

# Balkanistic

**DF**  **Forum '14**  
**БАЛКАНИСТИЧЕН 1-2-3**  
**ФОРУМ**



**HEROES AND PLACES OF MEMORY**  
**THE RUSSO-OTTOMAN WAR 1877 – 1878**

**B**alkanistic  
**BF**  **zum '14**  
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ИЗДАВА МЕЖДУНАРОДНИЯТ УНИВЕРСИТЕТСКИ  
СЕМИНАР ЗА БАЛКАНИСТИЧНИ ПРОУЧВАНИЯ И  
СПЕЦИАЛИЗАЦИИ ПРИ ЮГОЗАПАДЕН УНИВЕРСИТЕТ  
“НЕОФИТ РИЛСКИ” - БЛАГОЕВГРАД

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*The cover photo presents a working moment of the “Shipka Heroes” movie.  
It is from the book G. A. Mjasnikov, Rabota hudozhnika kino, M., Znanie, 1965, p. 42.*

ISSN 1310-3970  
<http://www.bf.swu.bg/BF-eng.html>  
[www.cceol.com](http://www.cceol.com)



**HEROES AND PLACES OF MEMORY**  
**The Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878**

**Editor: Dominik Gutmeyr**

**ТЮТЮНЕВА ФАБРИКА**  
**„ЦАР ОСВОБОДИТЕЛ“**  
**на Кжню П. Пашоолу -- Ст. Загора**



Най отлежалите, най фините и най ароматичните тютюни изработка в пакети и пироси винаги

**Фабриката Пашоолу**

*Advertisement of the "Car Osvoboditel" Tobacco factory in Stara Zagora, 1923*

THE CONTRIBUTIONS ARE PART OF THE RESEARCH ACTIVITIES OF THE INTERNATIONAL PROJECT PIRSES-GA-2011-295167: "POLITICS OF MEMORY AND MEMORY CULTURES OF THE RUSSIAN-OTTOMAN WAR 1877/1878: FROM DIVERGENCE TO DIALOGUE", SUPPORTED BY SEVENTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME, MARIE CURIE ACTIONS, PEOPLE, INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH STAFF EXCHANGE SCHEME

THIS ISSUE 1-2-3/2014 IS PUBLISHED BY THE SUPPORT OF THE BULGARIAN SCIENCE FOND OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE

ИЗДАВАНЕТО НА НАСТОЯЩИЯ БРОЙ ОТ СПИСАНИЕТО ПРЕЗ 2014 Г. Е С ФИНАНСОВАТА ПОДКРЕПА НА ФОНД „НАУЧНИ ИЗСЛЕДВАНИЯ“ ПРИ МИНИСТЕРСТВО НА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕТО, МЛАДЕЖТА И НАУКАТА

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## Introduction

The present volume constitutes one of the scholarly outputs of the EU-funded Marie Curie project “Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russian-Ottoman War 1877/1878: From Divergence to Dialogue” (MEMORYROW). This project started working on 1 February 2012 and will last until the end of January 2016. The project’s consortium consists of eight scientific institutions from eight countries, which are historically more or less strongly related to the events of this epoch-making war. The project’s leadership rests on the Centre for Southeast European History and Anthropology at University of Graz. However, the initiative came from the Balkanistic Seminar at Southwest University of Blagoevgrad. The other partner institutions are the Institute of National History “Ss Cyril and Methodius in Skopje”, the Department of Modern and Contemporary History, Folklore and Social Anthropology at Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the Department of History at the Istanbul based Bilgi University, the Shota Rustaveli University of Batumi, the National Academy of Sciences of Armenia in Yerevan and the North-Caucasus Federal University of Stavropol’.

The outstanding role of the Balkanistic Seminar in Blagoevgrad in the project is reflected by the fact that the funding not only of the project’s first publication (“National Models of Memory: The Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878”) which was issued in 2013 but also of the present publication could be realized by the support of the Bulgarian Scientific Fond of the Ministry of Education and Science. This role is also reflected by the fact that the project’s second work package was inaugurated by a workshop held at Southwestern University in Blagoevgrad on 27 April 2013, followed by an excursion to prominent places of memory and celebrations of heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War.

This excursion was revealing because it demonstrated a complete lack of any Bulgarian tradition of memory culture in the first decades after the war. Although the war paved the way towards the reestablishment of Bulgarian statehood after half of a millennium of “Turkish yoke”, Bulgarians had no ambitions to commemorate their heroes and freedom fighters immediately after the war. How comes? Anastasiya Pashova and Petar Vodenicharov refer in their contributions to this volume to this astonishing fact. In “The First Russian Monuments in Bulgaria devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878: Transformations of Memory” the two authors ar-

gue that “the Bulgarians did neither have a religious-military tradition nor a modern memorial culture”. With “religious-military tradition” they refer to the tradition of Russian religious memory culture, which they investigate in their second contribution to this volume, called “The Russian Military-Religious Memory about the Russian-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878”: Russia had a rich military-religious tradition. Since the Middle Ages all important victories were celebrated by the establishment of monumental memorial churches. These churches became memorial because they were devoted to the saints whose feasts were celebrated in the days of a victorious military campaign. In addition, in the course of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia began to appropriate European codes of commemoration such as triumphal arches, obelisks and memorial columns. Thus Russia had a rich arsenal of memorial instruments at its disposal, which were not only used for commemoration in the interior but also for the degradation and humiliation of the defeated enemy outside Russia. Thus in 1898 Russia created an impressive monument in San Stefano/Yeşilköy which today constitutes a suburb of Istanbul (close to the airport ‘Atatürk’), where the humiliating preliminary peace treaty was enforced by Russia on the Ottoman Empire on 3 March 1878. Not accidentally the monument was blown up in November 1914, when the Ottoman Empire declared war on Russia.

Of course, a similar memorial culture could not emerge in the Balkans under Ottoman domination. First of all public monumental representations of national memory (assuming that something like that existed) would have been completely inappropriate and unacceptable for the ruling class. Secondly, the Ottoman Empire did not know a memory culture like the Russian and West European one. The only superficial similarity was that mosques could be devoted to victorious sultans and commanders-in-chief. Public space was not used for the establishment of triumphal arches, memorial columns, obelisks or equestrian statues. Monumental art, especially the artistic representation of human beings in the public space was prohibited because of religious reasons. The only exception was Egypt under the reign of vice-Sultan İsmail Paşa (1863 – 1879), who dared to establish public monuments representing his father and grandfather in Alexandria and Cairo. The first public monument in Istanbul (except the above mentioned Russian monument in San Stefano/Yeşilköy) was the monument on Taksim Square – a half-relief – commemorating the foundation of the Republic of Turkey established only in 1928.

Having this in mind it is no longer surprising that public memory culture in the immediate post-Ottoman period was stimulated and inaugurated by foreign initiatives. If we refer to the Bulgarian example, one of the most significant pictorial commemorations of the Bulgarian uprising against Ottoman domination in April of 1876 is the painting “The Massacre of Batak” (1892) of the artist and photographer Antoni Piotrowski, who was Polish by origin. Russia still in 1878 established 303 gravestone monuments in Bulgaria and in the following years various monuments made of marble or granite. On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crucial battle on the Şipka Pass in 1902, the participants noticed only Russian monuments but no Bulgarian ones on the previous battlefield.

The volume opens with two inaugural articles; the first one stems from the Turkish colleagues Bayram Şen and Sinan Çetin (“Nationalist Narratives on the Aziziye Bastions and Nene Hatun: A Place to Remember the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878?”) and the second one from the Russian project collaborators Olga

O. Chernyshova and Alla S. Kondrasheva (“The Places of Memory in Russia regarding the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878: Stages of Transformation”). This decision was made deliberately because the two articles demonstrate how differently the events of the Russo-Ottoman War were commemorated in Russia and in the Ottoman Empire/Turkey. The Turkish authors point at the fact that historical knowledge about the war is rather confined to the cities of Erzurum and partly of Kars, which played a prominent role at the Caucasian warfront. After the capture of Kars Russian troops moved further to Erzurum, where they – already late in the year 1877 – were stopped by the defenders at the city’s bastions. However, this fact was not sufficient for the creation of nationwide memory. It needed the stories constructed around a local heroine figure fighting allegedly the Russian intruders, Nene Hatun, to attach the Aziziye Bastion of Erzurum a sacral position, which secured the bastion a place in local and later on in nationwide memory. The heroine, however, became only popular not during the Ottoman period but rather in the first decades of the Republican period, when she could be instrumentalized as a fighter against the internal (Armenian) and external (Russian) enemy in the nation building process of the Turkish Republic.

Whereas Turkish commemoration of the Russo-Ottoman War set in decades after the historic event and is more or less confined to mythological deeds of a Turkish heroine, Russia had significantly more reasons for the celebration of heroes. Immediately after the war an intensive process of commemoration in Bulgaria as well as in Russia was initiated: in Russia, for instance, the Aleksandr Military Sanctuary at the All-Saints Forest on the outskirts of Moscow, the church St. Aleksandr Nevskij, a monument to General M.D. Skobelev in Moscow; portraits of him could be seen in every village house next to the icon, paintings with war motifs from various Russian painters, fiction stories and novels as well as photographic collections related to the war. The cinematographic representation began comparatively late with the film “The Heroes of Šipka” finished in collaboration with Bulgaria in 1954. However, the period of active commemoratization ended abruptly in 1918, when the decree “Monuments of the Republic” was published by the Bolshevik government according to which all “monuments honoring the tsars and their servants” had to be destroyed.

The articles that follow are grouped according genres of visual and written representations: monuments, photography, film, excursions and tourism, and literature and press. Four of ten contributions are devoted to the analysis of the politics of establishing monuments. Milena Angelova (“The Epopee with ‘The Epopee’ or the Building of the Panorama ‘The Epopee of Pleven 1877’”) analyses the history of the construction of one of the largest monuments related to the Russo-Ottoman War in Bulgaria – the panorama museum of Pleven, which was opened on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the major battles that took place in the vicinity of the town in the second half of the year 1877. In the region of Pleven there are more than 160 monuments but the panorama museum is, without any doubt, the most spectacular and most prestigious.<sup>1</sup> The idea of a panorama museum goes back to

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<sup>1</sup> For a recent overview on panorama museums in Eastern Europe cf. Arnold Bartetzky; Rudolf Jaworski (eds.), *Geschichte im Rundblick. Panoramabilder im östlichen Europa*, Cologne; Vienna; Weimar, 2014.

1961, when the chair of the Committee for Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship, General Ivan Vinarov, began to promote this idea. After some ups and downs and after some pressure of the Soviet Embassy in Bulgaria the final decision to create the museum was taken in November of 1976. Only one year remained for the construction works. Angelova concludes that the construction of the museum served primarily political-ideological purposes since it should be devoted to “the education of the Bulgarian people and the future generations in the spirit of the eternal and unbreakable Bulgarian-Soviet friendship”.

Two more articles focus on war-related monuments in Bulgaria. In “The First Russian Monuments in Bulgaria devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878: Transformations of Memory” Anastasiya Pashova and Petar Vodenicharov analyze the establishment of the first Russian monuments in Bulgaria from 1878 to 1902 (25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war) as a memory imposed from outside. Within this quarter of a century most parts of the Russian memorial program were concluded – among them approximately 400 gravestone monuments. The most sensitive project was the building of the memorial complex on Šipka Pass and at its foot. In 1887 the construction works had to be stopped preliminarily after a Russophobe government had been installed in Sofia, which ceased the diplomatic relations with Russia. These turbulences lasted until 1896 and the construction of the complex could be resumed and finished in 1902.

The two authors’ second contribution to this volume “The Russian Military-Religious Memory about the Russian-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878” investigates the Russian-Orthodox tradition of military churches functioning as churches, military museums and frequently as graveyards in Russia until 1913. Out of a total of 555 military churches that existed in Russia in 1913, a little less than one quarter (149) were related to the Russo-Ottoman War; alone 36 of them were built in Kiev, 28 in Warsaw and 26 in the Caucasus. These are astonishing figures. There were towns in which the memory of the Russo-Ottoman War was especially strong such as in the town of Aleksandropol’/Gyumri in Armenia, where four out of six military churches were related to this war. After the October Revolution most of these 149 military churches were destroyed, some were desecrated.

Grigor Aghanyan’s article (“Memorials to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Gyumri/Armenia”) is also related to Aleksandropol’/Gyumri. His research reveals that the Hill of Honor, right between the town and its fortress, became an official garrison cemetery only after the Russo-Ottoman War and after the construction and sanctification of a chapel nearby. The reason for that was that the bulk of Russian troops of the Caucasian front was concentrated in Aleksandropol’ where also the main military hospital was located. Financed by Russian officers who were involved in the Russo-Ottoman War, a rotunda with a white marble obelisk inside the memory of their fallen comrades on the Caucasian front was built on the Hill of Honor in 1882. Interestingly enough, the Hill of Honor continued to function as a military cemetery in the first decades of the Soviet regime. However, in the 1950s a systematic destruction of the monument was ordered by the local authorities; graves and tombstones to the heroes of the war of 1877 – 1878 were systematically destroyed. The good Russian-Armenian relations might have motivated the former mayor of Gyumri to initiate the restoration of the Hill of Honor-complex, which was re-inaugurated in presence of the Russian and Armenian presidents in 2010.

Photography in extensive form and as source for the reconstruction of places of memory and celebration of heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War is used only in the contribution of the Georgian team consisting of Marine Aroshidze, Tamaz Phutkaradze, Marina Shalikava and Kakhaber Surguladze (“Memorial Places of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Georgia”). The article focuses on the region of Ajara, which was liberated from Ottoman domination in the course of the war. The analyses of photographic materials from private collection and public archives such as the National Archive of Ajara become especially convincing in the parts, when the authors combine photographs with ethnographic fieldwork. It is surprising how fresh and vital family memories are still present, although the respondents talk about the deeds of their great-grandfathers as in the case of I. Goliadze or the grandfather as in the case of R. Motskobili and G. Tsereteli, when they memorize the military leaders of the Rioni-unit of the Russian army (General Oklobjio) and of the Ottoman forces (Derviş Paşa), who allegedly were both Serbs by origin.

The following section focuses on the medium of film as visual representation of the heroic past. Dominik Gutmeyr’s article (“Visualizing a Heroic Past – The Russo-Ottoman War in Russian Popular Culture” gives an overview over the Russian visualization of the war in form of popular prints (*lubki*) and fine arts at the times of the war itself, to the emergence of the socialist-realistic film in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and to post-socialist films and documentaries. As already mentioned by Chernyshova and Kondrasheva with regard to film production the aim of Soviet cultural policy was to silence the late Tsarist period. The consequence was that not a single film with the Russo-Ottoman War as main motive was produced for an exclusively Soviet auditory. The only exceptions were two co-productions with Bulgaria, namely “Heroes of Šipka” (1954) and “Julija Vrevskaja” (1977). In the post-Soviet period this ‘spell’ was broken. Around the turn of the millennium it became again interesting to produce historical films for cinema und television, which among other themes brought the Russo-Ottoman War with two major productions back to the screens: the TV-serial “Bajazet” (2003) and the film adaption of Boris Akunin’s novel “Turkish Gambit” (2005). Gutmeyr concludes: “With the end of Socialist realism, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 became a visible part in Russian popular culture again.”

