Making Borders, Unmaking Identities: Frontiers and Nationalism in the Balkans, 1774 - 1913


It appears that few things agitate the modern imagination more than the sight of a line on a piece of paper. A line, that is, that demarcates the 'frontier' (or should it be called 'boundary'?) between 'states', 'nations', 'continents' or 'civilisations'. Such lines have stirred much passion not only among those who normally draw them (politicians, nationalists and soldiers) but also among those whose apparent preoccupation is to analyse or to cross them: historians and Mexican illegal immigrants, to name but a few. Historians have rarely resisted the temptation to think (literally) along these lines: whether they seek to identify ever shifting 'fault-lines', to chart elusive 'border-lines', or to pinpoint cultural 'zones', the discreet charm of a (straight or ragged) line, 'black' or coloured, on a ('real' or imaginary) map, seems to be quite appealing. After all, seeing is believing, and the drawing of lines, just as the production of maps, provides a 'discourse of conviction', whose alluring spell few have managed to escape.

The aim of this essay is to consider the drawing of a particular type of line in a particular type of paper, in a particular region: the invention of 'boundaries' and the demarcation of 'nation' and 'state' in 'ethnological maps' of the Balkans during the 'Long 19th Century', which stretches roughly from 1774 to 1913. This

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2 Cf. 'green lines' (West Bank), 'red lines' (Chad, Lebanon), 'ochre lines' (Pakistan), or 'blue lines' (Sudan, Kenya and Uganda). Sampled from: Michel Foucher, 'The Geopolitics of Front Lines and Borderlines', *Geopolitics*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (2000), 160
4 These chronological sign-posts merit a word at this point. The second (1913) marks the definitive end of Ottoman rule in the Balkans, and the beginning of a territorial *status quo* which
period witnessed the advent of modernity (of West European vintage) in the Balkans. Modernity, of course, did not come alone: it brought along a number of novelties, of which the Balkan peasants knew little and cared even less: state-formation, nationalism, and constitutionalism. It also brought the drawing of such lines as 'ethnological frontiers' and 'state borders', which were absent before modernity. The very term 'ethnological boundary' may safely be counted among the many linguistic products of modernity, which include 'factory', 'middle class', and 'statistics'. Just as 'statistics' was intended to be the 'accurate' and 'scientific' computation of a nation’s material strength, the 'ethnological frontier' was understood to be the 'natural' and 'objective' limes of the 'Nation', which should overlap with the territorial limits of the 'Nation-State'. These concepts, and the notions that supported them, crashed on the Balkan shores during the course of the long 19th century. They arrived as a mild, barely perceptible, swell of water. They were understood, however imperfectly, only by few intellectuals, if at all. But they quickly developed into a tidal wave, which engulfed the entire region. In 1774, the meaning of the 'national boundary' was unclear, as was the concept of the 'nation'. By 1913, men (and increasingly women too) were prepared to shed their blood, and that of others, for the defense of these borders. This essay will attempt to give some account of what had happened in-between.

At this juncture, a word of caution is called for: it concerns the limitations of the concept of a 'line', to which I alluded above. 'Borders', 'Frontiers' and, 'Boundaries' of every description are liable to be represented spatially by lines, which tend to be 'outer-oriented', somehow 'fixed' and 'closed', despite attempts

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outlived two world wars, and survived intact the wars of Yugoslav succession, at the very end of the 20th century; the first (1774) is less concrete but no less valid: the favourable economic conditions which the Greeks enjoyed after the Treaty of Kutchuk Kaynardji between the Ottomans and Russia facilitated the rapid expansion of the Greek mercantile bourgeoisie, and allowed for its domination of the eastern Mediterranean and Black Sea trade. That expansion gave a substantial impetus to a Greek cultural revival which then followed, and included the 'discovery' of the 'Greek nation'. The emergence of the 'nation', gives to the tapestry that the long Balkan nineteenth century is its most important, and unifying thread.
to qualify them as 'porous', or 'shifting'. The linguistic tradition of 'Eastern Europe', however, has produced terms that defy that rigidity, and offer a caveat that needs to be taken into account. Consider, for example, terms like the Polish 'Kresy', 'a limitrophic, open and dynamic region...an open frontier region', quite distinct from the stable frontier denoted by 'Granica';6 or the Ukraina, an open-ended 'border area', 'edge', or 'corner'. These terms, if I have understood them fully, go a long way in tempering conceptions of rigidity and line-drawing, and seem to offer a fair amount of spatial openness that almost defeat concrete delimitation. On the other hand, while much of the geographic imagination in the Balkans refers to 'lines' and 'zones', the concept of 'enclaves' or 'pockets' (usually used for scattered and relatively small populations like the Vlachs, or the Jews) further complicates the problem of demarcation. These 'enclaves', however, are powerful reminder of the fact that in ethnically mixed lands frontiers (ethnological or other) can only be found within other frontiers, in an exercise with no perceptible end. Just like the Russian dolls (the matryoshkas or babushkas) opening one only leads to another.

II. Before National Geographic: Religion, Maps, and Balkan Boundaries

Since the Enlightenment, when the West European imagination gradually abandoned the polarity 'North vs South' in favour of the 'West vs East' divide, the Balkans found itself in a geographical no-man's land: to be sure, the region was placed in the 'East', but in a rather restrained way: it belonged to the 'Near East', part of the 'less known', and 'barbarous lands', which were, nevertheless, neither truly 'Oriental' (for which read: Arab and Muslim) nor truly ' Asiatic' (for which read: 'Turkish'). Throughout the 18th century, European maps described

5 For a fuller but not exhaustive catalogue see Eric Hobsbawm, The Age of Revolution 1789-1848 (New York 1964), 17
the peninsula as 'Turkey in Europe', a term which competed with 'Near East' up until the early 20th century, when 'Near East' died an unceremonious death with the rising of the real article: the 'Middle East'. Hence a 'paradox', to use Wolff's term: the Balkans, at least geographically, belonged to 'Europe' despite its 'otherness'. Travelers and writers continued to describe the area as 'Savage Europe', or 'Oriental Europe', but despite these adjectives its admission to Europe remained a cartographic convention.7

These maps may have established the perception that the Balkan peninsula was in Europe (although not of Europe), but uncertainties about the region's internal features abounded, reflecting the state of cartography before the 19th century: early modern maps used both ancient and modern terminology for places and ethnic groups; they varied considerably concerning the geographical position of the peoples that inhabited the region; employed conflicting and unclear criteria for such demarcations, and made little, if any, effort to include internal boundaries and frontiers of any kind. All these, of course, applied to maps that tried to put the Balkans 'on the map'. But this was far from universal: The Atlas Universel (1757) 'envisioned Ottoman Europe as a dark land without the "lights" of enlightened geography', while a few years earlier another map, depicting 'The Voyage of a Dane' (1744), included the Balkans, but as an empty and unmapped space, with only a few tents and mountains.8

