

*A BODY WITHOUT A HEAD.*  
THE ELITE OF THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN THE BULGARIAN  
LANDS AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY<sup>1</sup>

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**ABSTRACT.** *“A body without a head”. The elite of the Muslim minority in the Bulgarian lands at the turn of the 2th century.*

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 led to the end of the Ottoman rule in the Bulgarian lands, which entailed a huge emigration of the Muslim population. The Ottoman elite was the first who decided to leave. Officials, hodjas, imams, officers, landowners, urban dwellers, and the intelligentsia moved to the Ottoman Empire out of fear of retaliation for having links with the former authorities. Additionally, after the Unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885, there was a new migration wave of Muslim officials, local activists, and militia officers from Southern Bulgaria. As a result, in 1879–1949 about 80% of the Muslim population of Bulgaria were small farmers, about 19% lived in cities as craftsmen, and only about 1% had a chance to make a career as entrepreneurs or merchants. The paper will focus on the three elite groups who correspond with the traditional division of the elite: the political (muftis), the economic (landowners, merchants, entrepreneurs), and the intellectuals (teachers – hodjas).

**STRESZCZENIE.** *„Ciało bez głowy”. Elita mniejszości muzułmańskiej na ziemiach bułgarskich na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*

Wojna rosyjsko-turecka lat 1877–1878 zakończyła panowanie osmańskie na ziemiach bułgarskich, co równocześnie doprowadziło do wielkiej emigracji ludności muzułmańskiej. Osmańskie elity jako pierwsze opuściły odrodzoną Bułgarię. Urzędnicy, hodźowie, imamowie, oficerzy, posiadacze ziemscy, mieszczenie oraz inteligenci wyjeżdżali do Imperium Osmańskiego w obawie przed rozliczeniami za powiązaniem z dawnymi władzami. Następnie, po zjednoczeniu Księstwa Bułgarii i Rumelii Wschodniej w 1885 roku, doszło do nowej fali migracyjnej muzułmańskich urzędników, działaczy lokalnych oraz oficerów milicji z ziem Bułgarii południowej. W okresie 1879–1949, w 80% muzułmanie w Bułgarii byli drobnymi chłopami, 19% żyli w miastach i pracowali jako rzemieślnicy, jedynie 1% miał szansę zrobić karierę. Artykuł skupia się na trzech grupach elity mniejszości muzułmańskiej w Bułgarii, co koresponduje z tradycyjnym podziałem elit: polityczna (mufti), ekonomiczna (posiadacze ziemscy, kupcy, przedsiębiorcy) oraz intelektualna (nauczyciele – hodźowie).

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**Słowa kluczowe:** elity, mniejszość muzułmańska, Bułgaria, przełom XIX i XX wieku, emigracja, mniejszość muzułmańska w Bułgarii, islam na Bałkanach

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The year 1878 was crucial to the history of the Bulgarian lands. The collapse of the Ottoman rule created new political and social circumstances for Bulgarians as well as for other ethnoreligious groups. The second biggest community in the Bulgarian lands were the Muslims<sup>2</sup>. The changes were not only linked to a decrease in their number, mostly due to migration processes (in 1881, 26% of the country's population were Muslim, in 1910 – 14%<sup>3</sup>), but to deep changes in the social structure of the Islamic community as well. Without the state administration, which exemplified that of a theocracy, the functioning of the Muslim elite<sup>4</sup> faced a completely new reality.

There are many stereotypes linked to the Ottoman Empire elite. It is usually said that Muslims were in power and Christians were *rayah* (cattle, second class subjects), however, such characterisation is simplistic. The social structure of the Ottoman Empire could be presented as a pyramid: class represented vertically and religion horizontally. The lowest and widest level was the *rayah*, among whom there were both Muslim and Christian peasants. On the higher, medium level, there were Muslim officials and landowners, but also the Christian elite, such as the Phanariotes or the boyars of the Danube Principalities. The pyramid's top level was reserved for the Muslim state elite, which Christians could not access without conversion. Historians accentuate religious divisions among the sultan's subjects, but it is frequently forgotten that most Muslims were in an economic situation similar to that of the Christian peasantry<sup>5</sup>. There are theories that the position of the Muslim subjects was even worse. An additional tax for Christians (*kharaj*), paid in lieu of the obligation of the military service, gave them some economic advantage: they were getting rich, while the gen-