Whereas Gutmeyr’s focus is on Soviet and Russian films the contribution of Mariyana Piskova (“Documentary Evidence of the Creation of the Film ‘Heroes of Šipka’ in Bulgarian Archives”) concentrates on the in-depth reconstruction of a Bulgarian film, which was produced in the early phase of socialist film production in Bulgaria. In fact, the film was a Soviet-Bulgarian coproduction based on Bulgarian funding and a Soviet screenplay, direction, operators and technicians which should serve as a model of Bulgarian national cinema in the fashion and aesthetics of Socialist Realism. The author was in the fortunate situation of being able to exploit among other the pertinent files kept in the Central State Archive. It was the tenth film after the nationalization of Bulgarian cinematography in 1948 and the first coproduction with a Soviet film-producing company. The appointed director of the film, Sergej Vasil’ev, arrived in Bulgaria in the spring of 1952, the principal shooting, however was conducted in 1954. The outcome of the 138 minutes-stripe can be considered a success the author of the article concludes. The director received the

Golden Palm of the Cannes Film Festival in 1955 as best director, the film was viewed by almost six million moviegoers in Bulgaria and almost 25 million moviegoers in the Soviet Union and fulfilled its inherent ideological functions.

The following two papers deal with the role of war memorials in student excursions at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and for the tourist movement in the socialist and post-socialist period. Kristina Popova's article ("Sunrise on Peak Šipka: Places of the Russo-Ottoman War in the Student Excursions in Bulgaria (1896 – 1912)") points at school excursions which were introduced in Bulgaria in 1896 and which had the potential to create "centers of sacral geography" because the majority of students of that time had no travel experiences and so they occupied an outstanding place in their lives. The excursions' statistics point out that among the most frequently visited places were the memorial places of the Russo-Ottoman War and places presenting industrial progress. The author comes to the conclusion that school excursions at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century "created a space of new knowledge, social entertainment and emotional experience. As a result of these trips, places of memory to the Russo-Ottoman War were connected to modern enterprises and state power institutions on a mental map, which shaped the Bulgarian landscape as symbols of heroic past, natural beauty and national progress."

More than half a century later the National Tourist Movement "Get to Know Bulgaria – 100 National Tourist Sites" was founded and still exists today. This organization's aim was to foil the tourist movement before 1944 as movement of intellectuals distant to the people and to establish a "progressive tourist ideology without any contradiction". Out of the total of 100 sites, 5 places were related to Russo-Ottoman War; among them was, of course, the memorial church on Šipka Pass. The war monuments were crucial for the indoctrination of the suggested direct line between two narratives of Bulgarian-Russian and Bulgarian-Soviet friendship: the liberation from 'Turkish yoke' and from 'Fascist slavery'. This line was affirmed by the tourist guides. Growing propaganda of nationalism fueled by the Communists' regime in the 1960s and 1970s moved the Šipka Pass into the center of the places of national pride. The Liberation Monument on the pass and not the memorial church any longer constituted a symbol of Bulgarian liberty. Sociological research, starting in the 1970s, reveals that the Šipka Liberation Monument became the most visited place of Bulgarian tourists.

The volume concludes with two Armenian papers, which refer to the representation of the Russo-Ottoman War in Armenian literature and in the periodical press. Karine Bazeyan with her article ("The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Armenian Literature") points specifically at the famous Armenian Jacob Melik-Hakobyan (1835 – 1888), who was witness of some of the war events. He advocated the idea that the Armenian Question should be resolved only forcibly. Impressed by the glorious victory of the Russian army, in his works "The Fool", "Wanderer of Mush" and "Sparks" he painted terrible images of the western-Armenians' life under Ottoman domination. Among brilliant Armenian writers in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century additionally Hagop Baronian (1843 – 1891), Raphael Patkanyan (1830 – 1892) and Ashugh Givani (1846 – 1909) relate portions of their work to the Russo-Ottoman War and the hope of liberation of their compatriots in the Ottoman Empire.

Gayane Ayvazyan's paper on "The Reflection of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Armenia's Periodical Press" reviews publications exclusively related to the war and issued in Istanbul, İzmir, İzmit, Tbilisi and Baku. Of course, the Armenian press in the Ottoman Empire was in a delicate situation with regard to war reporting; it had to hide important messages between the lines. Nevertheless, so the author, especially Armenian journalism in İzmir achieved a high professional level. Immediately after the retreat of the Russian army the Armenian periodical press in general was concerned with the safety of the Armenian population and pointed to the fact that there was no reason for vengeance by the Kurdish or Turkish population since especially Armenian peasants supported them during the war at the cost of significant sacrifices.

Thus this volume presents a broad and colorful kaleidoscope of topics, methodological and theoretical approaches which have the potential to add significant new knowledge to the already known. After having carefully read all the papers one has to conclude that all the analyzed places of memory and celebrations of heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War have their political conjunctures. They have been interpreted differently and newly interpreted in the course of the time until the present. We are witnesses of an ongoing new interpretation of this war and its heroes in the post-socialist world as well as in Turkey. The present volume documents many of these conjunctures. Whether it comes out to the right time remains questionable since new interpretations in the future cannot be excluded.

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## **Nationalist Narratives on the Aziziye Bastions and Nene Hatun: A Place to Remember the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878?**

**Abstract:** *The article follows the development of nationalist narratives on Aziziye Bastions and Nene Hatun in relation to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and how they were represented in nationalist historiography. We propose to look at the changes that the Aziziye Bastions underwent, in comparison to other bastions after they had become obsolete for military purposes and were slowly re-constructed in terms of a popular national narrative as a place to remember that “glorious” history in conjunction with the “heroine” cult of Nene Hatun and monumentalizing effects of these developments.*

If you were a tourist visiting Turkey for the first time, it is unlikely that you would stumble upon any place that is related to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 (*93 Harbi*).<sup>1</sup> Certainly these are not places that are easily found by chance or sheer luck. Contemporary tourist guides aimed at the average foreign tourist offer some tracks to follow. Most of these are divided into categories that loosely follow administrative regions as well as some thematically constructed ones: If you are interested in ancient history alongside sunny beaches, you might consider following the Aegean coast where you may find routes dedicated to early Ottoman architecture, or routes especially designed for tourists interested in the local cuisine, hiking in the mountains, etc.<sup>2</sup> Even in the most standard tourist guides that replicate administrative divisions by simply providing a step by step guide for each city, you cannot find any mention of the *93 Harbi* under the proposed routes to follow, places to visit, architectural monuments to see etc., despite the fact that Erzurum and Kars, two of the most prominent cities that are home to the battlegrounds of the *93 Harbi* on the Caucasian front, have experienced a rise in overall interest during recent years: Erzurum as a result of the 2011 University Winter Olympics and Kars as a result of being the setting for Nobel-prize winning author Orhan Pamuk’s novel “Kar” [Snow].

Having said that, city guides, especially those on Erzurum, and to a certain extent on Kars, provide what is missing in general ones, namely some historical sites of the *93 Harbi*. Every city guide of Erzurum published from 1954 until today

provides a simple summary of the city's history, in which the *93 Harbi* occupies a paragraph or more depending on the length of the guide. Without exception, every guide, even the simple ones that only enumerate the important places to see, includes the battleground of Aziziye in general and the Aziziye Bastions in particular.<sup>3</sup> This is not surprising and is something that can be expected when the focus shifts from national to regional. When the scale of interest focuses on a certain region, city or historical site, events, places and figures that did not appear in the guides that focus on a wider area take on a greater importance. On the other hand, the same shift of focus functions differently for other war-related heritage sites, monuments or locations such as Çanakkale, which can occupy enough space on the national scale. It is interesting to look at the reasons for this being the case.

There are two obvious answers to this simple question that also relate to Aziziye and the *93 Harbi* on a different level. Firstly, Çanakkale is usually linked to the cult of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, one of the many constituent elements of which is based on him being a military genius, hence also manifested on an international level in Çanakkale. In other words, Çanakkale is part of the Republican foundation "myth". Secondly, you can win a battle but lose a war and Çanakkale has been interpreted as a victory even though the Ottoman Empire lost World War I. These facts are also embedded in how the Erzurum city guides handle summarized historical background information; they usually jump directly to the end of World War I from the *93 Harbi* and Aziziye. To illustrate let us cite two examples taken from the history section of two different city guides.

The first of these was written in 1954, one of the first quasi city guides on Erzurum, written by İhsan Ünüvar.<sup>4</sup> After a brief prelude on the beginnings of the *93 Harbi*, he directly tells us that: "The people of Erzurum, women, men, young and old alike, fought hand in hand against the enemy at the Aziziye Bastions, writing a true epic. But despite this, the city was abandoned due to the treaty signed as a result of the situation of the Empire."<sup>5</sup>

What would you expect the next heading to be? If, perhaps, you expect to find something along the lines of "Erzurum during the reign of Abdülhamid II", or "Erzurum during World War I", you would be mistaken. The heading that actually follows is "Erzurum during the War of Independence (Congress of Erzurum)," followed by "Armenian atrocities in Erzurum," linking to "Erzurum during World War I (1914 – 18)."<sup>6</sup> Some may well consider this an odd outline?

Let us look at *Erzurum Gezi Rehberi* [Erzurum Travel Guide] written by Mazaffer Taşyürek in 2008.<sup>7</sup> Under the heading "Aziziye is the name given to an epic" he writes: "Despite the fact that at Aziziye all the people of Erzurum, women and men alike, fought tooth and claw, they could not save the city from ill fortune; what happened at Aziziye is one of the epic examples of our contemporary history."<sup>8</sup>

This guide also jumps directly to the "War of Independence" after covering the *93 Harbi* and its consequences for the city. What is missing is the direct relationship established between "Armenian atrocities" and World War I and its aftermath, even though Armenian "oppression" at the end of the World War I is touched upon within the presentation of *Aziziye Anıtı* [Aziziye Monument] and *Nene Hatun Parkı* [Nene Hatun Park]. Likewise, according to "Erzurum İli Turizm Envanteri"

[Touristic Inventory of Erzurum], prepared by the “Erzurum İli Turizm Müdürlüğü” [Erzurum Culture and Tourism Directorate] in 1996: “[...] Bastions in Erzurum are part of a glorious history. Landscape maps and descriptions of these bastions should be immediately produced.”<sup>9</sup> Every brochure, governmental and touristic report or similar material reflects this extraordinary character of the place to some degree.

What do these examples tell us? Nothing concrete or definitive; they are only examples after all. Yet, they certainly do say something about how the *93 Harbi* is formulated, or at least sought to be formulated as a part of the national historical narrative, or what you may prefer to call collective memory, through Aziziye. In order to do that, there has to be what MacCannell, in “The Tourist” calls “site sacralization”.<sup>10</sup> MacCannell proposed that sites develop in five identifiable phases: Naming, framing and elevating, enshrinement, mechanical reproduction and social reproduction. When introducing his concept of site sacralization, he was specifically concerned with the links between society and tourist attractions that make them “famous”, resulting in them becoming a desired place to visit and remember.<sup>11</sup> In fact, this can be simplified as giving an actual space to any kind of discursive narrative: a concrete site to remember by. This process is also enmeshed in tourism and the culture of visiting, which in turn changes both the space and history in question and how they are remembered.

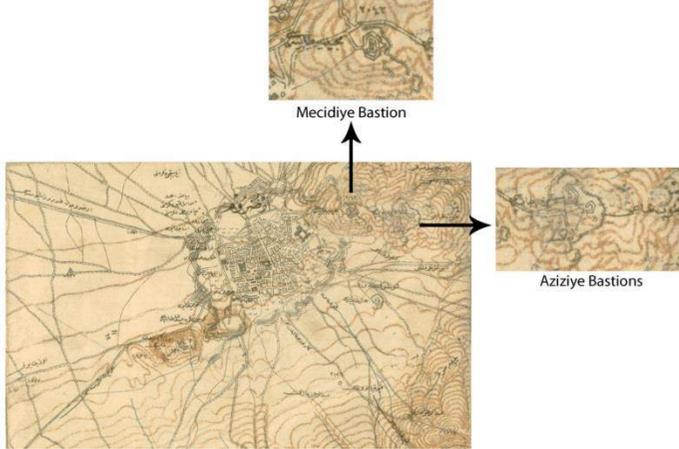
What we propose here is to look at the changes that the Aziziye Bastions underwent, in comparison to other bastions after they had become obsolete for military purposes and were slowly re-constructed in terms of a popular national narrative as a place to remember that “glorious” history.

### **The Aziziye Bastions: From battlefield to tourist attraction?**

The Aziziye Bastions consist of three different bastions erected to the east of Erzurum during the governorship of Fosfor Mustafa Paşa (1867 – 1872). They are part of a series of bulwarks erected around Erzurum from as early as the reign of Mahmud II (1808 – 1839)<sup>12</sup> (see Map 1). Erzurum is situated to the east of a lowland area surrounded by a series of mountainous regions: Topdağı and Deveboynu to the east, Mescit to the north and Palandöken to the south. This geographical location made it necessary to build a series of bulwarks around the city during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in order to control the straits that were the only connections to other regions. They also served to stop attacks at a distance from the city, whose walls became obsolete with developments in artillery technology that resulted in more powerful guns with a longer range. As a result, this kind of defence system was implemented step by step by constructing a series of bulwarks and bastions.

The first bastion was Mecidiye, built in 1852 on a hill named Topdağı approximately five kilometres east of Erzurum that controlled the roads to the city from the north. The building project was headed by Zarif Mustafa Paşa. The next bastions to be added to this new defence system were the first, second and third Aziziye Bastions. These are situated to the east of the town, with the three bastions side by side alongside the south-north axis, in order to control Hamamderesi on the route to Kars.<sup>13</sup> Between the years 1867 and 1872, under the supervision of Fosfor Mustafa Paşa, Ahali Bastion was added to the defence system. But after the defeat in the 93

*Harbi* and further developments in the range of cannons and other firearms, the proximity of newly built bastions to the city (only about two to three kilometers) triggered a new attempt at creating an effective defence for the city. Under Şahap Paşa, a commission issued by Abdülhamid II after field research in Erzurum proposed the building of 13 bastions. Sultan Abdülhamid II approved the project.<sup>14</sup>



**Map 1: Erzurum and its environs, including Mecidiye Bastion and Aziziye Bastions<sup>15</sup>**

These series of bastions and other defensive constructions were also used during World War I. Further still, Republican military ranks used some of them for other functions, such as depots until the end of the 1930s. The defences, which were the products of different time periods (see Table 1), today are conglomerated under the general heading of *Erzurum Tabyaları* [Erzurum Bastions].<sup>16</sup> Under this general title, the Aziziye Bastions occupy a relatively unimportant place. They have no special architectural features that make them more recognizable and no exceptional or unique epitaph or inscription. In fact, the Mecidiye Bastion seems to have more to contribute in this respect since it is the earliest. This bastion enables us to make comparisons in terms of military planning and how this changed in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>17</sup>

Date of Construction	Name of Bastions
Before 1867	Mecidiye
1867 – 1872	1 <sup>st</sup> – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Aziziye, Büyük Kiremitlik, Ahâli,
1884 – 1896	Küçük Kiremitlik, Büyük and Küçük Palandöken, Sivişli, Ağzıaçık, Toparлак, Çobandede, Dolangez, İlâve, Uzunahmet, Küçük and Büyük Höyük, Gez, Tafya, Karagöbek

**Table 1: Construction dates of Erzurum Bastions<sup>18</sup>**

All of this specific information is to show that when we talk about the Aziziye Bastions, we do not refer to a homogenous historical site. The bastions are the product of different time periods and the sites of more than one war; they were used by different generations of soldiers and served different purposes throughout their history. Moreover, the second Aziziye Bastion was in disrepair and the first underwent a major restoration. The third, however, remained intact because it was used by the Turkish Military Forces for a long time and is still under their control. That is to say that the Aziziye Bastions themselves do not show a “unified front”. What then makes them distinct from the Mecidiye Bastion, located just next to them? This was also part of the war, part of the siege of Erzurum. Why do we not talk about it? Is it not also part of the “glorious” history that should be addressed?

