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(Trans)forming Group Identities Among the Rhodopes' Pomaks in the First Decades of the 20th Century. A Historical Perspective

In the last few years the study of minority and ethnicity issues has become a popular subject among scholars who are interested in the people and history of the Balkans, a region that is generally assumed to be ethnically one of the most varied parts of South-Eastern Europe¹. A good example of the multicultural character of the Balkans is the Rhodopes range along the Greek-Bulgarian border, where among the majorities of Eastern Orthodox Christians lives a considerable Muslim population. This population is in terms of its cultural characteristics diverse in character and it is unofficially subdivided into three different groups: Turks, Pomaks (Slavic-speaking Muslims)² and Roma (Gypsies). In

1. On ethnicity issues relevant to the minorities of South Eastern Europe see in general C. Lienau - L. Steindorff (eds.), *Ethnizität, Identität und Nationalität in Südosteuropa. Beiträge zu einem Präsentationstag des Südosteuropa*. [Beiträge zu einem Präsentationstag des Südosteuropa. Forschung an der Universität Münster am 27.11.1998], München 2000. Cf. U. Brunnbauer (ed.), *Umstrittene Identitäten, Ethnizität und Nationalität in Südosteuropa*, Frankfurt am Main - Berlin - Bern - Bruxelles - N. York - Oxford - Wien 2000; L. Kürti - J. Langman (eds.), *Beyond Borders. Remaking Cultural Identities in the New East and Central Europe*, Boulder / Oxford 1997. On ethnicity issues concerning the Muslims in Bulgaria and Greece see A. Krasteva (ed.), *Communities and Identities in Bulgaria*, Ravenna 1998; S. Troubeta, *Κατασκευάζοντας ταυτότητες για τους Μουσουλμάνους της Θράκης. Το παράδειγμα των Πομάκων και των Τσιγγάνων* (Constructing Identities for the Muslims in Thrace. The Pomaks' and the Roma Case), Athens 2001 (in Greek).

2. On the history of the ethnonym "Pomak" see A. Popović, "Pomaks" in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, New edition VIII (Ned-Sam), Leiden 1986, pp. 320-324. On the older Ottoman term "Ahirjan" see V. L. Menage, On the Ottoman Word Ahrijan/Ahiryjan, *Archivum Ottomanicum* 1 (1969) 197-212. On Pomaks' geographical distribution in Greek Thrace (mainly in the northern zone of the prefectures of Xanthi, Komotini and Evros) see C. Lienau, Die Muslime Griechenlands - zum Problem von Ethnizität, Identität und Nationalität in *Ethnizität, Identität und Nationalität in Südosteuropa, op.cit.*, pp. 49-70, 51. As regards their numbers, according to the Human Rights Report-Greece (U.S. Embassy Athens) Release Date: 1st February 1991.8, Muslim Minority comprised then some 130,000 Turks,

Greece these groups constitute the Muslim Minority of Western Thrace³, which is defined by religious criteria alone as stipulated by the Lausanne Peace Treaty⁴. In Bulgaria, where the revised Constitutional Chart of 1991 does not recognize any collective minority rights and simply guarantees the protection of the cultural identity of those citizens of non-Bulgarian origin (article 54.1) and the promotion of the learning of their mother tongue (article 36.2)⁵, Pomaks are officially defined as Muslim Bulgarians (Bălgarite Mochamedani) with Bulgarian as mother tongue and Islam as their religious affiliation⁶.

Pomaks and Gypsies. According to the data presented by the Greek Ex-Deputy Foreign Minister G. Kapsis in 1990, the total 103,869 of Muslims in Western Thrace is made up of 51,917 Muslims of Turkish origin, 34,878 Pomaks and 17,078 Roma. See G. Kapsis, *Οι τρεις μέρες του Μάρτη. Απόρρητοι φάκελλοι* (The Three Days of March. Secret Files), Athens 1990, p. 298 (in Greek).

3. Y. Frangopoulos, *Les Grecs musulmans: "À propos d'une minorité religieuse dans les Balkans"*, *Balkan Studies* 34/1 (1993) 105-118; F. De Jong, *The Muslim Minority in Western Thrace*, in G. Ashworth (ed.), *World Minorities in the Eighties*, Sudbury, Middx. 1980, pp. 95-100. Bibliography and recent scholarship on Muslim Minority of Western Thrace in R. Clogg (ed.), *Minorities in Greece. Aspects of a Plural Society*, London 2002; V. Aarbakke, *A bibliography on Minorities in Greece*, <http://www.armory.com/~thrace/bibl/>, 1/3/2001; F. Asimakopoulou - S. Christidou (eds.), *Η Μουσουλμανική Μειονότητα της Δυτικής Θράκης και οι ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις* (The Muslim Minority in Western Thrace and the Greek-Turkish Relations), Athens 2002 (in Greek).

4. The text in *League of Nations Treaty, Series XXXVIII* (1924) 11-113.

5. K. Kentrotis, *Η Βουλγαρία στη μετακομμουνιστική περίοδο* (Bulgaria in Post-Communism Era), *Valkanika Symmeikta* (Balkan Miscellanies) 5-6 (1993-1994) 115-126 (in Greek). Cf. M. Κορρα, *Οι μειονότητες στα μετακομμουνιστικά Βαλκάνια. Πολιτικές του κέντρου και μειονοτικές απαντήσεις* (Minorities in the Post-Communism Balkans. State Policies and Minority Answers), Athens 1997, p. 70 (in Greek).

6. In Bulgaria, Pomaks are settled in the districts round the cities of Blagoevgrad and Gotse Delchev in Western Rhodopes and around Smoljan in the Central Rhodopes. Smaller Pomak communities are also to be found near the town of Lovech and around Veliko Tărnovo in central Bulgaria. According to an unofficial estimate, the number of Pomaks in the country amounted in 1971 to 170,000 persons (2.02% of the total population). See B. S. Troebst, *Nationale Minderheiten* στο K. D. Grothusen (ed.), *Bulgarien*, [Südosteuropa Handbuch Band VI] Göttingen 1991, pp. 474-489, 477, 487. According to data based on the population census which was conducted in 1989 by the Bulgarian Ministry of the Interior, the Pomak population amounted then to 268,971 persons (3% of the total population). See Yulian Constantinov and Gulbrand Alhang, *Names, Ethnicity and Politics. Islamic Names in Bulgaria, 1912-1992*, *Novus Press* 1995, p. 24. Cf. B. Gjuselev, *Die Minderheiten in Bulgarien unter Berücksichtigung der letzten Volkszählung vom Dezember 1991*, *Südosteuropa* 1994/6, p. 362.

The Slavic speaking Muslims⁷ in the Rhodopes manifest some features, i.e. a common proper name, a link with a land and some elements of common culture, which would be associated with a distinct ethnic group. But Pomaks' ethnicity should not be defined according to the essentialist and static national criteria, i.e. on the basis of the presumed historical descent of the group or the content of its culture⁸, as is often the case

7. Pomaks are speakers of Slavic vernaculars which are self referred to as *Pomatsko-so*. See P. Trudgill, "Ausbau Sociolinguistics and Identity in Greece" in P. Trudgill, *Sociolinguistic variation and Change*, Edinburgh 2002, p. 132: "There is also a community of Slavic Speakers in Greek Thrace. This is a Muslim community known as the Pomaks, 20.000 strong in 1951, perhaps 10.000 today (some estimates suggest as many as 40.000) who live in the area around Xanthi. The reference of these vernaculars as Slavic in this study follows the decisions of the Pan-Slavic Linguistic Atlas Committee that all Slavic idioms spoken within the boundaries of states that have non-Slavic national languages should be referred to simply as Slavic. Cf. D. Ivanova-Mirčeva, "Rabotata na Bălgarskata Komisija za Obšeslavjanskija Linguističen Atlas" (The Work of the Bulgarian Commission for the Slavonic Languages Linguistic Atlas), *Bălgarski Ezik* 4 (1982) 330-335, 333. Bulgarian dialectologists classify *Pomatsko-so* as Rupic (Rhodopes) Bulgarian dialects, see Stojko Stojkov, *Bălgaska Dialektologija*, Sofija 1993, p. 127; cf. I. Ivanov, *Bălgarska Dialektologija*, Plovdiv 1994. The sociolinguistic situation of *Pomatsko-so* is rather complex. In general terms both in Bulgaria as well as in Greece it is a non-institutionalized regional low variety, which is relegated to family and colloquial intra-group interaction and is stunted in scope. In Greece, Turkish has become since 1923 a high-culture language for the entire Muslim minority in matters of religion. Classical Arabic is also used for religious instructional purposes, but the Koran is theologically interpreted in Turkish. Turkish, although not a mother-tongue for the majority of Pomaks, is also the official minority language within the bilingual (Turkish-Greek) context of the primary and secondary education minority institutions. Greek is the language of the administration and the state, but within the Muslim community it does not claim a high-variety status. In general terms the three languages are distributed according to the social environment, age, gender and individual attitudes. On the sociolinguistic issues of *Pomatsko-so* in Greece see H. Sella-Mazi, "Διγλωσσία και ολιγότερο ομιλούμενες γλώσσες στην Ελλάδα" (Bilingualism and Minority Languages in Greece), in K. Tsitselikis, D. Christopoulos (eds.), *Το μειονοτικό φαινόμενο στην Ελλάδα. Μία συμβολή των κοινωνικών επιστημών* (The Minority Phenomenon in Greece. A Contribution of the Social Sciences), Athens 1997, pp. 351-413, 379-385 (in Greek); H. Sella-Mazi, "Linguistic Contact Today: The case of the Muslim Minority in Northeastern Greece", FYI 7-8/1997, pp. 115-143. Cf. L. Empeirikos and others (eds.), *Γλωσσική Ετερότητα στην Ελλάδα* (Linguistic Diversity in Greece), Athens 2001, pp. 15-67 (in Greek). For a discussion within the context of E.U see M. Siguàn, *Les minorités linguistiques dans la Communauté Économique Européenne: Espagne, Portugal, Grèce. Série "documents"*, Bruxelles - Luxembourg, Office des Publications Officielles de Communautés Européennes 1990; P. É. Dimitras, "Minorités linguistiques en Grèce" in H. Giordan (ed.), *Les minorités en Europe. Droits linguistiques et droits de l'homme*, Paris, pp. 301-317.