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<sup>2</sup> Muslims were not a unitary group in Bulgaria – among them there were Turks (about 85%), Pomaks (native Bulgarian Muslims), Roma, Tatars, before the Russo-Turkish War (1877–1878) also Circassians. They were concentrated in two areas of Bulgaria: in the northeastern part of the country and by its southern frontier; smaller communities lived in almost every part of the state. It is worth pointing out that at the turn of the 19th and 20th century members of the Muslim population identified themselves through the prism of religion (as ummah) and membership of local communities. National identity based on language and ethnic origin was not a widespread concept in the Balkan Peninsula at that time, especially among Muslims. In the sources the term “Muslim” is usually alternative to “Turk”.

<sup>3</sup> *История на българите 1878–1944 в документи*, т. 1: 1878–1912, ч. 1: *Възстановяване и развитие на българската държава*, ред. В. Георгиев, С. Трифонов, София 1996, p. 135; *Статистически годишник на Българското Царство*, год. 1: 1909, София 1910, pp. 46–47; J. McCarthy, *Muslim in Ottoman Europe: Population from 1880 to 1912*, „Nationalities Papers”, 2000, vol. 28, no. 1, p. 39.

<sup>4</sup> An elite is a small group of people who hold a disproportionate amount of wealth, privilege, political power, or skill in a society or community.

<sup>5</sup> F. Bieber, *Muslim Identity in the Balkans before the Establishment of Nation States*, „Nationalities Papers”, 2000, vol. 28, no. 1, pp. 14–15.

erations of Muslims were bleeding on the fronts of the extensive empire. That is why most Christians preferred to pay an additional tax after they gained the right to serve in the Ottoman army during the Tanzimat reforms<sup>6</sup>. Turkish historians express a belief that the egalitarianism of the Ottoman social structure surpassed the standards of the time – everybody had access to the highest official positions if they converted to Islam. Many Slavs, Greeks, or Albanians became the Grand Viziers of the Ottoman Empire<sup>7</sup>. Islam was not the only paradigm of the Ottoman elite's identity. They recognized themselves as the successors of the cosmopolitan ancient empire, Byzantium, and the Sultanate of Rum – Romans. The lower Muslim classes from Anatolia were named 'Turks' – that term was as offensive as 'Giaours'<sup>8</sup>.

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 led to huge migrations of the Muslim population in the Bulgarian lands. Justin McCarthy estimates that about 500,000 Muslims took refuge at that time and about half of them died as a result of war operations, hunger, diseases, and cold<sup>9</sup>. The Ottoman elite was the first one who decided to emigrate. Officials, officers, landowners, urban dwellers, and the intelligentsia moved to the Ottoman Empire because of the pogroms, repressions, and fear of retaliation for links with the former authorities. Imams, kadis, and muftis were leaving, which led to a paralysis of Muslim schools and mosques<sup>10</sup>. Not only the Turkish-speaking elite, but also the Pomak (Bulgarian Muslim) one migrated from the Bulgarian lands. The agas of the Rhodope mountains, who had fought in the rebellion against the Russians and the Bulgarians in 1878, emigrated to the Ottoman Empire after the suppression of the uprising. For example, Mehmed Aga from Dorkovo, who had taken a part in the suppression of the April Uprising in 1876, escaped to Turkey before the Russians entered Chepino in 1878. He settled down in the village of Sahilie in Anatolia<sup>11</sup>. Many of the Pomak emigrants from the Rhodopes were hired as officials in the frontier *kaa-za* of Ahi Celebi<sup>12</sup>.

The chaos of the war and the activity of the Muslim partisans in the north-eastern part of the country ended in the 1800s; after that period, the exodus of the elite was

<sup>6</sup> *General Report by Sir R. Dalyell on the Vilayet of the Danube, London 1.03.1869*, FO 881/2956/8–9; E. Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans Empire Lost, Relations Altered*, London-New York 2007, p. 141; R. H. Davison, *Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century*, „The American Historical Review” 1954, vol. 59, no. 4, p. 858.