In order to answer these questions, we should return to MacCannell’s phases for “site sacralization”, looking particularly in more detail at the first two phases: naming and framing / elevating. Although MacCannell did not provide detailed methodologies together with the theoretical discussion of these phases, it is possible to ponder on them by referring to other works on the same topic.<sup>19</sup> According to MacCannell, naming occurs when any historical site is “marked off [by society or institutions] from similar objects as worthy of preservation”.<sup>20</sup>

Although MacCannell seems to rely on Peirce’s Theory of Signs in order to distinguish the given meaning of the sign, he also clearly transforms the classical triadic elements of sign in Peirce’s model (representamen + interpretant + object = sign) into a model in which “attraction” assumes the function of sign. In order to be deemed attractive enough for tourism, any site should have a form, not necessarily material, that the attraction takes. The site should also give that attraction a meaning by referring to “information about a specific site,” which is called a “marker” by MacCannell. In a nutshell: “A marker represents something about a site to the tourist, which helps delineate and create an attraction.”<sup>21</sup> This marker could be in various formats, or in combinations of different formats including information about the site found in pictures, plans or a map, or even city guides, travel companions, brochures and stories.

The naming phase is the initial step toward “site sacralization” because it establishes what distinguishes the site from other similar sites. In a historical setting this unavoidably becomes entangled with the question of what happened in a given place at a given time.<sup>22</sup> In our case, the question remains the same: What happened in the Aziziye Bastions during the War?

### **Battle of Aziziye?**

According to Hozier, after the Russian army captured Kars they moved towards Erzurum and laid siege on the city. However, after the arrangement of the forces around Erzurum, the Russian military command realized that “the reinforcements had arrived too late in the season for anything to be accomplished” and “the defeat of the Russians before the walls of the city, on November 9, proved to them that the place was not to be easily taken by assault.”<sup>23</sup> Where is Aziziye as an epic, as a saga to the “glorious” deeds of men and women of Erzurum? That is the only mention of Aziziye, with no detailed account to be found. Another contemporary

account written by Francis Vinton Greene does not mention it at all, not even as a “defeat of Russians before the wall”.<sup>24</sup>

C.B. Norman was an officer in the Royal Artillery who was sent to Turkey to observe the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. In his account of the war, he devotes two pages to the events at Aziziye, mostly focusing on the military decisions and how the attack was carried out in terms of the Russian command.<sup>25</sup> He interprets the whole event as the zeal of one “staff officer who was an Armenian extraction, named Tarnaieff” and he continues by describing how Heinemann, as a “bold, daring leader”, goes with the idea of sneak attack to Aziziye works.<sup>26</sup> It is a well-known fact that C.B. Norman was “an advanced philo-Turk” and as a British officer his main concern was the state of the Russian army, whose advancement in Caucasia could be threatening to British interests in India via Persia.<sup>27</sup> This is why he interprets Tarnaieff’s attempt, who “was for some years employed in the Russian consulate”, as evidence for the Russian plan to capture Erzurum many years ago.<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, his account of the events at Aziziye and the aftermath is clearly one of the more detailed accounts from contemporary works covering the war. He also mentions the rallying of civilians to the help of the armed Ottoman forces, which is a constituent element in generic stories of Aziziye:

Awakened to the sense of their real danger, thousands of citizens, stirred with frenzy by the wild exhortation of the Moolahs (who thundered forth their anathemas on the hated Giaour from every minaret), dashed up to the citadel, where arms were hurriedly distributed. [...] By 7 a.m. the whole road from the Tabreez Gate to the Azizi was crowded with a mass of armed men proceeding to defend the city.<sup>29</sup>

There is no mention of heroics or extraordinary deeds that cannot be observed in other skirmishes, operations and battles throughout the course of a war.

Another contemporary account<sup>30</sup> sees the Russian attack as an ill-judged attempt, never mentioning “Aziziye” or “Azizi” in its one-page narrative. This account looks at the casualties suffered and how they were exaggerated by both sides. The examples can be easily multiplied, all leading to more or less the same conclusion: Aziziye was in no way dramatically different from other events, with the exception of the involvement of civilians, though this can also be observed in several other instances. It is only another of the skirmishes, scimmages, or whatever would be the perfect military term – just another defensive strategy against the Russian assault among many. It is not even differentiated by an ultimate Ottoman victory. During the course of the Caucasian front of the *93 Harbi*, you can find other instances in which the Ottoman army enjoyed temporary victories. On the other hand, all these accounts of war were written by outside observers or contemporary journalists, officials, etc. What about the Ottoman accounts of the War? Do they also describe events with this same level of normalcy, or do they represent it as an epic or saga as their counterparts in the Turkish Republic did?

Let us look at the memoirs of Gazi Ahmed Muhtar Paşa (1839 – 1919), who was sent to take charge of military operations as the head of the Anatolian Army in the Caucasian front of the *93 Harbi* after his success in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the rebellion in 1875. In his memoirs, he devotes one and a half pages to an account of the events that happened at the Aziziye Bastions. His rendering of

events does not come close to the enthusiasm and high level of heroism that can be observed in modern accounts. He simply describes how his attention was drawn to the fact that the source of “cannon and rifle discharge sounds creating a great uproar” was “the complex of three bastions named the Aziziye Bastions.”<sup>31</sup> He continues to spell out the steps that were taken to clarify what was happening and the military decisions he made to take action against the Russian attack once it became clear that the Russians had occupied the first and second bastions of the complex. He summarizes how the conflict proceeded and ended in terms of military actions. He then concludes by enumerating the casualties for whom he provides an explanation of 400 civilian dead and wounded among them: “The people of Erzurum also came bearing arms and acted together with the military troops in pursuit of enemy.”<sup>32</sup>

No heroics of an unprecedented scale, no extreme measures, no glory – a military skirmish among many others. It is understandable for a military commander to adopt a dry and factual style showing him to be interested only in the problem at hand, what action to take and the result. This may be the reason behind any lack of enthusiasm in the matter. Let us, therefore, turn our attention to the search for an epic in other memoirs.

“Başımıza Gelenler” [Woe is us], the memoirs of Mehmed Arif (1845 – 1897) may provide what is missing in the memoirs of his superior, Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa. Mehmed Arif, who was born in Erzurum, wrote these recollections of the 93 *Harbi* between 1878 and 1897, published post-mortem by his children in Egypt in 1903. The memoirs basically cover his observations in a close to chronological setting when he served as a head clerk under Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa in the 93 *Harbi*. It is perhaps the most cited and readily available work on the 93 *Harbi* in Turkey. It enjoyed eight different editions with a total of 16 reprints by six different publishers, two of which were in Arabic-Ottoman script, the others in Latin letters; most of the editions are free style and simplified transcriptions of Ottoman-Arabic script into the Latin alphabet. It is the most widely available memoir written in Turkish that focuses only on the Caucasian front.

In “Başımıza Gelenler”, Mehmed Arif devotes three pages to the incident of the Aziziye Bastions. Most of his narrative reflects what was written by Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, in a more informal style and using looser wording. He also gives a little more detail about the actual fight that happened in the blockhouses when the Ottoman soldiers attempted to take over the bastions. Other than that, his rendering follows the footsteps and framework of his superior. What about the deeds of civilians and the help they gave to military troops? He mentions this as follows: “The people of Erzurum, who also flooded in bearing their firearms, attacked there after the soldiers [...] Some of the people even did a pretty good job with their Yatağan swords in their hands.”<sup>33</sup> Even though Mehmed Arif is very sympathetic towards his own people throughout his memoirs, and most certainly seizes every opportunity to mention how the Ottoman people and soldiers behaved heroically and altruistically throughout the war<sup>34</sup>, he does not underline the experience of Aziziye as an extraordinary experience in war time.

By illustrating the absence of patriotic or heroic sentiment, we are not trying to minimize the importance of what happened in Aziziye. On the contrary, we are trying to emphasize the fact that during and just after the war, Aziziye was not seen

as an extraordinary part of the war by participating observers of any nature (soldiers, journalists, bureaucrats, officials, etc.). They included it in their accounts, as we can see from the examples, and sometimes elaborated on what happened and how it happened in more detail, but never elevated it above other events. Then in 1973 Zeki Başar writes under the heading “Aziziye Epopée,” that:

[...] women, men, youngsters and elders, and even children ran from four corners of the city towards Mecidiye like the early spring floods, roaring as strong as a lion [...] Tussling with their own deaths, the people of Erzurum with cleavers and axes in their hands, succeeded in bringing the Turkish flag back to Aziziye.<sup>35</sup>

Is this mere stylish exaggeration, or did Başar have access to other resources that those that Mehmed Arif had been unable to lay his hands on? Yes, he did. He had the Turkish flag<sup>36</sup> available to procure and place in the hands of Erzurum’s heroes under Ottoman rule. This however, does not answer the first question of how. In order to suggest any answer to that question, we should go back where we began: The missing 20 years of Hamidian rule that are not mentioned or addressed in the Erzurum city guides.

### How to bridge a historiographical gap

Early Republican historiography and its relation with the Ottoman past is a vast subject. What concerns us here is only a small fragment in which Ottoman heritage is re-formulated in a selective manner; what to connect and not to connect to the new Republic. In this manner, World War I plays a crucial role, especially in terms of Ottoman war propaganda enmeshed with the War of Independence and its overlapping cadres of military effort. It was a two-sided sword that cuts both ways, in other words the Ottoman past is both overlooked and adopted during and in the aftermath of the Anatolian Wars.

The new Turkish Republic and its official ideology was formulated in juxtaposition to the “incipient public opposition against Abdülhamid's autocracy” of the *İttihad ve Terakki* [Committee of Union and Progress] and opposition against the policies of *İttihad ve Terakki* resulted in defeat in World War I. The second position was fulfilled again by the outer circles of the *İttihad ve Terakki* cadres. Those cadres were the same cadres that had led the Anatolian Wars that resulted in the establishment of the Republic on the former, supposedly core lands of the Ottoman Empire. In fact, as Hanioglu expressed in his work, most of the Young Turks who had taken part in, “the First World War and the ensuing War of Independence, and who witnessed the coming into being of the Turkish Republic, saw many of their dreams fulfilled.”<sup>37</sup>

As a result, the historiography of the new Republic at the same time denied and accepted continuity with the Ottoman past. The early Republican historiography of the *93 Harbi* reflects this contradiction, crystallized in the work of Halil Sedes, who can be considered to be the foremost historian laying the foundation of how the *93 Harbi* was handled, and who provides an off-shoot of military history concentrat-

ing on why and how the Ottomans were defeated despite the best efforts of military administration in the field.<sup>38</sup> It would be productive to look as closely as possible at this development and how it was played out in a symbiotic relationship with popular history before culminating in the “sacralized” Aziziye monument.

In his “Introduction” written in 1934, Halil Sedes states that until that time, other than some memoirs and Süleyman Paşa’s interpretation of the war, there were not enough “official” publications on the subject of the *93 Harbi*.<sup>39</sup> It is not clear what Sedes means by “official” in terms of the existing historical literature on the *93 Harbi*, which is mostly produced by military officials of war, such as Süleyman Paşa’s work<sup>40</sup> and perhaps the only monograph on the *93 Harbi* before his own work, *Son Osmanlı Muharebesi* [The Last Russo-Ottoman War] by Ahmed Saib, who was also a former military official. Echoing Sedes, Saib complains about the difficulty of writing on the subject because of the absence of earlier printed works in Ottoman language. He continues to reflect on how difficult it was to write about the *93 Harbi* because of the lack of sources in Turkish and because of the bias of works written in foreign languages:

On the other hand, in our judgment it is impossible to write about the particulars of this war from European works because it is a known fact that the knowledge of our affairs of persons who are educated in European languages is deficient and in many circumstances they are biased.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike Sedes, Ahmed Saib was not in a position to extensively use the military archives, and his work was fundamentally built upon Turkish and Russian memoirs, such as the aforementioned account by Mehmed Arif, and French accounts of the war. Despite his insistence on the biased nature of European accounts he seems to have used them extensively in order to show that the Ottoman defeat was not the fault of Ottoman military cadres but due to the ineptness of Abdülhamid II and the central military administration.<sup>42</sup>

This was also a recurring theme in the voluminous work by former General Halil Sedes, which, in a letter sent to the author in 1939, was praised by President İsmet İnönü as a “major accomplishment in modern Turkish history.”<sup>43</sup> Sedes also seems to have been interested in the Ottoman administration of war and the role of the central Ottoman government in rebutting the efforts and minor victories of military commanders, both at the eastern and western frontiers of the War.<sup>44</sup> Russia’s victory over the Ottoman forces with low-grade weapons and at least a weaker army on paper has been the main supporting argument in these accounts for the ineptness of the Hamidian governance of war. All in all, the result was so stunning, both in loss of territory and prestige for the Ottoman administration, that early historiography of the *93 Harbi*, represented in Saib and Sedes, reflects on this defeat by underlining the ineffective military success of the military commanders, the heroic and extraordinary deeds of military figures such as Gazi Osman Paşa, and the defence of Plevna.

This tendency, which can be more or less observed in other works on the *93 Harbi*<sup>45</sup>, is also connected with the changing political landscape in the Ottoman Empire after the dethronement of Abdülhamid II and the proclamation of a constitutional monarchy, as well as the ensuing wars in the Balkans and World War I under the rule of the military cadres of *İttihad ve Terakki*. World War I and the continuity formulated between the *93 Harbi* and the Ottoman’s military efforts at the eastern

frontier during the War refuelled Russian-Ottoman rivalry. Under the command of Enver Paşa, the Ottoman army launched an offensive against the Russians in the Caucasus in December 1914, which resulted in the loss of nearly 80% of the Ottoman troops. It was nearly impossible to draw parallels between the 93 *Harbi* and the Battle of Sarikamış and its aftermath. Unfortunately, as Koroğlu clarifies, *İttihad ve Terakkî's* “irrational war propaganda” and rigid censorship on the press bifurcated such parallelisms: “The newspapers had not been able to write about the Sarikamış disaster or about the failure of the Canal Mission. To the contrary, due to government pressure they had even had to present them as great victories.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, the abolition of the monarchy in Russia after the February Revolution and Russia’s withdrawal from World War I with the Armistice of Erzincan (5 December 1917) transformed this defeat into something else when the Ottoman Empire’s full defeat by the Allies was sealed with the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920.

