

Educational Practices of Bulgarians in the Period of Separatist Movement from the Ottoman Empire in Kosovo

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Abstract

The aim of the research was to provide an unpretentious sample and contribution to the evaluations that education and schooling politics played a leading role for Bulgarian nationalist movement to gain a mass dimension like other separatist movements. With this purpose in mind, the efforts were made to address to modern education in native language move of Bulgarians that had not been adopted nation-state project only based on their own internal dynamics with the dimension that was tried to be built via interventions of foreign countries rather than generating and discovering resources available within themselves, and it is a process of a pragmatic change-transformation concerning political practices.

Key Words

Ottoman, Abdulhamid II, Bulgarization, Indoctrination, Identity.

The main hypothesis of the research is that the instrumentalization of education placed in a centralized position by Bulgarians is actually a dimension of global trend of the period in terms of development of nationalist discourse and movement, and national educational transformation is an important part of the phenomenon keeping up with the education era initialized by state via Sultan Abdulhamid II (Akman, 2006; Anderson, 2001; Bozboru, 1997; Frasher, 1964, pp. 146-47; Freeman, 1877; Jelavich, 1983; Karageorgou-Kourtzis, 2007, pp. 173-184; Puto-Polo, 1981, p. 132; Seton-Watson, 1917, pp. 250-275; Skendi, 1967). This approach arises out of the hypothesis revealing differentia-

tion among non-Muslim –even Muslims –residents of the empire with all aspects related to evolution of Ottoman Empire at a political, cultural, social, religious and economic base and evaluations regarding the underlying reasons thereof. The purpose of the research was to provide an unpretentious sample and contribution to the evaluations that education and schooling politics played a leading role for Bulgarian nationalist movement to gain a mass dimension like other separatist movements (Arnakin, 1963, pp. 115-144; Aydın, 1989, pp. 209-234; Aydın, 1990, pp. 280-285; İnalçık, 1992; Küçük, 1980, pp. 117-166; Stefanov, 2000, pp. 29-34; Sterionov, 2000, pp. 297-314; Tonev, 2000, pp. 203-208). With this purpose in mind; efforts were made to address to modern-education in native language move of Bulgarians that had not been adopted nation-state project only based on their own internal dynamics, with the dimension that was tried to be built via interventions of foreign countries rather than generating and discovering resources available within themselves, and it is a process of a pragmatic change-transformation concerning political practices (Boyar, 2007, p. 95, 106; Halaçoğlu, 1992, p. 397; İnalçık, 1992, p. VII;

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Skendi, 1967, p. 392; Şimşir, 1989, p. XXXI, XXXII; Uzunçarşılı, 1982, p. 274; Yüce, 1992, pp. 390-391). The scope of the research also constitutes its most significant limitedness in other words, this study is limited to the Sultan Abdulhamid II period in which separatist movement gained an important acceleration within the empire and Kosovo where it was relied that states would not initiate a rebellion against the central authority since Kosovo composed of the majority of Muslims (Beydilli, 1989, p. 79; Genelkurmay Başkanlığı, 1993, p. 35; Karal, 1983, p. 93; Karal, 1988, p. 76; Koyuncu, 1998; Şentürk, 1992, p. 221, 298; Tokay, 1996, p. 39).

In Kosovo where cosmopolitan populations such as Turks, Bulgarians, Greeks, Serbians, Albanians and Romans lived together, attempts of Bulgarians to form a new identity and conflicts with Ottoman superordinate identity reached the climax at the end of the XIX century (Bozbora, 1997, p. 232; Karal, 1988, p. 157; Sowards, 1989, p. 23). In that period, educational move in order to make Muslim population in the region adapt Ottoman sovereignty symbols by Sultan Abdulhamid II and reformist attempts –education in native language- in educational field for those apart from the majority were construed as efforts to expand the control and supervision authority of the state on the different aspects by Bulgarians and it caused a new ground of conflict.