<sup>7</sup> H. Poulton, *The Muslim Experience in the Balkan States, 1919–1991*, „Nationalities Papers” 2000, vol. 28, no. 1, p. 46–47.

<sup>8</sup> Дж. Маккарти, *Смърт и изгнание: Етническото прочистване на османските мюсюлмани (1821–1922)*, прев. К. Панайотова, София 2010, p. 18; F. A. Ergül, *The Ottoman Identity: Turkish, Muslim or Rum?*, „Middle Eastern Studies” 2012, vol. 48, no. 4, pp. 629–645.

<sup>9</sup> Дж. Маккарти, *op. cit.*, pp. 126–129.

<sup>10</sup> *Прошение от Афъз Абдулраим из г. Берковица до Министерство на външните работи и изповеданията, 18.08.1881*, ЦДА ф. 166к оп. 1 а.е. 866 л. 197.

<sup>11</sup> X. Попконстантинов, *Спомени, пътеписи, писма*, ред. А. Примовски, Н. Примовски, Пловдив 1970, p. 464.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 373.

linked to the lack of acceptance of political and social changes and of their careers, which were a part of the administrative and educational structures of the Ottoman state. This was also a major push for a new migration wave of Muslim officials, local activists, and militia officers from Southern Bulgaria after the Unification of the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia in 1885<sup>13</sup>. Public offices naturally were liquidated, mosques and Muslim schools lost most of their financial sources. In the reestablished Bulgaria there was no future for the old elite who could not accept the loss of their privilege and the power takeover by the former *rayah*. A social inversion took place in the Bulgarian lands after 1878 – the “master” became a “servant” and *vice versa*. Muslims lost privileges linked to taxes, ownership, access to the official positions or professions<sup>14</sup>. There was a choice between emigration, armed resistance, or life as second class citizens<sup>15</sup>. They could not imagine living in the country ruled by *giaours*, even though most of them had not had any bad experiences with their Christian neighbors<sup>16</sup>. It was unnatural, unethical in the light of basic social principals. According to Muslims, the Principality of Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia were Orthodox Bulgarian states, and their only natural homeland was the Ottoman Empire<sup>17</sup>. In result, about 350,000 Muslims left Bulgaria in 1878–1912<sup>18</sup>.

Not all of them emigrated. The Muslim elite in the Bulgarian lands at the turn of the 20th century could be divided into three groups, which corresponded with the tra-

<sup>13</sup> The “Great Bulgaria”, formed according to the San Stefano Treaty of 1878, did not survive, the Principality of Bulgaria (a Turkish vassal and a Russian protectorate) and Eastern Rumelia (an autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire) were founded in its place after the Berlin Congress.

<sup>14</sup> *Изложение за състояние на Шуменското окръжие през 1902–1903*, Шумен 1903, p. 16; Е. Кейе, *В България и Румелия*, ред. Г. Пеев, София 2006, p. 49–50; Х. Шкорпил, К. Шкорпил, *География и статистика на Княжество България*, Пловдив 1892, p. 189; У. Бюксеншютц, *Малцинствената политика в България. Политиката на БКП към евреи, роми, помаци и турци (1944–1989)*, София 2000, p. 62; М. Neuburger, *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Modern Bulgaria*, Ithaca-London 2004, pp. 35–36; S. Katsikas, *Millets in Nation-States: The Case of Greek and Bulgarian Muslims, 1912–1923*, „Nationalities Papers”, 2009, vol. 37, no. 2, p. 177.

<sup>15</sup> В. Стоянов, *Турското население в България между полюсите на етническата политика*, София 1997, p. 7

<sup>16</sup> С. Н. Шишков, *Българо-мохамеданите*, Пловдив 1936, pp. 72–73; И. Вазов, *Събрани съчинения*, т. 12, ред. Г. Цанев, София 1977, p. 158; *Изложение за състояние на Шуменското окръжие през 1902–1903*, Шумен 1903, p. 12; В. Арденски, *Загаснали огнища. Изселническите процеси сред българите мохамедани в периода 1878–1944 г.*, София 2005, p. 41.