Between these two dates – Russia’s withdrawal from the war in 1917 and the ratification of the Ottoman Empire’s defeat with Sèvres in 1920 – the Ottoman army was at war with new regional powers in the Caucasus. The establishment of several short-lived Armenian-controlled entities, such as the Republic of Mountainous Armenia, and the resistance against the Ottoman Empire’s deportation policies opened up a new path in “atrocities” literature<sup>47</sup>, which establishes links between World War I and the Anatolian Wars that culminated in the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Their role in the formation of a national identity of the early Republic, as well as the territorial organizations of resistance against the Treaty of Sèvres were significant in terms of shoring up the sought-for continuity between the Ottoman Empire’s old hostilities against Russia and new pockets of resistance against Armenian armed forces in the region. In this respect, the involvement of Erzurum and its environs in the Anatolian Independence Movement is entangled with these overlapping stories of Russian/Armenian atrocities against the Turkish homeland.

It is this gradual process that marks the Aziziye Bastion. In MacCannell’s terms the framing and elevation operates at this level and is built upon this continuity. The Aziziye Bastion is a site to remember not only the 93 *Harbi* but also successive wars against a common enemy that threatened the very existence of Islam and Turks in the region. What ties this site to a common and shared story is not only constructed by “official” historiography but also by popular figures and their stories that are entangled with religious myths, fables and rituals such as visiting graves in order to fulfil someone’s wishes. In this respect, Nene Hatun and stories constructed around this heroine figure give Aziziye Bastion a “sacralized” position, therefore elevating it above similar historical sites.

### Nene Hatun

On Wikipedia<sup>48</sup>, Nene Hatun is described as “a Turkish folk heroine, who became known for brutally massacring dying and wounded Russian soldiers left behind[d] on the battlefield after the recapture of Fort Aziziye in Erzurum from Russian forces at the start of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 – 1878”, whereas the Turkish version venerates her as a “Turkish woman who put her stamp on history by partici-

pating in the defence of the Aziziye Bastion.” Both Wikipedia articles are marked in need of additional citations for verification. Indeed, this is the gist of the problem: There is no monographic study about Nene Hatun based on verifiable historical facts. The bulk of the material readily available is literary in nature, and mainly aimed at children.

The historical knowledge concerning Nene Hatun depends on general works on the role of women in the Turkish Independence War.<sup>49</sup> These compilations usually underline the significance of women’s participation in the war as a precursor to their role in the newly founded Republic. They usually set up a prototypical female heroine instead of an actual figure who lived and died in a historical setting. As Kızıltoprak mentions in her thesis, in which she specifically tries to deconstruct the myth of Kara Fatma (another female heroine myth) – “Nene Hatun became popular not during the Ottoman period, rather during the Republican period.”<sup>50</sup> Her life story, as it can also be observed by Kızıltoprak’s explanations on Kara Fatma, is embedded in a general national myth of Turkish women as a defender of the homeland alongside the men. In this respect, the story of Nene Hatun and what “really” happened during the defence of Erzurum against the Russian threat does not matter at all. What matters is how Nene Hatun, as a fictional character rather than a flesh and blood person, is represented alongside other similar heroines, such as Kara Fatma among others.

It is nearly impossible to give a balanced summary of the true nature of events because the variations are multiple. In one version, Nene Hatun has an infant daughter, in another two children; her husband is in the house or on the battlefield; in one story the man on the battlefield is her brother, while in another he died before she rushed to Aziziye, and so on. Nonetheless her story or at least the general version that is most repeated, goes like this: Nene Hatun was a married woman before the war, and when the *93 Harbi* broke out, she moved to Erzurum from her village with her family. During the Aziziye attack her husband joined the defence of the city and told her to stay at home and kill herself and the children in order to prevent themselves from torture and rape if the Russians succeeded in breaching the city defences. Despite her husband’s warning, Nene Hatun left her children behind, rallied the other women behind her and rushed to Aziziye armed with an axe to fight side by side with the men against the Russians.

“Nene Hatun: Aziziye Kahramanı” [Nene Hatun: The Heroine of Aziziye] written by Tevfik Fikret Karagözoğlu and published in 1959 as the 11<sup>th</sup> book in the series of “Dağarcık Çocuk Yayınları” [Dağarcık Children’s Publications] was one of the earliest examples of this fictional character based on Nene Hatun.<sup>51</sup> In his book, Karagözoğlu sets two precedents that were to be used as the background again and again in children’s literary publications that followed: the Russians as the eternal enemies of Turks, and Armenians as the “ungrateful traitors” who provided guidance to the Russians.

The opening sentence of the story reads: “24 April, 1877: Moskofs<sup>52</sup>, who have always turned against the Turks throughout history, took the bit between their teeth and attacked our eastern frontiers like a hungry pack of wolves.”<sup>53</sup> In the following ten to eleven pages, Karagözoğlu tells how bravely and gallantly the undermanned Ottoman forces fought against the greater forces of the Moskofs. The story of Nene Hatun is introduced through a letter from her husband, Mehmet, which she

received in Erzurum, where she had been sent for her own safety by her father, just before the battle of Deveboynu. On the very same night, Nene Hatun's dream introduces the second antagonist in her story, namely the Armenians: "In her dream, she saw her husband Mehmet wounded gravely and her brother Hasan died a martyr. The enemy soldiers had set foot in [her] village with the guidance of Armenians, had been torturing her mother and father, and had bayoneted [her] children in their crib."<sup>54</sup> This double antagonism leads the writer to follow a different narrative strategy regarding Nene Hatun's involvement in the defence of Aziziye. Unlike in other stories, in Karagözoğlu's work, Nene Hatun kills two Armenian thugs dressed as Ottoman soldiers who try to rape her, attends the meeting held by the Ottoman Commander asking for civilians' help to defend the city, and then joins other Turkish women with whom she fights against the uprising in Erzurum's Armenian quarter.<sup>55</sup>

The story of Nene Hatun's heroic deeds closes with victory and the replacement of the Turkish flag on Aziziye<sup>56</sup>: "[...] as the sun was descending slowly, a Turkish woman was raising our glorious flag, which she removed from her bosom to place on the highest point of the Aziziye Bastion. This woman was Nene. This flag was the flag that had been thrown into the mud in the Armenian quarter a day earlier."<sup>57</sup> An illustration accompanies this passage (see Figure 1), depicting Nene Hatun as she raises the flag. This illustration is in opposition to later depictions of her, in which she was portrayed in more conventional Muslim female garments (compare with Figures 2 and 3).



**Figure 1: Nene Hatun raising the flag after the victory at Aziziye<sup>58</sup>**

Although this depiction is not repeated in other illustrations in the book, Nene Hatun as a Republican heroine is also emphasized in the final pages of the book. When Karagözoğlu closes his story by describing how she was also present at the opening ceremony of the Aziziye monument for the martyrs alongside the military dignitaries in 1952, he establishes a continuity represented by Nene Hatun's life. This could be understandable if the author had not skipped several decades, including World War I, the Anatolian War of Independence and the early Republican years. In that respect, Nene Hatun's physical as well as mythical existence serves

as a missing link in order to retrospectively expand the nationalist ideology to an Ottoman past in which Aziziye stood as an example of Turkish patriotism. In that respect, Karagözoğlu's Nene Hatun story establishes a tradition by antagonizing Russians via Armenians and blurring the limits of the historical period by introducing elements from World War I and the Anatolian Independence Wars as well as the Turkish Republic.

Other fictional works written until today have repeated this same pattern with different narrative strategies: the target audience of Saadettin Kaplan's "Esra ile Nene Hatun" [Esra and Nene Hatun]<sup>59</sup> were pupils in the second year of primary school. This book is based on a dialogue between Esra, a primary school pupil who refuses to go to the grocery store because of heavy snow, and an imaginary Nene Hatun, whose ghost appears in front of her. In their dialogue, Nene Hatun introduces herself saying: "My name is not important my darling. I am a Turkish woman. However they call me Nene Hatun. It is how the Erzurum Bastions and the heathens of Moskof know me and recognize me."<sup>60</sup>

She tells her story as a general example of Turkish ferocity when it comes to defending the country. With no explicit reference to the 93 *Harbi* or to the Ottoman setting, her general narrative could easily be placed anywhere during the Anatolian War of Independence or World War I.

A primary school book entitled "Erdemlerimizi Keşfedelim" [Let's Discover Our Virtues], published in 2011, is made up of five didactic stories for children in order to set examples for patriotism, bravery, honesty, making amends, respect and self-sacrifice.<sup>61</sup> The story on patriotism is based on Nene Hatun's story. The usual antagonists are repeated again: "Russian soldiers are terrorizing everywhere: [...] will the Armenians wait? They are cooperating with Moskofs."<sup>62</sup> Again, the story ends with poetic prose describing how Turks, each and every one of whom is a son of Nene Hatun, fought and died a martyr alongside her son in Çanakkale.<sup>63</sup> In other words, Nene Hatun was the embodiment of the Turkish struggle for survival that culminated in the establishment of the Turkish Republic. It is for this reason that every story about Nene Hatun sets up a strategy to connect her involvement in Aziziye with the Turkish Republic. In a book published in 2010 entitled "Anaların Anası Nene Hatun" [The Mother of Mothers – Nene Hatun] as a part of the series "Türk Klasikleri, Tarihsel Yaşamöyküsü" [Turkish Classics, Historical Biography], Nene Hatun is represented, as the title suggests, in the same light. After a standard rendering of how Nene Hatun's contribution changed the course of the Aziziye defence despite the backstabbing Armenians, the editor venerates her as "a symbol of bravery" for all the women in the Turkish War of Independence.<sup>64</sup>

The two most recent books on the topic are no exception: Both begin to tell the story of Nene Hatun in Aziziye and end by describing Nene Hatun as a figure who epitomized the gallantry, virtuosity and bravery of Turkish women in general. İbrahim Ünsal's "Yürekli Kadın: Nene Hatun" [Great-Hearted Woman: Nene Hatun] is the last example of what we have discussed so far and the fourth book in a popular and widely distributed series named "Bizim Kahramanlarımız" [Our Heroes] published in 2013.<sup>65</sup> In Ünsal's book, the usual antagonistic elements are exactly as we would expect them: We have Russians ever present and ever venomous and Armenians as the traitors; they even have their own chapter titled "Ermeni İhaneti" [Armenian Treason].<sup>66</sup> Unlike the other examples, Ünsal uses popular sources,

such as Mehmed Arif's "Başımıza Gelenler"<sup>67</sup>, for anecdotal historical background and events. These quasi-historical<sup>68</sup> anecdotes serves to promote make-believe anecdotes related to Nene Hatun, such as her nearly perfect nationalist oratory to rally support for the defence of Erzurum in a meeting she held for the Muslim women of the city (Figure 2) just after the defeat at the Battle of Deveboynu (4 November 1877).<sup>69</sup> The illustration portrays Muslim women figures who meet in a gloomy room wearing what are supposed to be "local" garments. Unlike the illustration discussed previously (see Figure 1), the book's illustrator Mustafa Afşin Gürler depicts Nene Hatun using conventional Muslim motifs, something that is closer to reality although the same motifs could also be used to construct a completely different imagination (compare with Figure 2).

Despite these variations, Ünsal, in a similar vein with others, closes his book with a chapter titled "Nene Hatun Yaşıyor" ["Nene Hatun Lives"]. In this chapter, he juxtaposes two stories: one taking place in Erzurum in 1935 and one in Istanbul in 2013, both set in a history class. In the 1935 story a history teacher listens to a presentation given by two students then tells his students the story of Nene Hatun's heroism and takes them to visit her in order for her to tell the story of Aziziye on the anniversary of Erzurum's liberation on 12 March 1918. The second story also takes place on the anniversary of the same date, with a student from Erzurum reading a poem dedicated to Nene Hatun in order to present her to his classmates. It is no surprise to find a Nene Hatun of the Turkish War of Independence fighting for the Turkish homeland at Aziziye.<sup>70</sup>



Figure 2: Nene Hatun (on the left with her baby) giving a rallying speech to the Muslim women of Erzurum<sup>71</sup>

Two exceptions, in terms of both targeted audience and genre, are M. Talat Uzunyaylı's historical novel named "Nene Hatun"<sup>72</sup> and the comic book named "Erzurumlu Kahraman Nene Hatun" [Heroine of Erzurum, Nene Hatun].<sup>73</sup> The first work does not deviate from the standard way of conveying the story of Nene Hatun and can therefore be considered an adult version of the aforementioned children's literature: a more complicated storyline, more detailed historical background, more attention to plot. The rest of the story resembles its shorter and simpler counterpart, especially when it comes to pointing out the antagonists: treacherous Armenians in the service of the Russians as the ferocious enemy of Islam and Turks.

The second exception was published as the first comic book series called "Türk Tarihi Gerçek Öyküler Çizgi Roman Dizisi: Kurtuluş Savaşı Kadın Kahramanlar" [Turkish History Real Stories Comic Book Series: Heroines of the War of Independence].<sup>74</sup> Apart from the connotations in the title of the series<sup>75</sup>, the introduction to the series clearly states that "[...] Nene Hatun who fought for her honour leaving her small baby in the cradle [...] is the real hero that we should recognize above phony and virtual heroes with whom we amuse ourselves." It is, therefore, necessary "to read again and again Atatürk's address to the Turkish Youth."<sup>76</sup> As a result, Nene Hatun turns into a national superhero who hacks and slashes Russian and Armenian monsters: "Nene Hatun's axe silenced another villain. She was finishing them off with a strike [...] and her face was covered by spattered blood."<sup>77</sup>

The similarity of the illustration technique in this work is surprisingly similar to the established drawing techniques applied in Japanese-American *manga*. The excessive representation of violence towards Armenians coincides with the often ignored villains/monsters of specific *manga* stories (see Figure 3). Moreover, how Armenians are represented in terms of facial elements, specifically white eyes with no pupils in contrast to the anatomically larger and coloured eyes of Turkish/Ottoman soldiers, underlines the superiority of Nene Hatun in contrast to the inferiority of Armenians and Russians.

Turkish filmography has produced two different kinds of Nene Hatun as a heroine. The first, "Gazi Kadın" [Veteran Woman] was shot in 1973<sup>78</sup>, which, as the lead actor Kadir İnanır, who played the role of Ahmet later confessed, began as a film on Nene Hatun that turned into a more general love story revolving around Zeynep (played by Türkan Şoray) and Ahmed during the 93 *Harbi*.<sup>79</sup> In a way this film was a replica of famous Ottoman-Byzantium movies shot during the 1970s. These movies tended to highlight the power of Turks-Muslims despite the tricks of Byzantine Christians shot on an "imagined" (a)historical background.<sup>80</sup>

The film was shot as the story of a Muslim/Turkish heroine. Nevertheless, the movie was in fact more of a love story and was different to the storyline of the usual Nene Hatun stories. In the film Nene Hatun was named Zeynep. Immediately after her wedding day she is left alone by her husband Ahmet who leaves for war together with her brother. During the film, we never hear her being called Nene Hatun. At the very end of the story Zeynep is shown as a heroine when she encounters veterans retreating from the front. She prevents them from retreating with a speech: "Isn't one arm enough to use a weapon, isn't one eye enough to fight? What will we do if our glorious prayer (*ezan*) does not resound in the sky? For the sake of God, for the sake of our motherland, for the sake of Turkishness, for the sake of Islam, we should fight!" The film ends with the famous lines of Mithat Cemal Kuntay:

“Blood gave the true meaning of the flags! Soil is the motherland if there is someone to die for it!”



