

Strasko Stojanovski PhD, University "Goce Delcev"- Shtip, Faculty of Law, Macedonia

Jovan Ananiev PhD, University "Goce Delcev"- Shtip, Faculty of Law, Macedonia

**Toward European Identity: Role of national historiographies in creating
Balkan myths**

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The national projects on the Balkan needed necessarily to begin from the religious settlement in the late Ottoman Empire, and generate nowadays Balkan national discourse, which during the clash of the models for building a national ideology were heading from Western Europe. Since the original national ideology under the veil of the liberalism, humanism and the Enlightenment would establish itself into the framework of the Christian communities therefore the ethnicity towards the Orthodox Church would become a basic criterion for building the national originality. In the early 20th century Pan-Orthodoxy would start its evolution towards the promoting of the Pan-Slavism. The opposition towards the executing of the service of "The Holly Greek Language" becomes the basic motif for the beginning of the search of the medieval empire roots of the Slavic communities.

Proto-national elites generated by the citizenships would firstly strive to construct special churches that would further on establish the basic paradigms of the presence of the nation, while representing the secular modern system within the mass education. Hence, at least one generation would be needed to go through the educational institutions in order to conduct the project for creating a homogeneous nation. The myth of the national unity in the forthcoming phase could be sermonized in terms of the primary societal institutions of

socialization, as it is the example of Family. Nevertheless, in practice the inconstancy of the character in these institutions such as the variable nature equally regarding the physical and ethnical boundaries, will prolong the whole national homogenization up until the first decades on the 20th century.

Hence, even in the Balkan context, the myth or the myths are a product of contemporary times and even of there existed in the preindustrial past yet their significance and symbolic value are considerably changed. National historiographies insist into the search for a more profound historical past in order to solidly place the nation as deeper as possible into the history. Thus, the Greek myth for the origin comes from the amalgam between the Byzantine Christian tradition and the antique past of “ Classical Greece“, then the Serbian and Bulgarian example that insist on maintaining the continuity from the legendary medieval Christian empires, further on the Macedonian historiography creates an image of a synthetic generating of the nation from the ancient past and medieval Slavic tribes and lastly, the Albanian history which appears with a pure religious and anti-Ottoman feature that attaches a national overtone to the Skenderbeg’s rebellion.

It is clear that one cannot neglect the era of Enlightenment and National awakening as a significant segment of the historical past, but also attaching an essence as to a natural and necessary process that comes as an outcome of the past but nevertheless vice versa- the past as a product of the reformed conditions of the present. Thus, in practice the national unity is maintained on the basis of referring to the blood relations and the ethnicity in the country less than the commitment and loyalty towards the civil state while which more or less this is being replenished with the usage of mechanisms for coercion and idealistic stimulating.

The one towards which the attention needs to be appointed while the influence of the historical curricula within the reconstructing of the memory and tradition of the collectivities, should not be sought for classical invention of tradition but a final form of a created general awareness through selective interpretation of facts. As for the case of the Balkan nations there are some examples in which the tradition itself is completely invented such as the case with the system of rituals and symbolic manifestations derived from the building of cult towards national monarchies, symbols (flags, hymn etc) or events from more distant ancient or medieval past that were completely erased from the collective memory and to which a new form and significance is being given, all of these in a function of the nation.

The depiction of continuity existence coming from times while creating the nation up to nowadays modernity is replenishing the myth of the origin. The establishing of the connection between the antique and the Middle Ages with the modernity is actually a challenge to which the national history devotes a significant part of its mission. In addition to that even in conditions of nonexistence of a certain continuity for national self-recognition, the myth for organic origin is being constructed through a search of relation with the distant past in terms of linguistic and historical traits. Much often the variable nature of the Balkan case is being explicated as a foreign national infliction or as a national superiority far into the history of the medieval empires and antique kingdoms.

This refers to the models for national constituting and building the nation alone. Namely, within the context of the Balkan up until now for the current scientific thought dominates the assumption that the nations are based on Ethno-linguistic model of existence of the organic settled nations. The basic substantial national element is the language and culture and the territory according to those aspects bears the second denotation. But as long some deepened substantial theoretical analyses are done, the conclusion is different. Beginning from the assumption of Brubaker according to which the French comprehension for nationalism is state-centered and assimilation-oriented and the German one is Volk-centered and differentiating-oriented; therefore, the first one is based on building universal cultural values and the second one is based on organic cultural, linguistic or racial communities. Hence, the second comprehension of nation is ethnocentrically considered and not as a political fact (Brubaker, 1999: 1). Such interpretation of Brubaker could be implemented in the framework of the Balkan historical-national context while there would be two phase differentiated within the national construction:

1. First phase includes the French model, using the assimilative power placed on political ground;
2. While in the second phase, the sense of ethnicity of the organ nations or ethnos is built, which after the ascertaining will get a tendency to recycle with the next generations.