<sup>17</sup> А. М. Mirkova, “Population Politics” at the End of Empire: Migration and Sovereignty in Ottoman Eastern Rumelia, 1877–1886, “Comparative Studies in Society and History”, 2013, 55(4), p. 976; R. Crampton, *The Turks in Bulgaria, 1878–1944*, [in:] *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, ed. K. Karpat, Istanbul 1990, p. 60.

<sup>18</sup> К. Попов, *Стопанска България (София 1916)*, [in:] *История на българите...*, т. 1, ч. 1, p. 144; А. Toumarkine, *Les Migrations des Populations Musulmanes Balkaniques en Anatolie (1876–1913)*, Istanbul 1995, p. 33; D. Vasileva, *Bulgarian Turkish Emigration and Return*, „International Migration Review”, 1992, vol. 26, p. 346.

ditional division of the elite: the political (muftis), the economic (landowner, merchants, entrepreneurs), and the intellectual (teachers – hodjas).

The most important members of Muslim communes in Bulgaria were muftis, the religious leaders of Islamic communities and at the same time officials responsible for the functioning of the Muslim religious-educational autonomy in the state. The muftis controlled the functioning of all councils, schools, and Sharia judges in the country, they also represented communities in contacts with local and central Bulgarian authorities<sup>19</sup>. Their functions were religious, and political - as representatives of the Muslim community and as state officials. However, they dealt with the same problems as the Bulgarian politicians and officials at that time. The pathologies of public offices, linked to clientelism, using violence in rivalry, abject negligence, illegal dismissals and designations, happened often also in mufti offices. Thus there were many critical opinions about their role in the community. For example, in 1911 the Haskovo mufti was accused of spying for the Ottoman Empire. The state report declared that Afiz Suleymanov “did not work in favor of the inhabitants of Bulgaria” and “transformed the Bulgarian state institution [muftlik] into an Ottoman outpost”. It was estimated that 2/3 of his activity as the Haskovo mufti aimed to benefit the interests of the Ottoman Empire, and only 1/3 was performed in favor of the local Muslim community<sup>20</sup>. The muftis, as the official representatives of Muslim communities on the state level, were the most natural choice for the role of actual leaders of the minority. However, personal interests and often suspicious ties with the Ottoman Empire excluded them from that role. As a result, compared with the Orthodox community, there were many conflicts between the religious leaders and their communes among Bulgarian Muslims. At a lower level, these problems concerned other officials of the Muslim autonomic institutions: imams (worship leaders), kadis (Sharia judges), or muezzins (people who lead and recite the call to prayer – *namaz*)<sup>21</sup>.

The Bulgarian agrarian reform (so-called “Agrarian Revolution”) was firstly targeted against the Muslim landowners. In the 1860s and 1870s about 6,6% of Bulgarian peasants worked on the chiftlics; in some territories, for instance the Kyustendil region, 15–20% of all lands were great estates owned by Muslims<sup>22</sup>. Just after the War of 1877–1878, Bulgarians took control over about 450 ha of the Turkish lands,

<sup>19</sup> *Привременни правила за духовното управление на християните, мюсюлманите и евреете, София 2.07.1880*, БИА ф. 290 а.е. 176, л. 23–30.

<sup>20</sup> *Поверително до Министерсрво на външните работи и изповедания, 28.10.1911*, ЦДА ф. 166к, оп. 1 а.е. 795 л. 122–123.

<sup>21</sup> More about the mufti institution in Bulgaria: K. Popek, *The Functioning of the Mufti Institution in Bulgaria at the Beginning of the 20th Century. A Case Study*, „Studia z Dziejów Rosji i Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej \ Studies into the History of Russia and Central-Eastern Europe” 2018, vol. 53 (Special Issue), pp. 217–232.