Despite the relative absence of boundaries in maps, for politicians and travelers things were much less abstract, although it appears that in the western imagination the only meaningful boundaries in the Balkans were those separating the region from the 'West': the Austrian Military Border served as a

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8 Wolff, op.cit., 183, for these maps. See also: H. Wilkinson, Maps and Politics: A Review of the Ethnographic Cartography of Macedonia (Liverpool 1951), 24. For the wider context see: Michael Biggs, 'Putting the State on the Map: Cartography, Territory, and European State Formation', Comparative Studies in Society and History Vol. 41, No. 2(1999), 374-405
powerful reminder of authority, and upon crossing the Balkan range, the Ancient Haemus mountains, classically educated travelers had an awareness of moving into a land rich in ancient (Greek) glory. The few relatively convenient points of entry into the Ottoman Empire, cities like Belgrade which otherwise few would wish to visit, also became in many ways a clearly recognisable 'frontier'.

Internal borders, however, operating inside the Balkans eluded most observers, lost as they were in the 'darkness' (tenebrae) that reigned in the region.

If the Military Border, the Danube, or Belgrade were 'borderlands' for the Westerners, for those living in the Balkans things were quite different. And this because of the imperial past of the region, and the prevalence of religion both among the (Ottoman and Muslim) rulers, and the (Christian and Slav, Romanian, Albanian or Greek) ruled. For the Ottomans, the Balkans formed a part of the Abode of Islam (Dar' al'-Islam), which included all the regions over which sharia law prevailed. The main boundary or frontier here (especially during the Ottoman ‘Classical Age’) was not conceived only as a line separating the lands of the infidel (the Abode of War, Dar al’Harb) from that of the Ottoman Sultan. Rather, the Empire itself in its entirety was seen as a borderland, a true Ukraina, that swelled and ebbed according to the fortunes of the Ottoman sword, as it charged in a continuous attempt to push forward the frontier of Islam. This meant that from a geographical point of view the Ottomans stood continuously (and quite literally) on the 'edge'.

Faith, however, provided the rudiments of geography for the ruled too. Orthodox Christianity (the majority religion among the Balkan peasants)

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10 Belgrade's good fortune was due to the fact that it was situated on the Danube, and on the well-traveled route to Istanbul, starting from Vienna, and going via Nish and Adrianople. Clearly, such a location rescued the city from almost total oblivion. Stevan Pavlowitch, 'Early Nineteenth-Century Serbia in the Eyes of British Travelers', Slavic Review, Vol. 21, No. 2 (1962), 322.

11 For these concepts, and the acute early modern Ottoman awareness of their Empire as a frontier state, see Halil Inalcik, The Ottoman Empire, The Classical Age, 1300-1600 (London 1994).
perceived the world very much as Islam did. Such a view had a long pedigree. Under the Byzantine Empire (roughly: 4th to 15th centuries) Orthodox Christianity (represented by the Empire) made a sharp distinction between the Orthodox and the rest of the world. The boundaries of this Orthodox world, however, included the entire known world (Oikoumene), over which the Emperor ruled. The universalist pretensions of the Byzantines produced an offspring that was destined to outlive the Empire itself. Called, and admirably analysed, in 1971 by Dimitri Obolensky, the ‘Byzantine Commonwealth’\textsuperscript{12}, it was a spiritual community of Orthodox Christian ethnic groups which covered the Balkans and a sizeable part of Russia, transcending ethnic, regional and linguistic barriers. This community covered a large multi-ethnic region, a sizeable fraction of which was at times politically united under the Byzantine Empire, and offered to its members a self-sustained and self-contained system of beliefs. Marked as it was by a high degree of spiritual and ideological interconnectedness, the Byzantine Commonwealth was capable of infinite expansion, given that ‘admission’ to that community was granted to every new convert to Orthodoxy.\textsuperscript{13}

The ecumenical traditions of that Commonwealth, and the role of religion as the primary focus of identification, survived and were even strengthened during the period of Ottoman domination, thus unifying the Balkan region to a considerable degree. This community of believers continued to form something approximating a 'Christian Commonwealth', long after the demise of its Byzantine predecessor in 1453, with the capture of Constantinople by the Ottomans.\textsuperscript{14} And this because the Ottomans organised their Empire around the Millet system, which provided for largely self-governed communities of religious

\textsuperscript{12}Dimitri Obolensky, \textit{The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453} (London 1971)

\textsuperscript{13}As Obolensky has noted, every convert ceased to be a ‘barbarian’ becoming in effect ‘Roman’ (Romaios: i.e. Byzantine). See: Dimitri Obolensky, ‘The Principles and Methods of Byzantine Diplomacy’, reprinted in his collection \textit{Byzantium and the Slavs} (New York 1994), 13.

\textsuperscript{14}The best studies on the subject of the post-Byzantine Christian Commonwealth are Nicolae Iorga, \textit{Byzance après Byzance : Continuation de l’Histoire de la vie Byzantine} (Bucharest 1935), and a collection of studies by Paschalis Kitromilides, \textit{Enlightenment, Nationalism, Orthodoxy: Studies in the Culture and Political Thought of South-eastern Europe} (Aldershot 1994).
groups headed by their supreme religious leader. That meant that the Orthodox peoples in the Balkans, irrespective of their ethnicity or language, were grouped together under the *Millet-i Rum* (the 'Orthodox' or 'Roman' millet) under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople.15

According to the Greeks, this community of Christians, whose custodian remained the Patriarchate, had a name: *genos* (γένος) a word that linguistically carries connotations of lineage through blood and ancestry, and remains notoriously untranslatable.16 Some discussion of this term is called for at this stage, given that, as shall be seen below, the cartographic imagination of 19th-century Greeks attempted to demarcate such borders as to include and shelter the genos in its entirety.17 The word started life in the Byzantine empire as 'genos of the Romans' or 'genos of the Christians' but in many instances remained unaccompanied by adjectives and other appellations. It is the one single word that was used throughout the period of Ottoman rule by the Greek-speaking Christians to denote the wider community they thought they belonged to. It is clear that the meaning of the *genos* was primarily religious: it denoted the

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Orthodox Christians, but it had many nuances and its meaning varied according to its user. In November, 1700 Patriarch Kallinikos II wrote a letter to the Wallachian ruler Konstantin Bassaraba Brincoveanu, praising him for publishing in his printing press many books that benefited 'our wretched genos' (to talaiporon hemon genos).\(^{18}\) Obviously, being Orthodox Christians, the Wallachian ruler and the Greek Patriarch belonged to the same genos. Almost a century earlier, however, Metropolitan Mathew of Myrra, sensing hostility between the Wallachians and the 'Romans' ('Greeks'), urged the former to honour the Greeks, the reason being that the 'Romans' were 'a blessed and most Orthodox genos' (genos orthodoxotaton, genos eologimenon)\(^{19}\); for the Metropolitan, Wallachians and 'Romans' were distinct groups, although both were Orthodox Christians. The first post-Byzantine Patriarch of Constantinople, Scholarios, also made a distinction between Orthodox Christians, when he referred to the Orthodox genos of the Russians.\(^{20}\)