8. Critical considerations of the primordial (essentialist) theory of ethnicity in J. D. Eller

with the authoritative imaginary discourses concerning the group throughout the Balkans⁹. Ethnicity is rather a variable and never ending process, through which the actors identify themselves and are identified by the others on the basis of the us vs. them dichotomy, which is established by the symbolic use of selected features of a groups' social organization. The selection of these features as ethnic markers by a population group is a dynamic process, dependent on the social interaction and the historical conjunctions¹⁰. Therefore, in order to understand Pomaks' ethnicity, one should look into the internalized ethnicity markers of the group itself and the cultural mechanisms that are crucial in establishing its boundaries and in guiding the collective behaviour of its members.

Within this framework Pomaks come out as an ethno-religious group whose self-perception is based primarily on religion¹¹. The preferred self-

and R. M. Coughlan, The poverty of primordialism: the Demystification of Ethnic Attachments in J. Hutchinson and A. Smith, *Nationalism, Critical Concepts in Political Science*, vol. I, London - New York, 2000, pp. 161-179.

9. See U. Brunnbauer, "Histories and Identities: Nation-State and Minority Discourses", in *In and Out of the Collective: Papers on the Former Soviet Bloc Rural Communities, On Line Journal issued by the Bulgarian Society for Regional Cultural Studies* 1 (1998) 1-14; cf. A. Balıkcı, "Pomak Identity, National Prescriptions and Native Assumptions", *Ethnologia Balkanica* 3 (1999) 51-58.

10. On this interpretation of ethnicity see F. Barth, "Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity", in H. Vermeulen and G. Govers (eds.), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 11-32; cf. G. De Vos, "Ethnic Pluralism: Conflict and Accommodation" in R. Romanucci and G. De Vos (eds.) *Ethnic Identity. Creation, Conflict and Accommodation*, Walnut Creek 1995, p. 24.

11. On the self-perception of Pomaks in Greece see S. Troubeta, "Κατασκευάζοντας ταυτότητες για τους Μουσουλμάνους της Θράκης", *op.cit.*, pp. 113, 130-133; Y. Frangopoulos, La minorité musulmane et les Pomaques de la Thrace: entre Islam et ethnisme, *CEMOTI* 17 (1-6/1994) 153-166. On the group presentation in Bulgaria and its identity transformations see E. Karagiannis, *Zur Ethnizität der Pomaken Bulgariens*, Münster 1997; Y. Konstantinov, "Sustaining a vulnerable Identity: The case of the Bulgarian Pomaks" in H. Poulton - S. Taji-Farouki (eds.), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, London 1997, pp. 33-52; M. Todorova, "Identity Transformation among the Pomaks" in L. Kürti - J. Langman (eds.), *Beyond Borders, op.cit.*, pp. 63-82; U. Brunnbauer, "Pomaken in Bulgarien. Der schwierige Prozeß der Identitätsfindung", *Ostwest - Gegeninformationen* 9/3 (1997) 26-30; J. Telbizova-Sack, "Die Pomaken Bulgariens zwischen Identitätsverlust und Selbstbehauptung" in *Ethnizität, Identität und Nationalität in Südosteuropa, op.cit.*, pp. 71-78; M. Danova, "Transformations of Ethnic Identity: The Case of the Bulgarian Pomaks" in Ch. Lord - O. Strietska-Llina (eds.), *Parallel Cultures. Majority/minority relations in the countries of the Former Eastern Bloc*, Ashgate. Aldershot - Burlington U.S.A. - Singapore - Sydney 2001, pp. 147-175.

denomination of the group /mysylmanin/ “Muslim” and the endogamy within the Muslim group are two good indications of the function of Islam as a major differentiating factor for insiders and outsiders. According to the Bulgarian anthropologist M. Elchinova even the myths of a presumed common ancestry and the historical memories are of a religious character and one can find among the Bulgarian Pomaks legends which depict the Prophet Muhammad as the true ancestor of the Pomaks and locate his place of birth in a local village¹². Nevertheless, equating ethnicity with religion is but a part of the ethnicity picture of the Pomaks, since members of the group also have subscribed to modern national imagined communities. Thus in Bulgaria, some Pomaks have Bulgarian leanings, while a growing number identifies themselves as Turks¹³. Similarly in Greece, many members of the group identify themselves as “Pomaks” or accept assimilation to the coreligionist Turks, whereas a number of them, residents usually of urban centres, either adopt secular views or use their cultural characteristics in an indifferent or opportunistic way, depending on the social situations and their interests¹⁴.

The use of religion as an ethnicity marker and the assimilation mainly with the coreligionist Turks are not accidental. Researchers usually point out that the identification of religion with ethnicity which is also observed among other Balkan populations is a pro-national relic of the Millet system of the Ottoman Empire¹⁵. Ottoman millet organization has indeed been a historical basis of the imaginary community of Muslim believers, regardless of race or language¹⁶. In this study, though, I shall argue that the ethnicity of the Pomaks is actually a reaction to the dominance of the national states in the late 19th century and to the constructions of identities through certain state policies throughout the

12. M. Elchinova, “Ethnic Discourse and Group Presentation in Modern Bulgarian Society”, *Development and Society* 30/1 (2001) 51-78.

13. Ts. Georgieva, “Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians” in A. Krasteva (ed.), *Communities and Identities in Bulgaria*, Ravenna 1998, pp. 221-238.

14. Βλ. S. Troubeta, *Κατασκευάζοντας ταυτότητες για τους Μουσουλμάνους της Θράκης*, *op.cit.*, pp. 121-133.

15. On Muslim identities in the Balkans see N. Clayer - A. Popović, “Identités musulmanes dans les Balkans à l'époque post-ottomane”, *Mesogeios* 3 (1999) 7-30; H. Poulton - S. Taji-Farouki (eds.), *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*, London 1997, p. 16.

16. On Millets in the Ottoman Empire see *infra* note 23.

20th century. Thus, the analysis will focus on the investigation of the ways the Balkan states of the region (Bulgaria, Greece, post-Ottoman Turkey) shaped the ethnicity of this non dominant group. The theoretical basis of the analysis is the dynamic, inter-actionist viewpoint of ethnic identity and the historical paradigms are drawn from the period 1870-1930. The analysis begins with an overview of the ethnicity of the Pomaks in the late Ottoman period and the way it came out in the military conflicts of the Ottomans with the nascent Bulgarian state in 1870, the Russians in 1878 and particularly after the signing of the San Stefano Treaty (19 February/3 March 1878). It proceeds with instances of state policies vis-à-vis the group in the second and third decades of the 20th century. On the basis of published Bulgarian documents are investigated the political and ideological motives behind the Bulgarian forceful conversion of the Pomaks to Christianity during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and the impact it had on their identity. It continues with Greek ideological constructions and government policies from the end of the First World War up to the 1930s and concludes with a brief comparative analysis of the Muslim minority rights postulated by the Bulgarian-Turkish Peace Treaty of Istanbul in 1913 and the Greek-Turkish Peace Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. These historical cases provide examples of some recurrent patterns throughout the 20th century.

During the second half of the 19th century, the Muslim populations of the Rhodopes were Ottoman subjects and constituted a part of the wider Muslim community of the Ottoman Empire¹⁷. The Ottoman Empire was a state paradigm, which on a primary level was comprised of populations with mainly local and diverse “low” cultures¹⁸. Pomaks settled in the Rhodopes were living next to Bulgarian speaking Christians or Turkish speaking Muslims¹⁹. They adopted mixed economy strategies and as small scale agriculturalists, mountain pastoralists or craftsmen²⁰

17. On Ottoman administration units in the Rhodope see H. J. Kornrumpf, *Territoriale Verwaltungseinheiten und Kadiamtsbezirke in der Europäischen Türkei (ohne Bosnien und Ungarn)*, Leiden - Köln 1995.

18. On “low” vs. “high” culture see E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, Oxford 1983, p. 141.

19. See L. Miletič, *Razorenieto na Trakijskite Bălgari prez 1913* (The Catastrophe of Thracian Bulgarians in 1913), Sofija 2003.

20. On the economic and social organization of the Central Rhodopes at the time see U. Brunnbauer, *Das Gebirge und die Haushalte. Ökologie, Arbeitsorganisation und Haushalte*

they were differentiated from the Turkish-speaking Muslims, who were living in the plain (Pomaks still call them in their vernaculars *tsitak* “uncouth peasants”) and were usually share croppers in the Ottoman big estates, as well as from the artisan Muslim Gypsies (they were called by the Pomaks *rashatar*²¹. But these socio-economic distinctions never became antagonistic, and for this reason provided only the social milieu for the construction of a Pomak identity close to that of an ethnic category²², that is local, discontinuous and apolitical.