<sup>22</sup> В. Д. Конобеев, *Българското националноосвободително движение. Идеология, програма, развитие*, София 1972, pp. 372–373, 398–399.

which were about 10% of the whole state's acreage<sup>23</sup>. In 1880, 25% of the farming land in Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia was controlled by Muslims; in 1900 that number decreased to 15%<sup>24</sup>. Some of the Muslim owners saved their chiftlics from the "Agrarian Revolution", mostly in Eastern Bulgaria<sup>25</sup>. In Southern Dobrudja there were 160 Muslim chiftlics, on which 485 employees worked<sup>26</sup>. These estates were significantly smaller than the ones during the Ottoman times when the biggest spanned up to 500 ha<sup>27</sup>. For example, at the end of the 19th century, the biggest chiftlic in the Districts of Nova Zagora and Stara Zagora was 48 ha<sup>28</sup>.

Muslims were also active as entrepreneurs and merchants. For example, they owned trade companies, rental companies, manufactures, and shops in Varna until the 1890s; most of them were family businesses. Some succeed and decided to open branches in other Bulgarian cities or in Constantinople<sup>29</sup>. The important sectors were tobacco production, horse breeding, and mills<sup>30</sup>. However, Muslim merchants or entrepreneurs were a small group, especially compared to Bulgarian entrepreneurs and those of other, less numerous minorities of the country: Greeks, Jews, Armenians. They concentrated in the biggest towns of the northeastern part of the country where 85% of the whole Islamic community lived.

There were many critical assessments of the richest class of the Muslim population of Bulgaria. In 1894 the governor of the Shumen District, B. Raynov, claimed that the Muslim mass emigration was caused by the Turkish beys. According to the document, Muslim peasants were escaping the degenerated feudal relations of the Muslim villages of Bulgaria. Raynov assumed that Muslims and Bulgarians together enjoyed gaining freedom in 1878, they thought that it was the beginning of a new era. These hopes were undermined by the Muslim elite who kept the strong social and economic powers. The beys did not believe in any social mission nor did they

<sup>23</sup> „Витоша” 1879, год. I, бр. 47 (14 ноември), р. 2; M. Neuburger, op. cit., pp. 174–175; B. Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria (1878–1985)*, London 1988, pp. 6–7; Б. Лори, *Съдбата на османското наследство. Българската градска култура 1878–1900*, прев. Л. Янакиева, София 2002, р. 81; J. Rubacha, *Bulgaria na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Bułgarskie metamorfozy w publikacjach „Świata Słowiańskiego” 1904–1914*, Olsztyn 2012, pp. 386–387; Idem, *Gospodarka Bułgarii na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, „Słupskie Studia Historyczne”, 2011, nr 17, p. s. 146.

<sup>24</sup> S. K. Pavlowitch, *Historia Bałkanów (1804–1945)*, tłum. J. Polak, Warszawa 2009, p. 174.

<sup>25</sup> *Lieutenant-Colonel Napier to Mr. Findlay, Sofia 3.08.1909*, FO 371/606/222.

<sup>26</sup> *Чифликчи и арендатори в 1905 г.*, [in:] *История на българите...*, т. I, ч. 1, р. 459–461.

<sup>27</sup> „Витоша” 1880, год. I, бр. 83 (9 април), р. 4

<sup>28</sup> К. Иречек, *Княжество България. Негова повърхнина, природа, население, духовна култура, управление и новейша история*, ч. I: *Българска държава*, Пловдив 1899, р. 225.

<sup>29</sup> Zob. ДА-Варна ф. 112к оп. 1 а.е. 1113, 1474, 1949, 1968, 1988, 2659, 2742, 3310; *Изложение за състоянието на Варненско окръжие през 1890–1891 г.*, Варна 1891, ДА-Варна ф. 78к оп. 3 а.е. 3 таблица ж; *Изложение за състоянието на Варненско окръжие през 1897–1898 г.*, Варна 1898, ДА-Варна ф. 78к оп. 3 а.е. 6 л. 57.

<sup>30</sup> *Изложение за състоянието на Варненско окръжие през 1892–1893 г.*, Варна 1894, ДА-Варна ф. 78к оп. 3 а.е. 4 л. 45; *Изложение за състоянието на Варненско окръжие през 1897–1898 г.*, Варна 1898, ДА-Варна ф. 78к оп. 3 а.е. 6 л. 58.

support the Muslim community in the new circumstances. They just focused on their own interests, consolidation of their material position and solidifying control over the land. Raynov blamed the elites for the tragic economic situation of Muslims in Bulgaria, which forced them to a mass emigration<sup>31</sup>.