**Figure 3: Nene Hatun depicted as a super-hero slaying Armenian monsters**

In September 2010, a new film on Nene Hatun was released in Turkey: unsurprisingly titled “Nene Hatun: Aziziye”.<sup>81</sup> This second movie reflects, what was sought to be achieved in the abovementioned comic book: to represent Nene Hatun as similar to modern Hollywood heroes, and to show Aziziye as the epitome of Turkish patriotism with visually appealing scenes. Even though their aspirations to match up with Hollywood failed colossally<sup>82</sup>, some scenes did reflect the bloody and violent imagery of the comic book (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4: A still from “Nene Hatun: Aziziye”, showing Nene Hatun attacking a Russian soldier.**

The promotion of “Nene Hatun: Aziziye” was based on the idea that: “Every single piece of motherland is valuable to such an extent that even if every man dies, women do not hand any piece of it into the enemy.” In addition, as the part of the promotion of the film, it was released on 29 October 2010, the 87<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic. This shows the continuity established in terms of Republican symbolism alongside an ahistorical representation of Nene Hatun. Like most of the books, the film and the comic book also finish their story by skipping a period of the Republican era in order to establish a direct link between the Nene Hatun of the *93 Harbi* and the Nene Hatun who was recognized as a national heroine in 1952 with the establishment of the Aziziye monument.

Therefore it is not a coincidence that all of the Nene Hatun’s stories – whether a children’s book, a historical novel, a comic book or a feature film – were constructed after the transformation of the Aziziye Bastion into a monument. It would be seen that the transformation itself provided so one may say, a place to reflect on this local and non-Republican story and shift it into the greater discourse of Turkish nationalism in construction. The establishment of the monument and how it was introduced in the 1950s in newspapers is the next point to examine because, in a sense, this can be considered as the constituent element upon which every Nene Hatun story turns.

### **Newspapers: The Aziziye Bastions become a monument**

The 1950s were a turning point in the history of Turkish Republic – socially, culturally and especially politically. The single-party regime had been demolished by the Menderes government (Democrat Party), and in the beginning of that decade there was a so-called libertarian mood. In other words, that period was determined as the first multi-party regime of the Turkish Republic. During this time the Democrat Party founded its own official history that was based on the Islamic-Turkish tradition, rather than the secular one established by the Republican Party.

According to the Islamist-Turkish tradition or the official history of the Democrat Party, the Ottoman past played a significant role. In this Islamist-Turkish synthesis, the Democrat Party aimed to commence the narrative from the beginning of the *93 Harbi* as an ongoing war – including the Balkan Wars – until the end of the Turkish War of Independence. However, the Ottoman defeat in the *93 Harbi* was totally ignored and was even transformed into a victory of the Ottoman army and combined with this narrative.

Under this Islamist-Turkish narrative, the Aziziye Bastions were used as a link between the Turkish Republic and the Ottoman Empire. They have symbolized the ongoing war in Anatolia and the importance of the *93 Harbi* as a history of victory. Within this framework, the Aziziye Bastions were established on 30 August 1952 as the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this victory. Moreover, the 30<sup>th</sup> of August holds further importance as *Zafer Bayramı* [Victory Day], which commemorates Turkish victories in the War of Independence over the Greek occupation forces on 30 August 1922, marking the full independence of Anatolia from enemy invasion. It has symbolized the victory of the Turkish people under the command of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, at the Battle of Dumlupınar on 30 August 1922. The War of Independence against the invading forces began in 1919, at the end of

World War I. It reached its final phase and between 22 August and 30 August 1922 the enemy was defeated.

In this sense, the commemoration of the Aziziye Bastions and the *93 Harbi* has been combined with the Independence of the Turkish Republic. Looking at the newspapers of that period we can easily recognize this commemoration as an imagined national narrative. One of the main newspapers, "Akşam", wrote about the opening of the Aziziye Bastions (in the article they called it the "Aziziye Abidesi" [Aziziye Monument]) that would be opened with the participation of the President of the Turkish National Assembly, Refik Koraltan.<sup>83</sup> In this article, they also gave the history of the Aziziye War, according to which, after the Russian invasion with 50,000 soldiers on 12 April 1877, the army of the Ottoman Empire first lost Kars and the Russian army came into Erzurum. Although Ahmet Muhtar Paşa held the Velibaba, Horasan, Oltu, Deveboynu, Uzun Ahmet, and Çobandere lines, fifteen Russian spies in Turkish clothes succeeded in capturing the Aziziye Bastions.<sup>84</sup> In this war narrative, "Akşam" determined that the people of Erzurum, including women, old people, and even children holding axes, knives, and sticks helped Ahmet Muhtar Paşa's battalions and regained the Aziziye Bastions.<sup>85</sup> The article concluded that the Aziziye War was an example of what the Turkish People could do against the enemy as a pride epos.<sup>86</sup>

On 3 September 1952<sup>87</sup> the newspaper "Milliyet" [Nationality] printed a story that emphasized the participation of the President of National Assembly, the Minister of National Education, members of parliaments, hundreds of teachers from primary, secondary and high schools, and finally thousands of students and citizens to the opening of the Aziziye Bastions.<sup>88</sup> "Milliyet" also wrote that many of the people attended the memorial of the Aziziye Bastions wearing traditional clothes, even those that symbolized wartime. They re-enacted the Aziziye War with attacks of Turkish people against the Russian Army, holding axes, knives etc.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, "Milliyet" printed the entire speech of the President of the National Assembly. In his speech Koraltan addressed the martyrs (*şehid*) of the Aziziye War.<sup>90</sup> He based his speech more on the Islamic sense by defining the importance of the martyrs since the Malazgirt Pitched Battle, which symbolizes the entrance of Turks into Anatolia. Significantly, he mentioned the migration of Turks from Central Asia or from the Altai Mountains, which was also linked to the *93 Harbi*, Aziziye Bastions and hence the long period of Turkish settlement in that region.<sup>91</sup> The historical combination of all Turkish and Islamic commemorations shows a sort of confusion.

Nuyan Yiğit wrote about the opening of the Aziziye Bastions in the newspaper "Cumhuriyet" [The Republic].<sup>92</sup> In her article she mentioned that General Nurettin Baransel on 3 July 1951 swore to accomplish the construction of a monument dedicated to the memory of the heroic Turkish martyrs who fought on 9 November 1877 at Aziziye.<sup>93</sup> Afterwards, Yiğit gave a description of the commemoration of the Aziziye Bastions (students, teachers, soldiers with traditional clothes of the wartime). Nene Hatun also attended the commemoration and Yiğit carried out an interview with her, in which she spoke of the day she fought against the Russian army with her carving knife. On the monument it was written that:

These girls and boys at the age of marriage, old grandmothers and soldiers attacked, fought, killed – and some were killed by – enemies in order to protect their

honour and the pride and glory of the Turkish People. The Turkish Nation has enshrined them in their hearts: 1293 [1877] – 1952.<sup>94</sup>

In the newspaper “Vakit” [Time], Doğan Tanyer gave a long history of the city of Erzurum since the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC until the end of the 93 *Harbi*.<sup>95</sup> In other words, he aimed at showing that Erzurum was established as a village and then led mostly by Islamic or Turkish emperors, including the Abbasid period, Alparslan Khan who was a first Turkish commander to enter Anatolia, and Selim I (Sultan Selim the Stern). Tanyer emphasized the importance of the victory and mentioned General Baransel’s words about the protection of the Aziziye Bastions.<sup>96</sup>

“Ulus” [People], the official newspaper of the Republican People’s Party (RPP), mentioned the opening of the Aziziye Bastions in a similar way to “Milliyet”, “Cumhuriyet” or “Akşam”.<sup>97</sup> However, before the Democrat Party was elected in 1950, Ulus published a special newspaper supplement about the city of Erzurum and the 93 *Harbi*, called “Erzurum Günü” [The Day of Erzurum].<sup>98</sup> In that supplement Cevat Dursunoğlu and Salim Altuğ (who was also a RPP representative at that time) wrote about the heroic history of Erzurum. The most different aspect of the way in which this was remembered was that it was linked to the first Turkic Tribes from Central Asia, Seljuqs, and the Turkish War of Independence, and therefore with Mustafa Kemal, but not directly to the Ottoman Empire or the Islamic culture of the city (as was emphasized by other newspapers).<sup>99</sup>

As well as newspaper articles about the Aziziye Bastions, on 10 November 1952, the anniversary of the death of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, commemorative stamps were also printed, to the value of 15, 20, and 40 *kuruş*. As seen in Figure 4, these commemorative stamps showed the victory of the Aziziye Battle. The 15 *kuruş* stamp depicted Nene Hatun and her fight with a Russian soldier with her carving knife, the 20 *kuruş* stamp showed the Aziziye Bastions and the 40 *kuruş* stamp symbolized the view from the city of Erzurum before the 93 *Harbi*.



Figure 5: Commemorative Stamps for the Victory of Aziziye, 10 November 1952.

As discussed above, these stamps also show that the Aziziye Battle has always been associated with the victory of the Turkish army and directly linked with grift relations among the ongoing war, including the 93 *Harbi*, Balkan Wars and World War I. However this remembrance was mostly used for the Turkish Independence War.

### Concluding remarks

In 2011, “Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Kuzeydoğu Anadolu Kalkınma Ajansı” (KUDA-KA) [Turkish Republic Northeast Anatolia Development Agency]<sup>100</sup> published a catalogue in which future investment plans laid out for TRA1 region that includes Erzurum, Bayburt and Erzincan.<sup>101</sup> In this catalogue, for Erzurum six out of 21 investment projects were touristic, and two of six touristic projects were related with the transformation of Palandöken and Büyük Kiremitlik Bastion into a recreation park and a boutique hotel respectively.<sup>102</sup> Under the project details for the Palandöken Bastion, among 22 bastions available Aziziye and the Mecidiye Bastions are mentioned as the most visited ones where the *93 Harbi* took place. Despite this prominent position, in the catalogue’s words “they were not protected and used properly.” According to the catalogue, there is an ongoing project to establish a war museum in the Mecidiye Bastion whereas the Aziziye Bastion is chosen to host a project, in which the *93 Harbi* is planned to be re-animated using miniaturized models.<sup>103</sup> These attempts to revitalize the potential of the Aziziye Bastion are likely to fail, at least in terms of creating an international war tourism attraction. This is related to what we have discussed so far; i.e. the integration of what had happened in Aziziye in particular and of the *93 Harbi* in general into a nationalist historiography.

One can easily conclude that the Aziziye Bastions are the symbols for remembering how the Turks, despite the best efforts of Armenian traitors in the service of Russians, would have succeeded to survive a series of wars; beginning with the *93 Harbi* (1877 – 1878), including the Italo-Ottoman War (called Libyan War [1911 – 1912], the Balkan Wars (1912 – 1913), and World War I (1914 – 1918), and ending with the Turkish War of Independence (1919 – 1923) which had been the highest point among them according to nationalist discourses. When Aziziye were monumentalized in the 1950s, it nationalized the *93 Harbi* as an event best remembered by the reproduction of Armenians and Russians as enemies. In this line of thought, Nene Hatun who lived till 1955 was a heroic female character who came to represent both this constructed continuity in terms of antagonism against the internal (Armenians) and external (Russians) enemies in the nation building process of the Turkish Republic. Hence, she has been depicted as a hero of the Turkish Independence War rather than one of the *93 Harbi*.

<sup>1</sup> For the sake of simplicity, we will use *93 Harbi* from this point onwards, referring to the year 1293 in the Hijri calendar.

<sup>2</sup> Among the many cf. Exploring Guide of Turkey, Istanbul, 2007; A Let’s Go Travel Guide Turkey, Istanbul, 2010; Suzanne Swan, Eyewitness Travel Turkey, London, 2010.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Ahmet Çolak; Çetin Korkmaz; Fikret Öztürk (eds.), Erzurum: Gezi Rehberi [Erzurum Travel Guide], İstanbul, 2011<sup>7</sup>; Ahmet Çolak; Çetin Korkmaz (eds.), Erzurum, Erzincan, Bayburt: Gezi Rehberi [Erzurum, Erzincan, Bayburt: Travel Guide], İstanbul, 2011; Rahmi Şener (ed.), Erzurum Gezi Rehberi [Erzurum Travel Guide], İstanbul, 2011; Muzaffer Taşyürek, Erzurum Gezi Rehberi [Erzurum Travel Guide], İstanbul, 2011; Hüseyin Yurttaş; Erhan Çandırcı, eds., Erzurum Turizm Rehberi [Tourism Guide of Erzurum], Erzurum, 2005; Ela Karasu (ed.), Erzurum Turizm Rehberi [Tourism Guide of Erzurum], İstanbul, 2009; İhsan Ünüvar, Erzurum Vilayeti [Province of Erzurum], İstanbul, 1954; Abdurrahim Şerif Beygu,

Erzurum: Tarihi, Anıtları, Kitabeleri [History of Erzurum, Its Monuments and Epitaphs], İstanbul, 1936.

<sup>4</sup> Ünüvar, Erzurum, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 36: "Kadın, erkek, genç, ihtiyar demeden Aziziye Tabyaları'nda düşmanla göğüs göğüse savaşın Erzurum halkı adeta bir destan yazar. Ancak bütün bunlara rağmen imparatorluğun da içinde bulunduğu durumdan dolayı yapılan antlaşmayla şehir terkedilir."

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 37-40.

<sup>7</sup> Taşyürek, Erzurum, 3, 100-104.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.: "Aziziyede kadın, erkek bütün Erzurum halkı dişıyla tırnağıyla savaşmasına rağmen şehri makûs kaderinden kurtaramamış olsa da, yaşananlar yakın tarihimizin destansı örneklerindedir."

<sup>9</sup> "[...] Erzurum'daki tabyalar şanlı tarihin bir parçalarıdır. Bu tabyaların gerekli tanımları ve çevre düzenleri ivedilikle ele alınmalıdır." Cit. in Erzurum İli Turizm Envanteri 1996, Erzurum, 1996, 40.

<sup>10</sup> Dean MacCannell, The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class, New York, 1976.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 43p.

<sup>12</sup> Erzurumun Kuruluşu, Kalesi ve Tabyaları [The Foundation of Erzurum, Its Fortress and Bastions], Erzurum, 1946, 2pp.

<sup>13</sup> Nusret Çam, Erzurum Tabyaları [Erzurum Bastions], Ankara, 1993, 18p.

<sup>14</sup> Belgin Aksak, Erzurum Tabyaları [Erzurum Bastions], BA Thesis, Atatürk University, 1988, 24-28.

<sup>15</sup> Based on Erzurum ve Civarı Haritasıdır [Map of Erzurum and Its Environs], Erkan-ı Harbiye-i Umumiye, İstanbul, 1917 – 1918.