On a second level, due to the internal state organization of the Ottoman populations in millets²³, Pomaks, as Muslim believers, were part of the imaginary Muslim community, and shared a collective identity that was constructed through the institutional distinctions between Muslims and non-Muslims. This identity was symbolized by markers of religion, the collective experience of which was safeguarded through the communal religious and educational institutions²⁴. Before the appearance of Bulgarian Nationalism in Thrace, the Ottoman religious communities had not been politicized, but they nurtured antagonistic social categorizations (cf. the symbolic dichotomy “believer” vs. “non-believer”), which under certain circumstances such as the collision of

unter Muslimen und Christen in den Mittleren Rhodopen, 1830 bis 1935, Phil. Diss. Graz 1998; Idem, “Abgebrochene Entwicklung? Die Rhodopen als regionale Fallstudie für die wirtschaftlichen Folgen des Zerfalls des Osmanischen Reiches”, *SOF* 59 (2001) 324-350.

21. For contacts among Pomaks and Gypsies see E. M. Cousinéry, *Voyage dans la Macédoine contenant des recherches sur l'histoire, la géographie et les antiquités de ce pays*, Paris 1831, vol. II, pp. 13-14, 104.

22. A. Smith, *National Identity*, London 1991, pp. 14, 39. As a paradigm of an ethnic category are usually quoted the peasants of Anatolia in 1900, who ignored the existence of a Turkish identity other than that of the Muslim identity or the prevalent Ottoman of the élite and considered more important the local identities constructed through kinship ties, the village community or the wider geographic region.

23. On Ottoman Millets see M. Ursinus, “Zur Discussion um ‘Millet’ im Osmanischen Reich”, *SOF* 48 (1989) 195-207; K. Karpat, “Millets and Nationality: The Roots of Incongruity of Nation and State in the Post Ottoman Era” in B. Braude - B. Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire*, New York 1982, vol. I., pp. 261-285; D. Gofman, “Ottoman Millets in the Early Seventeenth Century”, *New Perspectives on Turkey* fasc. 11 (Fall 1994) 138.

24. For the elements that unite believers see E. Durkheim, *Les formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse*, Paris 1960, repr. 1990, p. 218; D. Hervieu-Léger, “The transmission and Formation of Socioreligious Identities in Modernity”, *International Sociology* 13/2 (1998) 213-228, 218.

economic interests, the political aims of the leadership and the military conflicts between the Ottomans and the nascent national states could be manipulated and politicized. Within the Muslim community there also existed religious differences among the Sunni Muslims and the local Bektashi orders²⁵, but in the Pomak case, unlike other ethno-religious groups such as the Muslim Albanians and the Bosnians, these differences were eventually played down and did not lead to a political or ideological differentiation²⁶. Thus, in the military crisis of the last two decades of the 19th century, the Muslim community in the Rhodopes and its peripheral élite remained united and followed the central government.

As soon as the Bulgarian Uprising broke out in 1870, the Pomaks not only turned a deaf ear to the appeals of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Committees to participate in the uprising with the Bulgarian Christians, but also some of their local leaders, such as Ahmed Aga Tãmrãsljata and Ahmed Aga from Barutin, were leading the local irregular troops which played a crucial part in its suppression²⁷. In 1877-1878, during the Ottoman conflict with the Russians, the Pomaks joined forces with the other Muslims to resist the Russian and Bulgarian troops which advanced to the south and after the signing of the San Stefano Treaty (19 February / 3 March 1878)²⁸ they took part in the Rhodopes resistance, by forming a defensive line from Chepino in the northwest up to Haskoey in the

25. On Balkan Islam see A. Popović, *L'Islam balkanique. Les Musulmanes du Sud-Est Européen dans la période post-ottomane*, Berlin - Wiesbaden 1986; Idem, "Les ordes mystiques musulmans du Sud-Est Européen dans la période post-ottomane. Les derviches balkaniques hier et aujourd'hui", *Analecta Isisiana* XIII (1994) 25-65; E. Zeginis, *Ο Μπεκτασισμός στη Δυτική Θράκη. Συμβολή στην ιστορία της διαδόσεως του Μουσουλμανισμού στον ελληνικό χώρο* (The Bektashi Sect in Western Thrace. A Contribution to the History of the Dissemination of Islam in Greek lands), Thessaloniki 1988; M. G. Varvounis, "A Contribution to the Study of Influences of Christian upon Moslem Customs in Popular Worship", *Journal of Oriental and African Studies* 6 (1993) 75-89.

26. On the role of Bektashi orders in the Albanian national movement see P. Bartl, *Die Albanischen Muslime zur Zeit der Nationalen Unabhängigkeitsbewegung (1878-1912)*, Wiesbaden 1968, chapter 5. For the ethno-religious background of Bosnian Muslims see S. M. Džaja, *Konfessionalität und Nationalität Bosniens und der Herzegowina. Voremanzipatorische Phase 1463-1804*, München 1984, p. 43.

27. B. Lory, "Ahmed Aga Tãmrãsljata. The Last Derebey of the Rhodopes" in K. H. Karpat (ed), *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, [International Journal of Turkish Studies 4.2], Istanbul 1989, pp. 179-202.

28. Fred L. Israel (ed.), *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History (1648-1967)*, vol. II, New York 1967, pp. 959-974.

southeast²⁹. According to the Greek diplomatic sources, the armed movement of the Muslim populations was supported by the Ottoman Revolutionary Committee in Drama, which sought to instigate a general Ottoman resistance to the Bulgarian and Russian authorities³⁰. Some twenty Muslim (mainly Pomak) villages in the northwestern Rhodopes (Rupčos-region) also refused to comply with the regulations of the Berlin Treaty (1/13 July 1878)³¹, which stipulated the subordination of their region to the Bulgarian Kingdom and, although they officially came under Bulgarian sovereignty, they remained insubordinate up to the Top

29. Foreign Office Parliament Papers 1878 vol. LXXXI 892: "In the hills above Tatar Pazardjik and Plovdiv and the district of Ahi Celebi, the Muslim population was exclusively Pomaks. However, the Muslim inhabitants further eastward and to the southern Haskoey were exclusively Turks. The connection between these two categories of resisters was closer than that between these last ones and those still further to the south, where again the Pomak element predominates. This last group of Pomaks, who inhabit the parts about Sicancik Mountain or "Koca Yayka", although they took up arms, were comparatively little engaged, and for this reason, that the Christian element in those parts is numerically weak and found it prudent not to molest their Muslim neighbours". For the British explanation of the events see Foreign Office, vol. 2787, Confidential report of the British ambassador in Istanbul in 2 May 1878 in K. Karpat, *The politicization of Islam, Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, Oxford, 2001, p. 151: "The natural desire for national preservation has arisen to such a pitch as to lead in all probability to important and combined action on the part of the Mohammedan races of European Turkey, the object of which would be determined resistance to the proposed extension of Bulgaria by means of a protracted guerilla warfare to which south and Central Albania, as well as the Rhodopes mountains would be peculiarly adapted. Information received from various parts of European Turkey fully show the general determination of the Mohammedan populations for a national defence against what they consider to be unjustifiable and cruel treatment, as regards life, honour and property experienced by their coreligionists at the hands of Bulgarians and Russians and since it is held the Sultans government is powerless in obtaining the guarantee for the protection of ... its Mohammedan subjects. ... It is only fair that they should provide for their own safety even if the government were to oppose the attempts".

30. Archive of Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 25 April 1878 K.Y.-IIB in E. Kofos, *Η επανάσταση της Μακεδονίας κατά το 1878. Ανέκδοτα προξενικά έγγραφα μετά συντόμου ιστορικής επισκοπήσεως* (The Revolution in Macedonia in 1878. Unpublished Consular Documents with a Concise Historical Survey), Thessaloniki 1969, no. 172: *The Ottoman Revolutionary Committee in Drama not only supports a general uprising of the Ottomans but openly acts in favour of the insurrections in the Rhodopes through recruitments of irregular troops and other means*. See in detail, P. Papadimitriou, *Οι Πομάκοι της Ροδόπης. Από τις εθνοτικές σχέσεις στους Βαλκανικούς Εθνικισμούς* (The Rhodopes' Pomaks: From Ethnic Relations to the Balkan Nationalisms), Thessaloniki 2003, pp. 75-82.

31. On the Berlin Treaty see J. McCarthy, *Der Berliner Kongress 1878, Protokolle und Materialien*, Boppard am Rhein 1978.

Hane Treaty (24 March / 5 April 1886) and eventually were happy to return under Ottoman administration³², which lasted until 1913.

The Muslim anti-Bulgarian revolt in the Rhodopes and the insubordination of the Pomak villages were not long term popular armed movements of rebelling Pomaks³³ or Turkish-Muslims for self-government and independence in the region³⁴, since the political fate of these Muslim populations constituted from the very beginning a clause of the negotiations between the Sultan and the Bulgarians and according to the stipulations of the Top Hane Treaty the Bulgarians were to give back the rebellious districts in return for the administration of Eastern Rumili³⁵. Undoubtedly, the local interests of the Pomak élite in the region, their traditional incorporation in the Ottoman institutions and the incapability of the Russian and Bulgarian forces to guarantee the life and property of the Ottoman Muslim populations³⁶ were main reasons for the political solidarity of the Pomaks with the rest of the Muslim community. In any case, this instance of political cooperation meets one of

32. PRO F.O. 78/3868, report of the British Ambassador in Constantinople to the Secretary of the British Ministry of the Interior on 1 February 1886, in *Saedienieto na Severna I Južna Bălgarija i Sărbsko-Bălgarskata Vojna, Diplomatičeski Dokumenti 1885-1886*, Sofija 1989, no. 473, cf. no. 480, 481, 490. Cf. also PRO F.O. 78/3868 (16 January 1886) in *Saedienieto na Severna I Južna Bălgarija, op.cit.*, no. 447.

33. Thus K. Papathanasi-Mousiopolou, "Πτυχές από την Ιστορία των Πομάκων της Δυτικής Θράκης" (Aspects of the Pomaks' History in Western Thrace), *Thrakiki Epetirida* (Thracian Year Book) 8 (1991) 229-238.