As always with such terms, context is all, and it would be unrewarding to search for consistency, for in many cases much depends on who is referring to whom, and when. But it seems that whenever Patriarchs or other religious authorities mention that term they actually mean the Orthodox of the Ottoman Empire, those, that is, that were within the spiritual (but not necessarily administrative) jurisdiction of the Patriarchate of Constantinople\(^{21}\). The Russians were clearly another genos, which in some cases also enjoyed the distinction of

\(^{18}\) The letter was published by Manouil Gedeon in November 1902, in the Patriarchal journal *Eklisiastiki Alitheia* [Church Truth]. This letter and its context are discussed in: Dimitris Livianios, ‘Changing the Script: The Patriarchate of Constantinople and Missionary publishing activity, 1630s-1840s’. Paper presented at a conference on Missionaries and the nineteenth-century Ottoman world, held at Birkbeck College, University of London, on 7 December 2002.


\(^{21}\) It is occasionally overlooked that the Orthodox Ottoman community was administratively divided into four Patriarchates (Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Jerusalem) and that friction between them over issues of jurisdiction were not unknown.
being 'most Orthodox'. What appears to be certain is that, although language, jurisdiction and religion played a role in the definition of the genos, language played the smallest part. Christian Arabs, for example, were not considered members of a different genos. Athanasios, a former Patriarch of Antioch and himself an ethnic Arab, wrote about his kinsmen (in perfect Greek) in 1701 simply as 'Christian Arabs' without feeling the need to group them in a separate genos.\(^{22}\) Vlachs and Bulgarians (whose educated classes were highly Hellenised) also did not have their own genos, and the same applied to the Christian but Albanian-speakers (the Arvanites) of the Peloponnese, Attica, Hydra and Spetsai. It was this multi-ethnic and polyglot community that, together with the Orthodox Greek-speakers, comprised the community of the Patriarchate's flock, the genos.

It is evident, then, that genos not only coincided with the Millet-i Rum, given that the territorial limits of both entities overlapped, but it was also used as a literal translation of the term millet into Greek. In fact, it is in the Islamic realm, where religion determined identity as much as in the Greek case, that we have to turn, if we are to find suitable terms to convey some of the nuances of genos as it was understood during the period of 'Turkish rule' (Tourkokratia). Apart from the Ottoman term Millet, we encounter two other terms: the \(\ddot{u}\)mmet-i Muhammed, and the Arabic Umma. These terms denoted the Muslim community irrespective of linguistic or ethnic frontiers, and remained the main linguistic expression of the wider inclusive collectivity to which Muslims considered they belonged.\(^{23}\) Once again, Christianity and Islam, by promoting analogous forms of belonging, produced rather similar linguistic results. Significantly, with the coming of nationalism the terms millet, umma and genos will gradually cease to have the broad and religious connotations of the previous periods, and the impulse to

\(^{22}\) Emile Legrand, Bibliographie Hellenique (Paris 1962 edn), vol.4., 68
\(^{23}\) For the Ottoman term see: Antonina Zhelyazkova, 'Islamization in the Balkans as an Historiographical problem: The Southeast-European Perspective', in: Fikret Adanir - Suraiya
translate them as 'nation' in the modern sense of the word will correspondingly increase. In the Greek case, this happened in the course of the nineteenth century.24

Within that religious context, the Balkan Christians had an understanding of boundaries which consisted of four layers, and was coloured by their ideological, economic, and social mainstay: these layers were family, village, agriculture (or animal husbandry), and Christianity, probably in that order. On a narrow level, blood relations (mostly extended family, sometimes organised in a co-operative known as Zadruga among the South Slavs, or clan among the Northern Albanians) marked the confines of much of their world; a world that offered protection to those who were inside, from the unknown, and treacherous 'outside'. As the Greeks believed, anyone outside the family was literally a 'foreigner' (xenos), a linguistic appellation that survives to this day, with only slightly diminished vigour. Besides family, the village provided another boundary, for it also offered protection, not only from outsiders but also from the many demons and spirits that littered the air; hence the delimitation of the village boundaries with little icons and chapels. Beyond these boundaries, a further layer was added: migratory shepherds had to move to the highlands in the summer, and to return to the lowlands during the winter, like a pendulum of unfailing synchronicity. The last layer, was provided by Christianity: important places of pilgrimage, famous monasteries, and even cities like Jerusalem, and perhaps, sites like the Jordan river. The limits of this religious geography were clearly coterminous with the limits of the entire world for the peasants. Further


24 The Turks had to wait much longer, and the transition from Millet to nation was even more complicated. Even in the early proclamations of Turkish nationalists in the 1920s, including Kemal’s, the meaning of 'Millet' was unclear, as religious content alternated with a more secular one. See: Erik Jan Zürcher , 'The Vocabulary of Muslim Nationalism', International Journal of the Sociology of Science 137 (1999),81-92. Regrettably, a study on the vocabulary and political language of the Orthodox Church still awaits its author.
afield lay the land of darkness. Inevitably, such pre-national perceptions of space and place excluded the concept of 'national' or 'ethnographic' boundary.\textsuperscript{25}

Instead, religion together with antiquity provided the only basis on which a geography of 'Greece' could be based. A good example is a map of Greece published in 1543 by Nikolaos Sofianos, a western-educated Greek, provides apt illustration of this point. The map, entitled ‘A Description of All Greece’ (\textit{Totius Graeciae Descriptio}) depicted 'Greece' as covering the entire Balkan peninsula and adjacent areas, includes both classical Greek and modern Balkan name-places, and has no clearly delimited borders. Clearly its author mapped a hybrid, by fusing Ancient Greece with Christendom, the most important points of reference that his education and environment could give him. This map was to have a profound influence in the cartographic imagination of the Greeks until the early 20th century. It was during the course of the Long 19th century, however, that it was transformed into a map of the Greek 'nation'. From a map of antiquity cum Christendom, it was turned into an ethnological map to serve the interests of Greek nationalism.\textsuperscript{26}

In the European geographical imagination, from the 15th to the 18th centuries, 'Greece' was frequently depicted as covering virtually the entire Balkan peninsula: in many cases it included 'Bulgaria', 'Serbia' and the Danubian Principalities (occasionally using terms such as 'Moesia inferior', and 'Moesia Superior') as well as Macedonia.\textsuperscript{27} In some maps 'Bulgaria' was confined mostly to the lands north of the Balkan mountains and the Danube.\textsuperscript{28} The reasons for

