

Antiquity Musing
Reflections on the Greco-Macedonian Symbolic Contest over the
Narratives of the Ancient Past

By

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Introduction

The claims to the Legacy and Legitimacy of Alexander the Great

Not many people in history had “The Great” as their last name. Alexander, the king of Macedon who lived more than 2300 years ago, had the fortune to earn the title of greatness during his relatively short lifetime by expanding the small kingdom he inherited from his father into one of the most gigantic empires in history. No matter if he was visionary or a villain, liberator or megalomaniac, humanist or oppressor, Alexander the Great remained as one of the most important and most exploited characters from the ancient history¹.

As one of the rare “Greats” though, it is easy to suppose that Alexander of Macedon was an epitome of power and authority back in the days of the insane expeditions beyond any known boundary and the literal conquest of the world, at least the world known to the people in the antiquity. The notions of erecting cities bearing his name in every province², the alleged effort to homogenize the population of his empire (by some claimed even an effort to homogenize humanity)³, as well as the unprecedented symbolic unification of all the honors in the authority of just one person [i.e. the king of Macedon and the Hegemon of the Hellenic alliance (the Corinthian League), from being the Shah of Persia, to being the pharaoh of Egypt at the same time]⁴ resulting into his worship and deification, turned the young king into an absolute Sovereign and a symbol of legitimacy from the Mediterranean to the Himalayas,

1 The debate over the historical role of Alexander the Great was recently brought up in 2004, during the promotion of Oliver Stone's movie called “Alexander”. See Roger Moore, “The Great Debate: For 2,300 years controversy has swirled around Alexander the Great: Was he an ambitious visionary or just a bloodthirsty tyrant?”, *The Gazette (Montreal)*, November 14, 2004. Soon many books were published. The debate then was brought into academia. See Brooke Allen, “Alexander the Great: Or the Terrible?”, *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 58, No. 2 (Summer, 2005), pp. 220-230

2 For an overview of the campaigns and the policies of Alexander, see A.B. Bosworth, *Conquest and empire : the reign of Alexander the Great* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1993)

3 See E. Badian, “Alexander the Great and the Unity of Mankind”, *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte*, Vol. 7, No. 4 (Oct., 1958), pp. 425-444

4 See C. A. Robinson, Jr., “The Extraordinary Ideas of Alexander the Great”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 62, No. 2 (Jan., 1957), pp. 326-344

being the subject, but moreover, the (sublime) *object* of power at the same time⁵. The general remoteness of society back then, along with the communication gap between the king and the ordinary people were big enough for him to gain a mythological status even while he was still alive.

Fortunately or not, Alexander died very young without leaving a legitimate successor of the huge empire, leading to immediate contest between his generals for the crown. Subsequently, no proof was more solid of being the legitimate successor, than the ownership of the great king's corpse. The two potential heirs, Ptolemy and Perdikkas, were plotting and managed to hijack the Alexander's corpse from one another, yet at the end Ptolemy was more successful and the dead body ended as a mummy in Egypt, exposed in a transparent coffin, made of glass in front of the people to admire his greatness⁶. Alexander's corpse was considered to be the talisman of the Ptolemaic dynasty⁷. Later in the history, characters like Caesar, Mark Anthony and Octavian August were also vividly interested in the corpse, as they treated it with all the ceremonies as if Alexander had been a Roman Emperor. Unavoidable as always, was the Madman of the ancient world, the eccentric emperor Caligula. During his reign, he had taken away much of the jewelry and the armor of Alexander, and wore it during public appearances in an attempt to present himself as an incarnation of the Ancient Macedonian king⁸.

After Christianity was introduced as an official religion in the Roman Empire, the corpse of Alexander began to be perceived as part of the pagan past and lost its political significance.⁹ However, the image of Alexander was already mythologized in many other

5 See Allen, *op. cit.* As well, as Robinson argues, Alexander's death was the inauguration of the institution of the western concept of divine monarchy. See Robinson, *op. cit.*

6 Andrew Erskine, "Life after Death: Alexandria and the Body of Alexander", *Greece & Rome, Second Series*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Oct., 2002), pp. 163-179

7 *Ibid.*, p. 174

8 See Nicholas J. Saunders, *Alexander's Tomb: The Two Thousand Year Obsession to Find the Lost Conqueror* (New York, Basic Books : 2007)

9 Indeed, Alexander was sometimes even attributed with Antichrist-like features. George Cary, "Alexander the

areas that used to be part of his empire. Numerous tribes and peoples existing on the vast territory that was once embraced of the glorious Empire, had maintained the memory of the great king as part of their collective identification through the centuries. In the Middle Ages, a novel titled “Alexandrida” or simply “The Alexander Romance” emerged in Europe, in which he was portrayed as a Knight, going into many adventures, adding a lot of fantasy and myth to the image of the Macedonian king¹⁰. The novel had been translated in various languages, among them some of the Slavic ones, providing the grounds for the legends that portray Alexander the Great as a proto-Slav¹¹. The most famous case of attributing Alexander the Great proto-Slavic origin is probably noted with Serbian royal dynasty Nemanjitch, in their reign in the period around the 12-14th century AD traced their family genesis back to the Alexander and Philip¹².

During the revival of Hellenism as the core meta-narrative of Modern Greece, as it will be further elaborated, the myth Alexander was now put into the nation-building process¹³. Some of the Albanian romantic nationalists also started claiming Alexander as proto-Albanian, owing to the Epirian and Ilyrian roots of his mother Olympias. As the ‘ethnic’ make up of the Ancient Epirote kingdom remains an open question, one of the Albanian modern-day national myths traces the direct lineage between the ancient kingdom and the modern-day nation¹⁴.

Great in Mediaeval Theology”, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 17, No. 1/2 (1954), pp. 98-114

10 See Richard Stoneman, *The Greek Alexander romance* (London : Penguin Books, 1991)

11 The first claims that Alexander was proto-Slav are met in the 16th and early 17th century, in the work of the Italian-Croat historian Mauro Orbini, “Il Regno de gli Slavi” [“The Realm of the Southern Slavs”]. This later became one of the narratives of portraying Alexander the Great as a proto-Serb. Also see Zorica Dergovic-Joksimovic "Serbia Between Utopia and Dystopia", *Utopian Studies*. FindArticles.com. 03 May, 2009. <http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_7051/is_1_11/ai_n28818955/>, last accessed 15.05.2009

12 A very popular (pseudo) academic insight on this matter is the work by Jovan Deretic, “Alexander the Great, the Serbian Tsar”, <<http://media.starasrbija.info/dr-jovan-deretic-aleksandar-veliki-car-srpski.pdf>>, last accessed 03.05.2009

13 Victor Roudometof, “Nationalism and Identity Politics in the Balkans: Greece and the Macedonian Question”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 14.2 (1996), pp. 253-301

14 Antonina Zhelyazkova, “Albanian Identities”, International Centre for Minority Studies and Intercultural Relations, 2000, available online at <http://pdc.ceu.hu/archive/00003852/01/Albanian_Identities.pdf>, last

Finally, it was the Republic of Macedonia that, after gaining the independence of Yugoslavia, introduced the idea of continuity of Macedonianness over the millennia, tracing the ethnogenesis of the nation back to the ancient kingdom of Macedon and Alexander the Great. At the same time it challenged the Greek historical rights over Ancient Macedonian history and symbols¹⁵. These two claims were marked with a series of conflicting political moves, especially from the Greek side – ranging from an economic embargo because of the use of Alexander's symbols¹⁶, to blocking Macedonia's NATO bid¹⁷, to halting the European integration processes¹⁸. The process currently is in front of the International Court of Justice, as the Macedonian government decided to press charges against Greece for breaking the interim accord signed in 1995¹⁹.

Alexander the Great, Symbolic Capital and the Greco-Macedonian Context

From the historical overview it seems that two very obvious conclusions about the imagination of Alexander the Great that can be drawn. First, is that during the course of more than two thousand years, the myth of the continuity with Ancient Macedonian royalties was incorporated in many different contexts to serve as a source of legitimacy. No matter if it was the generals of his army, the Egyptian and Roman emperors, the medieval royalties or the

accessed 03.05.2009. See also Fatos Lubonja, "Between the Glory of a Virtual World and the Misery of a Real World" in (ed) Stephanie Schwandner-Sievers, Bernd Jürgen Fischer, *Albanian identities: myth and history* (Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2002), pp. 91-103

15 K.S. Brown, "Seeing Stars: Character and the identity in the landscapes of modern Macedonia", *Antiquity* no. 68 (1994), 784-796

16 See Spyridon Kotsovilis, "Exploring the Sources of Greek Foreign Policy Towards the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Conference Paper, 2nd PhD Symposium on Modern Greece, June 10, 2005, The Hellenic Observatory, London School of Economics and Political Science
<http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/hellenicObservatory/pdf/2nd_Symposium/Spyridon_Kotsovilis_paper.pdf>, last accessed 20.05.2009

17 N/A, "Greece blocking NATO expansion - Which Macedonia Was Alexander the Great From?", *Der Spiegel*, 29.03.2008

18 See Tony Barber, "Macedonian quarrels make Alexander the Great turn in his grave", Financial Times Brussels Blog, 29.01.2009, <<http://blogs.ft.com/brusselsblog/2009/01/macedonian-quarrels-make-alexander-the-great-turn-in-his-grave/>>, last accessed 03.09.2009

19 Markos Karavias, Antonios Tzanakopoulos, "Legality of Veto to NATO Accession: Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Sues Greece before the ICJ", *American Society of International Law*, Volume 12, Issue 26, December 2008, <<http://www.asil.org/insights081229.cfm>>, last accessed 20.05.2009

modern nationalists, the case has always been that there were attempts to derive political power from the legacy of the glorious historical figure of Alexander the Great. There are probably no more claims about any other legacy than there are for his. The second point is that those different parties claiming their relation with Ancient Macedonia often ended up contesting the other pretenders to the legacy of Alexander, although every different claim was distinctively conceptualized, since there are obvious contrasts between the way polities were legitimized through the time. Starting with the fight between Perdiccas and Ptolemy, it seems that the fate of contesting claims to the glorious past is very current, as the eyes of world politics are nowadays focused on the Greco-Macedonian dispute and their own fight over the historical rights to claim Alexander the Great and the Ancient Macedonian civilization.

Generally speaking, the main reason for the contested claims over his legacy, is that the link with Alexander generates, as Pierre Bourdieu calls, symbolic capital²⁰. The teleological perceptions of Alexander's reign contributed to the creation of a more mythologized version of the past in which much of the complexities were simplified: he was portrayed as a hero that driven by his noble ideas, liberated the world and established the largest political unit ever. His era was an era of power, dignity, successes and optimism. Alexander's reign thus could serve as the Golden Age that had to be reclaimed, an ideal upon which ethnic and national communities could be established²¹. The Golden Age of Alexander the Great's reign is the precise version of the glorious past that could strengthen the legitimacy and the emotional appeal of nationalist movements, as well as to articulate the definition of the nations²².

20 Pierre Bourdieu, "Symbolical Capital" in *The logic of practice*, (Stanford : Stanford University Press, 1990), pp. 112-122

21 Based upon the theory of the myth of the Golden Age by Anthony Smith, "The 'Golden Age' and National Renewal" in ed. Geoffrey Hosking and George Schöpflin, *Myths and Nationhood* (New York: Routledge, 1997) pp. 36-60. Also see Matthew Levinger and Paula Franklin Lyttle, "Myth and mobilization: the triadic structure of nationalist rhetoric", *Nations and Nationalism* 7 (2), 2001, p. 175-194

22 According to the model offered by Levinger and Lyttle, op. cit. p. 181

The symbolic capital of the meta-narrative of Alexander the Great is twofold. Its first value, is what I call “universal” and it could refer to any national or other type of community in the world that would claim Alexander as their ancestor or simply an idol. One of the layers of this myth is, for example, the immense military successes of Alexander's army are a solid basis for developing a myth of military valour, that legitimizes non-political actions and homogenizes the community²³. This myth is applicable not just to Macedonia and Greece, but also to all the ethnic or tribal communities dispersed around the territories that used to be part of his empire and it does not necessarily has to be related with the legitimization of violence. In this respect, the myth of Alexander's conquest provides a symbolical capital also for modern day armies, sport clubs, fiction writers, Hollywood directors and music bands. Similar to the “military valour”, the perception of Alexander as a humane leader who spread Hellenism through the Barbarian East, could be the basis of forging myths of election and civilizing mission, implying cultural superiority of the claiming nation in comparison to the others²⁴. This types of claims, besides for the geographically approximate contenders, are characteristic for the mere Western culture, as Alexander the Great humanist has been a symbol of Enlightenment and spreading noble values and probably the inspiration for what Said condemns as Orientalism.

Thesis Objectives

Yet, the field of interest of my thesis is rather the second type of symbolic capital the meta-narrative of Alexander the Great and the Ancient Kingdom of Macedon provides, and that is what I call the “case-specific” or simply the “Macedonian” one, referring to the Greco-Macedonian contest.

23 According to George Schöpflin, Nations, Identity, Power (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2000)

24 Ibid.

Belonging to the ancient world, Alexander's Empire image provides a suitable content for the myths of antiquitas, which assigns the nation the historical right over controlling certain territories and symbols²⁵. The hypotheses that the Ancient Macedonians were a unique community with a separate culture, gives the opportunity to the ones claiming the link to imagine their community as being sui generis, providing them with the myths of homeland, foundation, descent, national character, etc²⁶. As Smith argues, the myth of the Golden Age provides the name, the emblem, the myths of common ancestry, are the basic constituents and pillars of an ethnic community²⁷, and that is particularly the value of the Golden Age.

As the myths are to assert legitimacy and strengthen the authority by simplifying reality²⁸, it is logical to assume that the grand meta-narrative of the legacy of Alexander the Great is very precious to many who pretend to political power. By having the exclusive right to claim the direct link to him, one instantly gets the possibility to manipulate with highly forceful arsenal of political myths. Back at the time of Perdiccas and Ptolemy, it was not the control of the corpse itself, but the control over the remains of the gigantic Empire that was at stake. Twenty-three centuries after that, in the Greco-Macedonian feud, it is not just the dignity or the historical truth, but the 'selves' of the contending nations that are at stake. Greeks and Macedonians accuse each other of attempted theft of identity as identity was something material. As it will be discussed below, for a person that is seen as a unifier rather than as a conqueror, Alexander the Great had been the reason for much of a hostility between these two neighboring states, but also a reason for much arguments even within the respective communities.

Discursively, the Macedonian and the Greek governments are resembling Perdiccas

25 According to Pål Kolstø, "Assessing the role of historical myths in modern society", Introduction to ed. Pål Kolstø, *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2005), pp. 1-35

26 According to Kolstø, op. cit., p. 17

27 Anthony Smith, *Myths and Memories of the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 13

28 Ibid.

and Ptolemy, battling for the corpse of their glorious commander in order to prove their legitimacy. Both have enjoyed broad support from the respective populations in regard to the identity policies raising the animosity between them. So, the main task of this thesis is to commit a vivid dissection of the different modes of political use of the glorious ancient past in order to legitimize the community and reject the “otherness” and the “others”.

In the following chapters, I will try to determine the political role, the consequences and the reasons of the politicization of the narratives of antiquity in the broader context Greco-Macedonian dispute.

Chapter I examines the context of the diplomatic conflict in the light of international relations and nationalism theories in order to determine its grounds. The main argument is that it is precisely the exploitation of the ancient past stirs the emotions and the dispute between the two sides here is framed as a symbolic contest with a complex structure that goes to several different phases and involves several combined strategies.

Chapter II deconstructs the rhetoric of ancient nationhood in the respective cases. The main arguments here are that in the Greek case, the suggested relationship between the Modern state and Alexander the Great perpetuated the expansionist ideas, strengthened the homogeneity of the nation and helped in the definition of the “others”. In the Macedonian case, on the other hand, my argument is that the activation of the myth of Ancient Macedonia resulted with differentiation from others' claims of the Slavic Macedonian identity, but its recent turbulent revival induced new ethnic Macedonian nationalism and deep divisions in the society.

Chapter III tries to assess the reasons behind the essentialism attributed to the myth in the respective contexts. The main question raised here is why the myth of Alexander prevailed over other national myths in the both cases. The answer will be conceptualized by building

upon two different approaches to nationalism: the ethnosymbolic and the instrumentalist. The key argument here is that the two sides by remembering the grand narrative, besides utilizing the case-specific value, avoid their unpleasant episodes from the history: in the Greek case, the myth of continuity overrides the history of an assimilation nation-building process and its consequences, while in the Macedonian case the myth is used for covering the frustrations of being a belated nation, established only in the 20th century.

The concluding chapter, tries to sum up the points and addresses the possible shortcomings of the paper, proposing some points for further research, and to framing the outcome of the research into the approaches to studying nationalism.

Chapter I. National Myths, International Dispute, Symbolic Conflict

Nationalism and International Dispute: General Considerations

Nationalism is usually perceived as a principle that defines the relation between the individuals and society²⁹. The national identification of the individual juxtaposes them in the social order as a member of the imagined community of the nation. However, nationalism and national identification serve also as a primary link between the society and the world order at large³⁰. The world we live in is a world in which the nation-state is the dominant mode of political organization and representation³¹, hence nationalism besides providing the inner structure of nations and states, is in an inherently “dialectical relationship” with international relations and foreign policy³².

Nationalism, despite providing the criteria of the political organization, also contributes to political mobilization by employing an appealing rhetoric based on historical myths³³. Although nationhood is an existing discursive category, the nationalist rhetoric creates the illusion of the objective collective 'self' as if it was the super-ego of the nation, attributing it with a sacred cause and moral historical rights. Thus, the process of the constitution of the national 'self' is inherently complemented with a process of creating boundaries and the Other. The particular Other is the object of nationalist rhetoric and action, being the anchor and target of nationalist attitudes and its presence is essential for establishing

29 Craig Calhoun, “Nationalism, political community, and the representation of society”, *Nations matter : citizenship, solidarity, and the cosmopolitan dream* (London : Routledge, 2007), pp. 103-116

30 See Ilya Prizel, “National identity and foreign policy: a dialectical relationship” in *National identity and foreign policy: nationalism and leadership in Poland, Russia in Ukraine*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 12-38

31 Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism reframed : nationhood and the national question in the New Europe*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 21

32 Prizel, op. cit.

33 See Matthew Levinger and Paula Franklin Lyttle, “Myth and mobilization: the triadic structure of nationalist rhetoric”, *Nations and Nationalism* 7 (2), 2001, p. 175-194

any foreign policy at first place. Having in mind that the Other is usually a fellow, often neighboring subject of nationalism with its own nationalist rhetoric for itself, it can be said that every international dispute could be read as *internationalist* dispute, in respect to the rootedness into two colliding nationalist rhetorics. Yet, identity matters are not always crucial for an international conflict to be inferred, since the key category in the international affairs are interests (for example, security or control over resources). A starting premise here is that sometimes, identity questions can be related to political interest. By the same token, the nationalist flavor of an international conflict is proportional with the political interest attributed to the identity matters.

Additionally, taking nationalist rhetoric as inherently paranoid³⁴, in respect to the narratives of self-victimization and seeing the Others mainly as a threat, the assumption is that all spheres affected by it, including international relations, are more or less marked by paranoia. The nationalist paranoia is inevitable in many international conflicts, of different nature and scope. China objects the recognition of Taiwan by claiming it has always been a part of China. One paranoid nationalist attitude that might lead to an international conflict is the refusal of the Baltic states to provide citizenship to Russians. Another one, is the Slovenian blockade against Croatia's bid for an European Union membership, as a result of the unsettled border issue. But probably one of the most paranoia-driven international disputes today is precisely the infamous “name” dispute between the two neighboring Balkan countries, Greece and Macedonia.

The Balkan peninsula is one of the most turbulent areas in terms of excessive nationalism taking place. The dissolution of the Ottoman and the Habsburg Empire, and one century later, the break up of Yugoslavia, were to some extent a consequence of rising national movements in the region, at the same time being a cause for the emergence of other

34 Danilo Kis, “On Nationalism”, *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (May, 1996), pp. 13-17

nationalisms. During this period of about two hundred years, the region was struck by regional wars, world wars, exoduses, population exchanges, executions, deportations, militant assimilation, “ethnic cleansing”, “fratricides” and many re-drawings of the borders and the institutional frameworks. Greece and Macedonia always had an important role as the events were happening. The burden of the past, characteristic for the Balkanist discourse³⁵, is also on the back of these two nations. The intensity of history though, inevitably resulted in individual and collective paranoia over the survival of the national 'selves'. The Greco-Macedonian feud is an ideal case study of how the dynamics of history and particularly the nationalist reading of the past can induce an international dispute that defies any rational approach but at the same times threatens the very foundations of reason in both societies.

The Greek Context

Greece has been established as a an independent state under the supervision of the Great Powers in 1830, that after a turbulent period of changing regimes, consolidated as a democracy in 1974. Its modern history has been marked by the numerous political issues related to the meta-narrative of the national question. In general terms, the content of this myth encompasses the aspects of definition of the national 'self', that vary from the struggle for proving the historical truth to the nation-building efforts of the state in order to maintain the homogeneity and the uniqueness of the modern Greek nation³⁶. The excessive exploitation and development of the imaginary national discourse in the everyday experience in Greece and the essentialism ascribed to it (the “nationalization of society” in Balibar's sense³⁶), has led Stathis Gourgouris to portray modern Greece as a product of “daydreaming”,

35 On the “burden of the past”, see Maria Todorova, “The Trap of Backwardness: Modernity, Temporality and the Study of Eastern European Nationalism”, *Slavic Review* vol. 6, no.1, (2005), pp. 140-164

36 Étienne Balibar, “The nation form: History and Ideology” in Étienne Balibar, Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein, *Race, nation, class: ambiguous identities* (Verso, 1991), pp. 86-106. Balibar's account on nationalization is that it is a process exceeding the cultural realm.

or being “a dream nation”³⁷, while Triandafyllidou and Paraskevopoulou conclude that the Greek nation is in fact a dynamic process that has been always going through the process of definition and redefinition³⁸ (as any other nation in-deed).

The establishing of modern Greece was inherently bound to military collisions with the Ottoman Empire. There were several spheres of contention, the seething ones being the unresolved territorial disputes, of which the most important was the late-emerging Cyprus issue, as a result of the dissolution of the British Empire. As the perspective of the Greco-Turkish relations was not promising, it was their unlikely alliance under the NATO umbrella during the Cold War that neutralized the animosity³⁹. Decades after, it is the European Union managing the situation⁴⁰. However, the Greco-Turkish disputes remains an important concern regarding the Greek national question, thus providing enough of a source for developing a nationalist rhetoric in which Turkey will be seen as a threat rather than as an ally⁴¹.