34. Thus K. Karpat, *The politicization of Islam, Reconstructing Identity, State, Faith and Community in the Late Ottoman State*, Oxford 2001, p. 131: "The Rhodope rebellion provides a good yardstick for measuring popular involvement in political action. It started in 1877 as a grass roots resistance against the outrages of Bulgarian bands and Russian soldiers in the occupied areas, but it soon turned into an armed movement for self-government and independence. Eventually a Turkish-Muslim government headed by Ahmet Aga Timirsky (Demir) was established in the Rhodope area".

35. PRO F.O. 78/3868. Report of the British Ambassador in Constantinople to the Secretary of the Ministry of the Interior on 1 February 1886, in *Saedienieto na Severna I Južna Bălgarija, op.cit.*, no. 471.

36. On the Muslim refugees who fled before the Russian and Bulgarian advancement see the *Memorandum of Ambassadors for the Appointment of Commission of Inquiry into the State of the Rhodope District*, Foreign Office, Parliamentary Papers 1878, vol. LXXXI, 944-945; cf. also the *Report of the British, French, Italian and Turkish Commissioners appointed with others to inquire into the Condition of Musulman Refugees in the Rhodope District ... Buyukdere, August 27, 1878*, Foreign Office, State Papers, 187/1878, no. 1938319 (60/55) 1112-1122.

the three criteria that F. Barth has put forward for testing inter-ethnic relations³⁷ and suggests that the Pomaks, despite their cultural differences, formed at the time an undifferentiated part of the late Ottoman Muslim community.

On a local level the conflict certainly set the basis for the politicization of the traditional religious communities which were settled in the Rhodopes. Within the wider Ottoman political scene the Ottoman defeat was also a defeat for the Modernist Europeanist constitutionalist political wing that had made Midhat Paşa its spokesman³⁸ and reinforced the emergence of Islamism³⁹. This was a conservative political and ideological movement which sought to create a multi-ethnic Muslim Empire loyal to the monarchy with political and social structures based on religion and also to transform the traditional religious Muslim identity into a new political one through the attachment of all Muslims to the Sultan Caliph⁴⁰. The enforcement of Islamism as the main political ideology of the Ottoman Empire and the forging of a new political unity of the various Muslim populations were mainly the reactions of the Sultan Abdullhamid II to the insinuation of Nationalism in the Empire. Throughout the 19th century European intellectuals, bureaucrats and politicians were disseminating cultural theories of ethnicity, which had split up the Mus-

37. F. Barth, *Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity* in H. Vermeulen and G. Govers (eds.), *The Anthropology of Ethnicity*, Amsterdam 1994, pp. 11-32, 20-22. The three levels proposed by F. Barth are a) the inter-personal relations b) the state policies, i.e. the way a state organizes socially its different population groups c) the collective activity, i.e. whether or not the persons share a common ideology and express their solidarity through common political action.

38. Ali Haydar Mithat, *The Life of Midha Pasha*, London 1903, repr. 1973; M. Todорова, "Mithat's Paşa's Governorship of the Danube Province" in C. F. Farah (ed.), *Decision Making and Change in the Ottoman Empire*, London 1993, pp. 115-128.

39. J. Landau, *The Politics of Pan-Islam. Ideology and Organization*, Oxford 1990; N. Daniel, *Islam, Europe and Empire*, Edinburgh 1990. The Sultan Abdullhamid II took practical measures to consolidate the internal unity of Muslims and to forge the sense of a common Ottoman Muslim past by expanding rapidly after 1880 the modern school system and by constructing religious institutions in the countryside. For the religious institutions in the Rhodopes see M. Kiel, "Urban Development in Bulgaria in the Turkish Period: The Place of Turkish Architecture in the Process", *International Journal of Turkish Studies* 4/2 (1989) 79-158, 99.

40. On Ottoman Caliphate see E. Zeginis, *Η κυβέρνηση του Σουλτανάτου και της Χαλιφείας στην Τουρκία* (Sultanate and Caliphate Government in Turkey), Thessaloniki 2002.

lim community in different cultural groups, so as to form, as a German source puts it, *A Project on the Solution of the Eastern Question and a Critical Study on Positivist Principles*⁴¹. This innovative distinction of the Ottoman populations on the basis of language and presumed historical origin divided the Muslims into Turks, Tatars, Kurds, Albanians, South-Slavs, Pomaks and Circassians and enforced new national distinctions. Thus, Pomaks were from now on to be identified either as Turkish Muslims (*Türkische Mohamedanner, die sogenannten Pomaken*), or as Bulgarian Muslims (*Bulgarian Mohhamedans*) or, lastly, as indigenous renegades (*indigenes rénégats*)⁴².

These newly constructed national identities were of course incomprehensible to the Pomaks, who, as was the case with the other subjects of the Ottoman Empire, continued to draw the traditional distinctions between Muslims and Christians or Jews. This is confirmed by Stylianos Gonatas, an agent of the Greek Ministry of the State at the Consulate of Adrianople/Edirne, who in his report “*On Thrace*” in 1907 writes the following: “The national consciousness of the inhabitants in the countryside remains in a very bad state and had reached such a point that a

41. *Die Projecte zur Lösung der Orientfrage. Eine kritische Studie auf positiven Grundlagen*. Triest, Verlagsgeschäft. Triester Zeitung in Commission bei F. H. Schimpf, 1876, p. 5.

42. See, for example, E. G. Ravenstein, *Journal of the Statistical Society of London* 40 (1887) 438: “Amongst the Non-Turkish races of European Turkey the Bulgarians are numerically the strongest ... those amongst them who have Mohamedans are known as ‘Pomaks’, i.e., ‘helpers’, but Kanitz thinks that certain events might induce them to return to Christianity”. Cf. *Geschichte der slavischen Literaturen* von A. N. Pypin - V. D. Spasović nach der zweiten Auflage aus dem Russischen übertragen von Traugott Pech autorisirte Ausgabe, Leipzig F. A. Brochhaus 1880-1884, p. 21: “und 250,000 türkische Mohammedaner (die sogenannten Pomaken) die aber die bulgarische Sprache behalten haben”. On the theory that the Pomaks were the descendants of the Ancient Thracians see, for example, D. Fligier, *Ethnologische Entdeckungen im Rhodope Gebirge*, Wien 1879; B. Nikolaidy, *Les Turcs et la Turquie contemporaine*, Paris 1859; E. M. Cousinéry, *Voyage dans la Macédoine contenant des recherches sur l’histoire*, Paris 1831, I. 22, II. 77. On analogous constructions relevant to the Pomaks see N. Mischoff, *La population de la Turquie et de la Bulgarie aux XVIII et au XIX s.*, Sofija 1929. The theory of the Thracian origin of the Pomaks was promoted by *Veda Slovena*, a forged collection of supposedly Thracian-Pomak songs, published by the Bosnian antiquarian Stefan Verković in Belgrade in 1874. The Thracian theory was enriched with the identification of the Pomaks with the Thracian tribe of Agrianes and was broadly publicized in Greece after 1974, in an effort to promote a Greek ethnocentric theory of the historical origins of the group and split up Pomaks from the rest of the Muslim community.

considerable part of them confines itself to the religious distinction among Christians, Muslims or Jews and it does not care or is unaware of the national distinctions among Greeks, Bulgarians or Russians"⁴³. But despite the absence of any impact of the new imaginary national representations on the Pomak community, these constructions were taken up by the politicians of the surrounding national Balkan states in order to support their political agendas in the region. Bulgaria keenly put them in use during the Balkan Wars, so as to justify the forceful conversion of the Pomaks into Christianity. Shortly afterwards the Bulgarian and Greek delegations to the Paris Peace Conference used them in their memoranda which submitted to the Conference in support of their ethnological and political claims on the territories and the populations of Thrace.

Pomaks came out again during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), which put an end to the Ottomans' sovereignty in their European possessions⁴⁴. By the early autumn of 1912, the Balkan states of the region (Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro) had formed the Balkan League and took to the field against the Empire in a united effort to promote their respective plans for territorial expansion⁴⁵. The Bulgarian army took military action mainly in Thrace and since 12/25 October 1912 some of its detachments occupied the Pomak villages around the city of Razlog, whereas others advanced through the villages of Central and Eastern Rhodopes up to Isketse/Xanthi and Gümüldjine/ Komotini

43. See E. Belia, "Έκθεση Στυλιανού Γονατά 'Περί Θράκης 1907' " (Report of Stylianos Gonatas "On Thrace 1907", *Δελτίο της Ιστορικής και Εθνολογικής Εταιρείας της Ελλάδος* (Bulletin of the Historical and Ethnological Society of Greece) 24 (1981) 244-302, 292.

44. On the period, the Wars and their impact see K. Boeckh, *Von den Balkankriegen zum Ersten Weltkrieg. Kleinstaatpolitik und ethnische Selbstbestimmung auf dem Balkan*, München 1996; L. Aleksić, "Political and Diplomatic Importance of the Balkan Wars" in B. Király - D. Djordjevic (eds.), *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, New York 1987, pp. 371-385; Ch. Fragistas, "The Balkan Wars. Their Meaning in the History of Greece", *Balkan Studies* 3 (1962) 247-256.