<sup>16</sup> Aksak, Erzurum, 14; Çam, Erzurum, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Çam, Erzurum, 13, 24p.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 24-160.

<sup>19</sup> Linda Joyce Forristal; Dawn Gay Marsh; Xinran Y. Lehto, Revisiting MacCannell's Site Sacralization Theory as an Analytical Tool: Historic Prophetstown as a Case Study, *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 13, 6 (2011), 570-582.

<sup>20</sup> MacCannell, Tourist, 10, 44.

<sup>21</sup> Forristal; Marsh; Lehto, Site, 19, 572p.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Fiona McLean; Mary-Catherine Garden; Gordon Urquhart, Romanticising Tragedy: Culloden Battle Site in Scotland. In: Chris Ryan (ed.), *Battlefield Tourism*, Oxford, 2007, 221-234.

<sup>23</sup> Captain Henry Montague Hozier (ed.), *The Russo-Turkish War: Including an Account of the Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Power and the History of the Eastern Question (1877)*, London, 1878, 900.

<sup>24</sup> Francis Vinton Greene, *The Russian Army and Its Campaigns in Turkey in 1877 – 1878*, New York, 1879.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Boswell Norman, *Armenia, and the Campaign of 1877*, London; Paris; New York, 1878<sup>2</sup>, 404pp.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 403.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., iix-x.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 403.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 405.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Williams, *The Armenian Campaign: A Diary of the Campaign of 1877*, in *Armenia and Koordistan*, London, 1878, 352.

<sup>31</sup> Nuri Akbayer (ed.), *Gazi Ahmet Muhtar Paşa, Anılar 2: Sergüzeşt-i Hayatım'ın Cild-i Sanisi [Memoirs 2: The First Volume of My Life Exploits]*, İstanbul, 1996, 116p.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 118p.: "Erzurum ahalisi dahi silahlanıp gelmiş ve düşmanı takipte askerle beraber hareket eylemiş olduklarından bunların şehit ve yaralıları da 400'ü geçmiştir."

<sup>33</sup> Mehmet Arif Bey, *Başımıza Gelenler* [Woe is us], İstanbul, 2006<sup>3</sup>, 428–431: “Silahını alıp Topdağı’na doğru akın akm gelen Erzurum ahalisi de bizim askerinin arkasından o tarafa saldırdılar [...] Hatta ahaliden bazıları da ellerindeki Yatağan bıçaklarıyla haylice iş gördüler.”

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> Zeki Başar, *Erzurum İli Anıtları* [The Monuments of Erzurum Province]. In: Atatürk Üniversitesi (ed.), *50. Yıl Armağanı: Erzurum ve Çevresi* [Festschrift to the 50th Anniversary: Erzurum and its Environs], 1, Erzurum, 1973 200: “Kadın-erkek, genç-ihtiyar ve hatta çocuk çocuk bahar selleri gibi coşup taşarak, kükreyip aslanlaşarak şehrin dört bir tarafından Mecidiye’ye doğru akıp gitmişler [...] Ölümle boğazlaşan Erzurumlu’lar, savurup salladıkları baltalar ve satırlarla Aziziye’nin Türk bayrağına kavuşmasını sağlıyorlar.”

<sup>36</sup> There is a continuity between one of the nineteenth century official Ottoman flags and the Republican one. In 1876, sixteen different flags were used in Ottoman lands, so the flag, even if it is the precursor of Republican one, is one flag among others, and was certainly not just a “Turkish” flag but an Ottoman one. Cf. Mahmut Enes Soysal, *Tarihsel Süreçte Bayrak ve Sancaklarımız* [Our Flags and Banners in Historical Progress], *Atatürk Üniversitesi Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 42 (2010), 209-239.

<sup>37</sup> M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, New York, 1995, 216.

<sup>38</sup> Halil İ. Sedes, *1875 – 1878 Osmanlı Ordusu Savaşları: 1877 – 1878 Osmanlı-Rus ve Romen Savaşı* [Ottoman Wars of 1875 – 1878: Russo- and Romanian-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878], 12 vol., İstanbul, 1935 – 1955.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, 1.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Ahmet Saib, *Son Osmanlı Rus Muharebesi*, Kahire, 1911, 3p.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>43</sup> Onur İşçi, *Wartime Propaganda and the Legacies of Defeat: The Russian and Ottoman Popular Presses in the War of 1877 – 1878*, MA Thesis, Miami University, 2007, 21p.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> For early examples cf. Basiretçi Ali, *Yıldızın Hatası: Devlet-i Aliye ve Rusya Muharebesi* [The Lapse of Yıldız: Ottoman-Russian War], İstanbul, 1908; Hüsnü Süleyman Paşa, *Bin İki Yüz Doksan Üç Türk-Rus Muharebesi* [1293 Turkish-Russian War], İstanbul, 1906.

<sup>46</sup> Erol Köroğlu, *Ottoman Propaganda and Turkish Identity Literature in Turkey During World War I*, London, 2007, 100.

<sup>47</sup> There is a vast literature that sets to document such atrocities for a popular Turkish example prepared by General Directorate of State Archives cf. T. C. Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü, *Arşiv Belgelerine Göre Kafkaslar’da ve Anadolu’da Ermeni Mezalimi* [Armenian Violence and Massacre in the Caucasus and Anatolia based on Archives], Ankara, 1995.

<sup>48</sup> “Nene Hatun” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. Web. 10 July 2013. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nene\\_Hatun](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nene_Hatun); “Nene Hatun” Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia. Web. 10 July 2013. [http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nene\\_Hatun](http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nene_Hatun)

<sup>49</sup> Cf. T. C. Milli Savunma Bakanlığı, *Milli Mücadele’de ve Cumhuriyetin İlk Yıllarında Kadınlarımız* [Our Women during the War of Independence and the Early Years of the Republic], Ankara, 1981; Aynur Mısıroğlu, *Kuva-yı Milliye’nin Kadın Kahramanları* [The Heroines of Nationalist Forces], İstanbul, 1976; and for a recent example in the same genre: Osman Alagöz, *Milli Mücadelede Kınalı Eller* [Hennaed Hands in the Nationalist Struggle], İstanbul, 2006; Cemile Şahin; Mustafa Şahin, *Osmanlı Son Dönemi ile Milli Mücadele Yıllarında Türk Kadınının Sosyal, Siyasî ve Askerî Faaliyetleri* [Turkish Women’s Social, Political and Military Role in the Late Ottoman and Nationalist Struggle], *Nevşehir Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 2 (2013), 53-72.

<sup>50</sup> Zeynep Kutluata, *Gender and War During the Late Ottoman and Early Republican Era: The Case of Kara Fatma(s)*, MA Thesis, Sabancı University, 2006, 32.

<sup>51</sup> Tevfik Fikret Karagözoğlu, *Nene Hatun: Aziziye Kahramanı* [Nene Hatun: The Heroine of Aziziye], İstanbul, 1959. The book is dedicated to the noble and brave Turkish women, who confirmed the author's valour and love for his homeland. As a side note, the author also acknowledges the retired general Nurettin Baransel for providing access to his rich library.

<sup>52</sup> "Moskof" instead of "Rus" usually connotes a pejorative usage comprised of the radical conservative interpretation of Turkish historiography in which Russians were represented as the fundamental enemies of Islam and the Ottoman Empire as the highest point of Islamic civilization. This line of thought is best exemplified in Fazıl Necip Kısakürek's work. Cf. Necip Fazıl Kısakürek, *Moskof*, İstanbul, 1979.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: "Tarih boyunca Türklere daima düşman olan Moskoflar, yine gemi azıya almış, aç kurt sürüsü gibi doğu hudutlarımıza saldırmıştır."

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 18p.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 20-35.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. footnote 36.

<sup>57</sup> Karagözoğlu, *Nene Hatun*, 51, 42.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> Sadettin Kaplan, *Esra ile Nene Hatun* [Esra and Nene Hatun], İstanbul, 1993.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 9: "Adımın pek önemi yok kızım. Ben bir Türk kadınıyım. Ama, namımıza "Nene Hatun" derler... Erzurum tabyaları, Moskof keferesi bizi böyle bilir, böylece tanır."

<sup>61</sup> Sara Gürbüz Özeren, *Erdemlerimizi Keşfedelim* [Let's Discover Our Virtues], İstanbul, 2011<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>64</sup> Ahmet Özdemir (ed.), *Anaların Anası Nene Hatun* [The Mother of Mothers – Nene Hatun], İstanbul, 2010, 32.

<sup>65</sup> İbrahim Ünsal, *Yürekli Kadın Nene Hatun* [Great-Hearted Woman: Nene Hatun], İstanbul, 2013. The first book of the same series was *Plevne Kahramanı Gazi Osman Paşa* [Gazi Osman Paşa, the Hero of Plevne] also written by the same author and published in the same year.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-119.

<sup>67</sup> Compare Melikof's [Loris-Melikov] letter in *ibid.*, 121 with how it was mentioned in Arif, *Gelenler*, 33, 419.

<sup>68</sup> They are "quasi-" because they lack proper historical context.

<sup>69</sup> Ünsal, *Kadın*, 65, 101-105.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 203pp.

<sup>71</sup> Ünsal, *Kadın*, 65, 103.

<sup>72</sup> M. Talat Uzunyaylı, *Nene Hatun*, İstanbul, 2006.

<sup>73</sup> Suat Turgut (ed.), *Erzurumlu Kahraman Nene Hatun* [The Heroine of Erzurum: Nene Hatun], İstanbul, 2008<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>74</sup> Mavi Medya Yayıncılık, the publisher of the series, also published coloring books for children based on heroes of Çanakkale, Turkish Architectural Monuments, and Çanakkale Destanı [Çanakkale Epopee] as a comic book.

<sup>75</sup> We will not discuss the "gap between what is historically documented" and what is fictional as Zeynep Kutluata attempted for Kara Fatma in his thesis because we are more interested in Nene Hatun's representation in relation to Aziziye. Cf. Kutluata, *War*, 50, 67-70.

<sup>76</sup> Turgut, *Erzurumlu*, 73, endleaf.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>78</sup> Osman F. Seden, dir., *Gazi Kadın*, Akün Film, 1973.

<sup>79</sup> 'Nene Hatun' nasıl 'Gazi Kadın' oldu. NTVMSNBC. Web. 12 July 2013. <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25349416/>

<sup>80</sup> Cf. Buket Kitapçı Bayrı, Contemporary perception of Byzantium in Turkish Cinema: the Cross-Examination of Battal Gazi Films with the Battalname, *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies*, 37, 1 (2013), 81-91; esp. 89pp.

<sup>81</sup> Avni Kütükoğlu, dir., Nene Hatun, Özen Film, 2010.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Uğur Vardan, Nene Hatun Böyle mi Anlatılır, *Radikal Gazetesi*, 29 October 2010.

<sup>83</sup> *Akşam Gazetesi*, 30 August 1952, 1.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>87</sup> Interestingly 31 August to 2 September was the feast of sacrifice and newspapers were not printed during the religious holidays.

<sup>88</sup> *Milliyet Gazetesi*, 3 September 1952, 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>92</sup> *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, 3 September 1952.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> *Vakit Gazetesi*, 3 September 1952.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>97</sup> *Ulus Gazetesi*, 3 September, 1952.

<sup>98</sup> *Ulus Gazetesi*, 12 March 1948, Erzurum Günü [The Day of Erzurum].

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>100</sup> Development agencies are regional offices responsible for directing and implementing the policies and investment plans of Ministry of Development, at the local level. The Undersecretariat of State Planning Organization (DPT), which was founded in 1960, was reorganized as the Ministry of Development in June 2011

<sup>101</sup> T. C. Kuzeydoğu Anadolu Kalkınma Ajansı, TRA1 Bölgesi (Erzurum, Erzincan, Bayburt) Yatırım Projeleri Kataloğu [TRA1 Region (Erzurum, Erzincan, Bayburt) Catalog of Investment Projects], 2011.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-57.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

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## **The Places of Memory in Russia regarding the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878: Stages of Transformation**

**Abstract:** *The process of the formation of social memory to the last Russo-Ottoman War in the different periods of Russian history has been considered for this article. The memory culture concerning the events and personalities of the Russo-Ottoman War has been researched on. A variety of memorial places related to both the different historical periods and the socio-cultural conditions of their origin, degree of preservation and popularization have been outlined.*

The Russo-Ottoman War (1877 – 1878) is commonly referred to as the “Liberating War” as it brought liberty and independence to the Bulgarian people. The Russian campaign on the Balkans was crowned with glory for the victorious Russian army. Thousands of Russian soldiers sacrificed their lives for victory and most of them were buried in the common “beds of honor” on Bulgarian soil. As a sign of respect and devotion to preserve the memory to the fallen heroes and to important war events, hundreds of memorials were raised. In Bulgaria and the Russian Empire people with excitement considered everything relating to the memory of the war. All materials concerning the war were collected and archived – museums were established and monuments erected. The names of the Russian and Bulgarian heroes were celebrated and were known to many.

It went like this until the Bolsheviks seized power. Following their orders, many Russian military memorials including the ones devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 were destroyed. These memorials were considered as “monuments of Russian militarism” and “monuments to the tsar and his servants” and were subjected to destruction.<sup>1</sup> Another reason for their extermination was their religious essence – in the tradition of the Russian Orthodox Empire the main monuments to the fallen warriors were churches and chapels honoring them. The policy of the USSR in the sphere of culture was based on militant atheism which subjected all cult sites to destruction regardless of the events they were devoted to.

In Bulgaria everything went a different way. The Soviet soldiers, entering Bulgarian soil in 1944, were surprised to see many monuments devoted to Emperor Aleksandr II or to Russian military leaders and soldiers. Even in the time of the Soviet regime's domination in Bulgaria the Communist power did not dare to destroy the monuments devoted to the Liberating War. This is the reason why in Bulgaria a lot more monuments to buried Russian soldiers are preserved than in Russia. The modest quantity of monuments to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Russia cannot be explained by the fact that the war was fought abroad. In the past 135 years from the end of the Russo-Ottoman War many monuments ceased to exist or considerably changed their appearance.

After the end of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, at the All-Saints Forest on the near outskirts of Moscow the building of the Aleksandr Military Sanctuary for war invalids and veterans who took part in the war was initiated. In the pine woods a considerable territory was prepared to suit the sanctuary and soon a park, several residential buildings with apartments for the veterans and economy buildings were arranged. The complex was built by donations of charity organizations and individual persons (e.g. V.A. Alekseev, E.A. Kun, E.F. Šahovskaja-Glebova-Strešneva). The collection of the donations was organized by A.N. Strelkov.

In 1881 on the initiative of Great Duke Nikolaj Nikolaevič the building of the church “St. Aleksandr Nevskij” was prepared in memory to the assassinated Tsar Aleksandr II. The authors of the project were the architect Aleksandr Petrovič Popov and Aleksandr Nikolaevič Kozlov. The Invalids Market (later Leningrad) and the Invalids Street were named after the Sanctuary. In 1883, right on Petersburg Road at the entrance of the Sanctuary a road chapel devoted to Maria Magdalena was built in memory to the Russo-Ottoman War.<sup>2</sup> Later a tram line passed through the place of the destroyed chapel.