Another very important issue that is related to Greco-Turkish relations, but also with the definition of the 'self' and the 'others' of the Greek nation, is the failure of the Greek authorities with minorities' recognition and protection. In 2009, for example, in the Report of the Council of Europe regarding the human rights of minorities in Greece expressed concern over the inability of Greece to provide the basic rights and freedoms to minorities⁴². Greece

37 See Stathis Gourgouris, “The Nation's Dream-Work”, *Dream nation: enlightenment, colonization, and the institution of modern Greece* (Stanford, CA : Stanford University Press, c1996), p. 10 - 47

38 Anna Triandafyllidou and Anna Paraskevopoulou, “When is the Greek Nation? The Role of Enemies and Minorities”, *Geopolitics*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Autumn 2002), pp. 75-98

39 Ronald R. Krebs, “Perverse Institutionalism: NATO and the Greco-Turkish Conflict”, *International Organization*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Spring, 1999), pp. 343-377

40 See the Working Papers on the Birmingham University Conference “European Union and the Border Conflicts”: “Working Paper Number 9. The EU and the Cyprus Conflict: The View of Political Actors in Cyprus”, “Working Paper Number 10. The Talkers and the Silent Ones. The EU and Change in Greek-Turkish Relations”, “Working Paper Number 17. The European Union and Cultural Change in Greek-Turkish Relations”, “Working Paper Number 18. Perceptions of the Border and Europe in the Cyprus Conflict”. The Working Papers are <<http://www.euborderconf.bham.ac.uk/publications/workingpapers.htm>>, last accessed 20.04.2009

41 For instance, during a recent visit of the American President Barack Obama to Turkey and skipping Greece, there were some reactions from Greek politicians that it is a bad sign for Greece. See Ariana Ferentinou, “Obama's Turkey trip upsets Greek political circles”, *Hürriyet Daily News*, 16.03.2009 <<http://hurarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=11214839&p=2>>, last accessed 20.04.2009

42 “Report by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his

has an open problem with the unrecognized Albanian minority as well. In the response to the Report, the Greek government stepped towards some concessions with regard to the Muslim minority⁴³, yet denied the existence of “a so called 'Macedonian'” one⁴⁴. The latter thus leads to another important aspect of the national question in Greece – the Greco-Macedonian feud, which is the main field of focus of this thesis. However, before a broader analysis of that feud is being made, it is necessary to conduct a brief overview in the emergence of the new Macedonian national question in the 1990s as well.

The Macedonian context

The re-emergence of the national question in Republic Macedonia was one of the several consequences of the fall of the Yugoslav federation in the early 1990s. Eric Hobsbawm in his well respected work on the escalation of nationalism in the late twentieth century stated that much of the events following the dissolution of Yugoslavia were a sequel to the “unfinished business of 1918-1921”⁴⁵. As well, he seemed to be sure that the national questions being much more sensitive before 1914 turned out not to be explosive in the period of resurgence of radical nationalism. One of the unresolved puzzles in this respect, well known in the history, was the infamous Macedonian Question. As Hobsbawm said, unlike the other cases, Macedonia had successfully managed to stay away from the Yugoslav crisis, and remained peaceful in the years marked by hatred and bloodshed in the region⁴⁶.

Although not immediately turning into violence and warfare like the rest of the parts dissolved from the federation, Macedonia after the collapse of Yugoslavia inevitably found

visit to Greece on 8-10 December 2008” (with a response from the Greek Authorities), Strasbourg, 19 February 2009 <<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1409353>>, last accessed 20.04.2009

43 In the Greek official rhetoric, the term Muslim minority refers to all Turks, Pomaks, Roma, Albanians etc.
44 Ibid.

45 Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism since 1780 : programme, myth, reality* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 165 James Pettifer argued that the New Macedonian Question in comparison to the “original” one now was even more concerning. See James Pettifer “The New Macedonian Question” in ed. James Pettifer, *The New Macedonian Question* (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), pp. 15-27

46 Ibid.

itself stuck in a nationalist-infected environment.

Only partially the Yugoslav context was a factor in the re-opening of the Question. The Serbian nationalist forerunners frustrated by the departure of the small brother from the federation, started referring to Macedonians as South Serbs and expressing national hatred as well as irredentism⁴⁷. Fortunately, those claims were never followed by serious political action. Today, despite the antagonism between the respective Orthodox Churches, there is no other aspect of the Serbian-Macedonian dispute that remains open.

Similarly, Bulgarian nationalists constantly have been claiming that the all the Slavic speakers in the region of Macedonia, thus ethnic Macedonians, are their fellow co-nationals who speak a dialect of Bulgarian, addressing much of the commonalities in historical heritage and culture. These claims were in a paranoid manner denied by a majority of Macedonians⁴⁸. However, this issue, unlike the Serbian, certainly has the capacity to affect relations between the two states in the future, as some of the Bulgarian major political actors tentatively raise the question⁴⁹. Yet, a promising factor is that the official Bulgarian political discourse is very careful and reasonable in regard to this problem⁵⁰.

The ethnic heterogeneity and some of the rising minority questions additionally contributed to the complexity of the Macedonian national issue, culminating with an armed

47 Dimitar Mirchev, "Engineering the foreign policy of a new independent State: the Case of Macedonia, 1990-6" in ed. James Pettifer, *The New Macedonian Question* (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), p. 204

48 See James Frusetta, "Common Heroes, Divided Claims: IMRO Between Macedonia and Bulgaria" in (ed) John Lampe and Mark Mazower, *Ideologies and national identities : the case of twentieth-century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest : CEU Press, 2003), p. 121 and Stephan Troebst, "IMRO+100=FYROM? The politics of Macedonian historiography" in (ed) James Pettifer, *The new Macedonian question* (Hampshire : Palgrave, 2001)

49 For example, the Sofia mayor, Boiko Borisov, recently stated that "... we should make them [Macedonians] accept their own history". See "Borisov would put Macedonia back under the Bulgarian umbrella", A1 News 05.02.2009 [in Macedonian]. Available online at <<http://a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestiID=104013>>, last accessed 17.04.2009

50 A good illustration of this is the statement of the Bulgarian Prime Minister Stanishev in regard to the statement of Borisov from the previous example: "I consider [the statement of Borisov] as politically harmful and absolutely illogical". See "Crvenkovski: Borisov's statement is politically harmful", A1 News 10.02.2009 [in Macedonian]. <<http://a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestiID=104205>>, last accessed 17.04.2009

conflict between Albanian guerillas and the Macedonian army that lasted for several months, during the summer in 2001, proving the previously discussed Hobsbawm's hypothesis being totally incorrect. The incapabilty of the system to bridge the gaps between the different identifications has also perpetuated ambiguities and uncertainties in respect to the definition of nation in Macedonian social science and the public discourse⁵¹. This “rigid definition”, was not just an issue of semantics, yet a mere burden to the reading and interpreting the phenomena of nation and national identity in both public debate and political practice⁵², and has reflected in the other national issues. Nonetheless, an important step forward was done with the signing of the Ohrid accords, and the implementation of multiculturalist policies that had the objective to raise the representation of minorities in all the spheres of society⁵³. These extraordinary circumstances of the uncertainties regarding the cultural boundaries and the interchangeable state of denial of identity, could be an argument for taking the Republic of Macedonia as a clear example of a hyperreal entity⁵⁴.

The Feud Exposed

What is common for the cases mentioned, in which the national 'self' of Macedonia is involved and contested, is that all of them are at least temporarily settled. The one remaining unresolved and seething is particularly the dispute with Greece.

On the surface, the reason for the conflicting attitude between Greece and Macedonia, according to the Greek side, is that the use of the term “Macedonia” by their northern neighbor as their official country name, implies irredentist claims and territorial pretensions

51 See Nenad Markovik, “Rigid Defining of the Nation” in *Politichka Misl* no. 8, 2004, p. 19 – 31

52 See Anastas Vangeli, “Theory of the Civic Identity”, *Politichka Misl* no. 16, 2006, 39-51

53 See Kocho Danaj, “Dogovor vo forma na pozhelen konflikt” [The agreement as a desirable compromise], *Forum Analitika*, vol. 6 (2006), pp. 26-35

54 Aleksandar Boskovic, “Virtual Places: Imagined Boundaries and Hyperreality in Southeastern Europe”, *CTHEORY* (1997), <http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors2/boskovictext.html>, last accessed 22.05.2009
The author argues: “So, Macedonia is a new country that perhaps exists and it is inhabited by people claimed and at the same time denied by their neighbors. Macedonia not only provides some interesting examples for the concept of hyperreality - it is hyperreal itself!”

towards Greece, since “Macedonia is (and has always been) Greek”⁵⁵. The association of the term “Macedonia” is made in relation to the region Macedonia in Greece⁵⁶, that is perceived as the core territory of the Ancient Kingdom of Macedon. Since Ancient Macedon has been explicitly treated as integral part of the metatext of Hellenism, besides the territorial implications, the use of the term “Macedonia” is said that also implies “stealing” the Greek history. According to the Macedonian side, the Greek demands for changing the name of the country are said to be an attack against the identity of the Macedonian people and said to be motivated by historical reasons, as Ancient Macedon is claimed to be a non-Hellenic entity. Regarding the alleged irredentist claims, they are denounced by Macedonian representatives since Macedonia has issued Constitutional changes explicitly outlawing any territorial pretension towards the neighboring countries. At the same time, while Greece negates the existence of an ethnic Macedonian minority, Macedonia demands its full recognition.

Basically, these are the official grounds for the feud between the two countries. Whether one might argue over the rationality or the justifications of the problem⁵⁷, in the realist perspective of the international relations it is a dispute between a strong state (Greece) and a small state (R. Macedonia). In such a situation, the one who really has to be concerned in the first place, is the small one. Its progress depends directly on the possibilities of alliance between the two⁵⁸. Nonetheless, one of the premises of this thesis is that the international

55 “Macedonia is Greek” has been the leitmotif of the Greek foreign policy, but also a phrase used in science as popular culture. See Victor Roudometof, “Nationalism and Identity Politics in the Balkans...”, op. cit.

56 Yet some Greek definitions of Macedonia include the southern portions of the territory of Republic of Macedonia (Pelagonia, Strumica region, Mariovo, Ohrid and Prespa).

57 See Gianne Brownell, “Macedonia and Greece, Or How I Got Involved in a Diplomatic Row”, *Newsweek Blogs*, 30.03.2008, <<http://blog.newsweek.com/blogs/ov/archive/2008/03/30/macedonia-and-greece-or-how-i-got-involved-in-a-diplomatic-row.aspx>>, last accessed 26.05.2009

58 This argument is built upon the insights offered by Neophytos Loizides. Drawing on authors on transnationalism and interdependence theory like Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye, Loizides argues that “In this case, FYR Macedonia would assume the role of the small state, which has to face external threats to national survival and adapt its foreign policy to the constraints of the international environment. Greece might assume the role of the stronger state, which faces a lower level of external threat [...]”. Neophytos Loizides, “Greece and the Macedonian Problem after the Interim Accord of September 1995: In search of viable solutions to a centuries-old conflict”, Master Thesis, Southeast European Studies Program, CEU, 1998, p. 5

perspective alone is insufficient in the analysis of the Greco-Macedonian feud, simply because for many years the solutions proposed by domestic and international relations theory are constantly failing to provide a feasible solution for the dispute.

The irrationality of this row lies in the specific dynamics between the nationalist sentiment and the both parties' attitudes of rejection of the other. Since the biggest stake in the dispute were the conflicting claims regarding the founding myth, the roots for all the controversies sought to be looked for in the constituting and the design of the new national 'self' of Macedonia. Surely, it was the powerful state (Greece) that could allow itself exercising the very politics of rejection.

The rejection from the Greek side in respect to the establishment of the independent-to-be Yugoslav republic was the objection to the recommended recognition of Macedonia⁵⁹. Despite the conclusions of the Badinter commission that Macedonia is ready to be recognized as a State, Greece intervened in the European Community the process of recognition to be halted until the new country changed its name⁶⁰. However, the dispute between the two neighbors turned much more serious in the moment when Macedonian aspirations for the ancient past were translated into politics, or to be precise, into politics of symbols. That happened when the Macedonian Parliament unanimously adopted the flag with the illustration of the Sun of Vergina, an ancient Macedonian symbol, as official flag of the new independent state⁶¹. The official Greek stance, as it was said, was that everything that is Macedonian, thereby the symbols like the Sun of Vergina, belonged exclusively to Greece⁶². Consequently, the name of Macedonia, teamed up with the ancient flag was considered to be a straightforward statement that post-Yugoslav Macedonia was pretending to the rights to the

59 See Colin Warbrick, "Recognition of States Part 2", *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Apr., 1993), pp. 433-442

60 Ibid.

61 Brown, op. cit.

62 See Evangelos Kofos, "Greek policy considerations over FYROM independence and recognition", in ed. James Pettifer, *The New Macedonian Question* (London: MacMillan Press, 1999), pp. 226-263

heritage Ancient Kingdom of Macedon, much of what had become part of the Greek culture and politics throughout the time⁶³. The very same Sun of Vergina, for instance, was (and still is) resembled on the flag of the Greek region of Macedonia. So, when the Sun of Vergina became a symbol of the part of the territory of Macedonia in the borders of the Republic, which additionally was named Macedonia, the situation could have been understood as an opening of a direct conflict of both identifications over the historical right to claim their Ancient Macedonian origin⁶⁴. Furthermore, solid background for conceptualizing the Greek “defensive nationalist” was sought in the legacy of the Greek Civil War, when Macedonian irredentism was at its peak, and an analogy was being made that the history might repeat itself.

The myth easily mobilized the masses for political protests. In the Macedonian case, one factor was that it was not just the protest over historical rights, but also a claim to self-determination accompanied with the inevitable radical nationalism and irredentism⁶⁵. Still, the mobilization of the Greek people was much more impressive, as a consequence of the “archaeologization” of the Greek public discourse concerning to the issue, along with the speculations about possible military threat from the alliance between Macedonia and Turkey adding up to the image of the revived threat from the north⁶⁶.

The flag of the Republic of Macedonia was changed in 1995 after the intense pressure

63 Ibid.

64 Brown, op. cit.

65 The leader of the nationalist VMRO-DPMNE, Ljubcho Georgievski, made a famous statement that “the next congress of the Party will be held in Thessaloniki”, which meant that he stood for acquiring the city of Thessaloniki in the borders of Macedonia (a big port, nowadays in Greece, but perceived as historical part of Macedonia). A newly introduced national symbol was the “map of ethnic Macedonia”, based Territorial aspirations have been banned with the Constitution though, and since the claims of Georgievski, not much of the appetite for expansion had remained in mainstream politics. However, territorial aspirations were still plausible in popular culture. See “Koj reche kongres vo Solun?” [Who was about to hold congress in Thessaloniki], *Utrinski Vesnik*, 09.03.2007, <<http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=6E141DBCA1660C4AB439B15F8E4599DC>>, last accessed 27.05.2009

66 See Kofos, op. cit.

from Greece, including an unlawful economic embargo and political arm-twisting⁶⁷. The dispute over the name was delayed by signing the interim agreement by which Macedonia obliged to use the temporary reference “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” on the way to getting full membership in the United Nations⁶⁸. The following years of the dispute were quite silent. A compromise was never reached, but Greece halted the diplomatic pressure and at least superficially supported Macedonia in the efforts to stabilization and integration in the European Union and NATO.

The calm down between the two countries lasted for more than 10 years. The economic cooperation expanded dramatically as a large portion of the foreign investments in Macedonia came from Greece. The Greek presidency of the EU in 2003 pushed the European Union towards offering membership to Western Balkan countries which benefited directly Macedonia, and later, in 2005 Greece did not react to the Macedonia's EU candidacy bid, but even supported it⁶⁹. The same went for the NATO integration. The temporal name was enough of a compromise for the both parties and the emotions were set aside.

Yet, many of the Macedonian people were never satisfied with their country being called a former Yugoslav republic⁷⁰. As in 2006 the pro-nationalist VMRO-DPMNE party came in power, the stance towards the “name dispute” started to change. What was the novelty, was the radical shift in the identity politics towards the myth of Alexander the Great.

67 Takis Mikas argues that the real motives of Greece were even the “destabilization of the young republic and its eventual demise”. See Tachis Mikas, *Unholy alliance : Greece and Milošević's Serbia* (College Station : A&M University Press, c2002), p. 43 On the economic embargo see John Shea, “The Course and Meaning of the Greek Embargo Against Macedonia”, in *Macedonia and Greece: the struggle to define a new Balkan nation* (McFarland, 1997), pp. 328-310

68 See Mirchev, op. cit.

69 See “The commission recommends candidate status for the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, Europa Press Releases, <<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/05/1391#fnB1>>, last accessed 04.05.2009

70 For example, there was a massive civil society action supported by the Open Society Institute, for the promotion of the constitutional name of the country and the abolition of the reference FYROM. See Elena Simonoska, “Don't FYROM Me - Skopje Sends a Message to Strasbourg”, SEE Portal, 24.03.2004, <<http://see.oneworld.net/article/view/82332/1/>>, last accessed 04.05.2009

A process of so called “antiquization of the Macedonian identity”⁷¹ was inaugurated with the renaming of the Skopje Airport into the airport “Alexander the Great”⁷², awakening the spirits in the dispute with Greece in no time⁷³. Furthermore, several other moves were taken by the Macedonian government in the direction of the revival of the ancient roots of the Macedonian nation: the renaming of the main sports stadium into Philip II Arena and the main highway into Alexander of Macedon⁷⁴, the broadcasting of numerous video clips with explicit nationalist content produced by the government for “raising the national dignity and optimism” featuring Alexander the Great himself⁷⁵, the placement of ancient monuments in front of the headquarters of the government⁷⁶, the high meeting with the royal family of Hunza, highland tribal community from Pakistan claiming to be descendants of the Alexander's troops⁷⁷, and the exploitation of the ancient symbols in the campaigns of the governmental Agency for Youth and Sports⁷⁸ are just some of the acts contributing to the

71 The term antiquization was one of the hottest topics in the presidential elections. The term itself is borrowed from the history of art. “Antiquization is a term coined by architectural historians to refer to the Renaissance practice of giving a city the appearance of ancient Rome or Athens through the introductions of structures organized in the classical mode. These were occasionally temporary, as in the case of the “cérémonies à l’antique” – public events of a political content – but more frequently permanent. This phenomenon became visible in Rome and Florence and in the other major Italian towns around the fifteenth century and spread through the cities of the north – Lyon, Paris, Antwerp and London – throughout all the world, up to our times.” See Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, *Classical architecture : the poetics of order* (Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, c1986), p. 263

72 “Skopje's airport to be named “Alexander the Great”, *Makfax News*, 26.12.2006
<<http://www.makfax.com.mk/look/novina/article.tpl?IdLanguage=1&IdPublication=2&NrArticle=48999&NrIssue=229&NrSection=10>> (last accessed 09.01.2009)

73 See “A stir over name of Skopje's airport”, *Kathimerini English Edition*, 29.12.2006,
<http://www.ekathimerini.com/4dcgi/_w_articles_politics_100006_29/12/2006_78322>, last accessed 04.05.2009

74 “Macedonia Debuts “Alexander” Highway”, *Balkan Insight*, 06.01.2009,
<<http://balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/15863/>>, last accessed 07.05.2009

75 Blagica Ivanova, “Vladata gradi Nadmakedonci” [The Government breeds Uber-Macedonians], *Spic Daily Newspaper*, no. 781, 09.01.2009
<<http://www.spic.com.mk/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=0&tabid=1&EditionID=745&ArticleID=29320>> (last accessed 09.01.2009)

76 “Antichkite skulpturi postaveni pred vladata” [Ancient Statues set in front of the Government Building], *AI News*, 09.03.2007 <<http://a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=75632>> (last accessed 09.01.2009)

77 Will be elaborated below.

78 Sarcastically called “The Agency for Youth, Sports and Ancient Macedonian Propaganda”. See Zharko Trajanoski, “Firomizacijata prodolzhuva” (The Fyromization goes on), *Dnevnik*, 19.11.2008,
<<http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/?itemID=214F04AB2055984E88581613CBB74392&arc=1>>, last accessed 27.05.2009

general picture of antiquization of the present in Macedonia. The process is about to be crowned with the erection of a colossal and very expensive sculpture of Alexander on the main square in Skopje any day now⁷⁹. In the meantime, Greece reacted to this policies and significantly changed the attitude towards the Republic of Macedonia, what resulted with the blockage of Macedonia's NATO bid, and the name issue has become another benchmark on the road to the EU accession of Macedonia. The Macedonian government however, seems to be very uncompromising on the issue and is widely being criticized of being isolationist⁸⁰.

What can be concluded here is that in the period of the coming in power of VMRO-DPMNE in 2006, till today, new politics inaugurated in Macedonia were the reason for Greece's strong objections and the raising significance of the name dispute as a threat for the region's stability. The diplomatic pressure from the stronger state and the defiance and the rhetoric of self-sufficiency of the weaker one, just perpetuate the conflict with the same pace as in the early 1990s. Back then, and now, the line of antagonism is clear – it is the political use of ancient past by the Macedonian government in order to attain political legitimacy at home. During the years of “uneasy symbiosis” (from the interim accord to the renaming of the airport), the different issues between Macedonia and Greece were not questioning the progress in the bilateral relations and the progress of the region in general. Literally said, the two sides might have even discussed over name and minority issues separately, but it turned out that the head of Alexander in the airport hall now is too much of an obstacle for that.

The Feud and the Framework of Symbolic Conflicts

One approach that transcends the insufficiency of the international relations theory in terms of deconstructing the contest over the “ownership” of the ancient past. Simon Harrison,

79 See “Cela Firenca lee za Makedonija” [All the sculptors in Florence are working for Macedonia], Denvnik Daily Newspaper, 04.05.2009,

<<http://dnevnik.com.mk/?ItemID=56CF0E67D8739940B059D961D735395E>>, last accessed 04.05.2009

80 See an interview with Jasna Koteska: Isolationism is happening to us, A1 news, 08.02.2009,

<<http://a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=104134>>, last accessed 04.05.2009

departing from the orthodox Durkheimian interpretation of the identitarian complex as expression, leans towards the Bourdieu's definition of symbolic capital, and argues that actually “symbolic practices are inalienable possessions”⁸¹. Furthermore, he introduces the category of “proprietary identities” that are “social identities whose outward symbols or markers are treated as a property, and may be disputed as a property”⁸². The Greco-Macedonian conflict can be undoubtedly labeled as such.

