spy’ (*shpion*) who intimidated them, and as the area was frequented by Greek armed bands he succeeded in driving out the Exarchate priest Jovan from the village.¹⁶⁴ In the Bitola region upper village of Velushina, the Patriarchist Priest Ilija led a Greek band under the command of Makris in July 1906 to the nearby village of Optichari, whereupon violent acts were perpetrated on the civilian population.¹⁶⁵ Generally village priests do not appear to have wielded significant influence over the village, and certainly did not exert influence over their flock as did Roman Catholic priests in other countries.¹⁶⁶

Competition for adherence to churches, although aimed at the Christian population, was sometimes directed towards the priests themselves. The Greek Patriarchate utilised funds towards attracting Exarchate priests to join the Patriarchate. For example, Priest Marko was given 20 Turkish lira to renounce the

¹⁶² Nikola Giorgovski interview, op. cit.

¹⁶³ The priest was a local Macedonian. Ilija Najdovski (born 1920 in Suvodol, Bitola region), interview conducted in Novaci on 28 March 2000.

¹⁶⁴ Velika Spirova interview, op. cit. Velika Spirova further added that the Exarchate priest, Jovan conducted church services in Macedonian, and the Patriarchist priest Tome conducted services in Greek. Everyday communication between the two priests and the villagers was conducted in Macedonian.

¹⁶⁵ R. Poplazarov, op. cit. p. 150. The same Greek band under the command of Makris entered the overwhelmingly Vlah and Patriarchate village of Nizhopole in the Bitola upper zone and consulted with the Greek schoolteacher regarding which Vlah homes were to be burned for not submitting to the Patriarchate. Ibid, p. 148.

¹⁶⁶ C. Eliot, op. cit. p. 271.

Exarchate and transfer to the Patriarchate church.¹⁶⁷ Riste of the Popovci family from Dobromiri was recruited by the Patriarchate and sent to Greece to be trained as a priest. His family was handsomely rewarded for their sons adherence to the Patriarchate, with 3 gold napolyoni (coins) per month. In Greece he was trained and prepared to return to Macedonia to politically agitate that Macedonians were really Greeks, and to support Greek aspirations in Macedonia. During a stopover in Solun whilst returning from Greece, he met with the Russian consul who clarified that it was inappropriate that he be a Greek priest, when he was not Greek and nor was Greek his mother tongue. The Russian consul succeeded in convincing priest Riste to transfer his allegiance to the Exarchate, and upon his return to the Bitola region, priest Riste became the Exarchate village priest in Dolno and Gorno Aglarci.¹⁶⁸ Due to his priesthood training with the Greek Patriarchate, an unusual situation developed in that services were conducted in Greek even though the church was officially under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Exarchate. This was not a point of contention with the villagers who were content that their church was outside Patriarchate jurisdiction.¹⁶⁹

Prior to 1870, Macedonian priests were compulsorily employed within the Patriarchate church system.¹⁷⁰ Following the establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 there was a transfer of priests away from the Patriarchate to the Exarchate. Macedonian priests active in the national struggle largely came from the ranks of the Bulgarian Exarchate in the late nineteenth century, and in some instances were to achieve positions of prominence within the Exarchate.

¹⁶⁷ K. Bitoski (1968) op. cit. pp. 104-106.

¹⁶⁸ Nikola Giorgiovski interview, op. cit. Nikola Giorgiovski advised that he was aware of the circumstances relating to priest Riste's transfer to the Exarchate, as he was a close friend of the priest's son and heard the story from him.

¹⁶⁹ Nikola Giorgievski interview, *ibid.* According to Kanchov, the Exarchate village priests in the villages of Kukurechani and Novo Smilevo also conducted services in Greek. Circumstances may have been similar to the case of priest Riste from Dobromiri. V. Kanchov, *Bitola, Prespa i Obridsko*, 1970 (1891), Sofia, pp. 392–393.

¹⁷⁰ Similarly, prior to the establishment of the Exarchate, Macedonian schoolteachers were employed in the Patriarchate school system. The leaders of the Macedonian renaissance in the 1870s and 1880s were Macedonians educated in the Greek Patriarchate school system.

Theodosius Gologanov, the Exarchate Metropolitan of Skopje, was a Macedonian from the village of Trlis in the Nevrokop region. He commenced his religious education in the Patriarchist Monastery of St John the Baptist in the Seres district, serving as a monk from the age of fourteen until the establishment of the Exarchate. Although elected Metropolitan to the Skopje Eparchy by the Exarchate in 1878, he remained in Constantinople until 1890 because the Ottoman authorities would not authorise his position.¹⁷¹ Once appointment was conferred, Gologanov actively promoted Macedonian ecclesiastical independence from within the ranks of the Exarchate. Aware of the dangers facing Macedonia, Gologanov recognised that the aims of the Bulgarian Exarchate were in direct conflict with the interests of the Macedonian people. At the end of 1890 and beginning of 1891 he sought to reorganise Exarchate religious and educational institutions by appointing like-minded Macedonians to positions of authority.¹⁷² Gologanov fearlessly confronted the Ottoman authorities, arguing the case for the closure of Greek and Serbian schools as ‘there were no Greeks and Serbs, nor Bulgarians in Macedonia. The country was inhabited by Macedonians, who are ethnically distinct from the other three Balkan peoples’.¹⁷³

Gologanov strove towards national emancipation in an unmistakably direct manner. He expressed his views in a letter to Archimandrite Dionysius in Sofia, a Macedonian from Strumica who shared Gologanov’s views regarding the activities of the Exarchate. Gologanov wrote:

Its religious and educational activity here, in Macedonia, in fact carries out a most miserable task, it deprives a people of its name and replaces it with another name, it deprives them of their mother tongue and replaces it with another, alien one.¹⁷⁴

Commenting on the ambitions of the Balkan States he added:

¹⁷¹ S. Dimevski, *Metropolitan Theodosius Gologanov, Macedonian Revivalist*, Skopje, 1977, p. 247.

¹⁷² S. Dimevski (1965), op. cit. p. 150; Y. Belchovski, op. cit. p. 151.

¹⁷³ S. Dimevski (1977), op. cit. p. 249.

¹⁷⁴ From a letter dated 22nd June 1891. H. Andonov-Poljanski, editor (1985), *Documents on the Struggle...*, op. cit. p. 315. The entire text of the letter appears on pages 314-317.

We the Macedonians do not suffer as much by the Turks ... as by the Greeks, the Bulgarians and the Serbs, who have set upon us like vultures upon a carcass in this tortured land and want to split it up.¹⁷⁵

Direction was given to the Macedonian Movement by Gologanov, as he spearheaded a national program aimed at the restoration of the Macedonian Archbishopric of Ohrid. Gologanov advocated that:

We clergymen, Macedonians in origin, should unite and urge our people to awaken, throw off foreign authority, throw off even the Patriarchate and the Exarchate, and be spiritually unified under the wing of the Archbishopric of Ohrid, our only true Mother Church.¹⁷⁶

Although a Metropolitan in the ranks of the Exarchate, Gologanov became a Macedonian ideologue committed to the restoration of the Ohrid Archbishopric. He strove towards eliminating foreign propaganda from Macedonia; placing Macedonians in all positions of authority in religious, government and educational spheres; and, advocating that the Macedonian language be adopted as the official language of the nation.¹⁷⁷ The Balkan States were threatened by the revivalist activities of Gologanov, and his ability to influence Ottoman Governors.¹⁷⁸ Protests were filed with the Turkish government and the Exarchate protested against Gologanov's provocative and separatist activities, ordering him to Constantinople immediately. Three such requests went unheeded by Gologanov before the Exarchate approached the Ottoman authorities requesting that they take him to Constantinople by force.