Attempts to bulgarize the region by means of the “fesad committees” which were established by Bulgarians and attempts to merge the region with big Bulgaria they imagined caused an important disturbance both between Albanians constituting the majority of the population and others including primarily Greeks and Serbians. In this struggle, the soundest argument propounded by Bulgarians was that they were hard done on grounds that their identity characteristics different from other nationalities were tired to be eliminated. The objective of Bulgarian committee members was to draw attentions of the West through disorganizing the region and prevent the Ottoman centralization movements aiming establishment of the central sovereignty to be achieved. In 1885, easy seizure of Eastern Rumelia facilitated the Bulgarians to organize an integrated national movement in the region. Upon the emerge of a Slavic danger as a result of the separatist activities of Bulgarians, Ottoman Empire attempted to ensure the region to remain in its own administrative borders and tried to prevent the conscious efforts to create a national identity especially by help of Bulgarian teachers (Ottoman Archives [OA], BEO.AYN.d., No. 1240 [5 March 1883/25 R 1300]; MEMKT., 593/47 [13 June 1901/26 S 1319]; MF.MKT., 597/17 [2 January 1902/22 N 1319]; MF.MKT., 566/4 [8 June 1902/2

Ra 1320]; MF.MKB., 107/117. [8 September 1902/5 C 1320]).

While Sultan Abdulhamid II was under military, political and economic pressure of Western states to recognize non-Muslim schools engaged in activities against the system, he tried to take measures to prevent the opening of such schools, but was not able to achieve a complete success (Ragib Rifki, 1905-1906, p. 39; Selanikli Şemseddin, 1905-1906, p. 12). The bureaucrats of the time knew to what extent the Central Edirne – Macedonia Bulgarian Committee (Aydın, 1989, p. 210; Hösch, 1972; Schevill, 1991; Skendi, 1967; Terzis, 2000; Tokay, 1995) which was founded in Sofia in 1890, the Bulgarian Chieftainship and Exarchy contributed to the opening of such schools in Kosovo province. Although the Bulgarian Chieftainship had serious financial distress, it sent 1 million Francs to the schools of the region every year with the support of the Exarchy and assigned 1500 teachers to the Bulgarian schools in the region, a fact which shows the extent of the support given. Most of these teachers were graduates of the higher schools in the Chieftainship, who *never refrained from planting seeds of hate* and were foreigners and did not hold teacher diplomas. The Sublime Porte applied to the Bulgarian Exarchy via the Ministry of Justice in order to take necessary legal action against these people whose qualifications were suspected, on the one hand, and sent numerous instructions to the regional educational directors to prevent the assignment of such people as teachers, on the other hand (OA., Y.PRK.AZJ., 19/82 [1892-1893/1308]; Y.PRK.MF., 2/72. [8 May 1893/21 L 1310]; MF.MKT., 318/52 [9 June 1896/27 Z 1313]; MF.MKT., 566/4 [29 June 1901/12 Ra 1319]; TFR.IKV., 190/18979. [2 March 1908/28 M 1326]).

The Government was sure that the Bulgarian teachers in the region were desirous of undermining the state authority and loyalty of the citizens. These teachers did not only poison the youth in these schools to realize their hidden agenda, but also provoked the people to disrupt the order based on the instruction (Aydın, 1989, p. 224) they were given by the Macedonia Bulgarian Committee. Even, some of them became leaders of the Bulgarian bandit gangs and tried to weaken the loyalty feelings of the Bulgarian people, and instigate a mass revolt. For example, in a telegram message of the Radovis district governate dated 5 November 1904, it was stated that Bulgarian Committee sent money for delivery to headmen and guards of the villages, and also weapons for distribution to all villages of the region, and that the teachers of the Bulgarian schools were chosen from amongst the committee members as