Harrison argues that the different parties that contest each other's rights of a certain narrative, are concerned with the relative distribution of symbolic capital, rather than with its absolute accumulation⁸³. To explain this premise, he proposes four ideal-type models of symbolic contest: *valuation contest* in which the importance of a certain symbolical complex is at stake; *proprietary contest*, in which the ownership is at stake; *innovation contest* (ontologically sometimes taking place before the valuation), in which the respective sides try to innovate new meanings and functions of the symbols; and *expansionary contest*, in which the one side tries to change the other's side use of symbols⁸⁴. In the empirical analyses, he uses many examples from different epochs and geographical regions to support his theory, among them the Greco-Macedonian dispute over the heritage of Alexander the Great as portrayed by Danforth, as an example for a proprietary contest⁸⁵. Still, as he suggests, none of the examples corresponds to ideal-type of contests, thus what matters more is the strategies of the parties than the general labeling of the situation. The hypothesis to be proven in the following chapter is that the narrative of Ancient Macedonian nationhood, in the Greco-Macedonian symbolic conflict, underwent through a combination of all of the four suggested types of

81 Simon Harrison, *Fracturing resemblances: identity and mimetic conflict in Melanesia and the West*, (Berghahn Books, 2006)

82 *Ibid.*, p 4.

83 Simon Harrison, “Four Types of Symbolic Conflict”, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Jun., 1995), pp. 255-272

84 *Ibid.*

85 *Ibid.*

contestation strategies.

In the next chapter, the role of the narrative of Ancient Macedonian nationhood will be reviewed in the light of the respective national discourses, in order the dynamics of the contest to be dissected.

Chapter II. The Ancient Past as a Nation-Building Material in Greece and Macedonia

On Modern Greece and the Ancient Past Fetish

In historiography, and in the social sciences as well, there is a convention that whenever writing about “modern Greece” or “modern Greek” one has to put an additional emphasis the modernity attributed to modern Greekness, since Greece or Greek themselves necessarily stand for entities which date back to ancient times⁸⁶. This distinction was practically a byproduct of the Western European romanticism that in the 18th and 19th century. One particular aspect of that wave was its strong affection towards the glorious ancient past of Greece, or simply said its Philhellenism or Graecophilia, a tendency that had its peek at the years of the Greek liberation struggle and the dawn of the Modern Greek state⁸⁷.

It was a time when many western, and especially German archaeologists (ex. Heinrich Schliemann) travelled to Greece in order to find the remains of the fetishized ancient Hellenic culture⁸⁸. Philosophers and poets, among them the spiritual fathers of the German nation, like Schiller, Herder and Goethe were fascinated and inspired by ancient Greece. Their ultimate ideal regarding the rise of the German realm was not the resurrection, but the reincarnation of the Hellenic virtue in a new, modern form⁸⁹.

The emergence of the image of ancient Greece and its linkage with the developments of Modern Greece, however, did not remain uncontested. There have been many authors that challenged the philhellenic perspectives, but two of them seem to be most sound: Jacob

86 See Richard Clogg, *A Concise History of Greece* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, c1992), p. 1

87 See Virginia Penn, “Philhellenism in Europe, 1821-1828”, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 16, No. 48 (Apr., 1938), pp. 638-653

88 See Suzanne L. Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton University Press, 2003)

89 *Ibid.*, p. 16

Fallmerayer and Martin Bernal. The former, an Austrian traveller and historian who had lived and worked in the 19th century, had produced massive amounts of literature arguing that Modern Greeks had nothing to do with Ancient Hellenes⁹⁰. A century later, in the 1980s, it was the emergence of Bernal's "Black Athena", an attempt for scientific debunk of the myth of Ancient Greece, that had upset the classical scholarship. Bernal argued that the classical Hellenistic civilization was in fact rooted in the Eastern and especially African cultures. Later, that civilization was wiped out and the efforts to create not just a Greek modern nation, but a whole neoclassical civilization without referring to the afro-asian core of antiquity, was a mere racist and "Aryan" illegitimate approach⁹¹.

The theories of Fallmerayer and Bernal appeared at different points in time, were not resembling in terms of methodology and had separate structure of argumentation⁹². Although they touch upon a broad variety of matters, they seem to come to one important conclusion (among many others): the relationship between Modern and Ancient Greece was a mere construction. In many respects, they had a point there. Ancient Greece in the imagination of the German romantics, had not much to do with the development of the actual events in the modern Greece. The Hellenic high culture was long gone, and Greece now was facing a transition from an Ottoman province (Rum millet) to a nation-state, with a diverse ethno-cultural landscape, different way of life and an unexpected distance from the idealized European view of the living ancestor of the ancient civilization⁹³.

90 Gourgouris, "Fallmerayer, or the Misfortunes of Ancestry", *Dream Nation...*, op. cit. pp. 140-154 The author argues that because of the energetic objections against the historical right of Modern Greek claims to antiquity, the name Fallmerayer has gained a Satanic meaning in the Greek culture.

91 Martin Bernal, *Crna Atena: Afroaziskite koreni na klasičnata civilizacija. Prv tom: fabrikovanjeto na Antichka Grcija 1785-1985 [Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization. Volume I: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985]*, (Skopje: Tabernakul, 2009 (1987))

92 Yet Fallmerayer was a reference point for Bernal.

93 Peter Bien argues that the introduction of the narrative of continuity from antiquity was a two-fold distortion: distortion of the reality of Ancient Greece in terms of highly selective usage of the ancient past, and a distortion of the reality of Modern Greece, in terms of the novelties in the discourse brought by it. See Peter Bien, *Inventing Greece: The Emergence of Greek National Identity*, transcript from a lecture, <<http://www.hri.org/pot/Summer98/story2.html>>, last accessed 10.05.2009

However, the argument about the invention of Ancient Greece and the inequitable philhellenic-driven construction of the Hellenic continuity does not discredit the importance of the nation-building process in 19th century Modern Greece and the process of the revival of antiquity.

Although their ancient origin might have been disputed, the Greek-speaking elites had played an important role back in the Ottoman Empire much before the emergence of Modern Greece. Inhabiting a significant portion of what was known as “Turkey in Europe”, as well as in Asia Minor and the Pontus, they were an important factor of the inner political dynamic of the Empire. An emphasis has to be made on two important aspects of the Greek influence here: first, the cultural influx through the institution of the Orthodox Church and second, the fact that the vanguard of the non-Turkish population of the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans was in fact the “Greek, Grecophone or Hellenized strata”⁹⁴.

The Ottoman Empire's political system was to a great extent based on the religious identification of its population. The political tie between the individual and the society at large was the confession and belonging to one of the several *millet*s (religious communities), one of them being the *Rum millet*, that was comprised from all the Orthodox Christians living on the territories of the Empire⁹⁵. Since the legacy of the Orthodox Church was based upon the continuity with Byzantium, the main Orthodox institution remained to be the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the language of service and religious education remained to be Greek. The supervision over the Orthodox population on the Balkans, helped Greek culture become more coherent and to spread all over the region, which certainly later gave a significant impetus in the emergence of the Modern Greek nation⁹⁶. On the other hand, the idea that Greeks were the

94 Victor Roudometof, “From Rum Millet to Greek Nation: Enlightenment, Secularization, and National Identity in Ottoman Balkan Society”, 1453-1821, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Volume 16 (1998), p. 15

95 See Ibid.

96 See Mark Mazower, “Before the Nation”, *The Balkans* (London : Weidenfeld and Nicolson, c2000), pp. 45-76 and Dimitiris Livanios, “The Quest for Hellenism: Religion, Nationalism and Collective Identities in Greece (1453-1913)”, *Historical Review*, Vol. 3 (2006), pp. 33-70

legitimate successors of Byzantium, the one and only Orthodox Empire, implied myths of “the Second Coming” of Constantinople. Those myths were basically saying that sooner or later, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Orthodox political order would be restored and the Greeks would come to reign again⁹⁷. In that respect, Orthodoxy was a perpetuator of the subversive ideas of national liberation, and at the same time defined and mobilized the potential nation along the lines of its belonging.

The high status of Greeks in the Ottoman Empire, was not just based on the supremacy derived from the role of the Patriarchate. Among Greeks there were prosperous merchants that made the Greek community one of the richest in the region and probably the layer of the Ottoman Empire that was closest to the Western world⁹⁸. Much of the Greek owned capital, in the 18th century was invested in education and literature production⁹⁹. Moreover, the notion of the Phanariotes, a social strata mostly of Greek origin and sharing Greek culture, that had high positions in the Patriarchate, but also in the Ottoman administration, while later many of them autonomously governed the vassal Danubian Provinces, is an additional evidence about the privileges and the favored position of Greekdom in the region even before the national breakthrough¹⁰⁰.

The existence of an established elite, in the *Age of Nationalism* usually was an important in-put in the nation-establishment and the nation-building process. That had equipped Greek nation-to-be with an advantage in terms of its establishment compared to its surrounding. Furthermore, the monks, the artists, intellectuals, poets and even merchants, all brought, what is known in the Greek historiography, the ideas of the Enlightenment to the

97 See Roudometof, “From Rum Millet...”, op. cit. p. 17

98 See Laurie Kain Hart, “Culture, Civilization, and Demarcation at the Northwest Border of Greece”, *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 26. No. 1 (Feb., 1999), pp. 196-220. Also, Danforth notes that the term “Greek” besides its meaning in terms of cultural categorization, was also used to refer to person who owned or worked in the private enterprise. See Danforth, op. cit., p 59.

99 See Mazower, op. cit.

100 Roudometof, “From Rum Millet...”, op. cit.

Greek people. The Enlightenment in Greece, because of the relations Greek elite had with the West, was to some point an extension of the influence of the Encyclopedist and the French Revolution¹⁰¹, a fact that as it will be argued below, had much to do with the introduction of the narrative of the ancient past as a leitmotif of the Modern Greek nationalism.

However, the Enlightenment in Greece was not monolithic and was reflected in several tendencies in regard to the nation building. The first tendency, inclining to the ideal of the Orthodoxy, were promoting the Enlightenment values by criticizing the points of turning back to antiquity and projecting the Greek nation as a true, modern nation, based mostly on the Christian heritage¹⁰². Nonetheless, there was another, pro-ancient, *ethnogenetic* tendency emerging that later seemed to be prevailing, that stressed the particularism of the Greek nation, as opposed the universalism of Orthodoxy. Many authors, carrying the ideas of the continuity between the glorious ancient Hellenic past and the emerging modern nation, were translating, adapting and prefacing ancient works, setting the foundation of the rhetoric of Modern Greek nationalism, also known as Neohellenism¹⁰³.

One of the most crucial characters in the Greek Enlightenment was the so called *Teacher of the Greek Nation*, Adamantios Korais, an intellectual, raised in Western Europe, influenced by the ideals of the Encyclopedists, French Revolution and European Philhellenism. Diverging from his religious background, Korais was fascinated from the secular ideal of the Enlightenment and the vision of the historic nation. In terms of the Greek nation in particular, he had attributed it many transcendental features, projecting it as a one holistic entity that lasted over the centuries. In his works, he framed the Modern Greek nation as an organic successor of the ancient Hellenic world, framing the Ottoman rule for instance,

101 Kitromilides, op. cit.

102 Gourgouris, op. cit. 76

103 Ibid.

as a single event that had no significant contribution in the design of the nation¹⁰⁴. Elie Kedourie, in the analysis of the non-Western nationalisms, says that the Greek nationalist rhetoric as established by Korais, later became a prototype for the Asian and African post-colonial nationalisms that would trace their ancient roots centuries before the colonial rule¹⁰⁵. At the same time, Kedourie traces the Greek nationalism in the 18th and 19th century as the first nationalism that emerged in a context outside of Western Europe¹⁰⁶.

In that new, Neohellenic rhetoric brought by Korais and many other poets and prophets of the Greek nation¹⁰⁷, there was a semantic equation mark between notions of origin and continuity¹⁰⁸. Yet, the paradigmatic case for the prophecy of the continuity was not the work of Korais, because of his strong anti-clerical tendencies. It was the historian Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, the author of the first edition of the official Greek National history (a massive nine-volume edition) that stood for inclusion of various segments of the past. For instance, unlike Korais, he referred to the clerical Byzantine tradition as a medieval Hellenism and was probably the first and most important historian of the Greek nation that included the Ancient Macedonian narrative as well¹⁰⁹.

As seen, a important remark on the early years of the nation-building in Modern Greece was that a homogeneous rhetoric was hardly achieved, at least among different fractions within the Greek elite¹¹⁰. Kitromilides, for instance, focuses on the collisions

104 See Adamantios Korais, “The Present State of the Civilization in Greece” in Elie Kedourie, *Nationalism in Asia and Africa*, op. cit., pp. 153-189

105 Kedourie, op. cit.

106 Ibid.

107 Such as

108 Gourgouris, op. cit. 143-144

109 Victor Roudometof, “Invented Traditions, Symbolic Boundaries, and National Identity in Greece and Serbia, 1830-1880”, in ed. Victor Roudometof and Roland Robertson, *Nationalism, globalization, and orthodoxy: the social origins of ethnic conflict in the Balkans* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), pp. 101-131, Neophytos Loizides, “Balkan Historians as Nation-Builders (The Contribution of Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos to Greek Nationalism)”, *working paper* and Gourgouris, op. cit.

110 See Triandafyllidou and Paraskevopoulou, “When is the Greek nation...”, op. cit. Authors here argue that the Greek nation is a dynamic process, not a static entity, shifting the perspective of “when was the Greek nation” to “how is the Greek nation” (being) established.

between the “nationalizing” elite that insisted on the cultural particularity of Greekdom and Orthodox clergy that insisted on pastoral unity of different cultures sharing the same faith¹¹¹. Kechriotis refers to the multitude of nationalist projects in the early 20th as a *discussion* between the competing identifications among Greeks¹¹². Among the other ideas, worth mentioning is for example the federalist Greco-Ottoman stream insisting on cooperation and even building a federation between Greece and the (remains of the) Ottoman Empire¹¹³. Yet, even within these streams, different concepts emerged. In the Neohellenic stream, that was oriented towards the ancient roots of Modern Greece, there were factions that stood for an ethnic Greek nation and were not that much opposed to the Orthodoxy and there were the radical Enlighteners, like Rhigas Velistinlis (Pheraios), of Vlach origin, who stood for the establishment of a “civic” Greek nation that would unite all the enslaved peoples that had been under the Ottoman rule, but at the same time will destroy the Patriarchate, considered to be an agency of oppression¹¹⁴. The imagination of the ancient past, was also divergent, with regard to the selectivity of the different fragments of the history that were to be incorporated in the nation-building process.

Modern Greek Nationalism and the Unlikely Emergence of the Myth of Ancient Macedonia

Despite the plenty of disagreements and sometimes even antagonistic approaches to the definition of the 'self' of the Modern Greek nation, as well as the cultural heterogeneity within the Greek community, a single coherent story had to be produced for achieving unity. The main agency that ought to ensure the unitary discourse, was the Greek semi-sovereign state¹¹⁵. Despite the, initial difficulties of protecting the Greek statehood though, soon a

111 Kitromilides, op. cit. p. 33

112 Vangelis Kechriotis, “Greek-Orthodox, Ottoman Greeks or just Greeks? Theories of coexistence in the aftermath of the Young Turk revolution”, *Etudes Balkaniques*, 2005, No. 1, pp. 51-71

113 See Kechriotis op. cit., Triandafyllidiou and Paraskevopoulou, op. cit.

114 See Mazower, op. cit.

115 The Modern Greek state was established as a Kingdom under the supervision of the Great Powers. It was

national doctrine was elaborated, known under the name of the Megali Idea (the Grand Idea). It was very much oriented towards the cultural unity of the nation, inspired from the Neohellenic visions of the past.

Even though the main pillar of Neohellenism was the strong emphasis of the heritage of classic Hellenism, the Byzantine tradition was far from disregarded. Seeing the Byzantine Empire as a successor of Ancient Rome, and Rome as successor of Ancient Greece implied a clear trajectory of development of the Greek nation through the centuries, besides the historical complexities¹¹⁶. That is why Athens and Constantinople (Istanbul), the respective symbols of the two epochs spontaneously rose to primacy as centers of the Neohellenism¹¹⁷. Kotsakis discusses the respective functions of the two: the ancient past provided an “extrovert symbolic capital” that was used to prove to the outsiders the longevity and continuity of Hellenism, and the Byzantine past embodied the “introvert” one, as the Greek kingdom was the new Orthodox monarchy¹¹⁸. Thus, the Byzantine narrative legitimized the Bavarian royal family, and at the same time was a reference point of the fulfillment of the Megali Idea¹¹⁹.

The juxtaposition of Athens in the middle of the story of continuity with antiquity though, said much about the image of the ancient past modern Greece was trying to present: the ancient philosophy, the most progressive polis while the rule of Pericles, the marvelous pieces of art and literature and so on. It was not Sparta, the *ante muralis* military bastion, nor Thebes, nor Olympia, nor Mycenae, but it was Athens, the cradle of democracy and wisdom that was the epicenter of Hellenic culture, and now the axis of modern Greekness and Neohellenism. The symbolical capital Athens had to give to the Modern Greeks was the myth

formally ruled by the Bavarian royal house although the government was assigned a good amount of authority. See Clogg, *op. cit.*

116 See Triandafyllidiou and Paraskevopoulou, *op. cit.*

117 Clogg, *op. cit.*, p. 48

118 Kostas Kotsakis, “The past is ours: images of Greek Macedonia” in ed. Lynn Meskell, *Archaeology Under Fire: Nationalism, Politics and Heritage in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East* (Routledge, 1998), pp. 44-68

119 *Ibid.*

civilizing mission. As already argued, the distinguished position of the clerical and as well the secular elite gave the Greek intelligentsia a status of culturally superior towards the other Balkan peoples. The identification with ancient Athens, the locus where the classical philosophy was bred, was something that fit perfectly in the Greek self-perception, but also in the perception of the Philhellenic West that always imagined Greece as the vanguard of civilization.

The narrative of ancient nationhood of course, was vague and very inclusive towards the different segments of the past. Although the other components of the classic Hellenic history were not given the primacy over Athens, it can not be argued that they were less claimed to be Hellenic¹²⁰. Still, what was characteristic about the first years of the establishing of the Neohellenic tradition was the already mentioned evasive role of the ancient Macedonians in terms of the image of classical ancient Hellenism¹²¹.

Rhigas Pheraios, one of the pivotal Enlighteners, for instance was clearly an admirer of Alexander the Great¹²². He had authored several pieces on the Macedonian King and tried to use his image as an inspiration for the Greek national liberation. For instance, Alexis Politis points to 14 examples from the Modern Greek literature (among them the mentioned one of Adamantios Korais) that considered Ancient Macedonians were alien to Hellenism and were being a separate community¹²³. Korais in his works even used the terms “Macedonian” as a

120 Sparta and the battle at the Thermopylae, for example, was used as an inspiration for the independence war:

[...] “Must we but weep o'er days more blest?
Must we but blush?---Our fathers bled.
Earth! render back from out thy breast
A remnant of our Spartan dead!
Of the three hundred grant but three,
To make a new Thermopylae. [...]

Lord Byron, “The Isles of Greece” , <<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/byron-greece.html>>, last accessed 26.05.2009

121 Roudometof, op.cit. p. 281-282

122 Konstantinos Dimaras, *A history of modern Greek literature* (SUNY Press, 1972), p.168

123 As quoted in Roudometof, op.cit., note 36

synonym for an enemy¹²⁴. That rhetoric of using the Macedonians as the contending other to Hellenism, is very similar to the example from the speeches of the ancient Athenian philosopher Demosthenes, who was categorical on the distinction between ancient Macedonian barbarianism and the high culture of Hellenism¹²⁵. Furthermore, the interpretation of Macedonia, at least in the early years of the Modern Greek state, was as it is a backwards entity that could never be an equal part of the Hellenic realm¹²⁶. Hence, having in mind that since decades ago, the Greek government is determined to “protect” the Greek identity of Alexander the Great, the question raising here is, how and why did the image of Ancient Macedonia become suddenly evaluated as integral part of the Neohellenic rhetoric?

As already discussed, the significance of the myth of Alexander the Great, besides the universal symbolic capital, in the case of the Greece and Macedonia has additional value in terms of its appeal as a narrative of continuity, thus an evidence for the historical right over Macedonia (whatever it may mean). So, what the myth of Alexander the Great provided, and the myth of Athens and ancient nobility by itself lacked, was the latter - a cause and an argument for including the territories of Macedonia in the Greek national project. The territorial appetite as formulated in the Megali Idea, although not primarily focused on the Greek expansion towards the region of Macedonia, had still projected it as one of the key aims of the Greek cause for the future. With Constantinople being discursively further and further, it seemed that now the target place for liberating the Greek nation was shifted to the north.

The region Macedonia at that time was still under the Ottoman rule, and there were plenty of claims and efforts from the neighboring expansionist nationalisms for annexing the

124 “They are infinitely more culpable, those Greeks who first allowed themselves to be corrupted by Macedonian gold” in Korais, op. cit. p. 156

125 In his speeches he was very insulting towards Ancient Macedonians, saying they were barbarians. He was extremely harsh on Philip II, seeing him as threat to Athens. That is why some of his speeches are known as “Philippics”.

126 Kotsakis, op. cit.

remains of “Turkey in Europe”. Every nationalism, especially in the 19th century, featured a vision of the political-unit-to-be, but on the Balkans, the boundaries between the political and the cultural units had never become clear, as the struggle for their definition was the primary goal of the newly founded states.

What in the contemporary Macedonian historiography is known as “the foreign nationalist propaganda”, was in fact a contest between the Greek, Bulgarian, Serbian and to some extent the Romanian nationalism to win the population over to their side, since they had already established institutions¹²⁷. It has to be stressed that the meanings and the usage of the words Macedonia and Macedonian has been highly ambiguous¹²⁸, what probably was a factor that contributed to the emergence of the disputes between different claims to the Macedonian history, territory and symbols.

The modes of articulation of the contenders' plans, however, were different. For the sake of avoiding digressions, I would here just hold on to the Greek efforts.

The mainstream perception on the different cultural influences in Macedonia back then, is that they were put into work through the paradigm of religious institutions. In the Ottoman system, as said before, the basic political category had been the religious belonging. Therefore, it is easy to assume that the target group of the Greek influence in Macedonia were the Orthodox Christians loyal to the Patriarchate. However, an unexpected and very unpleasant occurrence that was an obstacle to fulfilling the Greek plan for Macedonia, was the emergence of the Bulgarian Exarchate, and the formation of the Bulgar millet (1870), inaugurating a new politics of belonging beyond religion – the ethnic/national one¹²⁹.

127 Slavko Milosavljeski, “Bugarskiot, Srpskiot i Grchkiot nacionalizam i razvitiot na makedonskata nacionalna svest” [The Bulgarian, Serbian and Greek nationalisms and the development of the Macedonian national consciousness], *Sociologija na makedonskata nacionalna svest [Sociology of the Macedonian national consciousness]* (Skopje : Kultura, 1992), pp. 168-190

128 See Danforth, op. cit. p. 6

129 See John R. Lampe, “Balkan States and Borderlands Before the Balkan Wars”, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe : a century of war and transition* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp.