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\item \textsuperscript{25} On the spiritual geography of the pre-modern Balkans, see Kitromilides, 'Balkan mentality', \textit{op.cit.}
\item \textsuperscript{26} See George Tolias, 'Totius Graecia [sic]: Nicolaos Sophianos's Map of Greece and the Transformations of Hellenism', \textit{Journal of Modern Greek Studies} Vol. 19 (2001), 1-22
\item \textsuperscript{27} See A. karathanassis, 'Some Observations on the European cartographers with regard to 15th-18th century Macedonia', \textit{Balkan Studies}, Vol. 32, No. 1, (1991), 5-17
\end{itemize}
such perceptions were many, and included the prevalence of Ptolemaic geography, the dominance of the Greek language and high culture in the region, the lure of antiquity, and the lack of detailed information on (and interest in) the linguistic and ethnic groups inhabiting the Balkans. The fact that many Balkan intellectuals, especially in the Bulgarian lands, had been Hellenised by attending Greek schools, and declared themselves as 'Greeks' despite their ethnicity, significantly reinforced these images.29

III. Beyond belief: the quest for the genos’ borders

The Balkan community of Christendom, the Christian Commonwealth, together with the concept of boundaries they subscribed to, was still very much alive in the 19th century. But forces were already at work to destroy its unity and eventually to create a Greek, or a Serb out of a Christian. Since the early 19th century, western ideas of belonging, and an awareness of a distinctive ‘national’ (and of course: glorious) past, started to penetrate the Balkans. The penetration of nationalist ideas started from outside, and from the fringes of the area, where connections with the West (mainly with France, Austria, Germany and Italy) were easier; from western-trained Greek intellectuals; from the schools financed by a flourishing mercantile Greek bourgeoisie, in which, significantly, not only Greeks but Hellenised Slavs started discovering their ‘own’ past; from the community of Bulgarian traders in Constantinople, from Serbs who lived and worked in the Habsburg Empire, and from Romanians living in Transylvania. Further, the new revolutionary political ideas of the French Revolution started reaching the region. The impact of these ideas in the Balkans was, of course, quite uneven, and few were able to come into contact with them. But those who

29 Charles Eliot, a knowledgeable observer of the region, noted in 1896: ‘Even forty years ago the name "Bulgarian" was almost unknown, and every educated person coming from that country called himself a Greek as a matter of course’. As cited in John A.R. Marriott, The Eastern Question (London 1967), 328
did were keen to sow the seeds of revolution against the ailing Ottoman Empire.\textsuperscript{30} The guardian of this commonwealth, the Patriarchate of Constantinople, predictably, resisted the ‘new ideas’ of revolution, which threatened the Empire, the ‘purity’ of the Orthodox doctrine, and, with it, the unity of the Christian flock.\textsuperscript{31} But it was soon realised that the Patriarchate was fighting a loosing battle.

The 19th-century revolutions (in 1804 the First Serbian uprising, in 1821 the Greek revolution) eventually led to the carving up of territory from the Ottoman Empire. Although the role of nationalism in both revolutions has been greatly exaggerated by the nationalist Balkan historiography, the result was the establishment of states that aspired to be ‘nation-states’.\textsuperscript{32} But from this, a range of questions emerged: where exactly does ‘Greece’ lie? and where should the ‘boundaries’ of the ‘nation’ be? Was language adequate in determining the ‘Greek’, or should religion be the only criterion of ‘Greekness’? Further: were ‘Greek lands’ those where Greeks, however described, actually lived, or any place that had been ‘Greek’ in the past? The answer to these questions varied wildly, and the borders of ‘Greece’ fluctuated accordingly, due to no small measure to the fact that Greek-speaking communities were scattered throughout


the Balkans, and beyond. The efforts to determine the 'Greek' in the 19th century were also closely related to the issue of the Christian Orthodox Slavs that inhabited most of the Balkan peninsula. And this because, if these Slavs were 'Greeks' by virtue of their religion, it then followed that the boundaries of Greece should be placed in the Balkan range, and even in the banks of the Danube. The entire Balkan peninsula would thus become 'Greece'. Conversely, if language only was to count as the most important criterion, then Greek frontiers should go no further than Thessaly, Epirus, and the southern fringes of Macedonia.

The problem of the limits of the country was forcefully articulated in 1844, by Ioannis Kolettis, a Hellenised Vlach:

' The Greek Kingdom [independent at the time of the speech] is not the whole of Greece, but only a part, the smallest and poorest part. A native of Greece is not only someone who lives within this kingdom, but also one who lives in Ioannina [in Epirus], in Thessaly, in Serres [in Macedonia], in Adrianople [in Thrace], in Constantinople, in Trebizond, [southern littoral of the Black Sea] in Crete, in Samos [in the Aegean], and in any other land associated with the Greek history, or the Greek race.'

This oft-quoted passage formulated the 'Great idea' the Greek irredentist project envisaging the unification of all 'Greeks' within the confines of a single state, a project which dominated the political life of the country for almost a century. Kolettis' geographical imagination was quite wide, claiming much of the Balkans as 'Greece' by virtue of 'history' or 'association' with Hellenism. His views, as we have seen, were not out of step with European ideas about the demographic picture of the Balkans, although at the time he spoke the Slavs, and especially the Bulgarians, had started making their presence felt in maps of the region: in 1842

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33 For the Great idea see: Richard Clogg, The Greek Millet in the Ottoman Empire’, *op.cit.*, 185-207
the Czech Safari, and in 1847 the French Boué had produced maps depicting the Bulgarians as the dominant ethnic group in central Balkans and Macedonia, based on the extent of (what they understood as) the Bulgarian language. For Kolettis, however, language was not the main criterion of 'nationality'. This ambivalence, to say the least, of the Greeks towards language as a 'national' criterion made the attempt to determine who was a 'Greek' and who was not particularly agonising.

IV. Identifying the 'Serb' and the 'Bulgarian'

Identifying the 'Greeks', however, went hand in hand with an identification of their Christian neighbours, the Serbs and the Bulgarians. In the post-Byzantine world (roughly: 15th - 18th centuries) their position was ambivalent: they spoke a language different from that of the Greeks, but they practiced the same religion. This meant that they were accepted (with varying degrees of sincerity) as members of the 'genos of the Orthodox', although belittled (occasionally with great vigour) because of their language: Slavonic languages were not considered sufficiently civilised, and were also highly suspect for a variety of reasons.