After 1917 the Aleksandr Military Sanctuary was liquidated. Some of the buildings of the unique architecture ensemble of the Aleksandr Sanctuary were preserved for some time. Nevertheless in the 1920s a Park of Rest and Culture was built and named “Čapaev”. In 1934 an Institute for Research of Invalids' Labor was established there, and after some time a factory for prostheses and other administrative buildings. By the 1960s the church of “St. Aleksandr Nevskij” was fully destroyed as a result of the policy of Nikita Sergeevič Chruščev, who thought of the most important task of the state being the fight against religion and church.<sup>3</sup> Even in the post-Soviet time, when Russia proclaimed the intention of restoring the historical monuments and cultivation of memory to the most heroic pages of the past, commercial interests sometimes prevailed over the preservation of cultural heritage. In that tradition, in the southern part of the Čapaev Park and on the spot of the “Bed of Honor”, devoted to invalid soldiers, a residential skyscraper called “Triumph Palace” was erected in 2006.

In the autumn of 1922 another one of the memorials to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, the chapel-monument “Saint Faithful Aleksandr Nevskij” on Mosaic Square (the present Manežnaja Square) in Moscow was destroyed.



**Figure 1: Memorial Chapel to St. Aleksandr Nevskij, 1883  
(Moiseevskaja Ploščad', Moscow)<sup>4</sup>**

The chapel was built in 1883 after the design of the architect Dmitrij Nikolaevič Čičagov (the winner of a competition with the academician Vladimir Alekseevič Kosov, whose project was more expensive). The costs were about 25,000 rubles, collected by an all-Russian subscription through small societies for fund raising.<sup>5</sup> The memorial inscription stated “In memory of the warriors fallen on the battle fields during the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878”. The chapel was shaped like an iron pyramid decorated with an arrangement of soldiers’ armors and double headed eagles on iron pillars at each corner.

Some of the pre-revolutionary monuments are in a process of rebirth at the present. In 2001 the reconstruction of the Monument of Glory on Izmajlovskij Prospekt at Sankt Petersburg began. The story of the monument begins in 1886, when in front of the eastern façade of the Saint Trinity Church a “Column of Glory” was raised to honor the heroism of the Russian army on the Balkans. The monument opened on 12 October, 1886 to celebrate the jubilee of the victory in Gornyj Dubnjak in the presence of the veterans of the last Russo-Ottoman War. The author of the original project of the monument was G.M. Žitkov, based on whose design the architect D.I. Grimm elaborated the project.<sup>6</sup>



**Figure 2: Troickij Sobor and the Column of Glory, 1886  
(Izmajlovskij Prospekt, St. Petersburg)<sup>7</sup>**

The monument represented a 28 meter high pillar, which was made out of Turkish guns and is crowned with a winged figure of victory with its hands stretching a wreath of laurels. Bronze commemorative plaques describe the basic events of the war and the names of the military units participating in them were engraved on the pedestal.

The Column of Glory represented a bright example of the high development of the engineering art during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Of special interest is the concept of the monument. During the Liberation War, in the Serbian town Niš, the Russian army came upon a sad monument to Ottoman atrocities on the Balkans – Ćele Kula [Skull Tower]. It was furnished with skulls of massacred Serbians who took part in an uprising against Ottoman rule. This served as an inspiration for the Column of Glory which was then furnished with Ottoman guns taken as trophies as a reply to the defeated enemy. Unfortunately in 1929 the monument to military glory was destroyed and sent to Germany to be melted. Not until the 1990s the city government realized the indispensability and necessity of its restoration.

On 28 November (20 December) 1887, on the occasion of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle for Pleven and on the initiative of the Russian Archeological Society, a Pleven chapel designed by the architect V.O. Šervuda and the engineer-colonel A.I. Ljaškin was built in Moscow. This chapel monument devoted to the grenadiers participating in the battle for Pleven was built with money (around 50,000 rubles) donated by grenadiers who were still alive at that time.<sup>8</sup> The chapel represented an octagonal pyramid with the head of Monomach" on the top as well as cross and crescent in a struggle. According to the original design the monument was supposed to be erected on the place of the battle itself. After the presentation of the finished monument at Neskučnyj Garden the citizens of Moscow insisted that the monument had to stay in town.



**Figure 3: Plevna Chapel, 1887 (Ploščad' Il'inskie Vorota, Moscow)<sup>9</sup>**

In result of the revolutionary events in 1917 the chapel was closed and ruined as most of the inside decoration disappeared. On the initiative of the Society for preserving Orthodox Culture the chapel was handed over to the Russian Orthodox Church in December 1992. It is noteworthy that the Bulgarian Embassy in Moscow for many years used to lay wreaths at the monument to the Russian grenadiers as a sign of gratitude. On 1 March 1998 (on the occasion of the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Treaty of San Stefano) the solemn consecration and opening of the chapel-monument took place. In December 1999 the Russian patriarch Aleksij II established a patriarchal podvor'e to the chapel. For several years in the sacred surrounding of the chapel, prayers for the souls of the dead grenadiers, who had fallen in the battle for Plevna, were held.

On 24 June 1912 the monument to M.D. Skobelev on Tverskaja Ploščad' in Moscow was built on the help of collected donations and the square was renamed Skobelev Street. Responsible for the architectural ensemble was P.A. Samonov. The monument consisted of a granite pedestal on which a four meter high statue of the General on his horse was standing upon. The right side of the sculpture presented a group of soldiers defending the banner during one of the General's Middle Asia campaigns, while on the left side an attack of Russian soldiers during the last Russo-Ottoman War was depicted. On the back side of the monument a plaque with Skobelev's advises to his soldiers during the battle for Plevna was attached.

In 1918 the decree "Monuments of the Republic" was published by the Bolshevik government. According to the decree all "monuments honoring the tsars and

their servants” had to be destroyed and on 1 May 1918 the Skobelev Monument was dismantled. On its place the Soviet power raised the Constitution Obelisk with a Statue of Freedom and the square was renamed Soviet Square.



Figure 4: Monument to M. Skobelev, 1912 (Tverskaja Square, Moscow)<sup>10</sup>

In 1954 on the square a new monument was erected; a monument to Jurij Dolgorukij. In pre-revolutionary Russia several monuments to Skobelev existed as for instance in the village of Ulanove in the province of Černigov, in Minsk as well as in Warsaw but unfortunately no one was preserved.

The places of birth of the heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War and their burial sites should also be considered as places of memory. In such places one can expect monuments, museums or at least ceremonies commemorating the events of the war of 1877 – 1878. In 1976 in Vladimir a memorial-museum to the brothers Stoletov opened; the museum was granted a medal on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria. In 1995 in Rjazan' the estate of Skobelev was restored and on one of the squares of the town a bronze bust of the “White General” was placed. Michail Dmitrievič Skobelev was buried on his native estate in the village of Zaborovo-Spasskoe in the Rjazan' province (the village of Zaborovo is 180 kilometers away from Rjazan' itself). The estate was pillaged during the first years of Soviet rule – only the church and the school survived.<sup>11</sup> The body of the general is buried in the Spasskaja Church. In the school building a museum of M.D. Skobelev was opened in 2003. In the Šeremetevskij Castle (park-palace-ensemble in the village of Jurino, Republic of Marij Ēl) one of the rooms was named “Skobelev

hall". Michail Dmitrievič used to stay often at the estate since Ol'ga D. Šeremeteva was his sister. Personal belongings of M.D. Skobelev are part of the castle museum's exhibition. In the castle "readings about Skobelev" in honor of the great Russian military commander "equal to Suvorov" still take place every year. Skobelev was very popular among the people; in memory of his heroism many popular prints were distributed. To praise the "White General" poems were written and songs were composed.<sup>12</sup>

After the end of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 a portrait of General M.D. Skobelev could be seen in every village house next to the icons. The glory and the unusual popularity of General Skobelev were actively used by different businessmen. In pre-revolutionary Russia many sweets were named after him – chocolate, candy, cakes. Despite Skobelev's reputation as a determined enemy of hard drinking a vodka brand called "Bitter Skobelev" was sold. In 1878 in honor of the victorious Russo-Ottoman War a Jaroslavl'-based tobacco factory was renamed "Balkan Star". After having been renamed in the mean time, the name was retaken in 1992 and cigarettes of that brand were produced again. In 1890 the owners of the St. Petersburg-based tobacco factory "Kolobova i Bobrova" issued a poster "Hero. The White General", thereby advertizing a blend of cigarettes of the same name.

To celebrate the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the last Russo-Ottoman War on 22 September 2008 a museum to General-Field-Marshal Iosif Vladimirovič Gurko was opened in the village of Sacharovo, Tver' province, by the efforts of the priest Gennadij Uljanič, a parish councilor of the Iosif-Volockij-Church, and with the support of the district's administration. At the beginning of the military campaign 1877 – 1878 Gurko was appointed commander of the vanguard of the Danube army. After his successful march through the Balkan Mountains and the liberation of a considerable part of Southern Bulgaria from the Ottomans he was promoted to the ranks of a General-Adjutant. During the final stage of the war the units of Gurko seized Philippople (Plovdiv) and Adrianople (Edirne) to open the way to Constantinople (Istanbul). The military used to call I.V. Gurko "General forward". For the magnificent realization of several military operations in the Russo-Ottoman War he was rewarded with the "St. George Victorious Rank" and with golden arms – a golden sword covered with diamonds and the inscription "for bravery".<sup>13</sup> Gurko was a cavalier receiving all superior medals of the Russian Empire and a national hero in Bulgaria. Just before his retirement he was promoted to the rank of a General-Field-Marshal. After his death in 1901 he was buried in the family tomb on his estate in the small village Sacharovo, Tver' province. In 1902 the Iosif-Volockij-Church was consecrated on his estate, where until the revolution of 1917 a museum to the family Romejko-Gurko also existed. After 1917 the estate was nationalized and the remains of the General and his wife got lost. They were found later and committed to the ground again in the restored tomb. In the present museum belongings related to the life and activities of the General-Field-Marshal, to the history of the Russo-Ottoman War and to the fraternal relations between Russia and Bulgaria are displayed. In honor of General Gurko three settlements and a boulevard in Sofia were named after him.

On 4 August 2007 in the town of Cholm, Novgorod district, a monument to Lieutenant-Colonel Pavel Petrovič Kalitin, the commander of the Bulgarian volun-

teers unit and hero of Šipka, was officially opened. On the commemorative plaque the following words of the Bulgarian poet Hristo Botev were inscribed: "One who falls for freedom never dies". The initiative for the monument was led by the singer and composer Bedros Filippovič Kirkorov, who for a certain time lived in Velikij Novgorod, and by the Society for Bulgarian-Russian Friendship of Stara Zagora. The memorial complex was built by the help of donations of the citizens of the Bulgarian town of Stara Zagora. The authors of the project were the architect Blagovest Volkov and the sculptor Božidar Kozaev. In the course of the battle for Šipka the Lieutenant-Colonel Kalitin, putting his life at risk, rescued the "Samara Banner" sewed by the nuns of the Iver Convent and granted to the squad of the Bulgarian volunteers by the citizens of Samara. The banner which was rescued by Kalitin is kept at the National Military History Museum in Sofia and a copy of it is preserved in a museum in Samara. P.P. Kalitin was buried in a grave of honor in the town of Stara Zagora together with some of his volunteers. In the regional museum of the town of Holm a special exposition was devoted to him. In Bulgaria streets and a school were named after him.

Within the borders of the former Russian Empire, many other significant places related to the memory of the Russo-Ottoman War can be found. On the northern side of the former Michajlovskij-Graveyard of Sevastopol' a grave of honor for the mariners of the steamship "Vesta" is situated. At the beginning of the Russo-Ottoman War a commercial steamship was bought by the government and converted into a warship. On 11 July 1877 the Russian crew of the steamship under the leadership of Captain-Lieutenant Nikolaj Michajlovič Baranov in an unequal battle fought the Ottoman ironclad "Feth-i Bülend" and forced it to withdraw.<sup>14</sup> In this battle for the first time in world history a galvanic system for automatic gun firing was used. On their return to Sevastopol' all crew members of the steamer "Vesta" were awarded honorary medals. Twelve deceased officers and sailors of the steamship were buried in a grave of honor at the Michajlovskij-Graveyard.

If the material artifacts of the memory about the Russo-Ottoman War was and is in danger of being destroyed, the spiritual heritage in the works of literature and art lasts for centuries. Some researchers claim that the artistic heritage of the War of 1877 – 1878 is even richer than the literary manifestations. To support that statement they point out the existence of a broad variety of paintings reflecting different fragments of battles from the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878.

The works from Vasilij Vasil'evič Vereščagin's "Balkan Collection" offer a deep and expressive understanding of the Liberation War. V.V. Vereščagin traveled all over Bulgaria and Serbia and took part in many battles. He got wounded during the firing of the Ottoman steamships at the torpedo boat "Šutka".<sup>15</sup> Vereščagin painted his work in his atelier in Paris using the collected field material. His Balkan collection took time. It consisted of twelve big canvases "Šipka-Šejново. Skobelev below Šipka" being the central one. To the heroic defense of Šipka he also devoted his paintings "All quiet on Šipka" (1879), "Batteries at Šipka", and "Dug on Šipka". The paintings of his "Balkan Collection" do not only present heroic episodes of the battles but also careerism and other negative sides of the war. To the battle below Teliš, where a whole regiment of rangers was killed because of the commanding officers' failures, he devoted: "Defeated. Requiem for the killed" (1879) and "The

Victorious" (1879). A series of paintings feature the storming of Pleven including "Attack" (1881) and "After the attack. A field hospital near Pleven" (1881). A considerable part of the paintings of the "Balkan Collection" became property of Pavel Michajlovič Tret'jakov and were displayed at the Tret'jakovskaja Galereja.

Pavel Osipovič Kovalevskij was assigned as a painter to the headquarters of the 12<sup>th</sup> army. He did many battle paintings ("A wounded on Šipka", "Behind the Balkans" "Ridge") including some big canvases for the military gallery of the Winter Palace.<sup>16</sup> An eyewitness and participant in the battles of the Russo-Ottoman War was Vasilij Dmitrievič Polenov. He was the only one of the painters who was assigned to the battlefields themselves. From October 1877 until February 1878 Polenov worked as a painter and correspondent at the headquarters of the heir to the throne Aleksandr Aleksandrovič.<sup>17</sup> Many of his drawings and sketches (1877 – 1878) got published in the journal "Bee" and so were his diary notes "From Kiev to Deligrad."<sup>18</sup> Motives of landscapes and a related genre-character prevailed in the works of Polenov, even in the ones drawn in the heat of the battlefields. The painting "Bulgaria is considered a very convincing documentation of the conditions of the Balkan front during the war. Another well-known example for the artistic manifestations of the war is "An episode of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878" by Michail Egorovič Malyšev, a participant in the military actions. The drawings of Aleksej Petrovič Bogoljubov, who in 1877 was attached to the headquarters of the commander of the Eastern detachment of the Danube army, got published in the "Illustrated Chronicles of the War". The Emperor Aleksandr II ordered him to paint episodes of the Russo-Ottoman War such as the explosion of the Ottoman scout "Sejfi" on the river Danube on 14 May 1877 or the explosion of the Ottoman ironclad Ljutfi Džemil on the river Danube in the year 1877.<sup>19</sup> Most typical for Bogoljubov's paintings is that they do not particularly feature battle scenes but rather display the attitude of the Russian society to the Liberation War. Similar topics attracted also Viktor Michajlovič Vasnecov which can be easily seen in his works "Night on the streets of Petersburg in the day of the capture of Pleven", "Military telegram" and others.