In the contest over Macedonia, the Bulgarian Exarchate had gained a starting advantage since the majority of the Orthodox inhabitants of Macedonia were Slavic speaking, thus culturally closer to the Bulgarian cause, some of them adopting the Bulgarian ethnic and national identification and even taking active role in the Bulgarian national movement. The only Greek-speaking community, as well culturally close to the Neohellenism were the bilingual Greco-Vlachs, a wealthy yet unequally distributed minority and certainly not the decisive factor in the hypothetical future nation-building in Macedonia. So, that is why the Greek attitude towards the Macedonian issue had to be adjusted. The similarity and the cross-cutting cleavages between the Slavic speakers in Macedonia and the Bulgarian culture led to formation of a Macedonian (or Macedonian-Bulgarian) identity which was based on cultural grounds¹³⁰.

The Greek response to the situation, was what Harrison calls, the innovation strategy. As the Bulgarian Exarchate was pursuing its goal by ethno-linguistic influences, the Patriarchate condemned them of ethno-philetism. Yet, the cultural realm seemed to be dominated by the Bulgarian cause, and the innovation was the projection of a new symbolical meaning, as the Macedonian identity was now redefined as bounded to the territory of Macedonia.

Namely, after Thessaly (1881), and parts of Epirus were already put under the Greek rule, the physical proximity of the Greek Kingdom and the region of Macedonia suddenly became very close¹³¹. Since the government had failed to secure foreign support, and at the same time had difficulties securing the affinity of the people on the field, a new Greek policy was introduced for “liberating” the Greeks in Macedonia¹³². It was based on strengthening

130 Evangelos Kofos, “Dilemmas and Orientations of Greek Policy in Macedonia: 1876-1886”, *Balkan Studies*, 21/1 (1980), pp. 45-55

131 See John Agnew, “No Borders, No Nations: Making Greece in Macedonia”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 97/2 (2007), pp. 398 - 422

132 See Kofos, *Dilemmas*, op. cit.

influence of the Greek schools and religious institutions as well as economic influence, but it was also based on “counteracting similar Bulgarian tactics” and questionable “armed activity”¹³³.

The arrival of the modern state in the regions beyond Western Europe and the definition of its borders, as Agnew argues, were often justified with the affiliation with the old gone state formations in order to prove the historical right of settlement¹³⁴. According to this pattern, as a reference point for defining what Macedonia is, the territory of the Ancient Kingdom of Macedon was taken. Furthermore the question about which version of the Ancient Macedonian past was more usable was opened, since the territories of the ancient Kingdoms varied frequently. The particular version of Ancient Macedon that was taken as a defining unit was the one under the rule of Philip II, the father of Alexander¹³⁵. The reason for selecting the precise version of the boundaries that Philip set was simple and practical. First of all, it was a territory that did not include the northern and central territories of Macedonia, in which in the 19th century the Bulgarian and the Serbian influence were much stronger than the Greek one as those parts were mostly inhabited with Slavic people. Projecting the historic Macedonia not far from the Aegean coast was less demanding and far more achievable.

Secondly, the figures of Philip and Alexander played a decisive role in the history of Ancient Greece, thus had a lot of symbolical potential. Under Philip's leadership, the Macedonian army had annexed several Hellenic territories and Philip had presented the idea of uniting the Hellenic armies (the Corinthian League) into a conquest against Persia, something that later had been accomplished by his son¹³⁶. Through the time, that process had

133 Ibid.

134 See Agnew, op. cit.

135 Evangelos Kofos, “National Heritage and National Identity in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Macedonia” in (ed.) Marting Blinkhorn and Thanos Veremeis, *Modern Greece: Nationalism and Nationality* (Athens : SAGE-ELIAMEP, 1990), pp. 103-143

136 An emphasis has to be made on the Philhellenism of Ancient Macedonian kings: because of being treated as barbarians from the Athenians, they had a complex of self-conscious. For instance, Alexander the Great was a big fan of Achilles and his ultimate goal was the spread of Hellenism. Being fascinated by Greek culture,

been read as an integration, not as a conquest. What the Modern Greek historians, in the first place Paparrigopoulos did centuries later, was a particular re-interpretation of (in Harrison's terms, innovation in) the context. They emphasized the points of proximity of the neighboring Ancient cultures on the expense of the differences between them. Hence, Philip the Barbarian now was seen as Philip the integrator, and the annexation of the Hellenic territories was simplistically said to be the unification of the whole Hellenic world under the rule of Macedonians¹³⁷. The territory of Philip's kingdom (and the territory from the early stages of Alexander's rule) was not regarded being the Kingdom of Macedon anymore, but it was the united Hellenic commonwealth. That clearly implied that Macedonia had been an integral, if not the crucial part of the Hellenic world. This viewpoint although failed in the rational elaboration of the connection, turned out to be very acceptable for the Modern Greek nationalism and it soon was very successfully incorporated in the nationalist programme. Alexander the Great was projected as a role model of the unification of the Hellenic world that had to happen (the Megali Idea), being the hero who millennia beforehand had brought the Enlightenment to the Orient¹³⁸. In fact, it was plausible to the Greek cause to the extent that the fight against the Ottomans for liberation of the Hellenic territories was soon focused on the particular territory of Macedonia.

The sentiment that Greece developed towards Macedonia, culminated with the involvement of Greece in the Balkan Wars and the annexation of large parts of the Ottoman villayets of Monastir and Salonica, what came to be known as the region of (Aegean) Macedonia¹³⁹. Besides the sentimental satisfaction derived from the incorporation of Macedonia under the Greek rule, some of the new acquisitions were the port of Salonica, the

under Alexander the Great's reign, Hellenism was spread across a vast region like never before of after.
137 Loizides, "Balkan Historians as Nation Builders...", op. cit.

138 Roudometof, *Invented traditions in Greece and Serbia*, op. cit. p. 108-109

139 On the Balkan Wars see Lampe, *Balkans into Southeastern Europe*, op. cit.

main urban center in this part of the Balkans, and the peninsula of Athos, considered to be one of Orthodoxy's most sacred sites, that contributed to another redefinition of the Greek national 'self'.

Still, Modern Greece as a prototype of a nationalizing state¹⁴⁰, the narrative offered by the new State was sort of a pan-Greek, all-encompassing view that united multiple usable segments of the past that could be connected together in a line of development till the present, which was not necessarily rational, but it certainly was a strong mean of mobilizing the population¹⁴¹. As the nationalizing policies of the Greek state were maintained throughout the time, other cultures were wiped out the region Macedonia. Partially it was the exodus and assimilation of the Slavic population, referred to by Macedonian historiography as ethnic Macedonians¹⁴². The rigid treatment towards the Jews, for example transformed the demographics in Salonica, once the city with highest Jewish population in the world. Many of the Jews were deported or forced to leave¹⁴³. A significant numbers of Muslims, both Turkish and non-Turkish speakers, that were spread all across the newly annexed territory were later exchanged and Greeks from Asia Minor, Pontus and Bulgaria were brought to settle Macedonia¹⁴⁴. Albanians in Western Macedonia were also object of a hard assimilation process. That contributed to the perception of Macedonia, no matter if ancient or modern, as

140 According to the theory of the nationalizing state as proposed by Rogers Brubaker. See "Nationalizing states in the old "New Europe" - and the new" in *Nationalism reframed...*, op. cit. p. 79. Paschalis Kitromilides expresses this in the following quote: "It is precisely the political role of the state in consolidating and legitimizing its power that will emerge most clearly from a consideration of the two dimensions of nation-building in nineteenth-century Greece." in Kitromilides, op. cit., p 35. Later in the text, Kitromilides describes the role of the state apparatus, for instance the role of the public education and the army as one of the crucial instances of achieving the Greek national identity. See Kitromilides, ibis., p. 38. On the same matter, Gourgouris argues that the nationalizing upbringing via education in Greece was based on the Humboldtian idea of Bildung. See Gourgouris, op. cit.

141 See Kitromilides, op. cit.

142 This matter will be discussed further in the paper.

143 See Mark Mazower, *Salonica, city of ghosts : Christians, Muslims, and Jews, 1430-1950* (New York : Alfred A. Knopf, 2005)

144 For an in-depth analysis from a folk-centered perspective about the Turco-Greek exchange of populations see Onur Yildirim, *Diplomacy and displacement: reconsidering the Turco-Greek exchange of populations, 1922-1934* (CRC Press, 2006)

an integral and indistinguishable part of Greece, yet at the same time, Macedonian remained as an internal Other¹⁴⁵. Thus, this perception remained uncontested until the 1940s, when a new political actor was introduced to the scene: the People's Republic of Macedonia.

“When Alexander met Tito (in front of the Church)”: The Coming of Age of Modern Macedonia

At a first glance, the idea of any relation between the Tito-led Partisan resistance during the Second World War in Yugoslavia and the narrative of Ancient Macedonian nationhood seems very odd and even self-contradicting. Communist ideology is usually perceived as anti-nationalist, and sometimes even anti-national, as if it repressed every expression of national feeling or belonging. Yet, starting from the premise that communism never repressed nationalism¹⁴⁶, and furthermore, that in some cases it had even instrumentalized it and even encouraged it¹⁴⁷, in this section it is argued that to a certain extent, the roots of the idea of continuity between Ancient and contemporary Macedonia should be looked for precisely in the establishment of the Macedonian statehood in post-war Yugoslavia.

Yugoslavia, besides Albania, was the only country in the War that managed to defeat the Axis occupation mostly due to its own military resistance. That fact earned the liberation movement under Tito's leadership a high status on the regional scene, becoming the source of legitimacy of the newly created Yugoslav Federation¹⁴⁸. One of the ways it was reflected in Tito's political projects, was through his plan of the Yugoslav regional expansion, both in term

145 Kotsakis, op. cit.

146 Rogers Brubaker, “Myths and misconceptions in the study of nationalism” in ed. John A. Hall, *The state of the nation : Ernest Gellner and the theory of nationalism*, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 272-306

147 Katherine Verdery, *National ideology under socialism : identity and cultural politics in Ceausescu's Romania* (Berkeley : University of California Press, c1991)

148 John R. Lampe, *Yugoslavia as history : twice there was a country* (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000) , p. 293

of political influence but as well as in terms of territory. Briefly said, his plan was through close political and economic collaboration and de-facto unification, to create a broader Balkan federation that would include the communist-ruled Albania and Bulgaria, but also Northern Greece (the Greek territory of Macedonia) or at least the territory inhabited with Slavic speaking populations, where the communist movement was on the rise. Its ultimate goal was establishing a mini-communist international that would be independent from the guardianship of Stalin¹⁴⁹. The political development of this idea lasted in the period between the middle of the War and 1948, when the Tito-Stalin split happened, precisely because Stalin's fear of the possibilities of the fulfillment of Tito's plans and his hypothetical increased influence in the region¹⁵⁰.

Tito was sharp-minded and a very pragmatic statesman. Even though he was running on a communist platform, he utilized every possible means for pursuing his goals. For the purposes of the project for creating the Balkan federation, he played to a great extent on the national question card. In that respect, one of the key assets for him was Macedonia¹⁵¹.

The territory of Macedonia, after the Balkan Wars, was partitioned by the four neighboring countries: the Greek Kingdom, Bulgaria, Serbia (consequently the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenians, after 1929 called Yugoslavia), and a small part was annexed to the new Albanian state. The already mentioned ethnographic diversity of the region perpetuated and national and ethnic identifications multiplied as the respective parts were now included in the separate nation-building processes. One of the narratives that prevailed throughout this processes, was the Macedonian identification, later to be the pillar of the Macedonian nation. It was basically an identification among Slavic-speaking Orthodox

149 Adam B. Ulam, "The Background of the Soviet-Yugoslav Dispute", *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Jan., 1951), pp. 39-63

150 Ibid.

151 See R. H. Markham, "The Role of Macedonia", *Tito's Imperial Communism* (Kessinger Publishing, 2005), pp. 220-230 and Keith. Brown, *The past in question : modern Macedonia and the uncertainties of nation*, (Princeton, N.J. : Princeton University Press, c2003), p. 45-47

people, that were spread across the whole region, and consequently, across the four Balkan states, and were not identifying them with any of them, but with the name of Macedonia. The Macedonian identification grounds were traced to the anti-Ottoman resistance and the IMARO/IMRO that was formed during the late 19th century and to the Macedonian National Revival at the same period, and arguably there was a presence of the myths of Philip II and Alexander the Great¹⁵². Although the Macedonian identification before the Second World War is a matter of dispute, it was later institutionalized as in 1944, the limited-independent and sovereign People's Republic was proclaimed, as a part of the Yugoslav federation¹⁵³. The Republic was founded on the part of the territory that was previously annexed by Serbia and on small parts that used to be under Bulgarian and Albanian rule, and was seen as a nucleus for the future unification of all the parts of the region of Macedonia, possibly within the Balkan federation.

Yet, what was proclaimed along with Macedonian statehood was the existence of the Macedonian nation which included not just the inhabitants of the Republic, but also to the other parts of what was claimed to be the territory of the region Macedonia¹⁵⁴. This meant that a part of the Macedonian nation is seated in Greece, Bulgaria and Albania. As the Albanian share here was insignificant, the main question remained to be the former.

The Bulgarian-Yugoslav cooperation after the war went smoothly and soon Bulgaria took many steps towards improving the position of the recognized ethnic Macedonian

152 See Keith Brown, op. cit. Chapter 2. See also Ines Crvenkovska – Ristevska – “Anthropological view upon the process of creation of the Macedonian national identity in the period of revival”, *EthnoAnthropoZoom* no. 5 (2005), pp. 73-113. For the narratives of antiquity see Ivanka Dodovska, “The awakening of the Macedonian national identity in the 19th century through the myth of Philip and Alexander the Great”, *Politichka Misl* no.16 (2006), pp. 29-38

153 Stefan Troebst argues that the proposed grand narrative of the genesis of the Macedonian national identity from the IMRO days till the 1990s is imperfect. Framing the historical events into the Miroslav Hroch's model of “national movements through phases”, Troebst concludes that the Macedonian movement has a questionable Phase B. See Stefan Troebst, “IMRO+100=FYROM?...”, op. cit.

154 See Markham, op. cit., Brown op. cit. See also Andrew Rossos, “Incompatible Allies: Greek Communism and Macedonian Nationalism in the Civil War in Greece”, 1943-1949, *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 69., No. 1 (Mar., 1997), pp. 42-76,

minority, in the Pirin as well as the numerous diaspora from Aegean and Vardar Macedonia in big Bulgarian cities, then seen as yet another pillar of the Macedonian nation. Still, after the “schism” in 1948, the Bulgarian attitude towards the Macedonian question had radically changed as Sofia leaned towards Moscow. In the years to follow, the Yugoslav reading of the Macedonian nation was altered proposing the role of the Macedonia as Bulgaria's little brother. However, after 1956, when Todor Zhivkov was into power, all the provisions made towards Macedonia, among which the recognition of the existence of the Macedonian nation and consequently the existence of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, which is a matter even nowadays. At the same time, a process of de-Bulgarization of the Macedonian culture, in terms of wiping out all the Bulgarian affiliations and influences¹⁵⁵.

On the other hand, the relations with Greece, were far more complicated. Greece was a country in which a proxy war between the what later will be the Eastern and Western blocs happened. After the victory over the German occupation, an open contest for power took place, involving the right wing, supported by the British and later the Americans on one side, and the tentatively pro-Stalinist Communist party on the other. As the Communist were on the way to allying with the British, it was no one else but Tito that encouraged them not to do so, promising them a full support in their struggle and even logistics in case of war, for taking over Greece under the condition of further tight cooperation. These events were happening a short period after the war, meaning that both the Communists' and the right wing's armies were still mobilized for warfare. As the confrontation escalated, the Civil War in Greece broke out. As this happened at the time when the Macedonian republic was established coupled with the recognition of the Macedonian nation, it also involved the Slavic speaking minority

155 See Ulf Brunnbauer, “Historiography, Myths and the Nation in the Republic of Macedonia” in ed. Ulf Brunnbauer, *(Re)writing history : historiography in Southeast Europe after socialism* (Münster : Lit, 2004), pp. 165-200 and Ulf Brunnbauer, “Ancient Nationhood and the Struggle for Statehood: Historiographic Myths in the Republic of Macedonia” in ed. Pål Kolstø, *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe* (London: C. Hurst & Co., 2005), 262-296.

declared as ethnic Macedonians in Northern Greece. Soon, a significant portion of the Communist army was comprised of ethnic Macedonian volunteers¹⁵⁶. Their stake this time was not exclusively seizing the power in order to conduct a Communist revolution. Another motive for joining the Communists was the prospective unification of the Macedonian nation and unification of the different parts of what was considered to be Macedonia¹⁵⁷. Tito wanted to utilize that – and similarly as in the case with Bulgaria, he stood for recognition and provision of rights of the part of the Macedonian nation in Greece, hoping that the fight for unification of the Macedonian could pave the way for expanding his “Empire” to the south¹⁵⁸.

Still, there was a clear break between the Greek communist and Macedonian nationalists. As Rossos argues, as the time passed the Greek communist leadership became very intolerant towards the autonomist ideas of the Macedonian fellow soldiers¹⁵⁹. Furthermore, after the Tito-Stalin split, the Greek communists openly decided to choose Moscow rather than Belgrade, which cost them the Yugoslav support. Tito, in a much weaker position after the split with USSR, had to bargain with the West for keeping Yugoslavia independent, and was under pressure to fully close the border and disband the bases of the Democratic Army on Yugoslavian territory¹⁶⁰.

The first targets for prosecution of the new very authoritarian regime despite the Communists, were the ethnic Macedonians. Many of them were expelled and forced to leave the country¹⁶¹. Tito had to choose between the urge to help the Macedonians evicted from

156 See Rossos, *op. cit.* Drawing upon the data gathered from official documents, he argues that a number between 11.000 – 20.000 Macedonian partisans were involved in the Army, which is more than a third from the total forces.

157 *Ibid.*

158 *Ibid.* See also Markham *op. cit.* and Ivo Banac, “The Tito-Stalin Split and the Greek Civil War” in ed. John O. Iatrides, Linda Wrigley, *Greece at the crossroads* (Penn State Press, 2004), pp. 258-273 and Evangelos Kofos, “The Impact of the Macedonian Question on Civil Conflict in Greece, 1943-1949” in *Greece at the crossroads*, *op. cit.*, pp. 274-318

159 See Rossos, *op. cit.*

160 *Ibid.*

161 *Ibid.*

Greece and the Western pressure to keep the border with Greece closed¹⁶². He finally did a compromise of granting political asylum to all the Macedonians that were expelled from the Aegean region. The Civil War story does not end here as the Macedonian refugees even nowadays have trouble returning to Greece, but their fate will be discussed later in the paper.

The legitimate question raising here is, where are the narratives from the ancient past in this chapter of the history? The direct link between Tito's imperialism and the narrative Alexander the Great, of course, is impossible to be proven. What was legitimized and politicized in this chapter was the innovation of the idea of Greater Macedonia¹⁶³, a narrative of the supposed cultural unit divided among three separate polities, that ought to be legitimized.

The creation of the Macedonian national identity as separate and bounded one, has been placed among of the central objectives for the institutions under and beyond government control since the foundation of the People's Republic of Macedonia as one of the six federal units of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). For that purpose, by a government decree in 1948, the *Institute for National History* was established, having a special monopolistic status in terms of historical research and being assigned the particular mission of identity creation and fortifying the cornerstones of the new nation¹⁶⁴. Soon, a process of making and remaking of the foundation national myths was started as the academia was put in the service of the national interest.

During the existence of Yugoslavia, the nation-building in every Yugoslav republic, hence Macedonia, was a task for the state apparatuses including the scientific and educational

162 See Viktor Cvetanoski, "Dramata na Egejcite (11)" [The Aegeans Drama], *Utrinski Vesnik Daily*, 11.07.2008, <<http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=75F7FD6F231B0449A210F25544E78FDE>> last accessed 22.05.2009

163 See Christian Voss, Great Macedonia as a "mental map" in the 20th and 21th century, *Nationalities Affairs*, issue 31/2007, pp. 163-169

164 Brunnbauer, op. cit.

institutions, under the supervision of the high Yugoslav authorities¹⁶⁵. The criteria of Brotherhood and Unity¹⁶⁶ had to be met, and the national projects had had to be compatible with the Yugoslav meta-narratives and the ideology of the Communist Party¹⁶⁷. The myths also had to be standardized and correlated with other republics' myths. Among the ethnic Macedonians, two narratives of origin (that were in a valuation contest) existed – the ancient and the Slavic (Orthodox) ones¹⁶⁸. The former, as Dodovska argues, was reflected in some of the works dating back to the 19th century and the Macedonian Enlightenment as well as in the oral literature. Authors like Gjorgija Puleski or Marko Cepenkov have also made notions of the memory of the myth of Alexander the Great among the alleged Macedonian ethnies in the 19th century¹⁶⁹. The explanations for this are twofold: the first one, as Dodovska suggests, is the “organic” argument that the myths have been kept in the oral literature tradition for centuries among the folks. Another approach is the one suggesting that the folk myth of Alexander the Great amongst Macedonian Slavs – the basics for later institutionalized uses – was strongly influenced if not shaped by Greek cultural inputs, such as the Greek schooling system in the southern areas, also in Aegean Macedonia¹⁷⁰.

The Slavic myth, on the other hand was directly correlated with the Ottoman resistance. Even some of the old generation of the fighters against the Ottoman Empire, took part in the anti-fascist liberation and the establishment of the Macedonian statehood.

Furthermore, the narrative of the ancient past was more esoteric, implying an ethnogenetic

165 Ibid.

166 Brotherhood and Unity [Bratstvo i jedinstvo in Serbo-Croatian] was “[t]he expression used to describe the relations between [Yugoslav] nations, nationalities and national minorities (while they existed); it was a compulsory motive of all the speeches, academic papers, articles etc. Tito, whenever he appeared in public, used the phrase: 'Protect the Brotherhood and the Unity as if it was the pupil of your eye'. The same phrase was used to name objects: for instance the highway “Brotherhood-Unity”. The excessive use of the term made it lose any meaning.” N/A, *Leksikon na JU mitologijata [Thesaurus of the YU mythology]* (Skopje: Templum, 2006), p. 61

167 Brunnbauer, op. cit, 269

168 See Dodovska, op. cit.

169 Ibid.

170 See Georgievski op. cit., as well as Kofos, “National Heritage...”, op.cit.

concept and an imperial legacy, which was not compatible to the communist ideals¹⁷¹. All in all, the circumstances were such, that the Slavic narrative, rooted in the anti-Ottoman struggle was put, in Harrison's terms “higher in the hierarchy” of myths¹⁷².

