

## MACEDONIA (part 2)

### When and how Greek and Latin Macedonia became Bulgarian and the ancient Macedonians became Bulgarians?

We already learned that in 146 BC Rome conquered ancient Macedonia and in V-VI c. AD these lands are populated by the “Sclaveni” (Sklavinia in Greek or Sclaviniae in Latin) i.e. the Slavs. When the Proto-Bulgarians arrived to the Balkans in the second half of VII c. and in AD 681 created their state, they found here the Slavic tribes. The unification of these tribes into the realm of the Bulgarian State, as well as the centralization of the military-administrative apparatus is closely intertwined into the gradual formation and strengthening of the Bulgarian nationality. First, the Proto-Bulgarians of Kouber lose their ethnicity, mixing with the Slavic tribes of The Central and Southern ancient Macedonia. The last data about them is from AD 718. The process of gradual disappearance of the Proto-Bulgarians of Asparouch is slower, due to their larger number and their important role in the ruling of the Bulgarian State.

The event concluding the assimilation of all the Proto-Bulgarians is their Christianization and the inclusion of the Slavonic language (The literary centers of Ochrid and Preslav). About the end of IX and the beginning of X c. the Bulgarian nationality is already established in Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia when under Tzar Pressian (AD 836-852) they are already in the Bulgarian State. In a stone plate Pressian is referred to as “the Ruler of the numerous Bulgarians”. Given that more Slavs than Proto-Bulgarians lived in these regions, it is clear that under “numerous Bulgarians” this stone epigraph means also the Slavs.

Since then “Bulgarians” is bearer of a new ethnic meaning as a common name of a people and encompasses the ethnic mix of Slavified Macedonians, Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians. It applies to “Bulgarian lands”, “Bulgarian ruler” etc. For example, in the *Extensive Life Description of St. Clement of Ochrid*, which old-Bulgarian source is a text by a saint’s disciple, it is said that before his death St. Clement’s left “to us, Bulgarians” his bequest about the organization of the Church. Particularly often Byzantine sources use terms “Bulgarians”, “Bulgarian Ruler”, “Bulgarian lands” and so on in texts about the events around the reign of Tzar Samuel (997-1014) by authors like Achilles of Larissa, John Skylitzes, Michael Psellos, John Zonorra and in all three charters of Basil II the Bulgarian Slayer himself. According to these sources Basil II fights the “Bulgarians”, enters “Bulgarian lands”, invades “Bulgarian fortresses”, captures “Bulgarian population” etc. Not only Byzantines, the same terms are vastly used in Bulgarian sources too. In the Bitola Inscription, carved in marble on order by the Bulgarian ruler Ivan-Vladislav in 1015-1018 he refers to himself as “Autocrat of Bulgaria” and “Bulgarian by origins”.

In the last part of the reign of Tzar Peter I the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations deteriorated. Emperor John Tzimiskes (969-976) brakes into North-eastern Bulgaria and declares it a Byzantine province (the lands between the Danube, the Balkan mountain range, Black Sea and Iskar River). In the same time in South-western Bulgaria, still independent, begins the rule of the four brothers, the “komitopoulo”, David, Moses, Aaron and Samuel, sons of the “Komit” Nikola, ruler of Sredetz (Sofia). In 976, after the death of John Tzimiskes the four brothers undertake an offensive and liberate North-eastern Bulgaria. So the Bulgarian State is restored

in its original borders (with the exception of Thrace). Upon the death of David and Moses and following the departure of Aaron, Samuel becomes the sole ruler. He conducts successful war campaigns against Byzantium, but in the beginning of XI c. Basil II defeats Samuel's army and soon after that Samuel dies (October 6, 1014). During the reign of his son Gabriel-Radomir who succeeds him on the throne (1014-1015) the Byzantine pressure goes on and many cities in Macedonia succumb to them. Gabriel-Radomir, killed in 1015, his cousin Ivan-Vladislav succeeds him, who is killed too in a battle at the blockade of Dyrrachium (modern day Dürres in Albania). Some Boyars (local princes) resist, but Byzantines invade more and more cities and in 1018 all Bulgaria falls under Byzantine domination.

After the death of Basil the Bulgarian Slayer (1025) a succession of 13 weak emperors sit on the throne and Byzantium falls in a deep crisis due to dynastic struggles and the Normans' offensive. This excites the spirits of the enslaved Bulgarians and a resurrection erupts in AD1185 led by two brothers of mixed Bulgarian-Cuman origin – Peter and Assen. The Emperor Isaac I Angelos makes a treaty with the rulers of the restored Bulgarian state, which officially recognizes its new existence. Tzar Assen I (1186-1196) slowly, gradually liberates all Bulgarian territories. He conquers the city of Sredetz (Sofia) in 1195 and continues his invasion southbound downstream along the river Strouma (Strymon). Tzar Ivan Assen II (1218-1241) unites the lands populated by Bulgarians, after which at Klokotnitsa he destroys the armies of Theodor Komnene, Despot of Epirus. Under his domination are now Odrin (Adrianople), Dimotika (Didimotichon), the regions between the rivers Maritza and Mesta (Nestos), Serres, Bitola, Prilep, the region of Thessaly, whole Albania to the Adriatic Sea.

The next rulers in XIII and XIV c. until the fall of Bulgaria under Turkish slavery: **The Assenides** (Kolomen I, Mihael Assen, Kolomen II, Mitzo, Constantine Assen, Ivaylo, Ivan Assen III), **The Terters** (George Terter I, Smiletz, Chaka, Theodore-Svetoslav, George Terter II), **The Shishmans** (Michael, Ivan Stefan, Ivan Alexandre, Ivan Shishman - 1371-1395, Ivan Sratsimir - 1356-1396), all of them with minor exceptions are known to the history through their passivity to the Serbian penetration in Macedonia, to the Tartars' invasion of Bulgarian lands, and finally through the tragic surrender of their lands to the Ottoman Turks. Important evidence left by Saadettin states that Turks knew they invade "the lands of Western Bulgaria, after they defeated at Samokov the Serbian ruler and his ally – the King of Bulgaria").

The lords of the Bulgarian lands, during their 500 years long rule, knew very well the ethnic character of the inhabitants of Moesia, Thrace and Macedonia. That is why on February 1870, the Sultan using his power, issued a decree ("ferman") establishing a Bulgarian Exarchate with Metropolitans in the Dioceses of Ochrid, Skopie, Bitola, Nevrokop, Veles, Stroumitza and Debar: without Metropolitans but with diocesan powers – in Doyran, Melnik, Kostour, Lerin, Voden, Solun, Siar (Serres). The Russian-Turkish war of 1877-78 enabled the Treaty of San-Stefano in which all lands populated with Bulgarians were unified in the newly constituted Bulgarian State. But the Great Powers imposed the revision of this fact and created a historical injustice in Berlin, Bucharest and Neuilly throwing the Western Bulgarians back into Turkish, Serbian or Greek yoke. Then a fierce assimilation went on, driving their victims to Old Bulgaria, North America, Australia and who knows where.

The states victorious in World War II instead of correcting the old mistakes, created new ones establishing a nameless miniature state, entangled by its serbianised ruling circles into political and Church problems, having nothing in common with its genuine history.

Let us hope that this mini-state will join soon the European Union so that its population will unite with their brothers, who fought in revolutions, Balkan and World Wars for their liberation from Turkish, Serbian or Greek cruel yoke. So that the shameless attacks would stop against their Mother since ten-centuries, who carried them to the 21<sup>st</sup> century as Slavic-Bulgarians.

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