In the face of great hostility he turned to the Roman Catholic Church, seeking the support and patronage of Pope Leo XIII, to restore the Archbishopric of Ohrid and advocated the

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 315.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 315. Metropolitan Gologanov strove to replace Bulgarian with Macedonian in the schools and administration, as well as replacing Bulgarian textbooks with Macedonian. He engaged the vilayet authorities to support the establishment of a printing press, which would see Macedonian language publications. His intention met with fierce opposition from the Bulgarian Exarch. However, he did succeed in having all official church forms, including birth and marriage certificates, reprinted in Macedonian without the name 'Bulgarian Exarchate' appearing. Y. Belchovski, op. cit. pp. 151-152.

¹⁷⁷ S. Dimevski (1977), op. cit. p. 249.

¹⁷⁸ Vilayet Governors were corrupt, as were other officials of the Ottoman State. Bribery was an accepted practice.

historical right of the Orthodox Macedonian people to be freed from the jurisdiction of foreign churches – the Bulgarian Exarchate and Constantinople Patriarchate – and be united in its own Orthodox Church, acquiring all the characteristic features of a people who have a right to independent spiritual and cultural life and education.¹⁷⁹

Gologanov's letter to Pope Leo XIII outlined the unlawful abolishment of the Archbishopric of Ohrid by Sultan Mustafa III in 1767, and requested its restoration in canonical unity with the Roman Catholic Church. Gologanov stressed that specific traits of the Orthodox religion be respected and sought assurances in relation to its independence.¹⁸⁰

Metropolitan Gologanov's approach to the Pope aroused great interest in the Catholic Church and in certain political circles. Bishop Augusto Bonetti, head of the Lazarist mission in Constantinople, travelled to Macedonia, meeting with Metropolitan Gologanov in Skopje where they discussed the restoration of the Archbishopric of Ohrid under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church. In Skopje, Bonetti came in contact with the Austrian Consul Schumuker, who was also enthusiastic about the possibility of transfer to union with the Catholic Church:

The consul indicated that Metropolitan Theodosius was in a very difficult position, persecuted for his nationalist activity not only by the Bulgarian Exarch but also by the Greek Patriarchate. The three Balkan governments, those of Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia, also stood against him ... According to the opinion of the Consul of Austria – Hungary, there should be prompt action in making a decision, since any delay may be fatal for Metropolitan Theodosius. My personal opinion (Bonetti) is that Metropolitan Theodosius is undertaking this action quite sincerely and that there are objective preconditions that he will be followed by the whole flock of Macedonia.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁹ From a letter by Metropolitan Theodosius to Pope Leo XIII, dated 4 December 1891. (Archivio della S. Congregazione de Propaganda Fide – Roma: "Indice della Potenza" Marzo 1892-93, Somm XV, f. 132-141). From H. Andonov-Poljanski, editor (1985), op. cit. pp. 318-319.

¹⁸⁰ Specifically Gologanov outlined a list of six conditions of transfer to union with the Roman Catholic church. These were: 1. The Archbishopric of Ohrid be restored in canonical unity with the Roman Catholic church, with the immediate blessing of the Pope. 2. That Theodosius be head (Archbishop) of the restored Archbishopric of Ohrid. 3. Officials of the high clergy should be Macedonians, appointed by Theodosius. 4. The borders of the Archbishopric of Ohrid to conform with the borders of Macedonia. 5. Present Uniate eparchies to be included under the jurisdiction of the Archbishopric of Ohrid; and, 6. New Catholic missionaries not to be sent, and those already in Macedonia should not interfere in the internal church and educational life of the Archbishopric. Ibid, pp. 318-319.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 321. Letter from Bonetti to the responsible Cardinal in Rome on the talks with Gologanov (dated 4 December 1891).

As a matter of urgency, Bishop Bonetti informed the College of Cardinals (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith) in Rome, urging that Gologanov's request be supported. In the meantime the Ottoman government intervened, ordering his removal under guard to Constantinople where the Exarchate had prepared an indictment against him. Protests were sent to the Exarchate by the Ohrid, Seres, Solun, Nevrokop, Shtip, Strumica, Enidzhe Vardar and other eparchies throughout Macedonia condemning the Exarchate for the removal of Metropolitan Gologanov.¹⁸² The removal of Gologanov in 1892 was an enormous setback to the Macedonian movement, and to aspirations for the restoration of the mother church and the foundations for a future Macedonian state.¹⁸³ Gologanov was banished to a Sofia monastery until his death in 1926.

Following the destruction caused by repercussions from the Ilinden Rebellion, foreign churches in Macedonia provided various forms of 'humanitarian aid' to the victims. Donations from the governments of Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia were distributed through their respective churches, but the intention was political in nature rather than innocently humanitarian. Strategically, the outcome sought was to attract adherents to their churches, whereby the recipients and their villages were to be registered as belonging to the Greek, Bulgarian or Greek nationality respectively.¹⁸⁴ The Bulgarian government donated a total of 1,000,000 francs for distribution by the

¹⁸² S. Dimovski (1977), op. cit. p. 251.

¹⁸³ In a letter dated 12 March 1892 to 'The Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith', Bonetti outlined that had the Catholic church 'acted more effectively' there would have been a successful outcome to the matter. Describing the revolt in Macedonia, at the ousting of Gologanov, Bonetti stated, 'my suggestion is based upon confirmed reports from Macedonia, where the congregation of the Skopje eparchy, as well as the whole of Macedonia, reacted strongly against the replacement of Metropolitan Gologanov and declared that they were ready to pass into union with our Holy church'. Ibid, pp. 328-329.

¹⁸⁴ Genuine humanitarian aid (not politically motivated) was sent to Macedonia from England and the USA. A center for the distribution of aid was established in Bitola. Flour, clothing, blankets and sanitary material were distributed, and even a hospital opened. The total value of goods distributed in the Bitola area was 22,203 pounds. H. Polyanski-Andonov, *The Attitude of the USA Towards Macedonia*, Macedonian Review, Skopje, 1983, p. 72. See pages 64 to 72 for further details regarding American aid for the victims of the Ilinden Uprising. That Protestant aid was not being used for political purposes appears to be evident by the fact that in the Bitola region Protestant missionaries did not enjoy any success converting people to Protestantism, even though an extremely large sum of money had been spent. Furthermore, the aid collected from England and America was donated as a result of public appeals, and not from their governments as was the case with Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia.

Exarchate in Macedonia, of which 285,000 was apportioned to the Bitola vilayet. The Exarchate Metropolitan in Ohrid attempted to personally visit villages to distribute the funds but was prevented from doing so by the Ottoman valia in Ohrid.¹⁸⁵ The Greek Metropolitan of Prespa-Ohrid (Antim) headed a commission to distribute Greek aid, and the Greek Consul of Bitola personally delivered a large sum of cash to Krushevo. He was quickly followed by the Romanian Vice consul of Bitola who delivered 10,000 dinars.¹⁸⁶ According to a 1903 Serb Consular report, the distribution of Greek aid was focused upon gathering the greatest amount of signatures and village seals and that ‘in effect they were paying for seals and signatures’.¹⁸⁷ Serbian aid was distributed in Krushevo through the Serbian school in the town; a Serb priest and the school principal, Alexandar Grdanovich, headed the committee overseeing the distribution.¹⁸⁸ Serb aid was handed out on 20 October 1903 to 32 male recipients who received a total of 4750 grosh.¹⁸⁹ The bulk of the money was distributed between nine individuals (3230 grosh), the remaining 23 received less than 100 grosh each (total of 1520 grosh). According to the Serb consular report dated 10 November 1903, which outlines distribution of the aid, the recipients were required to sign their names in order to receive their share of the aid. In a town that did not contain a single Serb inhabitant, all 23 recipients are recorded as possessing Serb surnames. In effect, aid was not intended as humanitarian assistance, but designed to pay for the creation of Serbian nationals.