The idea of ancient nationhood was never abandoned. It may not have won the valuation contest, but it sure was an object of innovation strategies. For instance, the Yugoslav reference the Alexander the Great in the history books was “Aleksandar Makedonski” (“Alexander of Macedonia”), and the Communist-approved first edition of the “History of the Macedonian People” traced the beginnings of the Macedonian nation in antiquity¹⁷³. Still, this notion was treated with a reserve, and was mostly instrumentalized in the disputes with Bulgarian historiography – as the Bulgarians were claiming the proximity with the Macedonian culture based on the common Slavic roots, the symbolic capital of Alexander the Great was the argument of distinctiveness which Macedonian historiography employed to prove the authentic Macedonian pre-modern past¹⁷⁴. Nonetheless, both the Macedonian and Bulgarian historiography developed a common narrative – that the Slavs upon arrival in the Balkans assimilated the autochthonous population (Ancient Macedonians and Thracians respectively) – thus a link with the ancient period was forged. The Greek rhetoric in this period was tolerant towards this, although emphasized the distinctions between Macedonians (Greeks living in Aegean Macedonia) and “Macedonians” or later, SlavoMacedonians (what they referred to as Slavic speakers living in the People's, consequently Socialist Republic of Macedonia, whose name was not disputed)¹⁷⁵. The contestation between the two sides,

171 See Brown. *op. cit.*

172 *Ibid.* This choice was also supported by strong symbolism. Namely, the highlight of the anti-Ottoman resistance was considered to be the Ilinden uprising, after which a not long lasting independent Republic was established in the town of Krushevo. The uprising took place at the 2nd of August 1903, an Orthodox holiday named “Ilinden”. The Macedonian state in the World War Two was established on the 2nd of August, 1944, and it was said to be the Second Ilinden.

173 See Brunnbauer, *op. cit.*

174 *Ibid.*

175 See Kofos “National Heritage and National Identity...”, *op. cit.*

however, did not transform in a proprietary conflict yet, because a pre-requisite for a proprietary conflict is the silent consensus between the two sides about the ultimately highest value of the contested symbol at the two respective sides¹⁷⁶.

The findings in Vergina and the Antiquity Significance Boost

Archaeology has played an important role in the nationalist projects, in terms of providing reference points for national myths and legitimizing claims to historical rights¹⁷⁷. As a nation-state founded on the “ruins” of ancient Hellenism, Modern Greece's relation towards the ancient heritage has been marked with a strong pace and enthusiasm. The artifacts from the past, as Hamilakis argues, are central to the Greek national imagination, because they are seen as a materialization, a physical proof of antiquity and at the same time personifying the key feature of Greek nationalism, the “nostalgia for the past”¹⁷⁸. Regarding the contest over the narratives of the ancient past, archaeology is a key input in terms of re-evaluation of the symbolic capital, as every new discovery could possibly add up to the value one narrative has had.

While in the 19th and the first half of the 20th century, Greek archaeology was concentrated on mostly the southern parts of Greece, in the last several decades, the focus of archaeologists shifted towards Macedonia. Before that, Macedonia had been less exploited in terms of archaeological research. As already said, the definition of the Greek nation had always been carried out by “othering” surrounding entities. Macedonia and its inhabitants, even after the annexation of the Aegean part of Macedonia, were seen as less Hellenic than Southern Greece, because of the various historical path of that region, most notably the late

176 Harrison, “Four Types...”, op. cit.

177 Philip L. Kohl, “Nationalism and Archaeology: On the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote past”, *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 27 (1998), pp. 223-246. As well, one of the central arguments of Hamilakis is that archaeology, being created by modernity in fact serves nationalism, as nationalism is the most successful ideology in the modernity. See Yannis Hamilakis, *The nation and its ruins : antiquity, archaeology, and national imagination in Greece* (New York : Oxford University Press, 2007)

178 Hamilakis, op. cit., Chapter 1

coming to being a part of the Greek state, but also because of the demographic heterogeneity¹⁷⁹. However, after the developments from the Civil War and the involvement of the ethnic Macedonians (described in the section before), the Greek nationalist project sought to incorporate Macedonia into the Hellenic image in order to neutralize the unification claims of ethnic Macedonians. Still, the role assigned to Macedonia regarding the national imagination, at this period was more in terms of its Byzantine past¹⁸⁰.

The turn around in terms of the meaning of Macedonia for the Greek national imagination, happened quite late¹⁸¹. Namely, in 1977 epochal archaeological findings were made in Vergina, the alleged capital of Ancient Macedonia, 40 km far away from Thessaloniki. Massive excavations were undertaken and the researchers managed to find the tomb of Ancient Macedonian Royal House, and among that the larnax (coffin) of Philip II and ancient Macedonian paraphernalia whose main feature was the later disputed 16-point Star¹⁸². The potential of this findings was prodigious, since they were not referring just to the Greek nationalism, but to the mere world history and the knowledge on Ancient Macedonia. At the same time, many archaeologists and experts in the field challenged the purity, accuracy and the academic objectivity during the research, mostly arguing that the tomb that was found might not have been the one of Philip II¹⁸³. Still, for the public opinion, that was down and in despair after the years of the military junta, the value of this findings was indisputable. They were attributed with a sacred meaning for the Greek national identification, and Greek nationalism gradually became “archaeologized” as the Vergina symbols started being used

179 Kotsakis, op. cit.

180 Ibid.

181 See Anna Triandafyllidou, “National identity and the 'other'”, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 21, 1998, pp. 593-612. The author stresses the interaction between the new archaeological findings, the Greek tendency to constantly redefine national identity and the emergence of the Macedonian nationalist rhetoric based claims to Alexander's legacy as determinant to the dynamic of this turn (p. 605)

182 Brown, “Seeing stars...”, op. cit.

183 See Phyllis Williams Lehmann, “The So-Called Tomb of Philip II: A Different Interpretation”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 84, No. 4 (Oct., 1980), pp. 527-531 and E. A. Fredrickmeyer, “Again the So-Called Tomb of Philip II”, *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 85, No. 3 (Jul., 1981), pp. 330-334

widely for political and commercial goals¹⁸⁴. Alexander the Great was referred to in political speeches, his portrait was put on the national currency (the coin of 100 drachmae), and scholarly work on the “Northern Hellenism” was presented¹⁸⁵. That was a clear impulse of a valuation conflict between the narrative of Alexander the Great and the other national myths of Greece. At the same time, these findings only partially induced valuation contest among Macedonian nationalists, as they only tentatively claimed their right to the ancient past, being far from the mainstream.

The contest and probably the announcement for the dispute to follow were the reactions to the findings by the respective Greek and Macedonian diasporas. As Macedonia in the Yugoslav context had to stick up to the Slavic narrative, it was logical to assume that the expelled nationalists would be opposed to the mainstream Slavic narrative, and would search for alternatives, one of them being inspired the ancient imperial past. This myth was especially plausible to the ethnic Macedonians originating from Northern Greece, that were evicted after the Civil War. Hence, many cultural and civil society organization founded by ethnic Macedonians in Australia, Canada and the United States started using the symbols of Ancient Macedonia for their representation¹⁸⁶. The fellow Greek diaspora, in the meantime, responded their way, by using the symbols as their own and at the same time denouncing the Macedonians the right to it¹⁸⁷. That ultimately has led to several encounters between members of the diaspora communities, most notably in Melbourne, on a football match between Macedonian and Greek team and their fan groups whose iconography was inspired by the Sun of Vergina and the ancient Macedonian symbols¹⁸⁸. Though, the competition between the two diasporas in respect to the narratives of antiquity since has been also reflected in high politics

184 Kotsakis, Triandafyllidiou, Triandafyllidiou et. al., Brown, “Seeing Stars...” op. cit., Danforth op. cit., 163-166

185 Danforth, op. cit. 172

186 See Voss, op. cit. Danforth, op. cit., Roudometof, op. cit., Ljubcho Georgievski quote

187 See Danforth op. cit.

188 Ibid.

much above the football fans clashes. For example, the Greek lobby in the United States Congress has constantly been promoting evidences about the “FYROM's attempts to steal history”¹⁸⁹.

Yet, that situation started changing as Yugoslavia was approaching to its end and the federal republics were heading to secession. The new situation and the rise of the meaning of the national 'self' opened the debate on national origin, setting the field for possible re-evaluation of the different narratives. As Ljubcho Georgievski, the nationalist frontrunner of the Macedonian independence has recently admitted, an inspirational story was needed “to awake the Macedonian people from the Yugoslav daydream” and that precisely was the purpose of the introduction of the myth of Ancient Macedonia¹⁹⁰.

The signs of Macedonian independence and the usage of ancient Macedonian symbols meant that there was the “prerequisite consensus” on the superior value of the contested symbol. After the promotion of the new state flag of the Republic of Macedonia that was representing the Sun of Vergina, the same symbol was protected by law as Greek national heritage¹⁹¹. That meant that the contest over Ancient Macedonian nationhood now entered the proprietary phase.

The Greek elite's perception or at least their suspicion was that the Republic of Macedonia is a possible threat to the security and the territorial integrity. The inferiority of Macedonia compared to Greece in terms of power sometimes was usually ruled out in the

189 For example, see the recent initiative of international scholars called “Macedonia Evidence”. A letter, signed by 200 university professors from around the world, was sent to the United States president Barack Obama, in which they demanded repeal of the recognition of “Skopje/FYROM” under the name “Republic of Macedonia”. As they state, “this silliness has gone too far, and [...] the U.S.A. has no business in supporting the subversion of history”. Furthermore, they urge president Obama “to help - in whatever ways you deem appropriate - the government in Skopje to understand that it cannot build a national identity at the expense of historic truth. Our common international society cannot survive when history is ignored, much less when history is fabricated.”. See “Letter to President Obama, May 18, 2009”, Macedonia Evidence, <<http://macedonia-evidence.org/obama-letter.html>>, last accessed 24.05.2009

190 Ljubcho Georgievski, “To the grand-children of Aminta”, Fokus Magazine, available online at <<http://www.vmro-np.org.mk/sodrzini.php?idSod=200&action=2>>, last accessed 22.05.2009

191 See Danforth, op. cit.

light of the arguments about the hypothetic Macedonian alliance with Turkey¹⁹². Moreover, the debates in the Greek parliament in which the government was called to use the full capacity and to take advantage of the better position on an international scene in order to reclaim the identity, certainly can be seen as the opening of the expansionary phase of the contest.

The Former Empire vis-a-vis The Former Yugoslav Republic vis-a-vis the Greek Expansionary Strategy

The valuation conflict between the different narratives within the Macedonian context remained open as the value of the ancient and the Yugoslav narratives remained ambiguous and unclear. Besides the introduction of the Vergina Sun as the flag symbol (and as a main motive in the national anthem), the narrative of the establishment of the first Macedonian state during the antifascist resistance remained a mainstream discourse after the independence in the 1990s as well. The President Kiro Gligorov, a marquee political figure, often perceived as a father of the nation, in 1994 stated that “our country is created on the 2 August 1944 and based on the decisions of the ASNOM”¹⁹³. It was a clear statement that there was an undisputed continuity between the Macedonian independent statehood and the antifascist struggle, a central point in the Yugoslav foundation myths.

Another story that had been exploited in the myth-making in Yugoslav and in the same manner post-Yugoslav Macedonia, was the narrative of the Krushevo Republic. The historic Republic was a state-like formation that lasted only for 13 days, following an insurrection by people of diverse ethnic background, oppressed by the Ottoman Empire. The socialist causes and the egalitarian tendencies of the insurrection and the Krushevo Republic were close to the

192 See Neophytos Loizides, “Doves against Hawks: Symbolic Politics in Greece and the Macedonian Question”, *forthcoming*, <http://works.bepress.com/neophytos_loizides/15/>, last accessed 16.05.2009 and Michas, op. cit.

193 Kiro Gligorov, *Viorni Vreminja: Republika Makedonija - realnost na Balkanot [Times of Whirl: The Republic of Macedonia – a Reality on the Balkans]* (Skopje: Kultura, 1999), p. 49

ideology of the Yugoslav leadership back in the 1940s, and the ethnic heterogeneity and mutualism along with the legends of epic struggles of the rebels was inspiring enough for the Yugoslav communists to symbolically choose the day of the establishment of the Republic as the day of the founding assembly of Yugoslav Macedonia. By the same token, the post-Yugoslav leadership, in first place Gligorov, referred to the Krushevo Republic as a forerunner of modern Macedonian statehood and to promote it as a starting point of the constitution of the Macedonian modern state¹⁹⁴. The Macedonian nation, gaining the independence in the 1990s, in terms of the official national historiography and the rhetoric of the elite, was very much based on its Yugoslav past. So, the question raising here is how, besides such a background of the Yugoslav and Slavic national mythology, the narrative of remote past managed to take over the Slavic discourse?

As mentioned above, an important factor was the declining Yugoslav federal harmony. The declaration of independence thus the change in the nationalist discourse seemed more and more possible but also necessary and many of the nationalist historians and politicians gained more freedom of expression, in terms of not having the obligations towards the Yugoslav leadership, and started promoting narratives from the past which were far more different and even incompatible with the previous versions of the national history, centered around the myth of the Ancient Kingdom of Macedon¹⁹⁵. For example, the edition of the official “History of the Macedonian People” published after independence, covers the period of the reign of the Ancient Kingdom in 200 pages, while the one published in 1969 devotes only 20 pages to the matter¹⁹⁶. As already argued, the narrative of Ancient Macedonia was nonetheless accepted in

194 For the myth of the Krushevo Republic in modern day Macedonia see Keith Brown, *The Past in Question...*, op. cit.. Stefan Troebst argues that the anti-Ottoman resistance was the Phase A in the national movement. See Troebst, op. cit.

195 For a literature review on the works produced on the topic by Macedonian authors, see Jasmina Mojsieva – Gjusheva, “Pomegju istorijata i psevd-istorijata – golemata tema na Aleksandar Makedonski” [Between history and pseudo-history: the great topic of Alexander the Great], *Slava Meriodinalis*, issue 5 (2005), pp. 61-74

196 Brunnbauer, op. cit., 274

the Yugoslav discourse, although as a mere lesson of history. Its political background was debatable.

The assumption that Macedonians were Yugoslav people (*narod*), meant that they had their origin in the family of several South Slavic peoples or tribes. That fact suggested that Macedonian nationhood had not much to do with the ancient history, the Kingdom of Macedon and Alexander the Great. Moreover, if one takes just a brief view on history, it seems that there are many contradictions and inconveniences in compiling the two narratives, since the Balkan has been undergoing numerous dynamic processes that affected the demography of the region. The gap between the reign of Ancient Macedonians and the emergence of the Slavic feudal kingdoms was spreading through a period of several centuries in which many rulers emerged and left the scene of history. First, the kingdoms in Asia Minor and the Balkans, succeeding Alexander's Empire have been conquered by the Romans, followed by the spread of early Christianity and the coming of age of the Byzantine Empire. After the arrival of the pagan Slavic tribes taking place from the 5th - 6th century and consequently, their Christianization, Slavs along with Greek speaking urban populations became primary bearers and reproducers of the Christian culture. During the centuries, numerous other tribes migrated towards the Balkans, such as the Kumans, Magyars, Huns and so forth. The establishment of the first independent polities ruled by Slavic nobility emerged earliest in 10th century AD. All of this was happening centuries before the organized resistance against the Ottomans, being the link between 1944 and the Slavic heritage. For many, it seems rather impossible to prove an ethnogenesis relation between any two peoples living before and after all of these episodes of history¹⁹⁷.

In this respect, after the independence, the president Kiro Gligorov made couple of statements on the issue, causing many debates afterwards. Even more radical than usually, he

197 See Georgievski, op. cit.

was often saying that Macedonians' predecessors are the Slavs that came on the Balkans in the Middle Ages; but not the Ancient Macedonians, which are a people that has been wiped off during the course of the historic developments – according to Gligorov, it meant that today's Macedonians are actually Slavic Macedonians¹⁹⁸.

Gligorov's claims were fundamentally opposed to the idea of continuity with the people that inhabited the same territory two millennia ago. For the standard perception, derived from the Yugoslav narratives, the idea for the historical continuity with the Ancient Kingdom of Macedon could be perceived as a departure from the already established (or perceived as established) South Slavic identity of the nation. This implies a clear case of even expansionary conflict within the Macedonian side, where the Slavic stream tried not just to prove that its narrative is more important, but also to change the symbolic practices of the contesting faction and finally, to terminate their myth.

Yet, the ancient narratives, except in the rhetoric of the Yugoslav hard-liners like Gligorov, were never presented disparate nor opposed to the Slavic character of the nation. Wroclawski, in his comparative research on the new trends and ideas of ethnogenesis among Croatians, Macedonians and Ukrainians states that the idea of ancient nationhood in Macedonia is not that opposed to the idea of Slavic origin, but it is simply used to neutralize other Slavic claims to the cultural heritage (in the Macedonian case, Bulgarian and Serbian)¹⁹⁹. The argument he offers for elaborating this assumption is that the Slavic character of the Macedonians plays big role in the defense of the national status against the non-Slavic Greeks and Albanians²⁰⁰.

198 Some of the most controversial statements of Gligorov about the Slavic origin of the Macedonians can be found in *Foreign Information Service Daily Report, Eastern Europe*, February 26, 1992 and *Toronto Star*, March 15, 1992, quoted in “Kontroverzni izjavi” [Controversial statements], *Vreme Daily Newspaper*, no. 1057, 03 May 2007

199 Krzysztof Wroclawski, “Croatian, Macedonian and Ukrainian National Ideas of Their Ethnogeny” in ed. Jolanta Sujecka, *The National Idea as a Research Problem* (Warszawa : The Polish Academy of Sciences. The Institute of Slavonic Studies, 2002), p. 247

200 Ibid.

The viewpoint of the new ethnogenesis standing for the claims that there is a continuity of the Macedonian national 'self' from the ancient history, in many ways is a narrative that is categoric in its both its inclusiveness and exclusiveness. As seen in Wroclawski's work, it is not a narrative that essentially tries to negate the Slavic features, because of the need of having a link between antiquity and modernity. Being descendants of the Ancient Macedonians, does not make the Macedonians distant to the Slavic culture, nor the Christianity. The Slavic heritage, being the Medieval link, is also being praised on the same level as the Ancient, especially its aspects related with the beginnings and spread of Christianity and the literacy among Slavic tribes around Europe²⁰¹. The Orthodox tradition is as inherent to Macedonian national identity as to the Serbian or Greek national identities, providing a necessary boundary from the Others (in the first place Albanians). Besides that, the Church is assigned a strong and active political role even though officially Macedonia was founded as a secular state. The narrative usually heard, about the importance of the faith, is that the faith in God helped Macedonians survive the 500 years under Ottoman hegemony, which is derived from the self-victimization myth of the "Turkish yoke".

The symbolic capital that Alexander the Great provided, was the set of narratives derived from the glorious empire of Alexander offers a "true self" and all the needed exclusive symbolism for the Macedonians. Briefly, the link with antiquity satisfied the quest for authentic origin and the urge to differ from the neighbors and ethnically different compatriots. Portraying the Macedonians as direct descendants of the Ancient Macedonians means that they are actually older thus autochthonous than the other Slavic peoples. Having in mind that Macedonian identity overlaps in many aspects with the fellow Serb and Bulgarian South Slavic identities, what is a cause for expansionist claims of the both sides, it is clear that

201 Wroclawski, op. cit., 249-250. See also Lidija Slaveska, "Mistifikacii okolu obedinuvanjeto na Makedoncite i Helenite i za pojavata na Slovenite" [Mystification about the unifications of the Macedonians and the Hellenes and about the emergence of the Slavs], *Makedonskata geneza*, op. cit., pp. 129-193

the pre-Slavic genealogy here provides a strong and permanent distinction line. As well, for an identity that has been ambiguous and contested not just by similar identities, but also by totally other autochthonous identities, like the Albanian or the Greek, the emergence of self-centrism means strengthening the self-esteem of the whole community that shares that identity and feels threatened. The uncertainties brought by the inter-ethnic or international tensions, could be much eased and the complexities would be easily simplified by using the rhetoric of the myth of Ancient Macedonia. The narrative of being autochthonous seems to be exceptionally appealing in the Macedonian case because it means that Macedonians are the indigenous people of the territory they live in, contributing to the image of having a positive role in history, but also because autochtonism/authenticity argument is very common across South East Europe. Besides the Greco-Macedonian links with Alexander the Great, similar cases are the Bulgarian alleged link with the Thracians becoming paramount in the communist reinvention of nationalism in the 1970s and 1980s, and also the Romanian narratives of belonging stressing the Dacian/Thracian connection at the expense of the Romans typical for the inter-war right-wingers and Ceausescu's nationalism. That is the norm rather than an exception in the Balkans, and what is more important is that the narrative of autochtonism always implies having much more historical rights on the territory and the resources than the others.

Another notion, is related to the fact that the process of othering the Albanians has been perpetuated during the turbulent 1990s, culminating with the military conflict in 2001. In such a divided society, where the obsession with the other takes over the public deliberation, the demands for (self)differentiation is urgent. In terms of the inter-ethnic tensions, and especially during its culmination with the military conflict and after, the narrative of Macedonians being the indigenous, unconsciously resulted with a rhetoric that Albanians

have come here from somewhere out there and now want to take over our the land. A popular Macedonians nationalist song devoted to the Macedonian victims of the conflict, addressing the Albanians, starts with the words: “where did you come from / better for us if you had never come”, which is in line with the Serbian myths that Albanians were a people “brought” from the Caucasus (the territory Albania in Azerbaijan) by the Ottomans.

However, not every functionalist portrayal is untenable. Much of the functionalist aspects concerning the revival of the myth of Ancient Macedonians could be ascribed to Vasil Tupurkovski, another marquee political and public figure from Macedonia, an important figure in the late years of Yugoslavia, and one of the most influential politicians during the 1990s²⁰². Tupurkovski in the beginning of the 1990s has authored several scientific works, but as well illustrated books for children, on the topic of the history of Ancient Macedonians. In the way he portrayed Ancient Macedonians, at least in the early phase of introducing the meta-narrative to the public, corresponded with the popular claims that Macedonians differed from the other former Yugoslav peoples, being peaceful, tolerant, enlightened and noble people that coexisted smoothly with members of different communities²⁰³. Additionally, the Tupurkovski's “Stories about Ancient Macedonia” offered kind of a phantasmagoric and utopian narrative of pride, dignity and a perspective for the future, much needed in an environment full of uncertainty brought by the political and economic struggle.