34 Wilkinson, Maps and Politics, op. cit., 33-42
35 This section draws on Dimitris Livianos, 'Christians, Heroes and Barbarians: Serbs and Bulgarians in the Modern Greek Historical Imagination, 1602-1950', in: Dimitris Tziovos (ed.), Greece and the Balkans: Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters Since the Enlightenment (Aldershot 2003) 68-83, and esp. 71-79, where these issues are treated in greater detail.
37 The spectre of prosyletism, for example, was one such reason. In the 19th century, the fear that Protestant missionaries may use Slavonic translations of the Bible to spread their 'corrupt' doctrines led the Patriarchate of Constantinople to condemn Slavonic translations. See: Angeliki Konstantakopoulou, He Elliniki Glossa sta Valkania, 1750-1850: To Tetraglosso Lexiko tou Daniil
Greek Enlightenment (a derivative movement which made its presence felt in late 18th and early 19th century) signaled the first coherent attempts to distinguish the Greeks from the other Orthodox Christians of the Balkans. Such an undertaking faced many problems, as has already been seen, for the criterion of language as a proof of 'Greekness' competed with religion. Another dimension, however, was then added to the equation for the first time: was it sufficient for a Greek-speaker to be considered Greek if he had learned the language through acculturation and education, and not through the milk of his mother? To rephrase this in modern terms: should people of non-Greek ethnic origin (Vlachs and Slavs, for example) who nevertheless spoke the language fluently be accepted as Greeks? Not so, thought the conservative Phanariot Panayiotis Kodrika, who also argued that only ethnic Greeks were able to speak perfectly the language of their fathers. He looked down on the Greek of the distinguished intellectual Iosipos Moisiodax (an ethnic Vlach) because, after all, he was 'alien by birth to the *genos* of the Greeks'.

This formulation sounds startlingly (and alarmingly) familiar: at the turn of the 20th century the intellectuals of *Action Française* argued that those who were ethnically non-French were incapable of understanding and speaking French properly. 'No Jew', remarked Charles Maurras, 'could appreciate the beauties of Racine's line in *Bérénice dans l’orient désert devint mon ennui*.' Kodrikas would have nodded approvingly.

That notwithstanding, ethnicity was not considered the main issue in the early 19th century; instead, language and religion continued to play that role.

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Serbs and Bulgarians were thus identified as both distinct nations and Greeks. The radical author of the *Hellenic Nomarchy*, published in 1806, in describing the ‘European part the Ottoman Kingdom’ referred to 13 provinces, including Bulgaria, Serbia and Bosnia, and calculated that the Christians formed the overwhelming majority. He then asked: ‘such a multitude of Hellenes, my dear [readers] how do they live?’ Clearly, for our author the Christian community was identical with the Greek *genos*. Kodrikas and other intellectuals disagreed with such views, but the enduring bonds of religion obstructed the neat differentiation between the Greeks and Slavs. For those who did make such a distinction, however, Serbs and Bulgarians were initially perceived as harmless, albeit uncouth, peasants, and pious Christians. That was true especially of the Bulgarians, who, in line with European images of that period, were depicted as a simple and hospitable lot, and stern followers of the Orthodox Church. The Serbs were treated somewhat differently by the Greek historical imagination: they were Christians, just like the Bulgars, and therefore stood on the right side of the fence, but they had a quality their Slav brethren lacked: a spirit of resistance. The Serbian revolt of 1804 had an important impact on Greek perceptions of the Serbs. They were not beacons of civilisation, to be sure, but they were at least brave and daring warriors, and they proved it by being the first to revolt against the Ottomans. Konstantinos Koumas epitomised the way the Greeks constructed the image of the Serbs in describing Karadjordje Petrović, the Serbian revolutionary leader: He was 'totally illiterate but brave and valiant', we are told, and he 'performed wonders of patience and prudence'. His virtues reflected those of his nation: they were brave but uncultured.


41 Cf., for example, ‘...les Bulgares en général sont robustes, sobres, très-simples dans leurs moeurs et très-hospitaliers. Les Bulgares chrétiens sont très-religieux...’ A. Papadopoulos-Vretos, *La Boulgarie Ancienne et Moderne Sous le Rapport Géographique, Historique, Archéologique, Statistique et Commercial* (St Petersburg 1856), 175

As the 19th century was nearing its close, the image of the Balkan Slavs was given a sharper relief, and the differences between Serbs and Bulgarians became even more visible. Profound transformations occurred, especially after the 1870s, affecting primarily the image of the Bulgarians: they ceased to be hospitable and honest peasants, and they were no longer good Christians either. Instead, they were transformed into blood-stained 'barbarians', indeed they were nothing more than a 'slow witted', and 'amorphous racial mass', animated only by the pan-Slavist propaganda. They had no 'national spirit' or 'national consciousness' and they deserved no nation-state of their own. Even their language was of no account, unfit to convey higher meanings. The Serbians, on the other hand, continued to be depicted as knights in shining armour. Greek historiography praised their bravery and glorious medieval past, as well as their magnificent folk poetry. And their language, of course, was the most refined of all South-Slav dialects. They were not as civilised or noble as the Greeks, but still they came a decent second in the Balkan hierarchy of nations. The reasons for such a sharp divergence in the image of the two Slav peoples are not difficult to locate: Bulgarian nationalism started making its presence felt since the 1850s, and the intense clash with Greek nationalism over Macedonia from 1870 to 1913 prompted the Greeks to recast aggressively the Bulgarian image. The Serbs, however, had national projects that did not antagonise (at least publicly) the Greek irredenta, and in the Macedonian imbroglio Greeks and Serbs were (somewhat uneasy) allies, not deadly enemies. It should be noted, nevertheless, that the image of Bulgarians as ruthless barbarians is more recent than commonly thought: as late as the 1850s and 1860s the Crimean War and the twists and turns of the Eastern Question made it possible for Greek intellectuals to call for an all-Christian Balkan initiative against the Ottomans: the time had come, argued N. T. Voulgaris in 1860, for 'the peoples of Orthodoxy to save our East'.

43 Nikolaos Timoleon Voulgaris, To Ethnikon Imon Kathikon pros tin Kindinevousa Anatolin [Our

43 Nikolaos Timoleon Voulgaris, To Ethnikon Imon Kathikon pros tin Kindinevousa Anatolin [Our
die a saddened and little-lamented death. The kind and peaceful peasant of the early 19th century was buried for ever, giving way to the late 19th-century 'barbarian from the north'.