45. J. D. Drossos, *La Fondation de l'Alliance Balkanique. Etude d'Histoire Diplomatique*, Athènes 1929; G. Herring, "Die Serbisch-bulgarischen Beziehungen am Vorabend und während der Balkankriege", *Balkan Studies* 3 (1962) 297-326, teil 2, *Balkan Studies* 4 (1963) 347-378; E. Prevelakis, "Eleftherios Venizelos and the Balkan Wars", *Balkan Studies* 7 (1966) 363-378; C. Svolopoulos, *Ο Βενιζέλος, ο Μπάουστερ και η ιδέα της Βαλκανικής Συμμαχίας (1894-1913)* (Venizelos, Bauster and the Idea of the Balkan League (1894-1913), Athens 1995.

in the Aegean coast⁴⁶. Within a month the allied forces pushed back the Ottomans from their European territories down to Ainos-Medeia line, just outside Istanbul. On 17/30 May 1913⁴⁷, the combatants signed the London Peace Treaty, which stipulated the division of the Ottoman lands, now in the hands of the aligned Balkan states, among the victors. But their divergent claims over Macedonia led Bulgaria to attack its former allies, Greece and Serbia, in mid-June 1913⁴⁸. In mid-July this war (known as the second Balkan War) was over and the disputing states settled their conflict by signing the Treaty of Bucharest on 28 July 1913⁴⁹. Bulgarians' main territorial gains were the Rhodopes and the Northern Aegean coast. On 30 September 1913 Bulgaria and Turkey also signed the bilateral Treaty of Istanbul, with which they accepted the stipulations of the previous Treaty and restored their relations⁵⁰.

In the interim between the two Balkan Wars (mid-November 1912 up to mid-September 1913) the Rhodopes were under Bulgarian military occupation and became the scene of the forceful conversion of the Pomaks to Christianity⁵¹. As we can conclude from official letters addressed

46. On the advancement of the Bulgarian troops through the Rhodopes see *Srednite Rodopi i Balkanskata Vojna, Okrāžen Dā ržaven Archiv* (Central Rhodopes' and the Balkan War, Regional State Archives), Plovdiv 1972. Cf. M. Yonov, "Bulgarian Military Operations in the Balkan Wars" in B. Király - D. Djordjevic (eds.), *East Central European Society and the Balkan Wars*, New York 1987, pp. 63-84.

47. Traité de paix avec les États Balkaniques, Londres 30 Mai 1912 in G. P. Gooch - H. Temperley (eds.), *British Documents on the Origin of the war 1898-1914*, London 1934, vol. IX/II, pp. 1049-1051.

48. H. Batowski, "The failure of the Balkan Alliance in 1912", *Balkan Studies* 7 (1966) 111-122.

49. A. Antonopoulou, *Συνθήκαι Λονδίνου, Βουκουρεστίου και Αθηνών* (The London, Bucharest and Athens Treaties), Athens 1917.

50. Traité de paix avec le Royaume de Bulgarie, Constantinople, 29 Septembre 1913 in S. Kuneralp (ed.), *Recueils des Traités, Conventions, Protocoles, Arrangements et Déclarations signés entre l'Empire Ottoman et les puissances Étrangères 1903-1922*, vol. I, 1903-1916, Istanbul 2000, pp. 213-227.

51. Ample documentary evidence about the Pomak conversion to Christianity in V. Georgiev - S. Trifonov (eds.), *Pokrāstvaneto na Bālgarite Mochamedani 1912-1913: Dokumenti* (The Christening of the Bulgarian Muslims in 1912-1913. Documents). Akademično Izdatelstvo Prof. M. Drinov, Sofija 1995. Cf. P. Marinov, *Balkanskata Vojna v Spomenie* (The Balkan Wars in Memoirs), Sofija 1973; A. Petrov, "Stojo H. Šiškov prez Balkanskata Vojna (1912-1913) Čerti iz dejnostta mu I dokumenti" (S. H. Shishkov during the Balkan War (1912-1913), Characteristics of his activity and Documents), *Rodopski Sbornik* III (1972) 193-206.

to the Prime Minister Gešov by the Secretary of the Bulgarian Holy Synod St. Kostov, the conversion was undertaken with the connivance of Prince Ferdinand and the Bulgarian Government and in spite of the submitted memoranda that voiced the anxieties of the European Embassies. The program was implemented by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and financially was supported by generous donations of wealthy bourgeois nationalistic societies. The Bulgarian Holy Synod in successive sessions assigned its implementation to the local bishops, who in turn proceeded to form spiritual missions manned with missionaries, secretaries, trained educators and Bulgarian civilian volunteers. These last ones undertook to enlighten the Pomaks and also served as their godfathers. The spiritual committees were escorted by militia-men, who usually belonged to paramilitary organizations, such as the Internal Macedonian-Adrianople Revolutionary Organization, that apparently overawed the Pomaks into submission⁵².

The following discourse gives an example of the actual procedure of the conversion:

All Pomaks gathered inside the mosque and the appointed missionaries arrived to speak to them. The majority looked at them with distrust and occasionally one would cry out: We do not want to be baptized ... The preacher pointed out the importance of the conversion, the origin of the Pomak population and their future. After that, a godfather was appointed to every Pomak and the christening began. Asen Alexander, Boris, Cyril, these were some of the favourite names ... The christening (sprinkling with Holy Water) ended with some photographs. One Pomak remarked: and on top of all that, they take pictures of us, so that everyone may see our disgrace⁵³!

52. See the telegraph of the Bulgarian Prime Minister Gešov to the Bulgarian Embassy in London on 7 January 1912 in V. Georgiev - S. Trifonov, *Pokrăstvaneto na Bălgarite Mochamedani*, *op.cit.*, p. 28, no. 14; cf. the report by the ecclesiastical Official of Razlog to Maximus, Metropolitan Bishop of Philippoupolis (Plovdiv), 26 March 1913, 221-225, in V. Georgiev - S. Trifonov, *Pokrăstvaneto na Bălgarite Mochamedani*, *op.cit.*, pp. 221-224, no. 122.

53. Letter of George T. Nakov addressed to the Bulgarian Ambassador in London on 27

Pomaks became a target group for political as well as for ideological reasons⁵⁴. The political motive was the fear that the Pomaks' military solidarity with the Ottomans posed an immediate threat to the establishment of Bulgarian sovereignty in the recently occupied territories. This was well grounded since, according to a Bulgarian military report, many Pomak villages in the Central Rhodopes had supported the Ottoman army⁵⁵, a fact that clashed with the Bulgarian ideological certainties that the Pomaks, notwithstanding their internalized identity, had remained Bulgarians on grounds of their assumed historical origin and cultural affinities⁵⁶. The disinclination of the Pomaks to side politically with the Bulgarians was attributed to the propaganda of the religious officials of

March 1913 in V. Georgiev - S. Trifonov, *Pokrǎstvaneto na Bǎlgarite Mochamedani*, *op.cit.*, p. 231, no. 125a.

54. See, for example, a letter addressed by the nationalistic society of the city of Pazarjik to Prime Minister Geshov and the Minister of the State Ljudskanov on 1 December 1912: "Pomaks are one considerable, compact mass which speaks and signs in pure Bulgarian language but prays in a foreign language. In their vernaculars and their folklore many linguistic treasures are buried. This population should continue to remain with us. If Pomaks are relinquished under the influence of hodjas in the future, they will remain fickle and fanatic, like they are today ... Only when this population is converted to Christianity, will it fall with us and be attached to its country" in V. Georgiev - S. Trifonov, *Pokrǎstvaneto na Bǎlgarite Mochamedani*, *op. cit.*, pp. 14-16, no. 3, p. 15.

55. Report of Chr. Karamandzhukov sent to the Macedonian-Adrianople Committee, Sofia, 5 January 1913 in V. Georgiev - S. Trifonov, *Pokrǎstvaneto na Bǎlgarite Mochamedani*, *op.cit.*, p. 26, no.13: "As is well known these [Pomak] villages were set on fire because their population, after their surrender to the Bulgarian army, came in contact with the Turkish army and provided it with facilities in every possible way. The houses were set on fire with all their belongings inside. But their residents were spared. Besides all the Pomaks who were able to carry arms were deported in the interior of old Bulgaria in order to secure peace and order in the Rhodopes".

56. The essentialist theories of the Bulgarian nationhood and the inherent historicism of Bulgarian nationalism, which views nationality or ethnicity as a matter of historical origin or culture, are still evident in the literature concerning the Pomaks. See, for example, T. Georgieva, "Pomaks. Muslim Bulgarians", in A. Krasteva (ed.), *Communities and Identities in Bulgaria*, pp. 221-238: "The Bulgarian origin of the Pomaks is an axiomatic fact that is confirmed by the identical language and traditional folk culture, by drawing parallels with the Serbian speaking Muslims and by relatively rich information in Ottoman sources". For the language which is perceived by the Bulgarians as an automatic natural primordial marker of the Bulgarian imagined community, see S. Rajčevski, *Bǎlgarite Mohamedani* (Bulgarian Muslims), Sofia, Universitetsko Izdatelstvo Sv. Kliment Ohridski 1998, p. 131; A. Pečilkov, *Istoričeskata sǎdba na rodopskite Bǎlgari mohamedani* (The Historical Fate of the Rhodopes' Bulgarian Muslims), Smoljan ODA, Smoljan 1993, p. 5.

Islam, a religion which was considered incompatible with the Bulgarian national identity⁵⁷. From the Bulgarian point of view, Pomaks were hindered to leave the imagined Bulgarian community (on grounds of common culture and presumed common origin) but at the same time were also prohibited to enter it on religious grounds. But since language was considered secondary to Christianity as regards the Bulgarian national markers and could not play down the status of religion as the ultimate symbol of Bulgarian identity, in the eyes of Bulgarians the only possibility open for Pomaks was to become full members of the Bulgarian nation by their conversion to Christianity.