It is hard to agree with that perspective. Although there were many conflicts inside the Muslim community, they were not the main reason for the exodus. A lack of economic and social perspectives, emotional motives, and of acceptance for the power takeover by the former *rayah* were more important factors in the migrations. Also, it ought to be remembered that the Muslim elite was the first victim of the “Agrarian Revolution” and the sociopolitical changes in the Bulgarian lands. As it was said, that group left Bulgaria first.

Another important group of the Muslim minority’s elite of the Bulgarian lands were the teachers. It is estimated that between 1877 and 1886, Muslims in Bulgaria lost most of their hodjas and the following years were witness to an attempt at restoration of the educational personnel, which proved nearly impossible because of the migration processes<sup>32</sup>. The mission of Muslim high schools (*rüştiye* – a new type created during the Tanzimat era, and *madrasah* – a religious school) was to educate the new teachers. However, every year the number of schools was decreasing. In 1907/1908 there were 37 *rüştiyes* in Bulgaria, in 1911/1912 – 28<sup>33</sup>. In 1900/1901, 20 *madrasahs* functioned in Bulgaria, in 1912/1913 – only 5<sup>34</sup>. Many graduates of Muslim high schools migrated to the Ottoman Empire, where they could continue the education or had many more professional opportunities: as teachers, officials, journalists, politicians, social activists etc.<sup>35</sup>. The average age of Muslim teachers was increasing – the young did not want to work in Bulgaria, where salaries were low and the conditions difficult. In 1894/1895, 48% of hodjas were more than 40 years old. About 47% had a basic education, 37% were graduates of a *madrasah*, none of them finished college<sup>36</sup>. As a result the condition of Muslim education in Bulgaria was judged very critically. Hodjas usually did not know anything about teaching, even some of them were illiterate and learned Koran by heart<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Изложение за състояние на Шуменското окръжие през 1893–1894, Шумен 1894, pp. 9–10.

<sup>32</sup> В. Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria...*, pp. 19–20.

<sup>33</sup> А. Павлова, *История на турски училища в България 1878–1959*, „Магистър-М”, 1992, бр. 1, р. 45; И. Татарлъ, *Литература на турците в България – състояние на изучаването ѝ и някои нейни теоретични и прагматични проблеми*, [in:] *Литература на малцинства в България след Освобождението*, ред. В. Мутафчиева, Г. Цанков, М. Карабелова, София 1999, р. 73.

<sup>34</sup> А. Павлова, *op. cit.*, р. 55.

<sup>35</sup> И. Татарлъ, *Литература на турците...*, р. 73.

<sup>36</sup> Н. Memişoğlu, *The Education of the Turks in Bulgaria*, Ankara 1992, p. 11; Ö. Turan, *The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria (1878–1908)*, Ankara 1998, p. 231; В. Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria...*, р. 24.

<sup>37</sup> Ö. Turan, *op. cit.*, р. 224; Ж. Назърска, *Българската държава и нейните малцинства 1878–1885 г.*, София 1999, pp. 84–85.

The small Muslim intelligentsia in Bulgaria saw these problems and tried to alleviate them. In 1895, the Ottoman-Turkish newspaper printed in Bulgaria, the “Turcaman”, called the emigration of the educated Muslims a “betrayal of ancestors and a capitulation”. Instead of fleeing, the newspaper emphasized, the Muslims of Bulgaria should have focused on the education, creating of a new elite, and getting involved in the political life of the country<sup>38</sup>. At the beginning of the 20th century a section of hodjas who wanted to reform the Muslim school system in Bulgaria came into being. The most important activists were Tahid Lufti Tokay, Kesimzade Mehmed Rusti, Mehmed Celil, Tokalioolu Mehmed Talata, Hafiz Abdullah Fehmi, and Suleyman Sirri Tokay<sup>39</sup>. Inspired by the leader of the Crimea-Tatars, Ismail Gaspirali, who traveled to Bulgaria in summer 1906, they erected the Islamic Education Association on the 18<sup>th</sup> (5<sup>th</sup> old style) of July in Shumen<sup>40</sup>. The most impressive result of their work was the Muslim Pedagogical School in Shumen, established in 1912. However, the Balkan Wars led to the closure of the school, which was reopened in 1918<sup>41</sup>. The results of the activity of the reformers of the Muslim schools did not become visible until the interwar period.