A common response received from interviewees in the Bitola region, regarding the distribution of aid through the Patriarchate and Exarchate churches, indicated that financial assistance was not considered as being of a humanitarian nature. Instead, the money was deliberately used to ‘buy people’, in order to obtain

¹⁸⁵ From an Austrian consular report in Bitola, dated 12 February 1905. D, Zografski, editor, op. cit. pp. 18-19.

¹⁸⁶ K. Bitoski (1968), op. cit. p.187.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 187.

¹⁸⁸ From a Serbian consular report in Bitola, dated 10 November 1903 (PP Number 853-4902). L. Lape, *Izveštaj od 1903 godina - na Srpskate konzuli, mitropoliti i uchilishni inspektori vo Makedonija* [Report of 1903 - of Serbian consuls, metropolitans and school inspectors in Macedonia], Skopje, 1954, pp. 342-344.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, pp. 342-344.

adherents for the respective propaganda's.¹⁹⁰ The single instance of a respondent believing that aid was genuinely of a humanitarian nature was Nikola Giorgievski, who stated that his one-legged father Naumche obtained a wooden leg through the Exarchate church.¹⁹¹

¹⁹⁰ Hristo Dimitrovski interview, op. cit., Atanas Kotevski interview, op. cit., Konstantin Nicha interview, op. cit., Ilija Najdovski interview, op. cit.

¹⁹¹ Nikola Giorgiovski interview, op. cit.

Table 4.5: Recipients of Serb Aid in Krushevo, 1903

Recorded Serbianised surname	Actual name
Matejy Boshko Petrovich	Actual surname is Boshku (Vlah). Petrovich is not a modification of the surname, but an addition. The Boshku family were traders in Krushevo and the descendants of Matejy now live in Skopje.
Kosti Bazhdavelovich	Actual surname is Bazhdavela (Vlah). Descendants live in Skopje.
Giorgi Badzhovich	Actual surname is Bazhdavela (Vlah).
Sterji Stavrich	Stavrich. Descendants in Skopje, surname Stavrich remains.
Peri Andzhelkovich	Actual surname is Angelkovski (Macedonian). Descendants in Krushevo.
Fiji Neveni Karafilovichki	Actual surname is Fidzhu (Vlah). Karafilovichki was a new addition. Descendants remain in Krushevo.
Nikoli Nane	Surname recorded in Serb document in its original form "Nane" (Vlah). No modification to surname or addition. The men of the Nane family are traditionally butchers. Descendants remain in Krushevo.
Paraskevi Kachandonovich	Actual surname is Kachandonu (Vlah).
Boshky Mickovich	Actual surname is Mickovski (Macedonian). Descendants remain in Krushevo.
Veljanu Janichijevich	Actual surname is Janakievski (Macedonian). Descendants remain in Krushevo.

Source and notes: Serbian Consular Report in Bitola, dated 10 November 1903 (PP Number 853-4902) from L. Lape, editor, *Izveshtaj od 1903 Godina na Srpskite Konsuli, Mitroploiti i Uchilnishni Inspektori vo Makedonija*, Skopje, 1954, pp. 342-344.

Note: actual surnames derived from local knowledge in Krushevo during March 2000.

Financial incentive was a popular method used in the cities to attract adherents to the respective churches. Although armed bands were restricted from entering large urban centres, violence and intimidation continued to be practised by the rival parties through other means. Hired thugs and assassins were employed by the 'Greek Committee' in Bitola to convince individuals to renounce the Exarchate and join the Patriarchate. The tradesman Nikola Dimitrovski received a visit from a

hired thug (an Albanian) at his workplace and was threatened with death if he did not renounce the Exarchate and become a member of the Patriarchate church community.¹⁹²

Illustration 4.3: The central Bulgarian Exarchate building in Bitola



In the countryside, it was not exclusively armed bands who terrorised villages to support respective church organisations. The notorious Patriarchate Bishop of Kostur, Karavangelis, was known to force notable villagers (such as village headmen) to call themselves ‘Greek’ or he would otherwise denounce them to the Ottomans. Brailsford remarked that many villages were won over in this manner. The Bishop was also known to travel on a tour of Exarchate villages, ‘with an immense escort of Turkish troops’ converting villages by force. The Patriarchate Bishops of Lerin and Seres also employed Turkish troops as ‘escorts’ in travels through their respective

¹⁹² Hristo Dimitrovski interview, op. cit. Hristo Dimitrovski stated that the hired thug spared his father’s life because at the time of the visit his children were present in his store.

regions in order to increase the number of Patriarchist villages. In one instance the Bishop of Seres arrested a Bulgarian priest and kept him prisoner until he renounced allegiance to the Exarchate.¹⁹³

In northern Macedonia the Serbs largely relied upon attracting adherents through bribery, targeting prominent and influential people in villages, and paying them between 5 and 10 Turkish lira.¹⁹⁴ It was common practice to target important people in a village community. In the Lerin region, village headmen were bribed to influence villagers to transfer village church jurisdiction.¹⁹⁵ The Patriarchate also actively played on the superstitious nature of the Macedonian people, arguing that the Exarchate was formed by a Muslim power, that baptisms and marriages conducted there were not really valid, and that the dead buried by the Exarchate church turned into vampires. Eliot considered that arguments of this nature had an effect upon the population, particularly among the women, and partly accounted for the number of people and villages remaining with the Patriarchate.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ H.N. Brailsford, op. cit. p. 211. The terror of the infamous Karavangelis left deep impressions on the local Macedonian population in the Kostur region. Elderly Macedonians in Australia from the Kostur region recall his notorious reputation and the hardships to which he subjected innocent Macedonians. It was common knowledge that he had a close relationship with the Ottoman Turks, in fact Macedonians often speak of them as 'partners'. A widely-published photograph in Macedonian (and Bulgarian) historical publications shows the Greek Bishop Karavangelis gracing a Turkish military review. In the photograph Karavangelis stands beside the Ottoman civil governor of the Kostur district and an Ottoman military commander. See C. Anastasoff, op. cit. p. 290. Knight noted the strategic role of Greek religious figures in the violent activities of armed bands in 1909. 'The Greek Bishops and clergy worked with fanatical activity; not only did they forbid their co-religionists to give employment to Bulgarians, but they were largely responsible for the atrocities committed by the Greek bands, and went so far as to draw up proscription lists of Bulgarian schismatics who had to be assassinated.' E.F. Knight, op. cit. p. 102. Note: Knight speaks of 'Bulgarians' in Macedonia. This thesis treats the category 'Bulgarian' in Macedonia to be 'Macedonian'.

¹⁹⁴ K. Pandev and Z. Noneva editors, *Borbite vo Makedonia i Odrinsko 1878-1912 Spomeni* [Battles in Macedonia and Adrianople 1878-1912 Memoirs], Sofia, 1981, p. 430. Data regarding Serbs bribing influential villagers are drawn from the memoirs of Slaveyko Arsov. Professor L. Miletich typically recorded memoirs of Macedonian revolutionary figures in the first decade of the twentieth century. Subsequent reprints of memoirs in both Bulgaria and Macedonia are often drawn from Miletich's interviews.