V. ‘Morbus Geographicus’
Maps and the quest for the 'Northern Boundary of Hellenism'

Such perceptions of Serbs and Bulgarians had a profound influence on the quest for the 'true' and 'natural' ethnographical boundaries of Hellenism. By the end of the 19th century, as nationalism was emerging victorious in its battle with religion, the Greeks had identify both Serbs and Bulgarians as distinct nations, with the Serbs depicted as trusted allies, and the Bulgarians as 'filthy' enemies. The (all-inclusive and Christian) identity of the genos was now rapidly giving way to the ‘nation’ (ethnos). But by then, another problem presented itself: how many of the Balkan Slavs were indeed 'Bulgarians'? and how many could still be claimed as 'Greeks'? This problem became particularly acute in the second half of the 19th century, in the clash over Macedonia, a province of the Ottoman empire with a mixed population that included Slavs, Greeks, Albanians, Jews and Turks. Until 1870, all Christians in Macedonia continued to be under the spiritual jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. A growing Bulgarian national movement, however, had every reason to want to challenge this supremacy. In 1870 the Bulgarians, still without a state, created their own church the Exarchate. It was no surprise that the national struggle of the Bulgarians found a religious outlet: namely the establishment of a church, although there were no differences whatsoever (from a religious perspective) between the Bulgarian church, the Exarchate, and the Patriarchate of

National Duty towards the endangered East] (Athens 1860), 19. See also Hering, op.cit., 56-58
Constantinople. The Patriarchate of Constantinople condemned the introduction of ‘phyletism’, that is nationalism, into the Church. But again it was fighting a losing battle, just as it has had in the 18th century when it tried to stop the penetration of western liberal ideas. From 1870 onwards the Bulgarians claimed that every follower of the Exarch was a ‘Bulgarian’, while Athens responded by arguing that those who remained under the jurisdiction of the Patriarchate were true ‘Greeks’.

The establishment of the Exarchate was a blow to the Greeks, followed by the Treaty of San Stefano (1878) which gave the Bulgarians most of Macedonia. Although the treaty was annulled in 1878 in the Congress of Berlin, both Serbs and Greeks realised that the Bulgarians were emerging as serious contenders in the scramble for Macedonia. By 1881, Serbia, Greece and Bulgaria shared borders with that unhappy province of the Ottoman Empire, and tried to ‘prove’ to the Great Powers that the province was part of their respective 'terra irredenta'. The Greeks unleashed an array of arguments: 'Macedonians' were in fact Greeks because they were Orthodox Christians; they were people of Greek descent who had simply lost their 'maternal language'; and they inhabited a land which was 'historically' Greek since antiquity. The Bulgarians, counterattacked by employing a startlingly modern, (and Herderian) argument: the Macedonians were Bulgarians because they spoke Bulgarian. If the Germans were so because of their language, why not the Bulgarians? The Serbs proposed a mixture of 'historical' and 'folkloristic' arguments: Much of Macedonia was indeed 'Southern Serbia', for it had been ruled for over a century by Stefan Dushan, the medieval Serbian emperor who had been crowned in Skopje. So the land was 'historically' theirs. They also argued that the Macedonian Slavs and the Serbs

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45 Kitromilides, “Imagined Communities”, rep. in Enlightenment, Orthodoxy, op.cit, 55-56
shared not only a number of customs and forms of social organisation, but many linguistic features as well.

The struggle to win over public opinion in Europe, and Great Power support of their respective claims, led the Balkan national movements to publish an extraordinary number of maps (sometimes crafted by local scholars, sometimes by 'sympathetic' foreigners) depicting the 'true ethnological border' of their nation in Macedonia.46 This was a novel concept. As has been seen, the maps that had been published before the rise of nationalist conflicts did not make references to 'ethnological' criteria: they mapped either Christendom, or a mixture of ancient and modern entities like 'Greece', 'Moesia', 'Dardania', or even 'Hungaria', which was sometimes depicted as covering most of the Bulgarian lands. The 'morbus ethnographicus' of the late 19th century represented the first massive use of 'ethnological' criteria: these maps purported to show the frontiers of nations, which then should be made to overlap with the borders of the state.

For many Greek historians and publicists, the northern frontier of Hellenism was the Balkan mountains. This was convenient for it offered both a 'natural' (i.e. 'geographic') boundary as well as a strategically defensible one. It thus claimed for the Greeks the entire Macedonian pie, and, of course, kept open the road to Constantinople, which consistently had been claimed as the capital of the Greek state envisaged by the 'Great idea'. Greek nationalism was prepared to accept that Bulgarians lived to the north of this range, but the Slavs who found themselves to the South of this line were simply 'Slav-speaking Greeks'. If Alsace was both German-speaking and 'French' why not Macedonia? This disregard for language as the prime factor for determining 'ethnicity' meant that Greek-sponsored maps could extend the northern boundary of Hellenism at will. What mattered for Greek historians and geographers was 'descent' and 'national

46 Wilkinson, in his Maps and Politics, has compiled a good selection of these maps. For this 'Morbus Ethnographicus', as it was called at the time, see also: Robert Shannan Peckham, 'Map mania: nationalism and the politics of place in Greece, 1870-1922', Political Geography, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2000), 77-95
sentiment'. The historians that dealt with the former quickly 'established' that the 'national origins' of the Slavs south of the Balkan mountains were Greek. The latter, 'national sentiment', was much more slippery and elusive, and prompted Greek scholars and propagandists to resort to a variety of indicators to prove the Hellenic 'leanings' of the Macedonian Slavs. They pointed to the dominance of Greek schools in Macedonia, which promoted the Hellenisation of the local Slavs, and to the fact that many followers of the Patriarchate of Constantinople continued to call themselves 'Greeks' and remained loyal to the Patriarch even after the establishment of the Bulgarian national church, the Exarchate.

Consequently the Greek maps assumed the overlapping between the Greek educational network and loyalty to the Patriarch with 'Greek national sentiment'. Even when all these factors (descent, history, and loyalty to the Patriarch) were not enough to support the Greek claims, a final argument emerged: 'Greeks' may not be the largest group numerically, but they were the 'dominant' one in Macedonia, given their ability to assimilate the other groups of the region. This meant that if an 'ethnographic map' could not support the Greek cause, an 'ethnocratic' one, depicting the dominant nation, could do the trick, reclaiming Macedonia for Hellenism. This was the argument of Konstantinos Paparrigopoulos, Greece’s national historian, who advanced the argument for an Ethnocratic map (carte ethnocratique) of the Balkans. Such a map was published in 1878 bearing the signature of the eminent Prussian geographer H. Kiepert.47 The Bulgarians had a more straightforward job. Since they used almost exclusively the criterion of language to determine the distribution of the 'Bulgarians', the overwhelming majority of Macedonian Slavs were classified as Bulgarians: the number of the Serbs dwindled, while groups like the Pomaks (Bulgarian-speaking but Muslim) or Muslim Gypsies simply vanished. The Bulgarian view was forcefully presented in the map published in 1900 by Vasil Kunchev, a

47 See Tolias, Totius Graecia, op.cit., 13-14; Peckham, op.cit.
school inspector, which claimed most of Macedonia as Bulgarian and excised from the region not only the Pomaks but also the Serbs.48