The Bulgarians had acted, as A. Strašimirov, a leading intellectual in the country, put it, in a way which was “a disgrace to their country and to humanity”⁵⁸. The conversion itself had threatened the cornerstones of the social organization of the Pomak community. After the signing of the Treaty of Istanbul (16/29 September 1913), the Pomaks returned to their old faith but in the meantime some important changes had taken place in their social attitudes. A large number of Pomaks, who according to Bulgarian estimates amounted to 20,000, became refugees and settled

57. It was for this reason that the religious adherence of the Pomaks was attributed historically to a forceful Islamization. For a critical assessment of this theory see A. Željaskova, “The Problem of the Authenticity of Some Domestic Sources on the Islamization of the Rhodopes Deeply Rooted in Bulgarian Historiography”, *Études Balkaniques* 46/4 (1990) 105-111.

58. G. Kennan (ed.), *The other Balkan Wars. A 1913 Carnegie Endowment inquiry in retrospect with a new introduction and reflections on the present conflict*, reprinted in Washington 1993, p. 156: “Those who stand for the thought and the honor of our country ought to know that our authorities have, in the countries on the frontier inhabited by the Pomaks and recently liberated, acted in a way which is a disgrace to their country and to humanity ... The ecclesiastical mission was beneath criticism ... The behavior of the police was monstrous”. The anti-islamic Bulgarian program alternated with the liberal attitude towards the religious rights of the Pomaks throughout the 20th century. After the assimilation campaign of 1913, the Pomaks were left in peace till 1937. In the next year a second nationalistic phase began which lasted till 1944. These were the years of the nationalistic *Rodina* Fraternity, which undertook to wipe out the religious symbols of the group, such as dress, head-gear etc., which were the visible signs of the group’s ethnic Muslim discourse. A third conversion cycle took place in the years 1971-1974 and aimed at substituting the Islamic names with secular, Bulgarian ones. Increasingly, random acts gradually became regular and peaked in the fierce nationalism of the “revival project” in the 80’s. See Yulian Konstantinov, “An account of Pomak Conversions in Bulgaria” in G. Seewan (ed.), *Minderheiten in Süd-Ost Europa*, Oldenbourg 1992, pp. 343-357.

in Turkey in the region of Eastern Thrace, where their descendants still live⁵⁹. A number of Pomaks also strengthened their ties with the coreligionist Turks and in the national Bulgarian census that was conducted in 1914, 20,000 Pomaks of Egri Dere and Dari Dere declared themselves as Turks. The Pomaks of these regions also voted for the Turkish candidates in the 1914 Bulgarian national elections, at a rate that amounted to 85,5%⁶⁰. Lastly, the whole population in reaction to the forceful conversion campaign deepened its social difference vis-à-vis the Christian Bulgarians, by intensifying the visible symbols of their religious ethnic discourse⁶¹.

Unlike Bulgaria Greece dealt with the Pomaks at the end of World War I. In October 1918 after the Turkish and Bulgarian defeat by the Entente Forces, Thracian territories east of Nestos up to the Propontis and from the boundary line Sozopolis - Agathoupolis - Pashmakli in the north up to the Aegean Coast to the south became an issue of fierce diplomatic antagonism among three contestant states: Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. Greece, being on the winners' side, sought to win over the district and to counteract both the claims of the defeated Bulgarians, who were in danger of losing the sovereignty that had previously won by the Treaty of Bucharest (28 July/10 August 1913) as well as the Turkish aims to preserve the political control of Eastern Thrace or alternatively to obtain the autonomy of all Thracian territories.

Greece formed its political programme and its ideology regarding the

59. P. A. Andrews - R. Benninghaus, *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, Wiesbaden 1989, pp. 92-96. According to J. McCarthey, *Death and Exile. The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims 1821-1922*, Princeton 1995, p. 91, the Muslim refugees from Bulgaria amounted to 200,000.

60. S. Trifonov, *Trakija. Administrativna uredba, političeski i stopanski život 1912-1915* (Thrace. Administration, political and Economic Life), Sofija 1992, pp. 74-76, 95.

61. Report of the parish priest in the village Dorkovo to the Metropolitan Bishop of Plovdiv Maximus on 30 September 1913 in V. Georgiev - S. Trifonov, *Pokrāstvaneto na Bālgarite Mochamedani*, *op.cit.*, no. 211, p. 415: "Women are now covering their faces, one can say one hundred times more than the Turks do". In the same vein another priest's report from the village Er-Kjuprija addressed to Maximus on 14 October 1913 states that: "Women wore brand new yashmaks and are covering their heads with such veils, as they did never before. In a word everything has changed for the worse. Pomaks were now openly and mightily declaring their ethnicity leanings, namely that they have always been Turks [that is Muslims] and Turks they will remain". In V. Georgiev - S. Trifonov, *Pokrāstvaneto na Bālgarite Mochamedani*, *op.cit.*, p. 419, no. 214.

Pomaks under this diplomatic pressure. Thus, during the Paris Peace Conference, which started its sessions on 5/18 January 1919⁶², Greece aimed to adduce evidence that the Greek population in Thrace outnumbered the Bulgarians and also to adduce proof that the Muslim population, which constituted the clear majority, preferred the Greek to the Bulgarian sovereignty in Thrace. For the second cause E. Venizelos submitted a memorandum signed by some of the Muslim members of Bulgarian Parliament with electorates in Thrace, where they argued that Thrace should come under an administration by the allied French, English and Greek armies⁶³. To counteract the adduced population figures of the Bulgarians, who systematically subtracted Slavic-speaking Muslims from the total number of Muslims and registered them as Bulgarians, Greeks adopted the traditional Ottoman practice to estimate the populations on the basis of religion, and thus presented Pomaks as an undifferentiated part of the Muslim population. Finally on 22 February / 6 March 1919 the Committee for the Thracian Question submitted to the Central Committee a report where it argued that among the non-Muslim populations of Western Thrace the Greeks were in the majority compared to the Bulgarians and consequently the Greek ethnological claims were more valid in comparison with the Bulgarian ones. It also pronounced that the Turkish population of Thrace (sic) would seemingly accept more willingly the Greek from the Bulgarian sovereignty⁶⁴. This position was finally adopted by the Supreme Council, which on 17 September 1919 called for the evacuation of Western Thrace from the Bulgarian army and pronounced that the region should pass under Inter-allied administration.

On the eve of the signing of the Treaty of Neuilly-sur Seine (14/27 November 1919), the Bulgarians addressed a letter to George Clemenceau, president of the Peace Conference, where in support for the continuation of Bulgarian administration in Thrace, they brought forward the

62. On the Paris Peace Treaty see H. M. V. Temperley (ed.), *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, I-VI, London 1920-1924; C. Seymour, *Letters from the Paris Peace Conference*, New Haven 1965; D. Petsalis, *Greece at the Peace Conference (1919)*, Thessalonike 1978.

63. *Documents of British Foreign Policy* 1, Appendix E no.22. Cf. D. Svolopoulos, *Η Θράκη υπό την Ελληνικήν Διοίκησιν* (Thrace under Greek Administration), Constantinople 1922, p. 114. The report is signed by the followings Members of Parliament: Mehmet Djelal, Ismail Hakki, Calim Nouri, Tevfik, Edhem Rouhi, H. Cafet, Hacjim, Kemal.

64. A. F. Frangoulis, *La Grèce et la crise mondiale*, I-II, Paris 1926, vol. II, p. 35.

official thesis that the Pomaks were in cultural and historical terms Bulgarians⁶⁵. The Greek delegation answered back with a memorandum, where it phrased in detail the Greek official imaginary construction concerning the Pomaks in 1919. A fragment of this discourse is as follows: “In order to rectify their low population figures in Western Thrace, the Bulgarians do not hesitate to register as Bulgarians the Turkish, Slavic-speaking populations of Thrace, who are known as Pomaks. As a matter of fact, the Slavic origin of the Pomaks is controversial. Some scholars argue that the Pomaks are autochthonous populations or even the descendants of the ancient Agrianes, who must have adopted the language from the Slavs and the Islam and the national identity from the Turks. What supports the Thracian historical origin of the group is the fact that Pomaks are also known in some districts as Achrianes. As a matter of fact the Slavic origin of the Pomaks is contestable. There are, indeed, some writers who claim that the Pomaks are an indigenous population or even the descendants of the Ancient Agrianes who must have adopted from the Slavs the language and from the Turks the religion and the national identity ... The Pomaks have a Turkish national identity. M. Geshov in a petition that was sited above notes that the Greek Bulgarian electoral agreement had to consider that feeling. But this was not revealed only in the elections. In 1877-1878 Pomaks fought against the Bulgarians and the Russians. And since 1913 they did not cease to reveal their hostile attitudes to the Bulgarian sovereignty, so as M.A. Stasimiroff was forced to write on 18 July 1915 in the *Dnevnik* of Sofia that it was an urgency to disarmament the Pomaks, who as long as they keep their arms, they will consider the Bulgarian

65. See Observations de la Délégation bulgare sur le Projet du Traité de Paix. Les frontières de la Bulgarie in *Complaints of Macedonia. Memoranda, Petitions, Resolutions, Minutes, Letters and Documents Addressed to the League of Nations 1919-1939*, Geneva 1979, p. 199 (No. 4-5-6): “Celle ci [la race Bulgare] compte, en effet, outre les Bulgares chrétiens, les Pomaks, c’est-à-dire les Bulgares qui, quoique convertis par force à l’Islamisme lors de la conquête ottomane et dans des temps beaucoup plus rapprochés de notre époque, ont gardé la langue, les coutumes et les traditions de leur aïeux”. Cf. Le caractère Bulgare de la Thrace Orientale in *Complaints of Macedonia, op.cit.*, pp. 251-252 (No. 7-8-9): “Il faut relever que les Pomaks parlent le langage bulgare le plus pur; ils chantent nos chansons nationales, ils partagent nos coutumes et nos superstitions; ... Les Pomaks ne font usage que de la langue de nos ancêtres et, malgré le fanatisme religieux qui leur était inspiré par les khodjas turcs, ces Bulgares de religion mahométane sont restés des Bulgares ...”.

regime as contemporary”⁶⁶.