¹⁹⁵ Kocho Duakis (born 1934 in Petoraci, Lerin region), interview conducted 20 January 2001 in Melbourne. Kocho Duakis was aware of this practice as he had heard stories from a 94-year-old friend from the Lerin village of Peshoshnica (the 94-year-old passed away in approximately 1990).

¹⁹⁶ C. Eliot, op. cit. pp. 319-320. The effects of Patriarchate arguments against Macedonian adherence to the Exarchate based on vampire superstitions should not be underestimated. Stories of people becoming vampires has existed in Macedonian folklore since the earliest times and persisted into the twentieth century. Regarding Macedonian vampire superstitions, see E. Tosheva-Giorgieva, *Veruvanjata vo vampiri vo Makedonija* [The Belief in Vampires in Macedonia], Bitola, 1981, pp. 565-579.

4.7 ‘Exarchists’ and ‘Patriarchists’

ADHERENCE TO THE Exarchate and Patriarchate churches respectively was generally viewed as akin to an association with opposing religious/political parties. It was not uncommon for interviewees to state ‘it was similar as what we have today where some support VMRO-DPMNE and others SDS’.¹⁹⁷ Generally there were no serious animosities or conflicts between villagers. The village community continued to function as a single entity, and physical confrontations were rare. Tensions were directed against specific individuals whose actions disrupted harmony in the village and attracted unwanted attention from armed bands or the authorities. Such an individual could be a village headman, the priest, a teacher, influential villager, spy or informer.¹⁹⁸ In other instances, pressures exerted by an armed band could incite tensions or disputes between villagers.

Collective celebrations such as the village saint’s day continued to be celebrated by all villagers, regardless of political leanings. There was no modification of customs and traditions corresponding to Exarchate or Patriarchate jurisdiction. In every instance in all sample villages, respondents stated that customs remained unchanged. It was of no consequence what party the people belonged to: ‘everyone spoke Macedonian at home and in the village, customs and traditions remained

¹⁹⁷ Since Macedonian independence from Yugoslavia, the two main Macedonian political rivals have been VMRO-DPMNE (Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity) and SDS (Social Democratic Union). Generally entire families are aligned with one or the other political party and those with VMRO-DPMNE are labelled *vmrovtsi*, whilst those with SDS (former communists) as *komunisti*, (‘Communists’). These terms are used frequently in everyday language. Rivalries between opposing supporters are often intense, and during the first several years of the 1990s, the labels - *vmrovtsi* and *komunisti* - of individuals, their families and community organisations was also commonplace in Macedonian communities in Australia. The writer visited Macedonia during the second multi-party elections in Macedonia (1994) and saw at first hand the passion with which Macedonians embraced their politics.

¹⁹⁸ Cvetan Jovanovski interview, op. cit., Kosta Markovski interview, op. cit., Stojan Spasevski interview, op. cit., Mihailo Kleshtev (born 1934 in Gorno Aglarci, Bitola region), interview conducted 1 November 1999 in Melbourne. Todor Veljanovski (born 1930 in Dolno Aglarci, Bitola region), interview conducted on 2 April 2000 in Bitola.

unchanged and were identical in all families'.¹⁹⁹ There was no separation into two groups in villages, for instance, the traditional *Badnik* (Christmas eve) bonfire at the height of the Exarchate and Patriarchate rivalry continued to be jointly celebrated in villages. As the bulk of villages were small to medium settlements, they only possessed one village square. Furthermore in each village there was a network of family ties (traced through male kin). According to Kosta Markovski from the village of Suvodol, 'our village was too small for us to divide ourselves into separate groups'.²⁰⁰ Although a small village may have an upper *maalo* and lower *maalo*, a large village may have several *maali*, more than one village square, multiple village taps and two or more churches. In large villages such as Nered (Lerin region), containing approximately 500 homes (there were four churches) and two *badnik* fires, the fires were not a reflection of a segregated religious community, but rather of people living at different ends of the village.²⁰¹

There was regular intermarriage between adherents of the Patriarchate church and those of the Exarchate church. All respondents stated that this was the case. In most instances, marriage between people from opposing parties was not hindered by the political situation, and, if there was resistance to a marriage, there was a threat that the potential bride may elope (*begalka*). For a daughter to leave her parents in such a manner brought shame upon them. Parents therefore generally disregarded political/religious differences and gave priority to living in harmony with the future in-laws (*svatovi*).²⁰² In the case of an impending marriage being organised by a middleman (*stroinik*), sometimes the partner was sought from the same religious/political group, however, priority was typically given to the social standing of the potential in-

¹⁹⁹ Aca Kotevska (born 1911 in Suvodol, Bitola region), interview 10 March 2000 in Novaci. Similar remarks were made by Luba Stankovska (interview, op. cit.), who stated, 'there were no cultural changes, the way of life, customs and traditions all remained the same'.

²⁰⁰ Kosta Markovski interview, op. cit.

²⁰¹ Velika Spirova interview, op. cit. The four churches in Nered were Sveti Atanas, Sveti Troica, Sveti Nikola and Sveti Luka.

²⁰² Trajanka Talevska interview, op. cit., Ljuba Stankovska interview, op. cit., Dragica Kleshteva interview, op. cit.

laws.²⁰³ Generally marriages were common between Patriarchists and Exarchists because the people ‘continued to function as one society... it was not so serious as to divide us into separate groups of people.’²⁰⁴ According to Atanas Kotevski from Vrajnevci, weddings regularly took place between members of the Exarchate and Patriarchate, and during village weddings ‘musicians only played Macedonian songs and party politics did not have any relevance when it came to collective celebrations’.²⁰⁵ Due to the tradition of men taking brides from neighbouring villages, and the family ties formed because of this, generally there was no real conflict between neighbouring villages that adhered to rival churches.²⁰⁶ Similarly in Bitola, marriages between Macedonian Patriarchists and Exarchists were the norm.²⁰⁷

Generally relations between neighbouring villages were congenial. Where villages were from opposing religious parties, they continued to maintain normal relations. For example, the village of Gorno Aglarci (both upper and lower) was exclusively Exarchate, however, they enjoyed normal neighbourly relations with the surrounding villages, including Suvodol and Paralovo which both contained Patriarchists. Aglarci villagers attended the village religious day celebrations in both these villages; this was a long-held tradition. Equally, villagers from both Suvodol and Paralovo also attended the village celebrations in Aglarci. There was no animosity resulting from opposing religious adherence.²⁰⁸ Alternatively in Graeshnica, according to Stojan Spasevski, there was a sense of division between the opposing members of the Patriarchate and Exarchate churches, but it did not create serious arguments or animosities between them, nor with any of the neighbouring Macedonian Christian villages.²⁰⁹

²⁰³ Ibid; and, Todor Veljanovski interview, op. cit.

²⁰⁴ Todor Veljanovski interview, op. cit.

²⁰⁵ Atanas Kotevski interview, op. cit.

²⁰⁶ Cvetan Jovanovski interview, op. cit.

²⁰⁷ Hristo ‘Caki’ Dimitrovski interview, op. cit. Similarly in the Vlah village of Gopesh, inter-marriage between Patriarchist and pro-Romanian Vlachs was the norm. Customs and traditions between the two parties were indistinguishable from one another. Simo ‘Hemtu’ Simonovski interview, op. cit.

²⁰⁸ Todor Veljanovski interview, op. cit., Mihailo Kleshtev interview, op. cit.

²⁰⁹ Stojan Spasevski interview, op. cit.