The latter faced an uncomfortable situation as a result of both Bulgarian and Greek advances to what they consider as 'Southern Serbia'. Western geographers have been consistent in reducing the number of Serbs in Macedonia, favouring either Greece, or Bulgaria. To redress this 'imbalance' the Serbs launched a two-pronged counter attack. The first leg of it consisted of simply denying the Macedonian Slavs to Bulgarians, classifying them instead as pure Serbs on historical, folkloric, or even linguistic grounds. Thus a map published in 1889 by S. Gopcevic, a diplomat and scholar, brought the Serbs to Salonica, and minimised the Bulgarian presence.49 The second part of this attack was more subtle. It was undertaken by Jovan Cvijić, a Serbian geographer of considerable reputation, and was developed in the maps he published, especially between 1906 and 1918. Cvijić suggested that the Slavs of Macedonia, whom he called the Macedo-Slavs, neither had a clear-cut national consciousness, nor were they a uniform linguistic group. They were, therefore, a distinct group which was part of a 'transition zone' between Serbians and Bulgarians, and could easily be assimilated into both groups depending on the country that would rule them. In 1918, he published an ethnographic map of the Balkans in the Geographical Review. In it, Cvijić depressed the number of Bulgarians in Macedonia to make room for the 'Macedo-Slavs', and enlarged the presence of the Serbs. In Cvijić's cartographic imagination, Macedonia was the geographical expression of an ethnographic and linguistic vacuum. A space, and a group, which could be absorbed by both Serbia and Bulgaria. He was careful, however, to ensure that his readers reached the appropriate conclusions from his researches: 'Macedonia

48 For this map see Wilkinson, op.cit., 129-130. He also published a detailed account of the 'ethnological' picture of Macedonia, perhaps the best of its kind. See his: Makedoniya: Etnografiya I Statistika (Sofia 1900).
49 Ibid., 96-103
proper', he assured them, although 'lacking in national consciousness', had 'preserved some traces of historical Serbian traditions.'

In their attempt to provide ethnological maps, clearly demarcating the geographical distribution of the Balkan nations, Balkan geographers mapped little more than their own predilections and obsessions. The Greek maps depicted a variety of things: 'the cultural dominance' of the Greek language, the 'historically Greek' lands, the distribution of populations whom they claimed as been 'of Greek descent', as well as the areas under the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople. The Bulgarians, confident in the strength of their linguistic argument, mapped the frontiers of the Bulgarian language, while the Serbs mapped the limits of their territorial ambitions. It was hardly surprising that the borders of these maps overlapped and crossed those of their competitors.

The Macedonian Slavs themselves, of course, did not publish any ethnological maps during the period under consideration here. And this because the peasants of Macedonia continued to stubbornly refuse to identify with 'nations' and 'national borders' despite the amounts of propaganda lavished upon them by the suitors of the Ottoman inheritance. They continued to identify themselves as Christians, any time a curious or unusually inquisitive traveler, spy or nationalist, asked them questions about their 'nationality'. Despite the massive progress of nationalism in the Balkans during the long 19th century, the Macedonian peasants remained among the last 'enclaves' or 'pockets' of the Christian commonwealth. This is not meant to imply that the Balkan peasantry had been 'static' or that nothing had changed since the 15th century. It simply indicates that their own conception of borders continued to be the perimeter of their village, or religion, and that their worldview continued to be very much in

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the Byzantine mould. Consider, for example, an incident in the 9th century: St Gregory (originally from Asia Minor) was arrested in Thrace, and received a good beating. The reason for that unfortunate treatment escaped the historical record, but not the question our saint was asked: to identify himself. His answer was rather simple: ‘I am a Christian, my parents are such and such, and I am of the Orthodox persuasion’.51 A somewhat similar, and oft-quoted, question was asked some ten centuries later, around 1905, in Macedonia. Near the town of Ochrid (now in the Republic of Macedonia, but then under the Ottoman Empire) a British journalist encountered some Slav children. He took them up to a medieval fortress and asked them: ‘Who built this place?’ Their successive replies, first ‘the free men’ and then ‘our grandfathers’, did not get their interlocutor far enough. ‘Yes’, he made a last attempt: ‘but were they Serbs or Bulgarians or Greeks or Turks?’ The answer was interesting: ‘they weren’t Turks, they were Christians’52.

Clearly, given this context, borders in Macedonia, but also elsewhere in the Balkans could only come as a result of violence and war, and not as an expression of people's aspirations. Violence, however, was important for the Balkan states not only because through war they could occupy land, expand, and 'liberate their brethren, but also, and perhaps more importantly, because through organised violence national identities could finally emerge triumphant by destroying the unity based on religion. Religion had already played its role in facilitating the revolts of the Greeks and the Serbs against their Muslim ruler. What was needed, however, to really forge the nation in the Balkans and to 'nationalise' their borders with neighbouring states, was conflict and war between the Christians themselves, for only then something approximating a 'national' loyalty could conceivably take precedence over religious unity. And

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51 As quoted in Cyril Mango, Byzantium: the Empire of the New Rome (London 1998 reprint), 31
52 H.N. Brailsford, Macedonia: Its races and their Future (London 1906), 99
only then could a 'Greek', a 'Bulgarian' or a 'Serb' finally emerge out of a 'Christian'.

Three instances of intra-Christian conflict in the Balkans are important in this connection. The first concern the war of 1885 between Bulgaria and Serbia. This was the first war between Balkan states. Both were Christian states, and Slav. The repercussions of that very brief affair which ended with the defeat of Serbia, were quite revealing. A contemporary western observer of Bulgaria, who understood all too well what a 'nation' meant, had this to say of the war: ‘A true national feeling grew more and more’, he wrote, ‘what had kept Bulgarians together was religion and the bonds of race. The meaning of fatherland was distant .... with the booming of the guns this idea seems first to have burst upon them’. As a result of this war, which galvanised Bulgaria, the Serbo-Bulgarian border surely became much more of a national frontier in 1885 than it was before.

The second example of the destruction of the community of Christendom we find in Macedonia, the battleground of nationalists, politicians and geographers. Between 1904 and 1908 a brutal low-scale guerrilla war raged in that Ottoman province as Greek and Bulgarian bands of irregulars tried to force the peasants to declare themselves ‘Greeks’ or ‘Bulgarians’. It is commonly referred to by the Greeks as ‘The Struggle for Macedonia’. The main task was simply to transform the Slav peasants into Greeks or Bulgarians. Realities in the field however frustrated the efforts of both sides. The Macedonian peasantry simply refused to identify themselves with the ‘national’ causes of either Bulgaria or Greece and stubbornly continued to declare themselves Christians whenever the curious traveler asked them the curious (for them) question ‘What

53 This discussion of violence is based on Dimitris Livianos, ‘The Quest for Hellenism’, op.cit.; Idem, ‘The Central European meets the Brigand: Ernest Gellner as a Historian of Balkan Nationalism and Violence’, in: Modern Greek Studies Yearbook (Forthcoming).
are you Greeks or Bulgarians’. A Greek nationalist found that reality quite disturbing: ‘I asked them’ he wrote ‘what they were -Romaioi [Greeks] or Voulgaroi [Bulgarians]? They stared at me incomprehensibly. Asking each other what my words meant, crossing themselves, and answered ‘Well, we are Christians, what do you mean by Romaioi or Voulgaroi?’.