However, Tupurkovski's version of the ancient past, had more of a scientific value than

202 Vasil Tupurkovski, whose family originates from Aegean Macedonia, is a gray eminence on the Macedonian political scene. In the 1980s, he has been President of the Union of Socialist Youth of Yugoslavia, and then amember of the Presidium of the Communist Union of Yugoslavia, as well as member of the Presidium of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. He had one of the key roles in the events leading to the disband of Yugoslavia. In 1998, he teamed up with Ljubcho Georgievski and their government was the first one not being formed by the communist-successor party SDSM. Tupurkosvki also was the mastermind of the process of the Macedonian recognition of Taiwan, which resulted with hostility from China. Subsequently, in the Security Council of the United Nations, China vetoed the mandate of the blue helmet peace forces in Macedonia. For many, this was the key point that had led to the military conflict in 2001. Some conspiracy theories argue that Tupurkovski was bribed to do so. In April 2009, he has been sentenced for money laundering during the Taiwan project.

203 Brunnbauer, op. cit.

a simple quasi-historian works, or as Kolstø says, an enlightening nuance, which was a balance to the functionalist or instrumentalist usage of the myths. In many occasions, he had repeated his stance that it is non-scientific and chauvinistic to say that history is “ours” or “theirs”²⁰⁴, which makes him one of the few public persons in Macedonia ready for compromise over the historical heritage, with Greece or anyone else. He had always stressed that it is the “civilizing mission”, not his ethnic background what makes Alexander the Great special, and that in terms of “ethnicity”, he was a son of “the region”, thus belonging to “all of the peoples living here”²⁰⁵. The attitude of Tupurkovski is in this respect significantly different from the exclusive claims and the insists of continuity by any means. In an interview for the Guardian about the national belonging of Alexander during the tensions caused by Oliver Stone's movie, Tupurkovski said: "Alexander lived long before nationalism and so is our common hero [and] would be laughing at us arguing about him now."²⁰⁶

The treatment of Alexander as a common historical figure, also leaves enough space for unification with Albanians under that myth, since there are notable claims in historiography that Alexander's mother was from Epirote and Ilyrian descent, two of the narratives of the ancient origin of Albanians. Thus the Albanian claims of the legacy of Alexander²⁰⁷. Yet, this possibility of the myth has never found serious grounds in Macedonian social science nor politics.

Nonetheless, the political pressures as a result of the expansionary strategy (in terms of the symbolic contest) conducted by the Greek government resulted with a change in the

204 “Intervju so Vasil Tupurkovski: Evropa ja zhivee vizijata na Aleksandar Makedonski” [Interview with Vasil Tupurkovski: Europe lives the vision of Alexander of Macedon], *Vreme*, no. 263, 11.12.2004
<<http://www.vreme.com.mk/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=16&tabid=1&EditionID=263&ArticleID=16759>>, last accessed 09.01.2009

205 Ibid.

206 Statement in Fiachra Gibbons, “Patriot Games”, *The Guardian*, 19.11.2004,
<<http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2004/nov/19/1>>, last accessed 25.05.2009

207 See Albanian identities op. cit.

constellation of the sides in the conflict. The flag of the Republic of Macedonia was changed in 1995, and the dispute over the name was delayed by signing the interim agreement by which Macedonia became obliged to use the temporary reference “The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” on the way to getting full membership in the United Nations. The international dispute with Greece was temporarily shut down, and it was mostly due to the bargains that Gligorov and the rising Prime Minister Branko Crvenkovski, Social-democrats, did over the state symbols, earning them the label of “cowards” or “traitors”. What was notable, but forgotten in present day historiography, that there was a political consensus about the change of the flag, especially in terms of the silent agreement by Ljubcho Georgievski, which also causes nowadays nationalist attacks on him²⁰⁸. That was, barely the triumph of Greece, as its narrative had seriously silenced the Macedonian one.

The Macedonian “Antiquization” and the Re-emergence of the Conflict

The accounts on the national 'self' can be (de)legitimized by politics, but that does not mean that can easily invent and erase them. That notion has to be taken in mind when discussing the variable role that the myth of Ancient Macedonia in the contemporary Macedonian context has. Even though the official state politics backed off from the claims of ancient nationhood in the middle of 1990s, causing its total devaluation, the myths never ceased to exist and were contemplated among some of the academic and political circles. There is not much secondary literature written on this topic, and that is why in this section I will offer more primary source analysis.

The new tendency that seemed to take over historiography and social sciences in Macedonia, especially in the past few years, has been insisting on the supposed continuity and

208 Filip Petrovski, “Pobeda za nashata ideologija” [Victory for our ideology], *Utrinski Vesnik Daily Newspaper*, no. 2878, 03.01.2009
<<http://www.utrinski.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=119C80921FB1E143AB1DC22D3EF96DD2>>, last accessed 09.01.2009

tried to shift from a more fictional and discursive to a more factual and scientific (or pseudo-scientific) interpretation of the ancient history. The hypothesis to be proved was that there was an uninterrupted ethnogenesis from Macedonian antiquity (and even prehistory) till the Macedonian presence. That was the leaning towards the stance that actually Alexander and the Ancient Macedonians were proto-Slavs, and that the whole Slavic civilization is in a way rooted in Ancient Macedonia²⁰⁹. Of course, these explanations sometimes were accompanied by metaphysical and supra-natural narratives. As a short movie aired on the national television recently argued, God created the Macedonians before He created anyone else, and the Macedonians were the founding people of the white race²¹⁰. This widening of the narrative of Ancient Macedonia, was in Harrison's terms, innovation in the discourse, that lead to a substantial increase of the narrative's symbolic capital²¹¹.

The innovative approach to the issue of the transcendental Macedonian continuity, seems to be focused mostly on the hypothesis about the similarity of the language of the Ancient Macedonians and the contemporary Macedonian language. Partially, it is based on pseudo-etymology. For example, in a so called Ancient Macedonian dictionary, many international words and even names are claimed to be of Macedonian origin²¹². Yet, there have been also more scientific efforts to elaborate the linguistic argument. A research project titled “Tracing the Script and the Language of the Ancient Macedonians” challenged the perception of contemporary science and presented a different reading of the Rosetta Stone, a popular

209 Wroclawski, op.cit, 248

210 Sunchica Unevska, “Makedonska molitva protiv zdraviot razum”, [Macedonia prayer against the common sense], *Utrinski Vesnik*, 02.03.2009, <<http://www.utrinski.com.mk/default.asp?ItemID=8C528E7F34DD0D469B0365F14A444CAA>>, last accessed 27.05.2009

211 A recent study that embraces the new Macedonian approach towards the ancient history can be seen in Lidija Slaveska, *Makedonskata geneza* [The Macedonian genesis] (Skopje : Matica, 2008)

212 Some of the examples: “Armagedon” means “the land of Macedon”, “angel” comes from “me + voice”, “Buddha” means “awake”, “Zoroaster” means “morning star” etc. See Edni Makedonci, “Vtor del: Zborovi – Rechnik” [Chapter Two: Words – Dictionary], *Rozata od Voda [Water Rose]* (Skopje : Akvarius, 2008), pp. 249-424

historical artifact from Ancient Egypt²¹³. Namely, the authors of the “Tracing...”, physicists, one of them member of the National Academy of Sciences and Arts (the supreme scientific institution in Macedonia), claimed that one of the three sections of the text on the Rosetta, which traditional linguistics recognize to be written in Demotic Egyptian, had been actually written in ancient Macedonian language using a demotic Macedonian script²¹⁴. They came up with these results by inventing complex physicist formulae. The ancient Macedonian language, in their work, is found out to be in many aspects similar to the contemporary Macedonian language²¹⁵. The scientific value of this discovery, however, was immediately disputed by Petar Ilievski, a classic philologist, who argued that the two researchers, “without any elementary knowledge of Egyptology, ancient history, nor basic principles of language development”²¹⁶, “by denouncing all the achievements in the field of Egyptology in the last 200 years”²¹⁷ have manipulated the facts which brought them to totally incorrect results. Yet, the assumption of the specific language of the Ancient Macedonians is still being very plausible, as new discoveries are emerging, tracing the Ancient Macedonian literacy even 2000 years BC²¹⁸.

The decoding of the Rosetta Stone and the supposed discovery of the language of the Ancient Macedonians turned out to be a fruitful investment in the nation-building project and

213 The Rosetta Stone is a historical artifact discovered by the French army of Napoleon in 1799. Since the beginning of the 19th century, it has been publicly displayed in The British Museum. The Rosetta Stone is actually a big stele with carved text on it. The text, a royal decree, is written in three scripts: the hieroglyphic and Demotic Egyptian and classic Greek. Because of the possibility to compare the meanings of hieroglyphs with the classic Greek language, the Stone gained major importance in decoding ancient languages and scripts. Information about the Rosetta Stone gathered from the official web site of the British Museum <http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/aes/t/the_rosetta_stone.aspx> (last accessed 22.12.2008)

214 Aristotel Tentov and Tomislav Boshevski, *Tracing the Script and Language of the Ancient Macedonians*, <<http://rosetta-stone.etf.ukim.edu.mk/index.php?q=en/node/169>> (last accessed 22.12.2008)

215 Ibid.

216 Petar Hr. Ilievski, “Preface to the second edition” of the *Two opposite approaches towards interpreting ancient texts with anthroponymic contents – Second Edition*, (Skopje: Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts, 2008), p. 7

217 Ibid.

218 “Otkrieno staromakedonsko pismo od pred 4000 godini” [4000 Years Old Macedonian Script Discovered], *AI News*, 29.12.2008 <<http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?vestID=102393>> (last accessed 09.01.2009)

successfully completed the task of increasing the value of the grand narrative. For instance, while organizing a grassroots-inspired, but government approved protest intended for “protection of the Macedonian name”, the organizers have sent a callout for mass participation that was partially based on the findings about the Rosetta, as one of their main slogans was “7000 years of Macedonian literacy”²¹⁹. The protest, held in spring 2008 just before the NATO summit where Macedonia's bid was blocked, turned out to be a massive one indeed, in which the choreography was mostly composed by symbols (flags and maps) resembling the Ancient Kingdom of Macedon, including a huge map of Greater Macedonia with the Sun of Vergina applied to it²²⁰. Its meaning was that the Macedonian nation had once again entered the valuation debate in which the narrative of ancient nationhood resurged with significantly higher capital than ever before.

Later in the year, another event related to the myth of Alexander the Great occurred. Namely, after gathering data from anthropological and linguist studies conveyed in the Himalayas in Pakistan, more precisely in the region Hunza, it was found out that a tribe called Burusho shared much of its historical memories with Macedonians, yet the most scientifically elaborated argument was the alleged obvious linguistic similarities²²¹. Several years before that, in the same region in Pakistan, another tribe, called Kalasha was found by Greek explorers, and a trip to Greece was organized in order the Kalasha to visit their remote homeland²²².

The Hunza tribe Burusho besides considering themselves successors of Alexander the

219 A poster of the call for the protest can be found at <<http://zborovi.info/sliki/protest.jpg>> (last accessed 27.12.2008)

220 “Protesten sobir za zachuvuvanje na ustavnoto ime” [Protest for protection of the constitutional name], *Utrinski Vesnik*, 28.02.2008, <<http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=08013DFB1EE0F245AC1C056BE11D13DD>>, last accessed 27.05.2009

221 “Hunza Delegation Travels to Macedonia”, *Balkan Insight* <<http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/main/news/11762/>> (last accessed 25.12.2008)

222 For a comparison of the Burusho-Kalasha experiences in Macedonia and Greece see George F. Will, “Homogenizers in Retreat”, *Newsweek*, August 11, 2008

Great, believed Macedonia is their remote homeland and their language featured elements similar with the Macedonian and perhaps with the Ancient Macedonian as well. In 2005, Macedonian historians had travelled to Pakistan to meet them. While residing there, they shot a documentary called “Do krajot na svetot” [To the end of the world]. It begins with an emotional claim: “To depart from Macedonia, and after following the Sun for 10000 km to arrive in Macedonia, again!”²²³.

The next phase in the Macedonian – Hunza fraternization, during the summer 2008, was the tribe's visit back to their remote homeland. A non-governmental organization called “Macedonian Institute for Strategic Research 16.9”²²⁴, organized the trip. The Hunza royal family has been generously welcome and had the opportunity to meet the Prime Minister, the Archbishop of the Church and the Mayor of the capital²²⁵. The report from the International Herald Tribune says that:

When the royal Hunza delegation landed in Skopje, the entourage got a boisterous Balkan greeting, complete with some 20 men dressed as Alexander's soldiers - with spears, helmets, shields and period uniforms. Several hundred well-wishers chanted "Macedonia!" and waved Macedonian flags. Some shouted "Welcome home!"

During the eight-day trip, the entourage was received by the prime minister, who offered 10 scholarships for Hunza students at Macedonian universities. They were blessed by the Archbishop Stephan, unrecognized head of the Macedonian Orthodox Christian Church.

Bishop Peter of Bitola proclaimed that the prince "looks like Alexander the Great." One man signed over to the prince a plot of land near Lake Ohrid "so that he would always have a place in his homeland."²²⁶

223 The documentary can be seen at Google Video

<<http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=6029292977830105634&q=do+krajot+na+svetot&ei=ySdqSJjwI4Gw2QK0tqiNDw>> (last accessed 22.12.2008) This opening quote from the movie is symbolically false: the Sun rises in the East, therefore, if one follows the Sun, means they are headed westwards, and not East, like the route of these travelers were.

224 “The name refers to Acts 16:9, a verse in the New Testament in which a Macedonian man appears to the Apostle Paul begging him: "Come over into Macedonia, and help us.”, Matthew Brunwasser, “Macedonia Dispute has an Asian Flavor”, *International Herald Tribune*, 1.10.2008

<<http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/10/01/asia/macedonia.php>> (last accessed 25.12.2008)

225 “Visoka delegacija na Hunzite utre vo Makedonija” [High Hunza Representatives coming in Macedonia tomorrow], A1 News, 10.07.2008 <<http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=95148>> (last accessed 22.12.2008)

226 Brunwasser, op. cit.

Although having much of a burlesque element, the Hunza story seemed not to end with their departure from Macedonia, but to begin with it. As their visit was ridiculed in some quarters of society, soon the term “Hunza” became being used as a pejorative reference for the apologists of the narrative of ancient Macedonian nationhood. Yet, it had much of political implications, especially during the recent presidential elections taking place in March and April 2009 as the two major candidates, one of them later elected president were associated with the Hunza visit to Macedonia²²⁷.

What have been then, the effects of the political use of the narratives of the ancient past in the dispute? The answer based upon the theory of Harrison, would be simply said, the perpetuation of nationalism in the political realm in the both countries. The social capital of the ancient past, in Greece and Macedonia, has been utilized as a strategic supporting cast to political power. That makes it an important political capital, and making itself being political symbol. As a political symbol, despite being a property in a contest, the grand narrative of Alexander the Great is a status marker, source of legitimacy and a focus of the popular sentiments and loyalty²²⁸. It was used to redefine the national 'self', its vision for the past and its perspective from the future. Since in the both the Greek and the Macedonian cases it was

227 First it was the candidate of the opposition, Ljubomir Frchkoski who was running on a “Slavic platform”, that attacked the government-supported candidate that later won the elections, Gjorge Ivanov, for being “the Hunza chief of the antiquization policies of the government”. Shortly after, a political analysis named “Who is the Hunza in Macedonian politics?” revealed the fact that it was Ljubomir Frchkoski who was in fact “the Hunza”, because he took part in the ceremonial dinner the royal Hunza family had with the Macedonian representatives. The situation was clear – “Hunza”, immediately associated with the Alexander the Great, became the synonym for the new “antiquized” Macedonian nationalism by its opponents, acknowledging that Alexander the Great had prevailed over the Slavic narrative, thus re-achieving the consensus between the Macedonian and Greek nationalism, setting the stage for the re-emerged proprietary conflict and the possible Greek expansionary strategy. See Emilija Geleva, “Koj e Hunza vo Makedonija?” [Who is the Hunza in Macedonian politics?], Nova Makedonija 16.02.2009, <<http://novamakedonija.com.mk/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=1&tabid=2&fCat=1&top=1&EditionID=318&ArticleID=18188>>, last accessed 27.05.2009

228 Harrison, “Four types”, op. cit.

the universal all-inclusive version of the national past, its exotic and mystical past was complementary with some of the Orthodox myths of the divine election thus imposing a strong moral component to it²²⁹. As in the same all-inclusive discourses it has closely interacted with the other myths of origin (in the Greek case with the Byzantine, in the Macedonian with the Slavic), it surely added up to the mythologized reading of history and the metaphysical reading of the nation as amalgamation and a *longe duree* entity that originates back in antiquity.

That itself speaks enough for the value of the social capital generated in Alexander the Great. Yet, the point here made although important is too reductionist as it only refers to the discursive reflections of this process. Still, the Greco-Macedonian dispute is an objectively existing one and it is an objective concern, that is why once again the reasons behind the essentialism of the ancient past have to be revisited.

229 About the divine components of national myths, see Bruce Cauthen, "Covenant and continuity: ethno-symbolism and the myth of divine election", *Nations and Nationalism* 10 (1/2), 2004, pp. 19-33

Chapter III. Remembering the Myth, Forgetting the History

"He who controls the present, controls the past. He who controls the past, controls the future."
- an often exploited quote from George Orwell's 1984

Ethnosymbolism and Beyond, and Back to Renan's "Historical Error"

The approach that seems most suitable for defining the value of the capital a political symbol offers in a nationalist context, is ethnosymbolism. The language of ethnosymbolism, unlike the Marxist or the modernist approaches, offers explanations for analyzing the complex of myths, sentiments and their influence on the developments of the ethnic and the nation.

The developments of the particular narrative of Ancient Macedonia and Alexander the Great in the two respective environments, so far in the paper, have been processed through normative lenses built mostly upon the insights offered by the founder of ethnosymbolism, Anthony Smith. The core argumentation on the role of the myth of the Golden Age as proposed by the ethnosymbolic theory assesses much of the functions of the myth of Alexander the Great. In the light of the ethnosymbolic arguments, it was argued that the name, the emblem and the myth of common ancestry of Ancient Macedonia are the realms crucial both to the Greek and the Macedonian national myth because not just of the universal symbolic capital Alexander the Great has, but also in regards to the claims of being indigenous and autochthonous people in the region.

Still, while the ethnosymbolic approach offers a suitable code for addressing certain aspects of the role and the function of the national myths, it is mostly some of the general shortcomings of this approach that lead me to raising further questions about the reasons of the ultimate selection and the essentialism ascribed to just one of the plurality of narratives of the distant past of the nation.

As Özkırmılı argues, Smith in his huge work on national myths offers many different and sometimes contradictory explanations on the precise issue²³⁰. On the one side, Smith argues that the nation always seeks a story that is “distinctive, unique and 'truly ours’”²³¹. In “Nationalism”, on the other hand, opposed to this claim says that these stories were never certain and there was always a plurality of myths of origin implying the national identity has been a fluid and dynamic category that “was always being reinterpreted and refashioned by each generation”²³². Hutchinson as well argues that the presence of differences within the nation and the rival symbols is inherent to the nation but never manages to make a point on the way one version of the past prevails over the others²³³.

This ethnosymbolic postulate is to a great extent correct and marks an efficient shift in its discourse from the basic perennialist tendencies towards more social-constructivist stances. Their insights here are provide that the formation of a national community is accompanied by more complex processes than the assumed transformation of ethnic towards the nation through modernization and institutionalization. Yet, that for itself, while being an epistemological improvement at the ethnosymbolic campus, signifies an obvious failure, in terms of answering the question of the supremacy of one myth of origin over the others. The question raising after the acknowledgment of the plurality of myths, is, as Özkırmılı puts it:

If there are many different pasts and cultural heritages, if there are counter-myths of origin and alternative memories, if there are rival symbolic and political projects which is the authentic one? Which past is the distinctive, unique and truly ours?²³⁴

The answer Özkırmılı offers, is simple and obvious – it is the elites and institutions

230 Umut Özkırmılı, “The nation as an artichoke? A critique of ethnosymbolist interpretations of nationalism”, *Nations and Nationalism* 9 (3), 2003, pp. 339-355

231 Anthony Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, op.cit., p. 43

232 Anthony Smith, *Nationalism*, (Cambridge : Polity, 2001), p. 128

233 John Hutchinson, “Nationalism, globalism and the conflict of civilizations”, quoted in Özkırmılı, “The nation as an artichoke?...”, op. cit.

234 Özkırmılı, op. cit.

that have the power to promote one of the many narratives²³⁵. And that is what is contrary to all the ethno-symbolic and perennial understanding of nationalism. Ethnosymbolists and perennialists argue that, since the nation is a formation from-below, it is rather the popular culture and the popular sentiment than the elites, that had set the basis and determine the way of nationalism. In the ethnosymbolic theory it has always been *the* popular myth, the grand meta-narrative and the bottom-up social dynamic that answered all the questions about the self of the nation. Of course, ethnosymbolists never denied that elites had some effects, but they have still seen the myth-for-itself evolving from ethnic myth to national one, as if there was no outside factors affecting the process.

In the case of Greece and Macedonia there are plenty of variations of the narratives of the ancient past, and there are even more alternative narratives of the not that distant past that have been part of the collective memory, thus the 'self' of the nation. What is striking is that in the discourse of the elites, despite, as Özkırımlı says, the “freedom of choice” they had²³⁶, they singled out the narrative of Alexander the Great as dominant in the nationalist mythology²³⁷.

There are also several other authors that offer variations of the Smith postulates, compromising between the ethnosymbolist and the constructivist approach. A brief overview of their arguments can assess the value of the symbolic capital of Alexander the Great in the respective contexts even more. Below, the Greco-Macedonian dispute will be analyzed in the theories of three authors that theorize the national mythology as an elite-controlled issue.

They all draw both on the accounts of the role of national myth, but also on the Hobsbawm's

235 Ibid.

236 Ibid.

237 Recently, Alexander the Great has been chosen as the biggest Greek ever in a media campaign in Greece called “The Great Greeks”. See “Aleksandur Veliki be izbran za nai-velikiia Gruk na vsichki vremena” [Alexander the Great elected as the greatest Greek of all time], Dnevnik News [Bulgarian] 19.05.2009, <http://www.dnevnik.bg/razvlechenie/2009/05/19/721422_aleksandur_veliki_be_izbran_za_nai-velikiia_gruk_na/>, last accessed 22.05.2009

notions of “usable past” and “invention and mass-production of tradition”²³⁸.

One already mentioned author is Pål Kolstø. In his normative analysis on the national myths in South Eastern Europe, he considers precisely the academia and political elite as the faction in society that is mostly responsible for the deployment and the presence of myths in the public discourse. According to him, there are two ideal-type approaches to this matter: the enlightening and the functionalist one, the former characterized by a Hobsbawmian pledge to objectivity and the latter associated with the nationalist sentiment and the service “for the national interest”. Kolstø says that difference between them is that “enlighteners treat myths as the opposite of 'facts'” while functionalists “see myth-making as an inevitable element of human existence” and they prefer the utility of the myth rather the objectivity and the facts. Sometimes the functionalist reading of the myths acknowledges the questionable truthfulness, but nonetheless they are put into service for a certain cause²³⁹.