As the above fragment makes clear the Greek government constructed a double-faced imaginary identity for the Slavic-speaking Muslim populations, by claiming a presumed historical Thracian origin⁶⁷ and at the same time ascribing to its members a Turkish national conscience. The presumption of the Turkish identity of the Pomaks, which supposedly had revealed itself by the political solidarity of the group with the Turks on several historical occasions was nothing but an example of the Greek political maneuverings of the 1920s and could not correspond to reality, since at that time even the ethnic Turks had not yet internalized the Turkish identity. But this construction is a good example of the way a national state could transform a traditional religious group into a national one, in order to promote its political interests. It also formed a prelude of a recurrent pattern that bounded up Pomak ideological constructions and state policies vis-à-vis the group with Greek foreign policy considerations throughout the 20th century⁶⁸.

66. Délégation Hélienne. Réponse aux exposés soumis par la Délégation bulgare à la Conférence de la Paix au sujet de la politique de la Bulgarie et de ses prétentions sur la Thrace, in *Complaints of Macedonia, op.cit.*, pp. 392-417, 408 (No.4-5-6): “Pour remédier à leur infériorité numérique en Thrace, les Bulgares n’hésitent pas à inscrire à leur actif comme élément de force nationale les populations turques slavophones, connues sous le nom de Pomaks. Or, l’origine slave des Pomaks est contestable. Il y a, en effet, des auteurs qui prétendent que les Pomaks sont des indigènes, voire des descendants des anciens Agriens, qui auraient reçu des Slaves la langue et des Turcs la religion et la conscience nationale. Ce qui milite en faveur de cette thèse, c’est qu’ils sont aussi appelés, en certains endroits, Achriens ... Les Pomaks ont la conscience nationale turque. M. Guechoff, dans un mémoire cité plus loin, note que l’accord électoral gréco-bulgare de 1912 a dû tenir compte de ce sentiment. Celui-ci d’ailleurs ne se manifestait pas uniquement aux élections. En 1877-1878, les Pomaks ont combattu contre les Bulgares et contre les Russes. Depuis 1913, ils ne cessent de manifester des sentiments hostiles à la domination bulgare, si bien que M. A. Strassimiroff a pu écrire, le 18 juillet 1915, dans le *Dnevnik* de Sofia, qu’ ‘il est indispensable de désarmer les Pomaks, qui, tant qu’ils conservent leurs fusils, considèrent le régime bulgare comme provisoire’ ”.

67. For the history of the theory of the presumed Thracian origin of the Pomaks see note 42 supra. The theory is expanded in detail by P. Hidioglou, *Οι Έλληνες Πομάκοι και η σχέση τους με την Τουρκία* (The Greek Pomaks and their Relation with Turkey), Athens 1980.

68. As R. Meinardus pointed out the encouragement of a Turkish national identity was one of the ways to neutralize the Bulgarian threats in Thrace up to the 1960s. With the deterioration of relations with Turkey over Cyprus Athens realized aware that the Turkish advances towards the Pomak community were now dangerous. So they tried to counter this

After the withdrawal of the Ottomans from their European possessions⁶⁹, post-Ottoman Turkey was keenly interested in preserving and enhancing the political links with those Muslim populations, which became minorities in the successor national Balkan States. These aims were facilitated by the Muslim social organization and the memories of the common Ottoman historical past, but they were eventually achieved by rallying the Muslim populations around the members of the Ottoman-Muslim élite who stayed behind⁷⁰ and most importantly through the stipulations that protected the minority rights of the Muslim populations. Already from the first stages of the consolidation of Turkish nationalism, many members of the Muslim élite in Thrace had sided with Turkish nationalists, who not only sought to achieve predominance in the Turkish political scene but also aimed at the Turcification of Islam and the substitution of the traditional Muslim identity with a national Turkish one, through the dissemination of the Turkish language and the idea of a presumed Turkish origin of all members of the Muslim Community⁷¹.

with a “revisionist strategy” and by bringing into play the latent Thracian theory, they sought from the 1970s onward to strengthen the Pomak identity and to alienate the Pomaks from the Turks and the Roma and eventually to weaken the potential for a united front influenced or led by Ankara. After the 1980s a distinct Pomak culture was semi-officially acknowledged and the development of their language and their cultural traditions were strengthened. See R. Meinardus, Muslims: Turks, Pomaks and Gypsies, in R. Clogg (ed.), *Minorities in Greece. Aspects of a Plural Society*, London 2002, pp. 81-93; Idem, *Die Türkei-Politik Griechenlands. Der Zypern-Ägäis und Minderheiten Konflikt aus der Sicht Athens (1967-1982)*, Frankfurt 1985.

69. A. L. Macfie, *The end of the Ottoman Empire 1908-1923*, London 1998.

70. On the local level, the Muslim Members of Parliament in the successor states were influenced or led by Turkey and kept mobilizing the entire Muslim community in accordance with Turkish foreign policy considerations. Thus, in the national Bulgarian elections (February 1914), the political activists of the Muslim Minority of the Bulgarian Kingdom issued a proclamation from the central mosque of Gjumuldzhina/Komotini stating that the Sultan Caliph was at the time in good relations with the Bulgarian Prime Minister Radoslavov and asked the Muslim electorate to vote for the Muslim candidates who were members of his party. The campaign was a success and 85,5% of the Muslim voters complied. See S. Trifonov, *Trakija. Administrativna uredba, političeski I stopanski život 1912-1915*, Sofija 1992, pp. 91-92.

71. For the emergence of Turkish Nationalism see F. Ahmad, *The Young Turks: The Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics (1908-1914)*, Oxford 1969; D. Kushner, *The rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876-1908*, London 1977; M. Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era*, Leiden 1992; S. Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in*

The theoreticians of Turkish nationalism like Ziya Gökalp had already expressed their support in implementing an educational program that would spread the Turkish culture and the Turkish language even among non Turkish-speaking Muslims, like the Pomaks, so as he put it “the Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks and the Greek-speaking Muslims of Crete might one day stop speaking Bulgarian or Greek”⁷². As regards the dissemination of the nationalistic theories of the supposedly Turkish origin of these Muslim groups, the Muslim Members of the Bulgarian Parliament in Thrace had already started to declare them in their early version of “Turanism”⁷³. Thus in an unofficial memorandum, which they submitted to the Allied Forces in 1919 in Sofia, they identified the Pomaks as “Turanians, who had arrived in the Balkans from time immemorial, and had adopted the Slavic language from the slavified populations who were settled there”. The compilers of this narration also assured that the Pomaks were converted to Islam with the spreading of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans and were fully aware of being Muslim-Turks⁷⁴.

During the 1930s the supporters of Turkish nationalism were gradually displacing the Traditionalists in the political life of the Muslim communities both in Greece and Bulgaria and eventually prevailed⁷⁵.

Opposition, Oxford 1995.

72. H. Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf and Crescent. Turkish Nationalism*, London 1997 (= *Υμίψηλο, Γκρίζος Λύκος και Ημισέληνος*, μετ. Ε. Πέπτα, Αθήνα 2000, pp. 102, 107).

73. G. Arnakis, “Turanism. An Aspect of Turkish Nationalism”, *Balkan Studies* 1.1. (1960) 19-32.

74. The petition of the Muslim Members of Bulgarian Parliament addressed to the Headquarters of the Allied Forces in Thrace in 1919 is in Εθνικό Ίδρυμα Ερευνών / Αρχείο Πάλλη φάκ. Α/έγγ. 7; cf. D. Svolopoulos, *Η Θράκη υπό την ελληνική διοίκηση*, *op.cit.*, pp. 115-117. Analogous statements were voiced by the former independent member of Greek Parliament Ahmet Faikoglu, who in 1991 in a speech in the Greek Parliament declared “that the Pomaks are pure blooded Turks. The minority is Turkish and its religion is Muslim”, in *Η Καθημερινή*, 15 Ιανουαρίου 1991.

75. For the activities of the supporters of Turkish Nationalists in Thrace during the 1930s see the report of Stylianopoulos to E. Venizelos in *Αρχείον Ελευθερίου Βενιζέλου, Μουσείο Μπενάκη 173/53*, Αθήνα 12.7.1929. For the Turkish pressures on Greek Government to expel from Thrace the traditionalist, anti-Turkish Muslim leadership and thus support the Nationalists see the petition of the Turkish Foreign Minister in *Archives of Greek Foreign Office 1927-1928*, B/28. For an explanation of the Greek policy see I. Anastasiadou, *Ο Βενιζέλος και το Ελληνοτουρκικό Σύμφωνο Φιλίας του 1930*, (E. Venizelos and

The Pomaks in Greek Thrace, as was the case with other agricultural Muslim populations in Turkey, in opposition to the majority of the Muslim leadership, reacted initially to the political agendas of the nationalists and for a short time kept at a distance from them⁷⁶. But they failed to form a strong independent leadership, which would avail itself of their political reactions to enforce mechanisms of differentiation of the group from the rest of the Muslim community and eventually to lead to the construction of a separate Pomak identity.