Clearly the Christian commonwealth stubbornly resisted dying a natural death. But the fact remains that the ability of Christianity to localise itself through the ‘national’ Churches and local priests, to be used, in other words, as a marker of identification with particular states and national movements, gave an indirect but much-needed impetus to the creation of national identity. The peasants of Macedonia were called by the Greeks to fight for their Church, against the ‘schismatic’ Bulgarians, but by doing so they ended up fighting for national causes. The Greek and Bulgarian nationalists who organised and led the warring factions during the Macedonian Struggle realised, of course, that the struggle for Macedonia was about ‘nations’, and that religion was just a convenient cover. But the connection between religion and nation was incomprehensible to the peasants. Nonetheless, The fact that very few of them understood that connection did not make the outcome less ‘real’. For those peasants who did not understand that point, the priest, or a captain, was always available to explain. This is how a Greek captain described his job to a British observer: ‘When I go into a converted village, [that is, a ‘Patriarchist’ village that had turned ‘Exarchist’], I call the people together into the market place, and tell them it was wrong to desert the old faith’. Prudently, he did not say that the peasants deserted ‘Greece’, for few would have understood him.

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56 As quoted in Mark Mazower, The Balkans (London 2000), 45
57 It should be noted here that only Christianity can be fragmented along state and national lines. Islam has persistently failed to do so, and this accounts to some extent for its considerable nationalism-resistant ability. On this issue see the perceptive analysis of Adrian Hastings, The Construction of Nationhood: Ethnicity, Religion and Nationalism (Cambridge 1997)
58 Allen Upward, The East End of Europe (London 1908), 328
As war acted as the most powerful midwife or national loyalties, the days of the Christian commonwealth were clearly numbered. This was confirmed during the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 (the first aligning Greece, Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria against the Ottoman Empire, the second pitting Bulgaria against her former allies). During these wars, which marked the final end the Ottoman presence in the Balkans, a nationalist fervour enveloped the region, as modern armies based on (recently enforced) peasant conscription were mobilised, supported by their respective national churches. From the point of view that interests us here, the Second Balkan War (1913), when the Balkan allies turned against each other over the spoils of Macedonia, is especially important. It would appear that the community of believers, already severely undermined by the nationalist propaganda that the Balkan nation-states had projected, had died at a stroke, as Christian killed Christian. In that war ‘Greek’ killed ‘Bulgarian’, and vice versa.59 Significantly, unlike previous armed conflicts between Christians in the Balkans, this short war was very much fought as a ‘popular war’, particularly at the local level. According to the authors of the Carnegie report, participation among Greek and Bulgarian peasants in the atrocities perpetrated by both armies was unusually high, something that must have also been aided by the fact that both armies targeted (and destroyed) entire villages and not just their uniformed opponents.60 It is difficult to ascertain whether in that particular instance the peasants killed their neighbours as ‘Christians’ or as ‘nationals’, or whether they could even distinguish between the two concepts. However, it can be said that the second Balkan war generated much local mobilization and local hatred which was expressed in national terms.

59 For the Balkan Wars and the record of terror see: Carnegie Endowment, Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan Wars (Washington DC 1914)
60 The level of participation in these conflicts did not escape the authors of the Carnegie report: ‘War is waged not only by the armies but by the nations themselves’. Ibid., 148.
In that sense, it ended up promoting nationalism, and extinguishing the last flickering flames of the Christian commonwealth.

The flames of violence not only forged national identities, but demarcated Balkan borders as well, as Macedonia was partitioned in 1913, with Greece getting the lion's share of the region (51%), Serbia a sizeable chunk (39%), leaving Bulgaria to content itself with only 10%. These borders represented little more than the configuration of power in the area at the end of the Balkan wars, for the 'principle of nationality' (whatever that meant) had nothing to do with this partition, despite the best efforts of Serbs and Greek nationalists to prove the opposite. Despite the deep cleavage, however that this partition created between Bulgaria and its neighbours, the 1913 borders proved quite enduring as they have remained largely unaltered ever since.61

VI By way of conclusion: The 'real, the 'artificial' and the Balkan hybrid

At the beginning of this essay I referred to a map entitled 'Voyage of a Dane' (1744), which showed the Balkans as an empty space. Only a few tents betrayed human activity. By 1913, that space had been filled to bursting point with names, places, 'ethnological frontiers', and 'state boundaries'. Filling the Balkan map proved a long and violent enterprise. The result, hardly surprising, was not the demarcation of 'natural' frontiers; rather, it marked the dominance of a certain idea concerning the reorganisation of space that can be summarised (to paraphrase the Peace of Augsburg, 1555) as cuius regio eius nation62: those who controlled (or wished to control) the land dictated its ethnological composition as well. In that sense, the Balkan 'ethnological' maps of the late 19th century are no different from similar exercises undertaken by Poles, Russians, or Germans. That notwithstanding, to condemn the Balkan maps, and the frontiers they included,

61 With the exception, of course, of the two World Wars, when large parts of Greek and Yugoslav Macedonia were given by the Germans to Bulgarians.
as 'artificial' would take us neither deep enough nor far enough; first, because 'natural' frontiers and maps exist only in the imagination of nationalists, and secondly because these maps did demonstrate 'reality' after all: the triumph of nationalism in the region. And this triumph was real enough.

For this to happen, however, an entire world, and a way of seeing the world, had to vanish: religion should cease to denote the 'Greek', and the Slavs should cease to be considered 'Greeks' by virtue of their religion. In order to make borders, Balkan nationalism had to break identities that had sheltered the region for far too long. The battle between religion and nationalism ended by producing a hybrid identity, which includes elements of both. Language, for example, emerged as a point of convergence between European and Balkan nationalism. The nation has to speak only the ‘national’ language, and in the interwar years no Balkan state tolerated ‘minority’ languages. On the other hand, the ‘nation’ that emerged after 1913 in the Balkans, although primarily a secular form of belonging, was still very much coloured by the prevalence of religion over so many centuries. In an important sense, ‘Greek’, ‘Serbian’, and Bulgarian still means, at the threshold of the 21st century, 'Orthodox Christian'. Consequently, although the Christian Commonwealth failed to maintain its unity, it managed to incorporate religion into the very constitution of ‘nationhood’ in modern Balkan identities. The Balkan borders were created by nationalists, but were buttressed by priests.

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