The only college in Bulgaria, the Sofia University, did not fulfill the mission of creating a local Muslim elite. In 1902–1904, only 0,2% of the students were Muslim. In the long period of 1891–1941, the representatives of all minorities constituted 1,55% of graduates, among them there were few Turks and Pomaks; most of them were Jewish or Greek. They were inhabitants of big Bulgarian cities (Plovdiv, Sofia, Ruse); they studied law, the second popular choice was medicine<sup>42</sup>. In 1907 the Turkish language course was launched at the university, however, it closed the same year with the whole institution because of the “University Crisis”<sup>43</sup>.

At the turn of the 20th century, the press began to play an increasingly important role. In 1878–1912 in Bulgaria, about 50 periodicals in the Ottoman-Turkish language

<sup>38</sup> Ö. Turan, K. T. Evered, *Jadidism in South-Eastern Europe: The Influence of Ismail Bey Gaspirali among Bulgarian Turks*, „Middle Eastern Studies”, 2005, vol. 41, no. 4, pp. 489–490.

<sup>39</sup> M. Methodieva, *Pan-Islam, the Porte and Education: Ottoman Support for Muslim Schools in the Bulgarian Principality, 1878–1908*, Ankara 2001, (unpublished PhD dissertation), pp. 55–56; B. Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria...*, pp. 39–40; Ö. Turan, op. cit., pp. 222–223.

<sup>40</sup> Ö. Turan, op. cit., pp. 240–241.

<sup>41</sup> И. Татарлъ, *Проблеми на турската култура в България. Студии, статии, слова*, София 2009, pp. 157–158; H. Memişoğlu, op. cit., pp. 11–12; B. Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria...*, pp. 39–41; П. Христов, *Българското законодателство за мюсюлманските училища 1879–1946*, „История”, 1996, бр. 3–4, pp. 75–76; А. Попович, *Културни прояви на мюсюлманските общности на Балканите*, [in:] *Мюсюлманска култура по българските земи. Изследвания*, ред. Р. Градева, С. Иванова, София 1996, p. 304; С. Гавазов, *Социално-политическите и културните изменения на турското население в България*, „Ново време”, 1967, год. 43, бр. 11, p. 67.

<sup>42</sup> Ж. Назърска, *Формиране на интелектуален елит на етническите и религиозните малцинства в България (1879–1944)*, „Педагогика”, 2007, б. 9, p. 106.

<sup>43</sup> R. Crampton, op. cit., p. 68; И. Татарлъ, *Проблеми на турската...*, p. 167.



were being published<sup>44</sup>. However, most of the journalists, editors, and publishers were not local Muslims, but political refugees from Turkey. They were alienated from the local communities and were part of the political life of the Ottoman Empire. To them Bulgaria was a place of exile where they could criticize sultan Abdülhamida II freely. They planned to return to Constantinople after the collapse of the Turkish regime. The newspapers were prepared mostly for the readers in the Empire, not in Bulgaria<sup>45</sup>.

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Ömer Turan claimed that after the Liberation of Bulgaria the Muslim minority without an elite became “a body without a head”<sup>46</sup>. In 1879–1949, about 80% of the Muslim population of Bulgaria were small farmers, about 19% lived in cities and worked as small craftsmen, and only about 1% had a chance to make a career. During the War of 1877–1878, Muslims massively escaped from the Bulgarian cities and concentrated in the countryside, as did Bulgarians after the Turkish conquest<sup>47</sup>. In 1878, about 4% of Muslims in Bulgaria could write and read (for Bulgarians it was 32%); in 1905, 3,8% of Muslims were literate (Bulgarians – 47%)<sup>48</sup>. That tendency did not change in the following years<sup>49</sup>. The Muslim peasant society produced food for its own needs and was economically isolated in its communes. The lack of an elite had a crucial impact on the arrested development of the press and an educational system, low political and social activity, strengthening of the religious conservatism, and aversion to changes among the minority’s representatives<sup>50</sup>.