Both the traditional Muslim as well as the Turkish national identity were also constructed for the members of the post-Ottoman religious communities through the stipulations of the Treaties that protected their minority rights. Two articles of the Bulgarian-Turkish Treaty of 1913 in comparison with those of the Greek-Turkish Treaty of Lausanne in 1923 will suffice to prove our argument. The article 8 of the first Treaty guaranteed for the Muslim Subjects of all the Bulgarian territories, freedom of conscience and worship and enjoyment of the same civil and political rights with the subjects of Bulgarian origin. It also stipulated that the Muslim customs would be respected and the name of his Imperial Majesty the Sultan, as Caliph, would continue to be pronounced in the public Muslim prayers⁷⁷. It should be pointed out that the Treaty mentions only Muslim subjects of the Bulgarian Kingdom and does not recognize any particular ethnic or national minorities. A similar wording

the Greek-Turkish Friendship Convention in 1930), Athens 1982; E. Hadzivasileiou, *Ο Ελευθέριος Βενιζέλος, η ελληνοτουρκική προσέγγιση και το πρόβλημα της ασφάλειας στα Βαλκάνια 1928-1931* (Eleftherios Venizelos, The Greek-Turkish Rapprochement and the Security Problem in the Balkans), Thessaloniki 1999. On the role of the press in the conflict see P. Konortas, "La presse d'expression turque des musulmans de Grèce pendant la période post-ottomane", *Turcica* XVII (1985) 245-278. For the preponderance of the supporters of Turkish Nationalism over the Traditionalists in Bulgaria see K. Mañčev, *National Problems in the Balkans. History and Contemporary Developments*, Sofia 1992, pp. 48-50.

76. See the vote distribution of Pomaks in the general elections in 1932 in I. Nikolakopoulos, "Πολιτικές δυνάμεις και εκλογική συμπεριφορά της Μουσουλμανικής Μειονότητας στη Δυτική Θράκη, 1923-1955" (Political Forces and Electoral Behaviour of the Muslim Minority in Western Thrace, 1923-1955), *Δελτίο Κέντρου Μικρασιατικών Σπουδών* (Bulletin of the Centre of Minor Asia Studies) 8 (1990-1991) 171-205, p. 184.

77. *Traité de paix avec le Royaume de Bulgarie*, Constantinople 29 Septembre 1913, in S. Kunalp (ed.), *Recueil des Traités, Conventions, Protocoles, Arrangements et Déclarations signés entre l'Empire Ottoman et les puissances Étrangères*, vol. I, 1903-1916, Istanbul 2000, p. 217.

was used ten years later in the Greek-Turkish Treaty of Lausanne, where it was stated that the minority rights conferred by the provisions of the Treaty on its non-Moslem minorities will be similarly conferred by Greece on the Muslim minority in its territory⁷⁸.

The two treaties obviously guaranteed for the Muslim citizens of the two successor states of the Ottomans the observance of the Ottoman Muslim law code but at the same time retained religion as the basis of social and institutional polarization between Christians and Muslims. Thus, they contributed to make the two religious groups to live in separate social spheres and set different in-group principles that were to affect family structure, gender relationships and intra-community categorizations. By guaranteeing the right of the Muslims to pronounce the name of the Sultan Caliph in the public prayers, the Treaty of Istanbul kept a late Ottoman Muslim law in force. But in an increasingly nationalistic environment it also nurtured both politically and ideologically the idea of the unity of all those Muslims outside and inside Turkey and laid the basis of Turkey's becoming the kin-state of those Muslims who remained outside its territories⁷⁹.

The Bulgarian-Turkish treaty preserved the unity of the Muslim community also in the sphere of education. According to article 7 of the second protocol⁸⁰, the Bulgarian government undertook the responsibility to set up primary and secondary Moslem schools on the scale established by the law for the Bulgarian public education. The teaching

78. According to H. Goekenjan, "Die Türkei und ihre christlichen Minderheiten", *Ostkirchliche Studien* II (1981) 112, the Kemalist Turkish government insisted on this wording as it did not and could not cope with the idea of the existence of national minorities within its territories.

79. L. Halley, *Ancient affections: Ethnic groups and foreign policy*, New York 1985; B. Oran, *Türk-Yunan İlişkilerinde Batı Trakya Sorunu*, Ankara 1991. For the Muslim minority as a factor of Greek Turkish relations, see A. Aleksandris, "Μειονοτικό ζήτημα" (Minority Issue) in *Διαστάσεις των ελληνοτουρκικών σχέσεων. Αιγαίο-Κύπρος, Επιστημονικό Συμπόσιο του Ιδρύματος Μεσογειακών Μελετών* (Aspects of the Greek-Turkish Relations. Aegean Sea - Cyprus, Scientific Symposium of the Institute of Mediterranean Studies), pp. 47-56; A. Iordanoglou, "Το Μειονοτικό ζήτημα" (The Minority Issue) in I. Hassiotis (ed.), *Η Ελλάδα και οι γείτονές της. Διακρατική συνεργασία και ειρηνική συμβίωση σε έναν μεταβαλλόμενο κόσμο* (Greece and its Neighbours. Inter-State Cooperation and Peaceful Coexistence in A Changing World), Thessaloniki, pp. 110-119.

80. *Traité de paix avec le Royaume de Bulgarie*, Constantinople 29 Septembre 1913, in S. Kunalalp (ed.), *Recueil des Traités, op.cit.*, pp. 213-227, 223.

would be conducted in the Turkish language and in conformity with the official syllabus, with obligatory teaching of the Bulgarian language. Similarly in Greece, according to paragraph one of article 41 of the Lausanne Treaty, the Greek Government was bound to provide to Muslim children teaching of and in their own language at the primary minority public schools. The system which was eventually adopted combines the language teaching of Turkish as a mother or minority language with the teaching of Modern Greek. Thus, while the education system was designed on a bilingual basis to guarantee the Muslim minority's linguistic rights, it resulted in a dominant-subordinate situation within the minority itself⁸¹. This pattern still influences the education of the Pomak youngsters in Greece as well as of those Roma children who are non Turkish-speaking. Gradually Turkish also became the language of religion and religious instruction, substituting Arabic as the holy Muslim language and constituting a pivotal ideological axis of a Turkish national identity.

In Greece, the *Convention concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations* of the Lausanne Treaty influenced considerably the ethnic, social and economic life of the entire country⁸². On a local scale it changed the population balance at the expense of Muslims⁸³, but it did not influence the Pomak settlement patterns, which preserved their compact and uniform character⁸⁴. The integration of the Pomaks in the broader Greek society met with objective difficulties such as the igno-

81. On the education of the Muslim minority in Greece see L. Baltiotis - K. Tsitselikis (eds.), *Η μειονοτική εκπαίδευση της Θράκης* (The Education of the Minority in Thrace), Athens - Komotini 2001; D. Michail, "Η επιβεβλημένη τριγλωσσία και η κατασκευή της αγραμματοσύνης. Η περίπτωση των Πομάκων της ορεινής Ξάνθης" (The imposed Trilingualism and the Construction of Illiteracy. The Pomaks' Case in the Mountainous Regions of Xsanthi), *Περί Θράκης* (On Thrace) 2 (2002) 271-289; E. Zeginis, "Pratique religieuse et education en Thrace" in R. Bistolfi, F. Zabbal (eds.), *Islam d'Europe. Intégration ou insertion communautaire?*, Paris 1995, pp. 352-355.

82. League of Nation Treaty, Series XXXVI (1925) 78-87. On the population Exchange see P. S. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities. Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*, New York 1932; D. Pentzopoulos, *The Balkan Exchange of Minorities and its impact upon Greece*, Paris 1962.

83. A. Aleksandris, "Το ιστορικό πλαίσιο των Ελληνοτουρκικών σχέσεων" (The Historical Context of the Greek-Turkish Relations) in A. Aleksandris - Th. Veremis (eds.), *Οι ελληνοτουρκικές σχέσεις 1923-1987* (Greek-Turkish Relations), Athens 1988, pp. 31-172, 65.

84. See in detail J. Dalège, *La Thrace grecque. Populations et territoire*, Paris - Montréal 1997.

rance of the Greek language, and the social isolation of the village communities, but was mainly impeded by the state policies concerning the group⁸⁵. On grounds which were connected with the Greek-Bulgarian political foreign relations in the mid-1940s, Rhodopes remained isolated and uninfluenced by the infrastructures that promoted the economic life of the rest of Western Thrace. Moreover, Rhodopes became restricted access area and by the decree 1366 issued in 1938, the Greek Government forbade foreign nationals to buy land near border areas. These measures preserved and gradually enhanced the economic inequalities of the Rhodopes populations and forced the Pomaks to occupy a low place in the social hierarchy. The economic and social disadvantage with its concomitant social discontentment led gradually to the construction of a social and political conscience of a minority group⁸⁶.

In the above historical analysis were discussed some historical instances of the multiple ways with which the national states can transform and construct ethnic identities of non-dominant groups. In the last decades of the 19th century the military conflicts with the Bulgarians set the foundations of a political Muslim identity. In the second decade of the 20th century the Bulgarian policies to convert the Pomaks to Christians, instead of turning them into Bulgarians, radicalized many of them by strengthening the Islamic symbols as ethnicity markers and made another 20,000 to think or portray themselves as Turks. Greek attitudes in 1919 made clear that the imaginary national constructions concerning the Pomaks depended on the political agendas of the state, whereas its external policy considerations led to policies which amounted to segregation of its minority population and gradually resulted in the construction of a social and political conscience of a minority group. The post-Ottoman Turkey's policies also prove how by influencing a nationalistic-minded leadership outside its territories or by enforcing stipulations that protect minority rights can exercise permanent influence on the transformation of a group identity into a new, national one.

85. G. Notaras, "Les obstacles à l'intégration des musulmans de Thrace" in R. Bistolfi, F. Zabbal (eds.), *Islam d'Europe. Intégration ou insertion communautaire?*, Paris 1995, pp. 342-345.

86. See S. Troubeta, *Κατασκευάζοντας ταυτότητες για τους Μουσουλμάνους της Θράκης* (Constructing Identities for the Muslims in Thrace), *op.cit.*, p. 121.