Collective memory of the national community is consolidated through emphasizing the historical moments of suffering and sacrificing in behalf of the group. The memory of the hard times is used from political subjects of the national present as a mobilizing attribute that is being used in the moments of crisis of the present. Much often in moments of economical

crisis, national consolidation is an alternative for sustaining the unity and the order in the society. But, as of the example presented from former Yugoslavia, the exploitation of nationalism into political aims could cause a new national catastrophes, ethnical, religious or group disputes that are hard to be controlled.

Yet, every Balkan historiography constructs visions for historical past where they were the victims in collective national sense. Thus, the one that the Greek historiography presents as a myth for the refugees after the Greek-Turkish war, then the Bulgarian one has it by the “injustice” with the preclusion of the “San-Stefan’s Bulgaria”, further on the episodes of the national rebellion such as the massacre at Batak. Furthermore, the Serbian historiography is a collective victim of the “Kosovo Battle” but seemingly the recent history of national defeats related with the violent disintegration of Yugoslavia etc. While the Macedonian historiography focuses to the “Bucharest Peace” since 1913 and its separation of the “Ethno-geographical” whole. But the one that is impressive is that each Balkan nations-states except R. of Turkey place the myth of the “Turkish slavery” through their national history as a dark, illegitimate part of their past.

“The Golden Age” of the Balkan national myths is identifying mainly two constitutive elements: Pre-Christian powerful empires and cultures that are derived in this region and the Christian medieval empires that preceded the Ottoman Islamic domination. The one that to the Greek myth represent an antique classical heritage and medieval Byzantium, then same to the Bulgarian, Serbian and the Macedonian myth, are the medieval Christian Empires that owned their own territorial centers onto which nowadays national states extend. Nevertheless, the Macedonian myth for the “well-known times” tremendously overlaps with the Bulgarian myth for existence of the statehood but both neglecting the fact that the Empire model is based on the triangulation religion- ruler- vassalage and not a based on the national centric perspective to see the ethno- linguistic context of the group determination. Even more to this, the Serbian myth is undermined in its last decade from the loss on territorial base that redefines the manifest content after the establishment of the independence of Kosovo.

Seemingly, it is remarkable to be mentioned about the battle for building the fundamental myth between the Pre-Christian antique past and the Christian concept of the historical statehood. If in case of Greece those discussions are open in the creating of the modern state in the 19th century, they are tremendously manifested through the battle for establishing an official language on the basis of antique *Koine v Katharevousa* or the Folks

contemporary demotic. Yet, among the others those discussions are vastly opened after the year of 1990. Therefore, in Macedonia there is a tendency for reexamination of the Golden Age in favor of the Antique Macedonian Empire of Alexander the Great, while in Bulgaria more of the significance was given to the Pre-Christian Thracian culture. Yet it must be mentioned that as much as the “Pan-orthodoxy” and the “Pan-Slavism” were supported or facing a support from the Russian sphere of influence the more Pre-Christian antique that had become an integral part of the “Western Civilization”, has been supported from the West. Hence, the current condition of recalling the Antique in some parts of the Balkan nations which after the 90-ties in the 20th century were derived from the communist regimes, is actually tremendously a product of the modern globalization of the thought and the canalizing of the West as a basic criterion according to which the intellectual elites perform their defining.

The Heroic time is completely established into the Christian viewpoint for construction of the collective visions for self-sacrificing in behalf of the others. Hence, the heroic time proceeds after “the Golden Age” and is being given an anti-Ottoman and anti-Islamic trait. Even Skanderbeg’s “Albanian” rebellion is being given a Pan-Christian trait in spite of the fact that the contemporary historical visions build a different image of the national heroism. The rest of the myths are mainly connected with the national liberation movements and rebellions pointed against the Ottoman Empire – First and the Second Serbian Rebellion, Greek Rebellion and the Battle for Independence, April Uprising in Bulgaria as well as the Ilinden Uprising in Macedonia. Further on, the Nation’s War of the Balkan People during the periods of the Greek and Macedonian Battle, The Balkan Wars, World War One and World War Two as even the Greek Civil War that beside it’s in general ideologically based in practice it grew to be a dispute of the Greek nation – a state with Macedonian minority.

It is interesting to mention that many of the heroes are a subject of aspiration of much nationalism. Thus the heroic mythography for Alexander the Great is equally produced by the Macedonian and Greek historiography even though that it is incorporated much sooner by the second one; the myth for the heroisms of *Kralo Marko* (King Marko) is equally placed into the Macedonian, Bulgarian and Serbian national epics; But the mythology that is made about the character of the Macedonian revolutionary movement in the late Ottoman period, is a subject of competition between the Macedonian and Bulgarian historiography.

The challenges for the collective identity on the Balkans and the rest of Europe are approximating slowly but surely. Consecutively with the new mainstream of the political and economical integration of the Balkan countries into the European Union the legal frame for mutual direct communication and collaboration is being created. The threat that spins around us is at the same time diffuse, uncertain and silent. It is not only an outcome of the external threats of the international terrorism which actually crystallize and strengthens up the community as destined. It is all in us. Into the dehumanized alienation of the civil market society expressed through human hair-splitting, destroying and fatalism expressed into our: "From today and until tomorrow" (Morin, 1989:139).