In northern Macedonian villages under Serb Patriarchate jurisdiction, the average villager maintained normal relations with the neighbouring Exarchate village. Petar Dimitrievitch, the Serbian School Director in the Kumanovo region, reported in 1903 that the only noticeable division and animosity was between the upper class and the Exarchate and Patriarchate protagonists.²¹⁰ In the Lerin village of Krpeshina, there was some tension in the village between Patriarchists and Exarchists, but it was never as serious as to create physical confrontations between each other. Opposition was expressed mostly through derogatory name calling such as *Grk* ('Greek') and *Bugarin* ('Bulgarian').²¹¹ Todor Veljanovski stated that his grandfather (mother's father) refused to visit his wife's relatives who were Patriarchate adherents in the nearby village of Dobromiri (majority Exarchate adherents, minority Patriarchate) because of a political disagreement between them. He did not, however, prevent his wife and children from visiting.²¹² In Vrajevci the majority Exarchist adherents lived well with the minority Patriarchists. 'All village religious holy days were celebrated together, people worked and socialised together on a daily basis, occasionally arguments would occur but people continued to live together as they always had.'²¹³

Interviewees were generally unaware of foreign surnames in the village corresponding to Christian, Bulgarian Exarchate or Greek Patriarchate church adherence. Although there is evidence indicating that foreign names were officially registered in Patriarchate or Exarchate church records, in everyday language Macedonian equivalents were exclusively used. In the mixed Patriarchist-Exarchist village of Suvodol, Aca Kotevska (from the Najdovci family) was known to all simply

²¹⁰ From a diplomatic report compiled by Milosav Kurtovitch, Serb General Consul in Skopje to Cimi Lozanich, Serbian Minister of Foreign Affairs, dated 20 February 1903. L. Lape, editor (1954), op. cit. p. 82.

²¹¹ Velika Spirova interview, op. cit.

²¹² Todor Veljanovski interview, op. cit.

²¹³ Atanas Vasilevski interview, op. cit. The notion of the general Macedonian Exarchist and Patriarchist population being at war and murdering one another is erroneous. When killings did occur these were invariably connected to the activities of the armed bands and are generally recorded as occurring from 1903 onwards (ie during the Ilinden Uprising and in the turbulent and chaotic years following, particularly 1903-1907). It was not uncommon for bands to force individual villagers to act as guides when travelling through unfamiliar terrain. These attacks often resulted in the loss of life and property and the distraught villagers invariably directed their revenge upon the guide, who often had no choice in the matter. Mihailo Kleshtev interview, op.cit.

as ‘Aca’ (a traditional Macedonian name), but was in fact christened with the Greek name Altmına. She pointed out that very few people outside her immediate family were aware of this, as the name ‘Altmına’ was never used in public. Her family was with the Patriarchate church and she was named Altmına because her ‘godfather chose it and that he was a Patriarchist also’.²¹⁴ At her christening there was also a Macedonian male infant baptised with the Greek name Cleomenis. Similarly, no one in the village knew him by that name; he was known to all as Kitse (a traditional Macedonian name).²¹⁵ Aca added, ‘although our family was the central Patriarchist family in the village, we continued to be known as Najdovci. This never changed.’ Nor was she aware of others in the village having Greek or any other foreign names, including the older people.²¹⁶ In the Patriarchist controlled village of Graeshnica, the village priest (a villager, Petre, from the Popovci family) kept a list of recommended Greek Christian names to be used for naming newborn children.²¹⁷ Although officially people were given Greek names, in everyday communication people only used traditional Macedonian names. Surnames remained in their original Macedonian form; there was no attempt made to change these to reflect a Greek character.²¹⁸

Typically Macedonian surnames are derived from a father’s name or even a nickname (*prekar*), which becomes a family symbol.²¹⁹ Traditionally Macedonians were identified by their Christian name and as the son of a particular individual, for example ‘Bogdan, son of Petre’. Ottoman records officially recorded Macedonians by this system as evidenced by fifteenth century tax records,²²⁰ seventeenth century

²¹⁴ Aca Kotevska interview, op. cit.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ilija Najdovski (Aca Kotevska’s brother) similarly stated that ‘none of the older people in the village had Greek names’. Ilija’s father was the Greek teacher in the village, and his grandfather (Marko Alaibegot) was also aligned with the Patriarchate. The grandfather, Marko, organised the construction of the church bell and village tap, on both were written ‘*Marko Alaibegot ja izgradil so Crkveni pari*’ (‘Marko Alaibegot built this with church funds’) in Macedonian. Ilija Najdovski interview, op. cit.

²¹⁷ Stojan Spasevski interview, op. cit.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ For a comprehensive study of Macedonian onomastics, and in particular Macedonian surnames see T. Stamoski, *Makedonska Onomastika* [Macedonian Onomastics], Skopje, 1990, pp. 163-192.

²²⁰ An Ottoman census conducted in the Bitola nahia in 1468 reveals that names in the village of Suvodol were typically Macedonian and recorded as - Rajko son of Branislav, Todor son of Nene, Radosh son of Yandre,

Ottoman administrative, legal and commercial documents,²²¹ and early nineteenth century tax documents.²²² Although the introduction of ‘official’ surnames in Macedonian culture commenced from the nineteenth century and was largely influenced by European customs and institutions,²²³ Ottoman state documents in the form of property titles continued to record Macedonian names according to traditional systems. As such the purchasers of *chiflik* land in the village of Gorno Aglarci are recorded as ‘Anasto son of Petre’, ‘Tole son of Riste’, ‘Milan and Giorgi sons of Micho’.²²⁴

Bulgarian Exarchate birth and wedding certificates obtained from the Archive of Macedonia reveal names recorded as typically Macedonian, such as Nikola Petrev from Bareshani and Neda Ilieva from Mogila.²²⁵ It is likely that because there was no substantial difference between Macedonian and Bulgarian names, the Bulgarian Exarchate may not have pressured Macedonians to modify their names.²²⁶ Macedonian surnames during the period of late Ottoman rule generally end with the letters ‘ev’/‘ov’ or ‘ski’ (male) and ‘eva’/‘ova’ or ‘ska’ (female). Serbian writers of the period replace the ‘ov’ with ‘itch’ and Greeks writers use ‘os’ or ‘as’. There are a

Dono son of Mirko, etc. Female names included Dobra, Zuja, Kalina, Ivana, Stana and Mara. Women were only included in census and tax data if they were widows with children. M. Sokolski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti - Opshirni Popisni Defteri od XV vek* [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Records of the XV century], Vol II, Skopje, 1973. pp. 86, 235-237. See also M. Sokolski and A. Stojanovski, editors. *Turski Dokumenti - Opshiren Popisen Defter No 4 (1467-1468)*, [Turkish Documents - Detailed Census Record No 4, 1467-1468], Skopje, 1971.

²²¹ M. Sokolski, editor, *Turski Dokumenti za Istorijata na Makedonskiot narod* [Turkish Documents on the History of the Macedonian People], Series I: 1607-1699, Vol III from January 1636 to the end of 1639, Skopje, 1969.

²²² Whilst maintaining a religious monopoly in Macedonia, the Constantinople Patriarchate does not appear to have systematically forced Greek names upon the Macedonian population in the Bitola region during the mid nineteenth century. This is evidenced through Ottoman tax records for the period 1840/41 and 1841/42, where the overwhelming majority of names are typically Macedonian. D. Gorgiev, editor, *Turski Dokumenti za Istorijata na Makedonija - Popisi od XIX vek* [Turkish Documents on the History of Macedonia - Censuses from the XIX century], Book II, Skopje, 1997, pp. 13-115.