In the case of the Greco-Macedonian row over the right to claim Ancient Macedonian nationhood, building upon the insights presented in Chapter II, there is a clear situation that it was the functionalist approach that was characteristic in the both cases. The universalist Greek historians in the 19th century seemed to ignore the ancient Athenian literature in which Ancient Macedonians were portrayed as barbarians and non-Hellenes; the Yugoslav communists seemed to silently approve the illogical genesis from antiquity till today; later, a common comment on the controversy over the excavations in Vergina in the archaeological public was that the Greeks are only consistent in the interpretation of the findings but never elaborated the facts; nowadays, the apologists of the linguistic proximity between Ancient and Modern Macedonian seem to ignore the objections made by philologists and

238 For the former, see Hobsbawm, *Nations and nationalism...*, op. cit. For the latter see Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914” in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 263-307

239 Kolstø, op. cit.

Egyptologists.

An important further reference on the functionalist approach to national myths is George Schöpflin. Starting from the premise that the instrumentalization of the myth-symbol complex has the crucial role in the process of nation-building. Borrowing Bourdieu's postulates, "one of crucial instruments in cultural reproduction", in his essay "The Functions of Myth and a Taxonomy of Myths", he offers a systematic vivisection on the different purposes of national myths²⁴⁰. At the same time he also stands on the same line as Özkırmılı and Kolstø that it is the political and intellectual elites are the ones "who control the language of public communication", hence control the myth but also decides on the choice of which myth will be appropriated and how it will be interpreted²⁴¹.

One of the functions of the myth he proposes is the capacity of self-definition, which is similar to Smith's classic ethnosymbolic theory. Yet Schöpflin here introduces the notion of "identity transfer", meaning that the elites might instrumentals a certain myth in order to re-shape the identification of the people. For example, he relates the identity transfer function both with the modernization process and with the post-Communist transition²⁴². The myth of Alexander the Great, in the Greek modernization case, along with the other narratives of the Ancient Hellenic civilization²⁴³, certainly had the role of shifting the identity of peasantry into Hellenes, and in the Macedonian context it certainly helped abandoning the Communist identity²⁴⁴.

Another proposition of Schöpflin's, is the myth's role of simplifying complexities, offering false explanations which could result in cognitive delimiting which can in some instances block the reforms and impact badly on politics²⁴⁵. I propose here the term "escapist"

240 George Schöpflin, "A Taxonomy of Myths and Their Functions", Nations, Identity, Power, op. cit., pp. 79-99

241 Ibid.

242 Ibid.

243 See Agnew, op. cit.

244 Georgievski, op. cit.

245 Schöpflin, op. cit.

functions of the myths, as in all these cases the myth here is used for simply bypassing the reality.

One very fitting example for the escapist function of the myths of the ancient past is a political cartoon from a Greek newspaper from the 1990s, when Greece faced the threat of mad cow disease. The cartoon portrays a worried clerk from the Ministry of Health calling the Prime Minister Simitis, explaining him: “It is not a minotaur Mister Simitis, it is a mad cow!”²⁴⁶. The message hereto is clear: the image of outraged cattle, associates Simitis primarily to a Minotaur, the ancient half-man, half-bull creature. He has hard time internalizing what is going on in the present day and that is why he can not see the obvious: a sick cow. That cartoon speaks much about the general essentialism attributed to the ancient past by politicians: the governments, consciously or not, put all the problems on the waiting list because what it matters most to them is antiquity. The over-exploitation of the myth as Schöpflin says, can even cause leaders to stop reform and change the general political discourse. That is especially the case in post 2006 Macedonia.

Similarly to the witticism about Simitis and the Minotaurs, one can make a parallel with Gruevski and the phalanges of Alexander. Simitis was mocked on about confusing reality with the mythological world of antiquity, mistaking the mad cow with Minotaurs; nowadays, Gruevski consciously prioritizes cultural policies over objective problems. A good example for this is the economic policy of the Macedonian government in the middle of the global financial crisis. Opposite to the common sense and the advises of domestic and foreign experts, vast amounts of the state budget are to be spend for cultural elevation by erecting monuments and archaeological excavations in which Ancient Macedonia has the central place, on the expense of solving some of the social upheavals caused by the crisis²⁴⁷. This

246 David Mason, “Reading Greece”, *The Hudson Review*, Vol. 55, No. 3 (Autumn, 2002), pp. 431-441

247 See Nina Nineska – Fidanoska, “Rebalans ili farsa na Vladata” [Rebalance of the budget or governmental pharse], *Edotiral to Utrinski Vesnik* 14.05.2009

notion can also fit in the Schöpflin's suggestion of “culturalization” of politics, meaning that the symbolic and mythological discourse are prioritized over objective problems²⁴⁸.

A third author that theorizes myths as “nationalist images of history”, is John Coakley²⁴⁹. He also starts from the premise that in one society, the action of the elites is the perpetuator of the nationalist image of history. The two most important assets that the elites have are the mechanisms of creation and dissemination of myths²⁵⁰. In terms of the functionality of the myth, Coakley builds upon Breuille's accounts²⁵¹ on the interaction between the nationalist ideology and the state and comes up with five types of functions: definition of the boundaries, reinforcement of a sense of pride, promotion of commiseration over unjust suffering, legitimization of the national struggle and inspiration for the future²⁵².

The most important trait in Coakley's work, however, is the reference to the nationalist (ab)uses of history as if it was a “grab-bag” from which the myth-makers select some of the

<<http://www.utrinski.com.mk/?ItemID=031FEAF08E5B9441A94B59A2D2E55903>>, last accessed 22.05.2009. Also see “Namesto spomenici i filharmonii, pari za stocharite!” [Instead of spending on monuments and philharmony, help the troubled farmers!], A1 News, 03.04.2009, <<http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=106718>>, last accessed 22.05.2009. The biggest controversy is the statue of Alexander the Great, which is under the supervision of the Skopje's downtown prefecture. As one third of the prefecture's money are intended to be spent on monuments, the government-backed mayor has recently stated that “it is not a lot of money”, “there is no crisis” and that the monument of Alexander is an important political asset in the dispute with Greece. See “Sedum milioni evra za spomenici vo Centar” [Seven million Euro for monuments in the city center], Dnevnik, 13.12.2008, <<http://www.dnevnik.com.mk/?itemID=9043A1916347DF43BF07C4424BD1BC7E&arc=1>>, last accessed 22.05.2009 and “Todorovik: Ne sme vo kriza” [Todorovik: There is no crisis], A1 News, 10.05.2009 <<http://a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestID=108351>>, last accessed 19.05.2009

248 Schöpflin, op. cit.

249 John Coakley, “Mobilizing the past: nationalist images of history”, *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 10 (2004), pp. 531-560

250 Ibid., p. 534

251 See John Breuille, *Nationalism and the state* (Manchester : Manchester University Press 1994)

252 Coakley, op. cit., p. 541. This point needs to be discussed. More or less, the functions as according to Coakley's typology has been discussed in the previous sections., as the definition, legitimization and the inspiration functions are somewhat common points of all theories on the role of national myths. The single of his five functions that has not been discussed so far is probably the function of providing commiseration. Self-victimization and commiseration in the Greek and Macedonian context though, are more associated with the Turkish yoke (Turcocrata in Greek). In respect to the myth of Ancient Macedonia, the capacity of commiseration arises from its contextual interpretation within the corpus of other national myths with whom it interacts - the myths of the fall of the Golden Age, the myths of traitors and oppressors and unfair treatment by history. That rhetoric can be seen in a quotation the Macedonian mono-drama “Philip II”, that was sponsored by the government. In the play, the ghost of king Philip condemns the traitors who caused the failure of his Kingdom, referring to the ones who are now willing to compromise the name of the Republic of Macedonia, portraying himself and the other Macedonians as betrayed and tormented. Nonetheless, the victimization component is marginal in this paper.

narratives while omitting the others on purpose. That is to a great extent in relation with Kolstø's argument that in the functionalist approach to national myths, there is no possibilities for critical re-examination of the factual accuracy²⁵³. However, Kolstø does not emphasize enough the case that the omitted past events remain packed in the “grab-bag” and never see the daylight of academic debate. That argument by itself opens a whole new perspective about the not-remembering or rather forgetting some episodes of the history, leading us back to the postulates of the famous Ernest Renan.

“Forgetting, and I would even go far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation” was Renan's opening on nationalism²⁵⁴. While nationalists are focused on remembering and commemorating their invented traditions, the actual historical events are being forgotten. Undoubtedly, no one could guarantee the accuracy of history, but here it is proposed reading the past contextually and as a continuity, rather than seeking the objective historical truth. The myth clearly does the latter – by generalizing the past, it creates a black and white image of history in which things are treated as inherently good or bad with no sensibility towards any ambiguous or inconclusive occurrences. Every peculiarity from the past is evaluated based on its interaction with the national 'self'.

That being the case, it is arguable that forgetting specified passages from the past, is a fundamental hallmark of myths, and an extension of their escapist function. Depending on the degree of divergence between the myth and the history, often the forgotten can be the crucial episodes of the past and their reflections in the present state of the nation.

Greece and the Politics of Smearing Differences

In the Greek context, the alteration of the image of the past can be seen as a replacement of the mosaic of different identities that have existed on the territory of Greece

253 Kolstø, op. cit.

254 Quoted in Calhoun, op. cit. and Coakley, op. cit.

with the image of an eternal monolithic continuum from antiquity. Insisting on the exclusively “pure” Hellenic character of Alexander the Great and Ancient Macedonia, the Greek nationalists tend to forget the historic diversity of the region. The ancient Greek tribalism has been gradually replaced with an imperial rhetoric of a broad Greek identity²⁵⁵. The implications here concern not just the image of the ancient past, but the whole context of the Balkans. At the same time, implying that Alexander the Great had a Greek national identity, means a projection of the category nation back to the ancient times, which is . The assumption of the antiquity of nations, as Özkırmılı argues, is highly questionable²⁵⁶. Here, it seems, that a short departure from the motive of the interpretation of the ancient past has to be made, in order its repercussions to be examined.

In the Greek nationalist image of the past, the Greek identity is perceived as the most durable one in the neighborhood, hence the most legitimate in terms of claiming historical rights. Every other identity is in some way seen as peripheral and subordinate to the Greek one.²⁵⁷ In this respect, the merging between the ancient Greek and Macedonian identities indicates that the Greek and Macedonian identity remained merged in modernity. That is why modern-day Macedonian identity is considered to be a regional sub-national identity of the Greeks that live on the territory of Macedonia. That, later, leads Greece to denouncing the notion of a separate Macedonian ethnic identity that was established in the late 19th and the

255 Michael Bakaoukas, “Modern Greek National Identity”, *The Origin of European Nationalism: Politics Resource Center* <<http://www.radicalacademy.com/studentrefpolitics22mb.htm>>, last accessed 22.05.2009.

As well, this goes in line with Bernal's proposed dichotomy of “ancient” and “Aryan” (racist) approaches to the Ancient Greek civilization. While in the “ancient” model the culture was not homogenized and was diverse and interacting with other cultures, the racist approach in an ignorant and instrumentalist manner omits those features. See Bernal, *Black Athena...*, op. cit.

256 Umut Özkırmılı and Steven Grosby, “Nationalism Theory Debate: The Antiquity of Nations?”, *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (3), 2007, pp. 523-537

257 A good trigger for this features of the Greek self-perception is a recent study on the attitudes of Greek students. See Christos Zagkos, Argyris Kyridis, Paraskevi Golia and Ifigenia Vamvakidou, “Greek University Students Describe the Role of Greece in the Balkans: From Equality to Superiority”, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 35 (2), 2007, pp. 341-367. Although the premise on the antiquity of the Greek nation in the background of the research is questionable, some of the insights offered by the analysis on the opinions seem pretty valid. 72,5% of the respondents perceived Greece as leading in the region, in a great portion based on its cultural supremacy (p. 362).

20th century. Through forgetting about the differences, what is remembered is the homogenous, unitary, long-lasting Greek identity whose others, as Triandafyllidou argues, are not just the ones that are culturally different, but also the dissenters to the official Greek story²⁵⁸.

One important example of the latter is the case of Anastasia Karakasidou in the 1990s. Karakasidou, an anthropologist, in the late 1980s and the early 1990s has been doing a research on the ethnographic diversity in the Greek region of Macedonia. The insights she offers on the matter of the collective memory of the Slavic speaking people in Greek Macedonia clashes with the official story of pure Greek national identity. Her work, however has been a matter of a fierce attacks and active other-ing. As she says, she has been accused of “stupidity”, “cannibalism” and being a “secret agent of the FYROM”. She goes on stating that she had felt “like a woman who unwittingly violated taboos by peering behind the veils and revealing the “sacred flutes” of Greek national ideology”. She has frequently been asked if she was still feeling Greek.²⁵⁹

The Karakasidou case attracted a lot of international interest. As her book was about to be published by Cambridge University Press, the publishing house has unexpectedly decided to abandon this idea, because of threats by Greek nationalists, causing protests among academia who started questioning the freedom of expression²⁶⁰. In the official statement of the Cambridge University Press, their exculpation was based on their concerns about Karakasidou's personal safety, but as well the possible risk for their own employees, as there

258 See Anna Triandafyllidou, “National identity and the 'other'”, op. cit. See also Loizides, “Doves vs. Hawks”, op. cit., p. 14 and Triandafyllidou, A., Calloni, M. and Mikrakis, A. “New Greek Nationalism”, *Sociological Research Online*, vol. 2, no. 1 (1997), <<http://www.socresonline.org.uk/socresonline/2/1/7.html>>, last accessed 27.05.2009

259 Anastasia N. Karakasidou, Preface to *Fields of wheat, hills of blood : passages to nationhood in Greek Macedonia, 1870-1990* (Chicago, IL : University of Chicago Press, 1997),

260 See Sarah Lyall, “Publisher Drops Book On Greece, Stirring Protests”, *New York Times*, February 17, 1996 and Fred Barbash, “Advisers to Publishing House Protest Rejection of Macedonia Book”, *Washington Post*, February 2, 1996

were death and rape threats sent before from nationalist organizations from Greece, but also from the Greek diaspora in the United States²⁶¹.

The aspect that makes Karakasidou's work controversial and disputed by Greek nationalism, is certainly the argument she makes on forgetting, ignoring and negating ethnic identities. As she argues, it was the Greek “invention of tradition” and the reference to the people claiming their Slavic Macedonian identity as people without history, or people attempting to steal Greek history²⁶². For the language they speak, it is said that it is a dialect of Bulgarian or Serbian or even Greek, and the same goes for the culture and the rituals they share²⁶³.

Another anthropologist, that scrutinizes the concept of other-ing and forgetting in the Greek context is Rodanthi Tzanelli. Focusing not to the unrecognized Slavic, but to the unrecognized Albanian minority in Greek Macedonia. Tzallini analyzes the notion of the Greek national holiday, the “Ohi” day commemorating the refusal to abide by Mussolini's ultimatum in October 1940 (“ohi” means no in Greek) and its celebration. Building upon a case when contrary to the practice, the best student in a local place was deprived of the honor to carry the national flag during the parade just because his declared Albanian ethnic identity, the author argues that it is the “solidary amnesia” that is the poetics of belonging in Northern Greece. Briefly, the point made in his work is that the purity of one's Greekness depends on their ability to abandon their collective memory. That is the same case on a state level. As Tzanelli argues, the purpose of the particular “Ohi” day celebration, is not the one assigned by the Greek authorities - commemorate the day when Macedonia became part of Greece and to perpetuate the sentiment of national belonging; rather, its purpose is to perpetuate the

261 See “Cambridge University Press: Official Response”, February 10, 1996, available online at <http://www.h-net.org/~sae/threads/CUP/cupresp.html>, last accessed 21.05.2009

262 Besides *Fields of Wheat...* see Anastasia Karakasidou, “Politicizing Culture – Negating Ethnic Identity in Greek Macedonia”, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, 11:1 (1993), pp. 1-28

263 Ibid.

exclusion and to keep the politics of forgetting²⁶⁴.

Of course, the forgetting, as well as the “remembering” is a process that is being adjusted to the political developments. As Karakasidou argues²⁶⁵, and as it has been pointed in the exposition of the thesis, in the Greco-Macedonian context, an important event that shaped the further constellation between the two sides, was the independence of the Republic of Macedonia.

That can be seen in an analysis of the mainstream Greek nationalist rhetoric for such purposes. Regarding that, there is probably no example more representative for such an analysis than the works by Evangelos Kofos. Kofos is a famous Greek historian, born in Edhessa (Voden), a town of Aegean Macedonia, who has been working on the Macedonian Question for decades now. Some of his works have been referenced in the chapters above. In the 1990s he has been the principal associate to the Greek government regarding the relations with the Republic of Macedonia. It is expected that soon he will publish a large study on the name dispute and beyond, under the guardianship of the Greek government again.

Kofos in the period 1960s – 1990s, writing mostly about the War years and the Civil War in Greece, referred to ethnic Macedonians in Greece and the citizens of the (Socialist) Republic of Macedonia as 'Macedonians' or variations of the term Slavo-Makedones (Slavo-Macedonians, Slavic Macedonians, Macedonian Slavs)²⁶⁶. Even in his piece published in 1990, he persisted using the same terminology²⁶⁷. Yet, only couple of years later, he started sharply shifting from the use of any word combination containing the noun “Macedonian” towards the use of FYROMians or more frequently, Skopianes (after the capital of the

264 See Rodanthi Tzanelli, “The politics of 'forgetting' as poetics of belonging: between Greek self-narration and reappraisal (Michaniona, 2000/3), *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (4), 2007, 675-694

265 Karakasidou, “Afterword” to *Fields of Wheat...*, op. cit.

266 See for example, Evangelos Kofos, *Nationalism and communism in Macedonia* (Thessalonike : Institute for Balkan Studies, 1964) and Kofos, “Dilemmas of the Greek policy in Macedonia”, op. cit. (1980)

267 Kofos, “National heritage and national identity...”, op. cit.

Republic of Macedonia)²⁶⁸.

Greece attitude of not recognizing “a so called 'Macedonian' minority” has persisted throughout the years and it has recently been flagged as an important minority issue by the Council of Europe²⁶⁹. At the same time, the Macedonian government and a good portion of the civil society in the Republic of Macedonia acts in solidarity with the Greek citizens that claim to be ethnic Macedonians and struggle for recognition. Yet, if one takes in account some the well respected anthropological and ethnographic studies that argue for the existence and the alleged assimilation of Macedonian (or Slavic Macedonian) minority in Greece, than one of the approaches that can provide a decent comprehension of the complex of the two states and the minority in between, is the one offered by Rogers Brubaker on the complexity of national minorities, nationalizing states and external homelands²⁷⁰.

A common argumentation in the Macedonian camp, often exaggerated and colored in emotions but nonetheless formulated around an idea that is valid, is the argument about the potential of the Macedonian issue for opening up the Pandora box of the Greek national question. In a word, the counter-factual analysis statement of some of the Macedonian intellectuals (most significantly, the newly elected president, Gjorge Ivanov²⁷¹), is that by the eventual recognition of an ethnic Macedonian minority in Greece, the Greek nationalist rhetoric would have to face an unpleasant reality check. The emergence of the forgotten and

268 His most recent paper even engages into discussion on the revision of terminology as being important factor in the solution of the Greco-Macedonian dispute. See Evangelos Kofos, “The Current macedonian Issue between Athens and Skopje: Is there an Option for a Breakthrough?”, *ELIAMEP Thesis*, April 2009

269 “There is no ‘Macedonian’ minority in Greece. In this regard, Greece reiterates its position, that any recommendation by UN treaty bodies and, a fortiori, by other monitoring mechanisms, on the protection of rights of persons claiming to belong to a “minority” cannot determine the existence of a minority group or impose on States an obligation to officially recognize a group as a “minority.” See the Appendix [Comments of the Greek Authorities on the draft report of the Commissioner for human rights of the Council of Europe following his visit to Greece on 8-10 December 2008 (issue reviewed: human rights of minorities)] of the *Report by Thomas Hammarberg* (op.cit)

270 Rogers Brubaker, “Nationalizing states in the old 'New Europe' – and the new” in *Nationalism reframed...*, op. cit., pp. 79-107

271 As there is a lack of written sources on this matter, I recommend some of the public appearances of Ivanov. See <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKyS26s8EKE>>, a fragment of an open forum where he exposes his ideas.

suppressed historical events would dismantle many of the national myths, Alexander the Great being only one of the most benign of them. Besides the discursive havoc, there would be an demographic shock²⁷² as well, as all the expelled Macedonians after the Civil War would now be set to return to their homeland and reclaim their properties. It would also provoke a domino effect in terms of the rights of other ethnic minorities, in the first place the Turkish and the Albanian one. Ivanov supposes that the opening of the minority issues might result in tensions and possible legitimacy crisis as well, similar to the one the Republic of Macedonia experienced with the struggles for political rights of the Albanians. On a regional scale, the recognition of Macedonian minority in Greece would be a step forward to the recognition of the Macedonian minority in Bulgaria, which might have similar consequences in terms of destabilizing the country²⁷³. The possibility of these issues opening in two European Union member states, in the already disordered Balkans, in the end, leads us to the re-acknowledgment of the bad karma the Macedonian Question carries with itself.

The New Macedonism and the Honorable Quest for the Roots

In the Macedonian case, the reasons behind the instrumentalization of the narratives of the distant past are probably as far-reaching as in the Greek one. In spite of that, the circumstances are patently different, generating a separate discourse with its own specifications. The Republic of Macedonia, a small and socially tormented country, generated nationalist sentiments which to a great extent were, in Hanák's words, a “compensation for backwardness”²⁷⁴. In a critique on the Macedonian obsession with the national self, Vladimir Chupeski relates the national uncertainties with the failure of the system and the destructive

272 This hypothesis is exaggerated given the overall size of population in N. Greece vs. the likely numbers of repatriates.

273 This hypothesis might also be seen as exaggerated, given that the likely number of the minority will take a tiny share of Pirin's overall population (less than 1%).