<sup>44</sup> Ö. Turan, op. cit., p. 266; В. Стоянов, *Турското население на България и официалната малцинствена политика (1878–1944)*, [in:] *Страници от българската история. Събития – размисли – личности*, т. 2, ред. М. Босева, София 1993, pp. 196–197; А. Eminov, *The Status of Islam and Muslims in Bulgaria*, „Journal Institute of Muslim Minority Affairs“, 1987, vol. 8:2, p. 293; В. Şimşir, *The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria: History and Culture*, [in:] *The Turks of Bulgaria...*, p. 169; R. Crampton, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>45</sup> М. Savova-Mahon Borden, *The Politics of Nationalism under Communism in Bulgaria. Myth, Memories and Minorities*, London 2001, p. 266.

<sup>46</sup> Ö. Turan, K. T. Evered, op. cit., p. 484.

<sup>47</sup> The similar processes had a place also in Greece and Romania. The Muslim elite survived in the countryside in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Hercegovina. X. Bougaler, *Balkan Muslim Diasporas and the Idea of a European Islam*, [in:] *Balkan Currents. Essays in Honour of Kjell Magnusson*, ed. T. Dulić, Uppsala 2005, p. 148.

<sup>48</sup> Ö. Turan, *The Turkish Minority...*, pp. 213–217; R. Crampton, op. cit., p. 68; А. Eminov, *Turks and Tatars in Bulgaria and the Balkans*, „Nationalities Papers” 2000, vol. 28, no. 1, p. 139; М. Михайлова-Мръвкарлова, *За татари, татарските училища и татарските джамии в Североизточна България*, [in:] *Татари в България – общество, история и култура*, съст. Т. Димов, Н. Муртаза, Добрич 2009, p. 40.

<sup>49</sup> С. Гавазов, op. cit., p. 67.

<sup>50</sup> Г. Геннадиев, *Бежанците във Варненско 1878–1908*, София 1998, pp. 18–19; Z. Klejn, *Rola mniejszości narodowych w państwowym i narodowym odrodzeniu Bulgarii (1877–1914)*, „Balcanica Poznaniensia” 2001, t. 11\12, p. 115.

The Muslim elite played a political role in Bulgaria as members of the parliament. However, they were probably the most passive group of the Bulgarian National Assembly, well known as blind supporters of the government and the monarchs<sup>51</sup>. In the 19th and 20th century there was no uniform political agenda of the Muslim minority, and the Muslim politicians were divided between the Bulgarian political parties<sup>52</sup>. They could be compared to the Bulgarian chorbadjis, the most conservative and loyal to Turkey and the role they played in the Bulgarian political life during the Revival. The conflicted Muslims became a harmless element in the reality of the Bulgarian politics at the beginning of the 20th century. They focused on differences and quarrels. Personal interests became more important than the fight for the rights of their community. In result, the Muslims could not demonstrate unity in front of the Bulgarian authorities.

On the other hand, the weakness of the Muslim minority's elite in Bulgaria had a bright side, too. The Bulgarian minority policy towards Muslims was quite liberal after 1885<sup>53</sup>. Perhaps, had the Muslim community in Bulgaria been better organized, the authorities in Sofia could see them as a threat and enforce a more repressive policy. Muslims were perceived as harmless by Bulgarian politicians, who preferred to ignore their presence in the national landscape.

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<sup>51</sup> R. Crampton, op. cit., p. 69.

<sup>52</sup> *Brophy to Lascales, Varna 16.05.1881, FO 421/27/13; Denziel to Palgrave, Sofia 30.10.1879, FO 195/1246/372–373. Ж. Назърска, Етническите и религиозните малцинства в българския парламент 1879–1885, „Исторически преглед”, 1999, б. 1–2, pp. 8–9.*

<sup>53</sup> Look: K. Popok, *Cruel Tormentor or Good Neighbour? Stereotype of the Turk and Bulgarian State Policy Towards the Muslim Minority in 1878–1912, „Slavonic Review” (Prague), 2017, no. 2, s. 261–284.*

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