the weapons were to be delivered to the daskals* in Radovis and Strumica (OA., MFMKT., 364/13 [6 August 1897/7 Ra 1315]; MFMKT., 458/36 [31 July 1899/23 Ra 1317]; MFMKT., 593/47 [13 June 1901/26 S 1319]; TFR.I.KV., 76/7536. [5 November 1904/27 Ş 1322]; TFR.I.KV., 85/8434. [17 March 1905/10 M 1323]; MFMKT., 566/4. [18 August 1904/6 C 1322; 26 June 1905/22 R 1323; 22 July 1905/[19 Ca 1323; 16 December 1906/29 L 1324]). Inquiries conducted with respect to the political crimes committed in the region revealed that the above mentioned activities in Kosovo were intensified particularly since the late 1890s. At this point, the essence of the problem was the illegal activities of the teachers in the schools which were almost converted to a war front in the Bulgarian education movement that progressed dangerously threatening the future of the empire - although these schools were state schools within the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. A collection of biographies drawn up by the Ministry of the Interior on 17 March 1903 underlined, as the most important reason, the failure of the local educational directors to carry out necessary inquiry before permitting the recruitment of teachers (OA., Y.PRK.BŞK., 35/78 [4 April 1894/27 N 1311]; MFMKT., 566/4 [17 March 1903/18 Z 1320]; TFR.I.KV., 15/1408 [15 May 1903/14 S 1321]; TFR.I.KV., 85/8434 [March 1905/M 1323]; TFR.I.KV., 83/8288 [5 March 1905/28 Z 1322]; TFR.I.KV., 85/8433 [7 March 1905/30 Z 1322]; TFR.I.KV., 89/8884 [9 May 1905/4 Ra 1323]; TFR.I.KV., 210/20967. [20 February 1908/17 M 1326]).

Bulgarians were able to take advantage from mass media, besides schools and teachers in the region efficaciously against the attempts of Sultan Abdulhamid II to generalize the understanding of union. As for the campaign initialized in order to form a mass open to indoctrination, it is not exaggerated to say that it is required to perceive that Bulgarians took advantage from historical anecdotes in primary schools, far beyond the skills to provide student with literary awareness and deeply (OA., MFMKT., 566/4 [3 June 1901/16 S 1319; 29 June 1901/12 Ra 1319; 11 July 1901/24 Ra 1319; 2 September 1901/18 Ca 1319; 28 October 1901/15 B 1319; 8 June 1902/2 Ra 1320; 10 June 1902/4 Ra 1320; 2 November 1902/29 Ş 1320; 3 February 1903/5 Za 1320; 17 March 1903/18 Z 1320; 23 March 1903/24 Z 1320; 7 May 1903/9 S 1321; 16 May 1903/18 S 1321; 18 May 1903/20 S 1321; 19 May 1903/21 S 1321; 29 May 1903/2 Ra 1321; 6 June 1903/10 Ra 1321; 27 June 1903/1 R 1321; 29 January 1904/11 Za

1321; 22 February 1904/6 Z 1321; 19 May 1904/3 Ra 1322; 26 May 1904/10 Ra 1322; 5 October 1904/25 B 1322; 8 October 1904/28 B 1322; 19 October 1904/10 Ş 1322; 30 October 1904/21 Ş 1322; 16 January 1905/10 Za 1322; 19 January 1905/13 Za 1322; 8 August 1905/6 C 1323]; MFMKB., 107/117. [8 September 1902/5 C 1320]; MFMKT., 318/52. [9 June 1896/27 Z 1313]). That is to say, teaching to the children at the age of primary education Bulgarians who lived long before the Ottoman sovereignty in the regions where students were born can be assessed as an activity that Bulgarians performed to make students adopt that they were different from/superior to Albanians, Greeks, Romans and Serbians living in the region and as an evidence that they did education politics with their ethnical labels (OA., TFR.I.KV., 76/7536. [5 November 1904/27 Ş 1322]). As a matter of fact, it can be said that real aim of Bulgarians is a bargain made between them and the majority which thought that they were suppressed for a long time, so as to realize the independent Bulgarian model of which privileges were protected, rather than struggling for equality, right-liberty, or recognition of national identity, depending on the activities that Bulgarians who were provided with an equal position with the sovereign nation (millet-i hakime) so as for their nationality and languages to be recognized, provided the young to get education abroad rather than getting in their denominational schools they opened within the borders of empire, despite those amendments, made the said young establish political associations/committees and directed them towards acts disorganizing the order and breaking the peace, and tried to prevent the region to gain a stable and integral administrative structure, since the acceptance date of Rescript of Reform (Islahat Fermanı) and foundation of independent Bulgarian Exarchate in 1870 (OA., TFR.I.KV., 210/20967. [20 February 1908/17 M 1326]).

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* Daskal means teacher in old Greek.

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