²²³ T. Stamoski, op. cit. p. 164.

²²⁴ Original Ottoman land titles (all are dated 21 July 1906) in the possession of the author – Volume 52, Document 20, Number 91; Volume 52, Document 29, Number 100; Volume 52, Document 31, Number 102; Volume 52, Document 34, Number 105; and, Volume 52, Document 38, Number 109.

²²⁵ Bulgarian Exarchate documents derived from the Archive of Macedonia – 01.0491.0007.0162 / 0687-0691 (five baptismal documents from 1900); 01.0491.0007.0163 / 0712-0713 (two baptismal documents 1901 and 1909); 01.0491.0007.0164 / 0714-0718 (five wedding certificates from 1904) and 01.0491.0007.0165 / 0734-0738 (five wedding certificates 1905).

²²⁶ This may have also been dependant upon the individual priest and the religious/political hold over the villagers. Comparisons with different regions of Macedonia, particularly border areas would be desirable.

number of factors making it difficult to determine how widespread the practice of Christening infants with foreign names may have been.

As evidenced by the data presented on Table 4.6, the parents and grandparents of all interviewees born before 1940 had distinctly Macedonian names. Graves in village cemeteries had no text on the headstones, and as the priest was often either from the same village or from a neighbouring one, pressuring villagers to adopt foreign names for their newborn children may not have been a popular act. Furthermore, in every instance in Exarchate and Patriarchate villages, the priest and teacher were known by their Macedonian names only.

In the Macedonian Islamicised villages of the Dolna Reka region, interviewees revealed that after conversion from Christianity to Islam villagers were required to adopt Muslim names and gave their children such names. Although amongst themselves they continued to use their traditional Macedonian Christian names, even though these were no longer their official names. 'A Macedonian Muslim may have been Ismail before the Turks. At home and in the village, he remained Ilija'.²²⁷

²²⁷ Ismail Bojda (born 1953 in Brod, Kosovo-Serbia), interview conducted in Skopje on 7 March 2000; Abdula Odzheski (born 1945 in Zhirovnica, Reka region), interview conducted on 25 March 2000 in Zhirovnica; and, Redzho Muslioski (born 1946 in Dolno Kosovrasti, Reka region), interview conducted 27 March 2000 in Dolno Kosovrasti.

Table 4.6: Christian Names of Parents and Grandparents of Macedonian Male Interviewees Born in the Bitola Region (Prior to 1940)

Name	Year of birth	Place of birth	Father	Mother	Grand-father	Grand-mother
Hristo 'Caki' Dimitrovski	1893	Bitola	Nikola	Elizabeta	Dimitrija	Tema
Vasil Petrov	1911	Tepavci	Giorgi	Ristana	Petre	Rumena
Vasko Altiparmak	1912	Dolenci	Ilija	Ilinka	Veljan	Trena
Stefan Trajchevski	1913	Dolno Orehovo	Mitre	Stojna	Trajko	?
Petko Atanasovski	1913	Makovo	Kote	Jana	Atanas	Visha
Ilija Najdovski	1920	Suvodol	Riste	Dosta	Marko	?
Stojche Petkovski	1920	Makovo	Dimitrija	Mara	Petko	Ristana
Vlado Jankulovski	1921	Novaci	Jovan	Naumka	Jankula	Mitra
Mihailo Todorovski	1921	Dolno Orehovo	Vidan	Kalina	Todor	Mitra
Stojan Spasevski	1922	Graeshnica	Petre	Sofka	Spas	?
Atanas Kotevski	1923	Vrajnevci	Giorgi	?	Stojche	?
Nikola Giorgioski	1927	Gorno Aglarci	Naumche	Blaguna	Giorgia	Visha
Atanas Vasilevski	1928	Vrajnevci	Mio	Velika	Tale	Dosta
Zivko Dimovski	1929	Gorno Aglarci	Bogoja	Sultana	Mitko	Cveta
Kosta Markovski	1930	Suvodol	Tole	Ristana	Anasto	Blaguna
Trajan Micevski	1930	Novaci	Angele	Dosta	Riste	Lenka
Todor Veljanovski	1930	Dolno Aglarci	Pavle	Velika	Giorgia	?
Mihailo Kleshtev	1934	Gorno Aglarci	Petre	Koprina	Naumche	Mara
Vane Tancevski	1935	Lopatica	Bosilko	Maria	Angele	Angelina
Stojan Vasilevski	1937	Kukurechani	Riste	Spasa	Vasil	Kita

Notes: The following interviewees are not included in Table 4.6 due to a lack of data collected by the writer, Cvetan Jovanovski (born 1914 in Novaci) from the Bozovci family; Giorgi Dimovski-Colev (born 1929 in Bitola); and, Trajan Popovski (born 1939 in Lazhec) from the Popovci family.

In single church-mixed Patriarchist and Exarchist villages, all continued to use the one church and cemetery. Village cemeteries contained no divisions or separate areas for Exarchate or Patriarchate graves. Similarly, in the Vlah village of Gopesh, the single church was shared between the Patriarchist and Romanian parties, and both used the sole cemetery with graves dispersed throughout its grounds without separate areas used.²²⁸ Furthermore, if the village church swapped jurisdiction, there was no modification to the church or cemetery.²²⁹ Regardless of which Balkan Orthodox church organisation held jurisdiction, church services and village religious rituals remained unchanged. The only notable difference may have been the language of the church service. In villages that contained a single church it was inconceivable that a separate cemetery be established, as traditionally a village cemetery is located within the church grounds. Where a village contained two churches, only then were separate cemeteries established, such as in the villages of Vrajnevcı and Krpeshina.²³⁰ It was common in the Bitola region that the establishment of a second village church was invariably an Exarchate church and beside it a cemetery established.

It is interesting to draw a comparison to a Patriarchate village faced with the establishment of a second non-Orthodox church. In Koleshino village (Strumica region), a Macedonian Protestant church was established in 1890. The already established Patriarchate church forbade the Protestant villagers continued use of the existing cemetery, and ‘did not accept them as Christians because they changed their religion’.²³¹ Subsequently a new cemetery for Protestants was established beside the original one and later, after the end of Ottoman rule when the Orthodox cemetery

²²⁸ Simo Simonovski interview, *op. cit.* In Gopesh graves were either in Greek or Romanian script.

²²⁹ Old graves in village cemeteries bore no legible script upon them and generally did not have a headstone. A stone plate lay on top of the grave and often had a Christian cross carved into it.

²³⁰ Vrajnevcı was considered to be an Exarchist village, as the overwhelming majority attended the Exarchist church. There was an upper and lower section of the village, the Patriarchist church Saint Todor was above the village, and the Exarchist church Saint Dimitija below. Both priests conducted services in the Macedonian language. Atanas Vasilevski interview, *op. cit.*

²³¹ Jovan Izev interview, *op. cit.*

was full, ‘they commenced burying people in the Protestant cemetery - we became one again’.²³²

In the nineteenth century Bitola contained two main Christian cemeteries. On the north-eastern fringe of the town, and associated with the Patriarchist Saint Dimitrija church in central Bitola, stood the cemetery known as Bukovo cemetery (*Bukovski grobishta*). The other cemetery was situated on the southern fringe beside the Exarchist Saint Nedela church. A physical examination of the two cemeteries revealed that the nineteenth and early twentieth century graves in the Sveta Nedela cemetery exclusively bore Cyrillic script and the graves of Bitola region revolutionaries were found here. In the Bukovo cemetery the majority of pre-1912 graves bore Greek script, however a sizable portion of graves contained Cyrillic script and were generally found scattered around the cemetery, with a larger grouping situated in a specific area. An interesting example highlighting the political/religious influences of the period was a specific family burial site with inscriptions in multiple languages upon the headstone. The first two names appear in Cyrillic, the following three in Greek, and the remaining two in Macedonian. There were numerous examples of family graves in the Bukovo cemetery originally bearing Greek script, and later in Macedonian exposing distinct Vlah names, confirming that the majority of ‘Greek graves’ were in fact Vlah.²³³

²³² Ibid.