274 Péter Hanák, “A National Compensation for Backwardness”, *Studies in East European Thought*, Vol. 46, No. 1/2, Nationalism and Social Science (Jun., 1994), pp. 33-45

force of the political parties, arguing that in the Macedonian case, the ethnonational mobilization over myths are cause and consequence of failed politics²⁷⁵. As he proposes, the Macedonian political parties do not differ significantly in terms of their attitudes towards strategic political and economic issues, with the only exception being the national question. What appears to be the apple of discord, hence the ideological denominator in the Macedonian context is the approach to the Macedonian national identity and the related matters²⁷⁶. The situation in Macedonia in that respect was resembling the typical post-Yugoslav case, in which the trained Marxist mutated into ideologues of nationalism. As Siniša Malešević argues, the void created with the downfall of Yugoslav communism, in the successor societies was filled with the politics of identity. The conformist and servile Marxist-trained elites adjusted themselves to the new settings where it was the national rather than the class 'self' that was the anchor of politics²⁷⁷.

The fashion in which the Macedonian nationalist discourse developed was determined by the burden of the outside claims towards different aspect of Macedonian identity. That was reflected in the adoption of political language that embraced plenty of what Brubaker calls, “defensive” nationalist qualities adding to the “nationalizing” efforts of the Republic, typical for every newly independent state²⁷⁸. The essential characteristic of that defensive kind of “national-populist nationalism”, is its juxtaposition as opposed to outside threats. After gaining the independence, the Macedonian position was subordinated towards the neighboring claims, which caused a self-perception of inferiority to be achieved²⁷⁹. In respect to the

275 Vladimir Chupeski, “Macedonian Macedonians. National Minority in its own country?”, *New Balkan Politics*, Vol. 9 (2005) <http://www.newbalkanpolitics.org.mk/napis.asp?id=40&lang=English#_ftnref16>, last accessed 22.05.2009

276 Ibid. See also Mirjana Maleska, “The Macedonian (Old-New) Issue”, *New Balkan Politics*, Vol. 3 (2002) <http://www.newbalkanpolitics.org.mk/OldSite/Issue_3/maleska.macedonia.eng.asp>, last accessed 24.05.2009

277 Siniša Malešević, *Identity as ideology : understanding ethnicity and nationalism*, (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

278 See Brubaker, “Myths and Misconceptions...”, op. cit.

279 Kristina, Balalovska, “Between ‘the Balkans’ and ‘Europe’: A study of the contemporary transformation of Macedonian identity, 1991-2002”, *New Balkan Politics*, Vol. 6, 2003,

relations towards the neighboring nation-states,

However, the defensive nationalist features were not essentially a novelty in the political discourse. As Troebst argues, since the establishment of the Macedonian state within Yugoslavia, historiography and politics were intertwined in the recycling of history, creating, what he ironically labels as “historical 'Masterpieces’” that helped creating image of a Macedonian distinctiveness²⁸⁰. In his viewpoint, the Macedonian case had been an exception in Yugoslavia, as Macedonia was the only federal republic where the Yugoslavist aspects of the nation-building were less intense than the Macedonianist ones, and even argues that in Macedonia, the doctrine of Yugoslavism was subordinated to the one of Macedonism²⁸¹.

The so called “Macedonism”, an approach towards history and the national question, that emerged in Yugoslavia, was primarily focused on proving the ethnogenetic uniqueness of Macedonians. As Mirjana Maleska elaborates:

“it represents a complex process of building and consolidation of a nation [...] to protect itself from assimilation [...]

On a political level the "Macedonism" is simplified and manifested as an ideology [...] in favor of a status quo situation on the Balkans. According to them, the establishment of a Macedonian nation, Macedonian language and culture is a "fait accompli". Macedonian national identity [...] must not be questioned in order not to jeopardize Macedonian territorial integrity, for this could have negative political consequences to the stability of the Balkans.”²⁸²

Being engaged in a multilateral debate, Macedonism was never a phenomenon for itself. In its foundation, it interpreted the nation in ethnic terms, defining its allies and negative others. As that discourse emerged within the Yugoslav metatext, it is logical to assume that the narratives nurtured by Macedonism, were the ones what are in this paper

<http://newbalkanpolitics.org.mk/OldSite/Issue_6/balalovska.beetween.eng.asp>, last accessed 24.05.2009
280 Stefan Troebst, “Historical Politics and Historical “Masterpieces” in Macedonia before and after 1991”,
New Balkan Politics, Vol. 6 (2003),

<http://www.newbalkanpolitics.org.mk/OldSite/Issue_6/troebst.historical.eng.asp>, last accessed 24.05.2009
281 Ibid.

282 Maleska, “The Macedonian (Old-New) issue”, op. cit.

classified as the “Slavic” ones. However, Slavic, or even South Slavic is a term that has a vague meaning and is certainly does not refer to a homogenous culture as there was the specter of Yugoslav identities (with different variations within all of the federal republics) and outside Yugoslavia, and the Bulgarian one²⁸³.

The Macedonian statehood came into being much later than the Bulgarian and Serbian. While the Macedonian national movement was stuck in the prolonged and difficult Phase B (in Troebst's terms), Serbia and Bulgaria were already established and pursuing their national projects. One point where they met was Macedonia. The Orthodox, Slavic speaking population that lived in Macedonia had not had have the experience of living in a Slavic state until 1913. At that point, as soon as Vardar and Pirin parts of Macedonia were annexed to Serbia and Bulgaria respectively, the nationalizing processes that had commenced with the “propaganda” in the 19th century, now entered a more intensive phase, trying to impose the new identities to the population.

Of course, the interaction between the Slavic people and the identities was not strictly a process from-above. That was more obvious with regard to Bulgaria. Namely, many of the national heroes from the late Ottoman, but also from the 20th century history were claimed by Bulgaria as Bulgarian national heroes. Moreover, part of those heroes had declared themselves as Bulgarians, or those who stressed a Macedonian identity rarely saw it as mutually exclusive with Bulgarianness – similarly as in the Montenegrin-Serbian case²⁸⁴. Additionally, there had been notions on undeniable similarities in the culture between the two sides. All of that, stimulated the Bulgarian position to claim even more the historical rights over the Macedonian heritage and to argue that the Macedonian identification is a sub-national variant of the Bulgarian national one.

283 The platform of Macedonism is reflected in the opinions of Atanas Vangelov. See *Atanas Vangelov, Pro et Contra Makedonizmi (Pro et Contra Macedonianisms)*, (Skopje : Demokratija, Vesnik na SDSM, 1998)

284 See Frusetta, op. cit.

In the case of Serbia, the Macedonian case had fewer resemblances, although the Serbian claims that the Macedonian identity is a sub-variant of the Serbian national identity were also present. However, after 1945 and the establishment of the Brotherhood and Unity based federation of Yugoslavia, the Serbian claims had to be reduced on the expenses on the institutionalization of the Macedonian identity²⁸⁵. Framed like this, the Macedonian national identity institutionalized after the World War Two, can be seen as a solution that at the same time was neither Bulgarian nor Serbian and was still addressing the need for belonging among Slavic speakers or the alleged ethnic Macedonians in the region²⁸⁶.

After the federalization with Serbia within Yugoslavia, the only sound other for Macedonia remained to be Bulgaria. That was visible for instance, in the commemoration of the struggle against the short-lived Bulgarian occupation in 1941-44 and the lack of attention to the 1919-41 period, including the repressive policies of Belgrade, forceful colonization, and IMRO resistance²⁸⁷. Hence, in the establishment and the development of the Macedonian official discourse towards the national question, a strong emphasis was made on the othering of the Bulgarians and un-remembering or forgetting the common characteristics and collective memories. As Maleska argues, besides the reinterpretation of history, the process of de-Bulgarization was reflected in society, as the “post-war generations grew up “overdosed” with strong anti-Bulgarian sentiment, leading to the creation of mainly negative stereotypes for

285 There were other aspects of this process as well. Serb colonists expelled by the Bulgarian authorities were not allowed to return by the new communist rulers of Macedonia, stemming one of the sources of Serbianization. Also, the codification of standard Macedonian language rolled back the expansion of Serbo-Croatian as *lingua franca*.

286 “It could be said that Macedonians, declare themselves “Macedonians”, if, for no other reason, than at least because they are, first of all, convinced as to the necessity and all-inclusiveness of the ethno-national self-determination; and, second, because the identification “Macedonians” seems to them to be the most attractive option out of all that could have been chosen from 1944 onwards [...] The ethno-national connotation of the signifier “Macedonian”, which was aimed at the Christian Orthodox, south Slavic language nation, and additionally at the Bulgarians and Serbs, and was itself unknown in the central Balkan region of that time, gained significance only after the Second World War.” Troebst, “Historical Politics and Historical 'Masterpieces'...”, op. cit.

287 Brunnbauer, op. cit.

Bulgaria and its nation”²⁸⁸. The viewpoint characterized by the excessive negative sentiments towards Bulgaria and the denial of its cultural proximity, being the consequence of the Macedonianist rhetoric, is labeled by Maleska as “Bulgarophobia”²⁸⁹, (also known as “B-complex”).

The Macedonian and Bulgarian national identifications both were partially rooted in the Macedo-Bulgarian regionalist identity which was very strong both prior to the Balkan Wars and in the inter-war period²⁹⁰. Having in mind the plenty of crosscutting cleavages and a lot of converging past, the Macedonianist discourse could avoid the cultural influence from Sofia only by insisting on a narrative of autochtonism that could help proving the difference between the two. And that was the point where Alexander the Great fitted into the Communist rhetoric.

Namely, both the Bulgarian and Macedonian nation-builders had a consensus in reading the Slavism of their nations. The general narrative was that the Slavs had arrived on the Balkans invading from the North, and then mixed with the indigenous populations. In the Bulgarian case, Bulgarians were perceived as a breed between Slavic tribes, the Protobulgarians and the Thracians²⁹¹, and in the Macedonian case, as a one between (another set of) Slavic Tribes and Ancient Macedonians. Thereby, the link with Ancient Macedonia, in the Yugoslav period was the one legitimizing the Macedonian nation vis-a-vis the Bulgarian.

However, this Macedonianist perspective has not been unchallenged within the

288 Mirjana Maleska, “With the eyes of the “Others”, *New Balkan Politics*, Vol. 6 (2003)

<http://www.newbalkanpolitics.org.mk/OldSite/Issue_6/editorial_eng.asp>, last accessed 25.05.2009. The negative stereotypes towards the Bulgarian nation have gradually become a part of the Macedonian culture. For a critique on the pejorative uses of the term “Bulgarian” see a text by the current Vice Prime Minister in the Macedonian Government, Ivica Bocevski, “Bugarski kosh” [The Bulgarian basketball shot], *Utrinski Vesnik*, 03.05.2005, <<http://217.16.70.245/?pBroj=1718&stID=31428&pR=7>>, last accessed 20.05.2009

289 Maleska, “With the eyes of the ‘Others’”, op. cit.

290 That regionalist identification was cultivated by the IMRO and its legal institutions – the Macedonian Charitable Fraternities, Macedonian Patriotic Organization, Macedonian Scientific Institute, Macedonian Popular Bank, Macedonian faction in Bulgaria’s parliament, etc.

291 Protobulgarians are said to be nomadic tribes originating from Central Asia. For a deconstruction on the theory of the amalgamation of the Slavs, Protobulgarians and Thracians into the Bulgarian nation, see Ilija Iliev, “The proper use of ancestors”, *Ethnologia Balkanica*, Vol. 2, 1998, pp. 7-18

Macedonian public sphere. Another nationalist discourse developing within the Macedonian society was the one of the so-called “anti-Macedonism”. It has been defined as a tendency that seeks “returning the Bulgarian consciousness” of Macedonians²⁹². It has been associated with segments of the VMRO-DPMNE party under the leadership of Ljubcho Georgievski, prime minister of the Republic of Macedonia in the period 1998-2002 who later became a Bulgarian citizen.

Ljubcho Georgievski has been the political figure that has inspired the Macedonian independence from Yugoslavia. As well, he has been the one that had overseen the introduction of the Ancient Macedonian symbols as national symbols during the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. In his recently published article though, with a vast amount of historical background, quoted several times throughout this paper, he argues against the recent process of “antiquization” as it is highly instrumental and fallacious. As well, he tries to exculpate himself saying:

“The main problem we faced [on the way to our independence] was the the massive Yugoslavism among Macedonians. We could have used the story about Ancient Macedonia as a mean for wakening up from the Yugoslav daydreaming, but we never did that.”²⁹³

Although it is disputable to which extent Georgievski did not instrumentals the narrative of Alexander the Great, it is certainly clear that it was his successor in the VMRO-DPMNE, and Prime Minister since 2006, Nikola Gruevski, whose family originates from Aegean Macedonia, that was the one who introduced the rhetoric of the ethnocultural longe duree of the Macedonian nation with Alexander as its core myth.

Gruevski's rhetoric regarding the Macedonian question is based on two pillars: the antiquity, and the belated salient sentiments of anti-communism. The latter is a new moment

292 Maleska, “The Macedonian (Old-New) Issue”, op. cit.

293 Georgievski, op. cit.

in this analysis and deserves at least a brief elaboration. Namely, VMRO-DPMNE from its beginnings was oriented towards criticism of communism. However, the anti-communist attitudes of the party, were enacted into policy only since 2006. The most illustrative example is the building of a museum for the victims of the communist regime. The satanization of communism can be seen best in the rhetoric used by the party. For example, the recent protests against building a Church on the main square in Skopje, were commented by VMRO-DPMNE as “communist”. The same label goes with the opponents to the Antiquization, since communism is said to be anti-national as well. That clearly sharpens the image about VMRO-DPMNE's approach to the Macedonian question: besides the re-interpretation of the myth of Alexander, they propose a major review of the Yugoslav communist past. In the traditional Macedonism the communist years were perceived as the period when the Macedonian nation was established; in Gruevski's rhetoric it is a period when the national sentiments were repressed. That is why implicitly in this chapter the terms New Macedonism and NeoMacedonism were suggested for labeling this new approach. The new Alexander-inspired Macedonian populist nationalism can be inferred as representing a new major revisionist project towards history, being confronted with both the previous two dominant approaches towards the national question. First, by stressing the Ancient Macedonian distinctiveness it departs from the “anti-Macedonism” of the pre-Gruevski VMRO-DPMNE. The assumption of the ethnocultural durability of the Macedonian nation from the late neolith²⁹⁴ till today implies its cultural distinctiveness, thus transcending the Slavic meaning of Macedonia and any hypothesis on the proximity with Bulgarians. Secondly, by introducing the anti-communist rhetoric by presenting the “myth of the repressed national identity” and the demonization of

294 In the recent archaeological discourse, the term “Macedonian neolith” is used, instead of the logical phrase “Neolith findings in the Republic of Macedonia”. A Center for Macedonian Neolith Research was established with a task “to prove the continuity of the Macedonian culture”. See “Vo Bitola otvoren Centar za istrazhuvanje na makedonskiot neolit” [A Center for Macedonian Neolith Research established in Bitola], A1 News, 19.05.2007, <<http://www.a1.com.mk/vesti/default.aspx?VestiID=79327>>, last accessed 27.05.2009

the Yugoslav past, it amends the rhetoric of “Macedonism”, which glorifies the liberation struggle during the World War II and the nation-building role that Tito's communists have played. Building upon the inherently Macedonianist feature of over-emphasizing the uniqueness of Macedonians, it also borrows from the anti-Macedonianist rhetoric of objecting to the communist-approved nation-building process²⁹⁵.

The maintenance of the “roots”, similarly as in the Greek case, results with un-remembering, or rather to say forgetting of important episodes from the past. In the Macedonian case, the Neomacedonianist rhetoric is not just a re-evaluation of the symbolic capital, but it is an attempt to transcend the burdens of history. In addition to the traditional anti-Bulgarian sentiment, the Neomacedonism generates an excessive anti-Yugoslav one as well.

295 An interesting point on this is made by Jasna Koteska. She suggests that besides the fierce opposition of this new nationalism towards the communist past, in fact the exploitation of esoteric narratives (stressing the Hunza case) are to a great extent in continuity with the communist rhetoric of appreciation of exotics. See Jasna Koteska, *Komunistichka Intima, [Communist Intimacy]* (Skopje : Templum, 2008)

Concluding Remarks

Writing about Southeastern European nationalisms is always a dangerous and thankless job. It is dangerous because it involves the author and the reader in a vortex of collective memories that could possibly lead to a blind historicist interpretation of the facts. It is thankless, because the author always ends up as an apologist of one's side perception: if it is their own, they are considered a hero back home and a nationalist abroad; if it is someone else's, they are treated as a traitor back home but the credit abroad can easily fail to come.

Generally speaking, this paper provides a study on the New Macedonian Question, much different from the studies before, entering the above mentioned dangerous areas of nationalism. First, unlike the other researches, the focus here is on the symbolic capital of the complexity of the myth of Alexander the Great. Then, the myth was examined in comparative perspective. Finally, the insights on the myth were processed through an analysis of the respective national discourses in a broader context.

The possible limitations in the paper for the sake of avoiding digressions is probably the lack of emphasis of the objective circumstances in which the Greco-Macedonian dispute was opened, brought by globalization.

In terms of politics, it was the context of democratization (Greece after 1974 and Macedonia after 1990). Democratization process arguably helps the perpetuation of national myths. Dankwart Rustow, one of the most significant authors on democratization, says the first thing (“single background condition”) a society needs to democratize is national unity, in terms of all fellow citizens sharing the same vision about the nation²⁹⁶. Yet, the notion of national unity means the citizens are sharing the same myth, since everything what is national, especially the unity, is much dependent on the myths. First of all, sharing the same myth is

296 Dankwart Rustow, “Transitions to Democracy”, *Comparative Politics*, April 1970, p. 352

one of the basic conditions of belonging to the same nation – hence, no myth means no nation means no democracy. Second, many theorists recognize the relation between the demographic composition and democracy²⁹⁷ - the higher the homogeneity of the population is, that higher the prospects for democratization are. So, the relation between national myths and democratization becomes quite clear even out of the frame of political power. Especially, in the Macedonian case, the notion of the post-communist transition offers a lot of possibilities for exploring the democratization discourse and its interaction with nationalist myths²⁹⁸.

In terms of social change, it was the technological advancement that had reshaped the fields of communication. The new fields of communication are *detrterritorialized* (since the distance does not matter), *decentralized* (since the new media are available for most of the people) and arguably *detemporalized* (since most of the communication is happening in real time, but also remains written down indefinitely). This novelty was expected to be accompanied with a strong and effective rationalization of the discourse around the world, but it turned to be another way around. The information that multiplied, spread and was processed around the globe, was still controlled by humans. The Internet, especially the user-generated content platforms, offered people an opportunity to express or satisfy their most hidden deeds anonymously, by using their computers. One consequence of that is the expansion of online nationalist content²⁹⁹. A common feature of the Greek and Macedonian nationalists³⁰⁰ is their

297 Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, “Stateness, Nationalism and Democratization”, *Problems of democratic transition and consolidation : southern Europe, South America, and post-communist Europe*, (Baltimore : Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 16-37

298 See K. S. Brown, “In the Realm of the Double-Headed Eagle: Parapolitics in Macedonia 1994-9” in ed. Jane Cowan, *Macedonia: The Politics of Identity and Difference* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), 124-139. For an excellent study on the post-Yugoslav transition and the nationalist myths see Boris Buden, “Mythos und Logos des serbischen Schicksals” in Jans Becker, Achim Engelberg (ed.) *Serbien nach den Kriegen* (Frankfurt a.M. : Suhrkamp Verlag, 2008), p. 308-321. Quoted from the translation in Serbian <http://www.pescanik.net/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2944&pop=1&page=0&Itemid=106>, last accessed 12.04.2009

299 Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “Nationalism and the Internet”, *Nations and Nationalism* 13 (1), 2007, pp. 1-17

300 Though, of course, Macedonians start from a much lower position given the cultural capital associated with Hellenism.

effort to “promote your culture to the world” was seen as the major utility³⁰¹. In that respect, technology reinforced myths, and even advanced it, as the nation now got deterritorialized, decentralized and detemporalized, thus stimulating diaspora nationalism and *transnational* nationalism, and giving the myths possibility to multiply and spread around much more effectively than before³⁰². These insights could be also used in a study of the role of the diaspora in the Greco-Macedonian conflict.

Otherwise than that, the contribution of this study was in the “autopsy” of the myths of ancient nationhood.

The first part of the thesis engaged in exposing the Greco-Macedonian dispute in a broader perspective. Arguing that some of its aspects were inconceivable for the normative approaches, it was followed by a discussion on the role of the symbolical capital of Alexander the Great and the Ancient Macedonian Kingdom in the context of the feud.

In the anthropological framework of symbolic contestation, it was argued that the confronting claims over the historical rights to the myth of Alexander has been developing in four different phases, according to the model offered by Simon Harrison. First of all, in 19th century Greece and in 20th century Macedonia, there were inner debates over the value of the myth. These processes were nevertheless catalyzed by innovation efforts, most notably inspired from the archaeological findings in Vergina and the researches on the language of the Ancient Macedonians. At the time intervals when there was a consensus among the Greek and Macedonian elites that Alexander the Great stood highest in the hierarchy of myths (early 1990s, 2006-present), Macedonia and Greece openly confronted in the international arena,

301 For example, until recently, the most commented video clip on YouTube was a clip titled “Macedonia is Greece” created by Greek user called “makedoniatruth”, featuring the Sun of Vergina, Alexander the Great and data from academic and media sources. As I am writing this, the clip is now only second with astonishing almost 650.000 comments. See <<http://www.youtube.com/browse?s=md&t=a>>, last accessed 25.05.2009

302 Eriksen, op. cit.

opening a proprietary contest over the exclusive ownership of the myth. Greece, due to its advantages in terms of longer statehood and wider political capacity, exercised expansionary strategies that had an interim success of making the Macedonian side repeal the claims on the myth of Alexander (1995-2006). After the innovation and the re-evaluation of the myth in Macedonia however, the conflict re-entered the proprietary phase.

In the next part of the thesis, a dissection of the functionalism behind the myth was undertaken. Building upon the instrumentarium of ethnosymbolism of Anthony Smith, some of the basic roles of the myth were assigned, and by using some of the combined theories by Özkırmılı, Kolstø, Schöpflin and Coakley, two aspects were flagged: the role of the elites and the function of forgetting. Hence, the last part was engaged in a discussion of the forgotten sequences from the history on the expense of the remembering the myth. In the Greek context, it was the multiculturalist image and the assimilation forces that were unremembered, and in the Macedonian it was the belated nationhood and the cultural proximity and its alteration that were forgotten.

As a final statement, although it used much of the insights by Anthony Smith and the ethnosymbolic approach, I would rather place this paper in the constructivist campus. The understanding of Özkırmılı's that the assumption of antiquity of nations is highly erroneous has been implicitly confirmed in both the cases of Macedonia and Greece, as it confirms the basic postulates of Hobsbawm's about the elite and the selection of the “usable past” and the “invention of tradition”. Yet, the very existence of this paper goes in line with the Calhoun's statement that nations, although they might not exist objectively, even in the globalizing world, still matter.

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