²³³ At the end of the nineteenth century Vlachs were considered to be amongst the wealthiest inhabitants of Bitola. This was apparent at the Bukovo and Vlah cemeteries by the construction of elaborate graves and tombstones. From 1913 to the beginning of the Second World War, all graves contain exclusively Serbian script (during this period Macedonia was recognised only as Southern Serbia by the Serbo-Yugoslav regime).

Photo 4.1: Arched entry of the Bukovo cemetery in Bitola



A third Bitola cemetery was located below the Bukovo cemetery and the property was purchased in 1903 by the Vlah association with financial help from the Romanian government.²³⁴ The establishment of a separate Vlah cemetery in Bitola was directly related to the struggle for emancipation from Greek Patriarchate influence²³⁵ and graves in the cemetery exclusively contain Vlah/Romanian script.

The intensity of the conflict between the Greek Patriarchate and the Vlah party was expressed through Vlah folk music. The following example is a traditional unrecorded and largely unknown Vlah song from the Ottoman period.²³⁶

²³⁴ Konstantin Nicha interview, op. cit.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ From the private collection of Hristo Hristoski-Mular (Krushevo, Macedonia), Director of the Ilinden Festival in Krushevo. The song was originally collected by Tayka Hrisik, a resident of Krushevo and compiler of old folk songs.

Sh-ira noapte, sh-avea lunaOne moonlit night

I

Sh-ira noapte, sh-avea luna
 sh-nji-avdzai cantic di-Armana
 sh-nji-avdzai cantic di-Armana
 iu-sh-plandzea pi-aljei curuna

One moonlit night
 I heard the voice of a Vlah woman
 weeping on her wedding crown

II

Sh-plandzea corba, shi zghilea
 Sh perlji di-n-cap sh-lji-arupea
 Sh perlji di-n-cap sh-lji arupea
 Sh-a-ficiorlui ma lji-dzatsea

The poor woman cried and screamed
 and tore the hair from her head
 she spoke to her young son

III

Gione, cara s-banedz, s-nji creshci
 Bunj parintsa s-nu-agarsheshci
 Sh-la Grets fara uminatate
 Ti una dao s-la pateshci

“Son if you grow up
 do not forget your (good) parents
 and to the Greeks without mercy
 pay them back twice”

IV

Dado, cara s-banedz, s-nji crescu,
 bunj parintsa nu-agashescu
 sh-la Grets fara uminatate
 ti una dzatse va la paltescu

“Mother, if I grow up
 I will not forget my good parents
 and to the Greeks without mercy
 I will pay them back ten times”

Self-preservation

DETERMING THE INFLUENCE villages came under is not always clearly evident. A village classified as Patriarchist by one writer might be referred to as Exarchist by another. Villages did change allegiance between the parties in order to preserve their own security and prevent attracting the attention of foreign bands and their violence. A deliberate strategy existed in villages whereby some villagers presented themselves to armed bands as their supporters in order to maintain peace in the village. In Makovo, Stojche Petkovski pointed out that:

The village was predominantly with the Exarchate, however there were some who were with the Patriarchate. In one family, two brothers were on opposing sides, not because of the politics, but due to a deliberate strategy of self-preservation. If a

Greek *cheta* came into the village and threatened the Exarchist brother, the Patriarchist brother would stand up in his defence.²³⁷

The village of Suvodol was split between Exarchists and Patriarchists. The village headman was with the Patriarchist party and he placed the interests of the villagers first. He was careful to prevent party politics from creating divisions amongst the people. As a result there were no serious tensions in the village.²³⁸ Kosta Markovski from Suvodol stated that people from both parties in the village lived peacefully:

They all knew they were the same people, they looked after one another - the village kmet (Marko from the Najdovci family) protected the village. If the Turkish authorities came through and inquired whether any bands had been seen, he replied no, and if a Greek band had come through he would deny it to the Bulgarian band, and equally deny the appearance of a Bulgarian band to the Greeks.²³⁹

In the mixed Macedonian Turkish village of Dolno Orehovo, Macedonians adhered to both the Exarchate and Patriarchate parties. To ensure harmony and security for all, 'if a Bulgarian band arrived, we replied there are no Greeks, if the Greeks arrived, we replied there are no Bulgarians'.²⁴⁰ In this manner, Stefan Trajchevski added, 'we protected our village'.²⁴¹

A story passed down linked to self-preservation from the violence of armed bands has a setting sometime at the beginning of the twentieth century on the fringes of the Mariovo district, in the village of Grunishta. Frequented by both Greek and Bulgarian bands, the story revolves around a Greek band entering the village and confronting an elderly male in his barn as he attended to his sheep. The following exchange takes place:²⁴²

²³⁷ Stojche Petkovski interview, op. cit. Stojche Petkovski stated that the methods employed by the *cheti* in winning people over to their position involved burning one's house, barn, or sheep enclosure. Stojche recalls these details from stories related to him by his father.

²³⁸ Ilija Najdovski interview, op. cit.

²³⁹ Kosta Markovski interview, op. cit. The village *kmet* (headman) was known to all as Marko 'Alaibeg' ('Alaibeg', a Turkish word signifying the status of the village *kmet*, to be similar to that of a Turkish *beg*).

²⁴⁰ Stefan Trajchevski interview, op. cit.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Stojche Petkovski interview, op. cit.

Greek band:

“Dali si Bugarin”? - “Are you a Bulgarian”? (Bulgarian – *“Bugarin”*)

Male villager:

“So bukaneto voda si piam” - “I drink water from the vase” (Vase – *“bukaneto”*)

Greek band:

“Togash Grk si”? - “Then you're Greek?” (Greek – *“Grk”*)

Male villager:

“Ama grd sum, star sum” - “Yes, I'm ugly, I'm an old man.” (Ugly – *“grd”*)

Greek band:

*“Ovoj ne razbira od politika,
ne znai od koja partija e,
aj da begame”.* - “He has no understanding of politics,
and doesn't know what party he belongs
to, let us leave”.

The above story was related as a humorous example of self-preservation, but this tactic was not always effective. The village of Kochishta attempted to remain aside from the conflict between the Exarchate and Patriarchate churches, but its impartiality was no defense against the violent actions of the armed bands. The village was totally destroyed by a Greek band in 1907.²⁴³ Strategies of self-preservation were intended to protect the interests of villages, even though they may have presented a particular outward appearance of religious jurisdiction or ‘nationality’ to interested observers. It may be assumed that maintaining harmony and most importantly a sense of security, were important village priorities.

²⁴³ Stojan Vasilevski interview, op. cit.

Position of IMRO

THE PRIMARY OBJECTIVE of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) was the attainment of political autonomy of Macedonia. The organisation viewed the religious activities of the Balkan States as propagandistic political interference and reacted to it in a defined manner. According to Article Two of the constitution of the IMRO, 'the Organisation struggles for the removal of chauvanistic propaganda and national disputes, which split and exhaust the population in its struggle against the common enemy'.²⁴⁴ The position of IMRO was aimed at preventing further intensification of the religious rivalry in Macedonia and discouraged the Macedonian people from crossing from one church allegiance to another.

Slaveyko Arsov, an IMRO revolutionary leader, advocated the official IMRO position in respect to religious conflict in villages. Active in countryside villages and arranging public meetings, most often conducted in the village church, he encouraged the inhabitants to put aside any disagreements amongst themselves be they personal, political or of a religious nature. Reinforcing the aims of the organisation, Arsov made known that the primary aim of the *cheti* is not to make villagers Exarchists or Bulgarians, but to liberate them from the Ottomans. Whilst agitating in the Patriarchist village of German in the Mala Prespa region, the villagers asked Arsov whether they should transfer to the Exarchate or remain with the Patriarchate. Arsov replied, 'we are not interested in that, and that they may remain as they are, only that they cooperate with our work'.²⁴⁵ Arsov believed this strategy brought positive

²⁴⁴ M. Pandevski (1974), op. cit. p. 84. A translation of the IMRO statute in modern standard Macedonian reads: 'Organizacijata se bori za odstranuvanje na shovenistichkite propagandi i nacionalnite jazhbi, koi go razedinuvaat i obeccilnuvaat Makedonskoto i Odrinskoto naselenie vo negovata borba protiv zaednichkiot neprijatel'.

²⁴⁵ 'Vo German me prashaa dali da odat pod Egsarhijata ili da ostanat i natamu pod Patriakot? Im odgovorivme deka nas toa ne ne interesira i deka mozhat da si ostanat toa shto si bile. Dovolno e da bidat dobri za deloto'. Slaveyko Arsov Memoirs from I. Katardzhijev, editor, *Spomeni - S. Arsov, P. Klashev, L. Dzherov, G.P. Hristov, A. Andreev, G. Papanchev, L. Dimitrov*, Skopje, 1997, p. 95. Slavetko Arsov's memoirs were originally published in the series *Materijali za Istorijata na Makedonskoto Osloboditelno Dvizhenje* under the title of *Vostanichkoto Dvizhenje vo Jugozapadna Makedonija (Do 1904 God.)*, P. Glushkov, Sofia, 1925.

results. Harmony was restored in villages that were divided by religious propaganda, and thereafter a favourable political climate was created for the organisation to operate.

Similarly, Nikola Petrov Rusinski was an IMRO leader active in the Bitola/Mariovo region in the winter of 1902/1903. As an activist he conducted meetings in numerous villages under Patriarchate and Exarchate jurisdiction and successfully joined entire villages into the organisational fold. Oaths of allegiance were taken, memberships administered and village committees appointed.²⁴⁶ Similar accounts are given in the memoirs of Mihail Gerdzhikov, Boris Sarafov, Yane Sandanski, Pando Klashev and others throughout various regions of Macedonia of both Patriarchist and Exarchist villages, supplying freedom fighters and supporting the organisation and its struggle for political emancipation.²⁴⁷

The organisation actively engaged in bringing villages over to the IMRO regardless of church affiliation, and exploited the dissatisfaction of the Macedonian Christian population. A substantial portion of its fighting ranks consisted of men from Patriarchist villages²⁴⁸ and recruits were drawn from all sectors of the Macedonian population. Subjected to various influences, there were active men from

²⁴⁶ D. Pachemska-Petreska and V. Kushevski, editors, *Nikola Petrov Rusinski - Spomeni* [Nikola Petrov Rusinski - Memoirs], Skopje, 1997, pp. 241-277.

²⁴⁷ See I. Katardzhiev, editor, *Spomeni - I.H. Nikolov, D. Grujev, B. Sarafov, J. Sandanski, M. Gerdzhikov, Dr H. Tatarchev*, Skopje, 1995, and K. Pandev and Z. Noneva, op. cit.

²⁴⁸ Memoirs of numerous revolutionary figures attest to the fact that Macedonian Exarchist and Macedonian Patriarchist villages united as one during the Ilinden Rebellion. It is interesting to note that Greek historians have made claim to the Ilinden Rebellion as a Greek rebellion of liberation in Macedonia, counting Macedonian Patriarchist villages as Greek. On the other hand Bulgarian historians routinely claim the insurrection as Bulgarian, counting the IMRO leaders as Exarchate schoolteachers and the Macedonian Exarchate population as Bulgarian. The American, Albert Sonnichsen, spent a period of six months in Macedonia as a member of an IMRO *cheti*, active in the regions between Ber to Ohrid. Sonnichsen details how a leader of a VMRO unit, from a Patriarchate village, whom had been educated in Athens and was a fluent Greek speaker, utilised his Greek language skills to entrap and kill the Greek priest from the village of Pisoderi. Sonnichsen described the priest as 'below a Bishop in rank, but higher in atrocities committed'). A. Sonnichsen, *Isповед na eden Makedonski chetnik* [Confessions of a Macedonian bandit], Skopje, 1997, pp. 208-210. Originally published in New York, 1909. Dr Ivan Alyov, of the Patriarchist party, was a prominent individual from the town of Gumendje. He had gained his medical training in Athens and provided the local revolutionary committee in Gumedje with medical supplies and attended to the medical needs of the *cheti*. Described as a Macedonian patriot, he was particularly respected for his stand against the antagonism brought by the religious rivalry between the Exarchate and Patriarchate. M. Pandevski, (1974), op. cit. p. 113.

Exarchate, Patriarchist, Serb Patriarchist, Uniate and Protestant villages.²⁴⁹ From the non-Macedonian population, Vlachs were the most numerous participants in the IMRO.²⁵⁰

Prominent members of the organisation routinely travelled throughout Macedonia visiting both Exarchate and Patriarchate villages and speaking to the inhabitants about the political future of Macedonia.²⁵¹ The organisation opposed the interference of the Balkan States and the manner in which Macedonia had become a battlefield for competition of the people. The IMRO sought to maintain and protect the integrity of Macedonia. Towards the final stages of Ottoman rule, certain elements in the organisation favoured continued Ottoman domination in preference to dismemberment of the country.²⁵²

Despite the enormous pressures put on people to subscribe to one particular identity or another, there is a surprising level of uniformity on what it meant to live and work in Macedonia.

²⁴⁹ See M. Pandevski, *Makedonskoto Osloboditelno Delo Vo XIX i XX Vek* [The Macedonian Liberation Action in the XIX and XX century], Vol III, Skopje, 1987. In the Strumica region the district treasurer for IMRO was Alafred Izev (Koleshino village). Alafred Izev was a son of Mane Izev. According to John Izev the famous revolutionary leader Jane Sandanski was training to become a Protestant church pastor before his death in 1915. John Izev interview, op. cit.

²⁵⁰ There was also a small number of ethnic Greeks in the ranks of the IMRO. A prominent individual was Ivan 'Grcbeta' (Ivan 'the Greek'). Born in 1880 in the Eastern Macedonian town of Melnik, he was recruited into the IMRO by the famous Goce Delchev. During the Ilinden Rebellion he led a *cheta* in the Drama region. Faithful to the principles of the IMRO to the end, he was killed in battle with the Ottoman regular army in 1905.

²⁵¹ Nikola Petrov Rusinski details his visit to the village of Polog (Bitola region) in 1902 and the topic upon which he spoke at the evening gathering was 'the laws by which nations are governed'. D. Pachemska-Petreska and V. Kushevski, op. cit. p. 258.

²⁵² Jane Sandanski, the famous leader in the Seres region of Macedonia, was an outspoken advocate of this view in the final years leading to the Balkan Wars.