The drawing "Meeting the army", asked for by Savva Ivanovič Mamontov and painted at the beginning of 1879 became the only tragic reply of Ivan Nikolaevič Kramskoj to the Russo-Ottoman War. Unlike Kramskoj, Il'ja Efimovič Repin in a painting with the same name "Meeting the army" featured the joy of meeting the victorious. In the trend of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878 paintings were also created by other masters such as Michail Osipovič Mikešin ("Russia at the doorstep of the Balkans", "Balkan martyr woman") and Konstantin Egorovič Makovskij ("Balkan martyrs"). Other artists creating paintings on war-related subjects feature Aleksej Danilovič Kivšenko, Bogdan Pavlovič Villeval'de, and Nikolaj Dmitrievič Dmitriev-Orenburgskij, who did not take part in the military actions.

A supreme order to depict subjects of the Russo-Ottoman War was given to N.D. Dmitriev-Orenburgskij, who re-oriented himself from genre to battle painting.<sup>20</sup> For two of his paintings he was promoted as a professor by the Imperial Academy of Arts ("The Entry of the Emperor in Ploiești", "The Battle above Svištov, escorted by Emperor Aleksandr II"). Some of his paintings devoted to the last war with the Ottoman Empire decorate the Pompey Gallery of the Winter Palace. For the Military Gallery of the Winter Palace big battle paintings with motives of the Russo-Ottoman

War were created by A.D. Kivšenko on the order of Emperor Aleksandr III. Preparing himself for the paintings he visited the Southern Caucasus in 1884.<sup>21</sup> Ivan Konstantinovič Ajvazovskij elaborated a specific chronicle of the sea battles and painted a series of canvases on subjects of the Russo-Ottoman War (for instance on the fight between the Russian steamer “Vesta” and the Ottoman ironclad “Feth-i Bülend” on the Black Sea on 11 July 1877).

Fiction about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 reflected the most pressing questions of Russia’s social issues: the relation between East and West; the national question; Russia and Europe – searching for ways of development; the unification of Eastern Orthodox peoples; the Slavic community; the role of humanity in world history and others. One of the most outstanding figures of the Russo-Ottoman War became the “White General” – M.D. Skobelev. His was portrayed in detail by Vladimir Ivanovič Nemirovič-Dančenko in his novel “Skobelev” (1886). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century Boris Vasil’ev, a famous Russian and Soviet writer, devoted one of his novel to Michail Dmitrievič (“Skobelev, or there is only a moment...”). Unlike the writers of the 19<sup>th</sup> century whose works resembled annals, Vasil’ev strived not to reconstruct the military biography of the General but to go beyond it featuring the key moments of the life of the General, uniting them in a convincing artistic matter. This novel of Vasil’ev is related to his novel-epopee “They were or weren’t”, broaching the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule.

The mysterious death of General Skobelev became the core of the detective novel of Boris Akunin “The Death of Achilles” (1998). The poem “Under the red cross” by Jakov Petrovič Polonskij (1878) was written in memory of Julija Petrovna Vrevskaja. Baroness Ju.P. Vrevskaja was a self-sacrificing woman, who sold her estate to equip a sanitary unit to be directed to the front of the Russo-Ottoman War. In the story “The first battle” Ivan Leont’evič Leont’ev (Pseudonym Ivan Ščeglov) succeeded to represent the emotional condition of a young participant in the war. The romantic glory of the war in Ščeglov’s stories contrasts the gray everyday life featured in the stories and memories of Vladimir Aleksevič Tichonov, a participant in the war himself, and his stories “A year of war” and “Batman”. The characters of Tichonov are common people, lacking extreme heroism but possess a lot of self-control to get along with the war’s hardship. The short story “Four days” of Vsevolod Michajlovič Garšin (1877) was written under the fresh impressions of the war. Garšin knew what war was about since he possessed first hand information after having been a voluntary in an infantry regiment, where he got wounded in the battle of Ayaslar. In the center of his story “Four days” he put the problem of humanity in war in more general terms. The author aimed to depict the mental condition of a man dying for nothing. The historical novel by Valentin Savvič Pikul’ “Bajazet” (1960) was devoted to the siege for Beyazit, elaborating on one of the heroic episodes of the Russo-Ottoman War – the defense of the stronghold by a small Russian unit.

The cinematographic heritage of the Russo-Ottoman War is not as rich as one might expect. In 1954 the film studio “Lenfil’m” filmed “The Heroes of Šipka” and for the first time the Soviet audience was acquainted with M.D. Skobelev, one of the heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War. “The White General” was pictured as an enemy of autocracy; nevertheless he was devoted to Aleksandr II. In 1977 the So-

viet-Bulgarian coproduction "Julija Vrevskaja" was shown on Soviet TV, it broaching the dramatic destiny of this remarkable Russian woman.

In the post-Soviet time other scenarios and films about the Russo-Ottoman War were produced. The TV-serial "Bajazet" (2003) was based on Valentin Pikul's novel about the 23 days of besieging Beyazit. The movie "Turkish Gambit" (2005), presenting a conspiratorial version of the Pleven events, was based on the novel of Boris Akunin. Currently more and more documentary films and TV-discussions concerning the Russo-Ottoman War and the Russian-Bulgarian friendship are produced.

The Soviet period was a period of silencing the Russo-Ottoman War and its war heroes. Streets relating to the war were renamed, including Stavropol's streets. The historical name of the "8<sup>th</sup> of March Street" was "Šipka", "Tel'man Street" was initially called "Pleven Street", and "Serov Street" was called "Kars Street". At present only "Šipka Alley" has preserved the memory about this particular heroic battle of the Russo-Ottoman War. One should note that that at present in many Russian towns the only preserved places of memory about the war are related to Šipka and Skobelev: "Skobelev prospect" and "Šipka Street" in St. Petersburg, "Skobelev Street" in Moscow etc. In December 2003 a station of the Butovskaja Linija of the Moscow Metro was named after Skobelev, situated just under the street of the same name.

In today's Russia, the memory of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and its war heroes is actively revived. Many exhibitions in different Russian museums speak for such a revival. The exhibitions are usually related to anniversaries (mostly to the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the victorious end of the war) to jubilees of war heroes or to the celebration of the Year of Bulgaria in Russia (2009). On 3 November 2009 the photo-exhibition "Forgotten photos of the Russo-Ottoman War" opened in the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia. Copies of unique archive photos from a private collection (the works of Franz Duschek) were displayed and so were genuine medals and arms from the funds of the State Central Museum of Contemporary History of Russia.

Most of the photo-materials are stored in the Russian State Archive of photo-documents, including the photo-album "Balkan Hike 1877 – 1878" of Aleksandr D. Ivanov, a photographer from Charkiv. The album offers illustrations of the events from the life of the Russian army at the front and the rear. In the Archive of photo-documents twelve albums related to the war were collected. These photos are considered as the most valuable photo-documents about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878.<sup>22</sup>

One of the most interesting museum exhibitions of recent time was the exposition of prints from the collection of Aleksandr Alekseevič in the State Historical Museum (3 March – 16 April 2012, Moscow). The full name of the exhibition project was "The Balkan Triumph. Pages from the heroic history of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878." The prints not only reflected the most important events but by following the course of the Russian army on the Balkans allowed the viewers to reconstruct the chronology of the war. War prints could be considered as both historical sources and as pieces of art. Taken from the spot, in the course of the Russo-Ottoman War the prints played the role of a kind of war reports.

As a result of our analysis of the places of memory to the Russo-Ottoman War in Russian history we can outline the following tendencies in relation to the ideological situation in the country: In tsarist Russia the memory of the last Russo-Ottoman War and war heroes was sacredly commemorated. After the defeat in the Crimean War the victory in the last war played an important role for the revival of the Russian Empire's prestige on the international stage. It was a state initiative to eternally preserve the memory of the glory of the Russian Army liberating the Balkan peoples. To commemorate the war events and the war heroes, memorials from modest obelisks to grandiose monuments were created in Russia.

In the Soviet period of Russian history almost all of the Russian war memorials were destroyed by the Bolsheviks, who considered them as monuments of tsarist militarism and artifacts of Russia's old history. From thousands of monuments to Tsar-Liberator Aleksandr II, most of them built with the help of donations, none were left. Despite the fact that during World War II Communist propaganda addressed the theme of patriotism and the heroism of Russian soldiers as the liberators of the fraternal Bulgarian people again, the names of the Russian military elites, who took part in the battles for liberating Bulgaria, were deliberately doomed to oblivion.

At the present stage of Russian history the phenomena of reviving historical memory and aiming at a rebirth of the national consciousness and the memory about the great ancestors can be observed. New interest arose in different aspects of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 but we should admit that in respect to the research of war events and memorial places related to the Russo-Ottoman War many unsolved problems exist:

- Limited financial resources for the logistics of initiatives for the restoration of memorial complexes and objects
- Limited materialist possibilities for their preservation and sustenance
- Lack of a clear system for the popularization of the memorial places and their structures
- In schools the war events and their historical role receive insufficient attention

At the beginning of 2003 on a decree of the President of Russia, the all-Russian state and social organization "Russian Military History Society" was founded as an attempt to restore the "Imperial Russian Military-Historic Society" which existed in Russia from 1907 until 1917. It was established for the purpose of researching and preserving evidences of military history. The Society also researched on battlefields, military uniforms and arms, as well as on military museums. It contributed to the preservation and restoration of war monuments. That way, one can hope that in the future the memory about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and its war heroes will be fully restored. The "Russian Military History Society" should unite all activities related to the storage and recreation of Russia's military history including research activities, popularization in mass media and the state's propaganda on the heroism of the fatherland's warriors.

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<sup>3</sup> Гелий Земцов, Виды Москвы XIX и XXI веков. Сопоставления и комментарии [Views of Moscow in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century. Comparisons and Comments], Москва, 2007, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Available on <http://genrogge.ru/memo/plmon/f-anmon1.htm> (14.12.2013).

<sup>5</sup> “Дворянский род Rogge (Rogge)”. Web. 14 December 2013.

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<sup>6</sup> Андрей Й. Гусаров, Памятники воинской славы Петербурга [Monuments to Peterburg's military glory], Санкт Петербург, 2007, 201.

<sup>7</sup> Available on [http://family-history.ru/temples/temples\\_11.html](http://family-history.ru/temples/temples_11.html) (14.12.2013).

<sup>8</sup> Василий В. Аникин, Памятник гренадёрам, павшим под Плевной [A monument to the Grenadiers, fallen at Plevna], Москва, 1986, 62.

<sup>9</sup> Photograph by Nikolaj A. Najdënov (1888), available on [http://mosday.ru/photos/?3\\_52210050](http://mosday.ru/photos/?3_52210050) (14.12.2013).

<sup>10</sup> Available on <http://www.liveinternet.ru/photo/2483533/post18144379/> (14.12.2013).

<sup>11</sup> Дмитрий К. Матлин, “Скобелевские походы “русского знамени” [Skobelev's campaigns of the “Russian flag”]. Web. 14 December 2013. <http://www.russkoe-znamya.narod.ru/sprz.html>

<sup>12</sup> Леонид В. Евдокимов, “Белый генерал” М.Д. Скобелев в народных сказаниях [“The White General” M.D. Skobelev in folk tales], Санкт Петербург, 1911, 134.

<sup>13</sup> Анатолий И. Супрунов, Фельдмаршал Гурко [Field Marshal Gurko], Тверь, 2005, 141.

<sup>14</sup> Фёдор Ф. Герасимов (ред.), Герои и деятели Русско-Турецкой войны 1877 – 78 года [Heroes and active figures of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 – 78], Санкт Петербург, 1878, 187.

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<sup>22</sup> Елена Лебедева, “Забалканский поход” [The Balkan Campaign]. Web. 14 December 2013. [http://www.istrodina.com/rodina\\_articul.php3?id=2676&n=130](http://www.istrodina.com/rodina_articul.php3?id=2676&n=130)

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## **The Epopée with “The Epopée” or the Building of the Panorama “The Epopée of Pleven 1877”**

**Abstract:** *This paper elaborates the history of the construction of one of the largest monuments for the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878 in Bulgaria – Panorama “The Epopée of Pleven 1877”. Surely this has been the most spectacular memorial war site from the Communist era in Bulgaria. Within the context of the ideology at that time, The Panorama was primarily “a symbolic monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship”. The panorama was constructed in honor of the 100th anniversary of the Pleven Battle and was officially inaugurated on 10 December 1977.*

There are over 450 monuments related to the Russo-Ottoman War (1877 – 1878) on the territory of Bulgaria. There are more than 160 in the region around the town of Pleven alone. This paper introduces the history of the construction of one of the largest monuments to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Bulgaria – the panorama “The Epopée of Pleven 1877”. There is no doubt that this has been the most spectacular war memorial from the Communist era in Bulgaria. Within the context of the ideology of that time, the panorama was primarily “a symbolic monument of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship”. The panorama was constructed in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pleven Epopée and was officially unveiled on 10 December 1977. The Panorama “The Epopée of Pleven 1877”, more commonly known as “Pleven Panorama”, is a panorama located in Pleven, Bulgaria, that depicts the events of the Siege of Plevna (Pleven Epopée) which consisted of four major battles over a five-month period (20 July – 10 December 1877).

### **The Siege of Pleven in the memorial landscape of the war**

When it comes to military actions involving the siege of Pleven, one can often hear the opinion that everyone there was a winner. In this siege the Ottoman forces held the town for nearly five months, besieged by the numerically superior Russian and Romanian military. The strategic delay of the Russian advance in Pleven was crucial for the fate of the Balkan campaign as a whole.



**Figure 1: Panorama “The Epopee of Pleven 1877”<sup>1</sup>**

During the battles in the region of Pleven, the Russian army sustained the biggest losses and it is understandable that after the War a great number of memorial sites were concentrated around this area. A part of the monuments was built in the period of 1903 – 1907 on the initiative of “Tsar Liberator” Committee, headed by Stojan Zaimov.<sup>2</sup> Another part, including the Panorama, was constructed in the period during communist rule in the country after 1944.

### **The origins of the panorama tradition**

In visual arts, the term “panorama” is often associated with a sweeping vantage point of a map or landscape. However, the original panoramas relate to painted canvases that encircle spectators and whose popularity boomed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century for an extraordinary visual spectacle.<sup>3</sup> The term “panorama” was first used in 1792 by Robert Barker to describe his painting of Edinburgh, Scotland. Barker’s panoramas were housed inside a cylindrical exhibit hall also called “The Panorama”.<sup>4</sup> The special painting technique, combined with sophisticated lighting, produced a new experience for the viewer, who stood on a special platform in the center of the circular room. The goal was to produce the perfect illusion of a real scene.<sup>5</sup>

At first mainly landscapes and themes of urban architecture were painted. A new direction of panoramas was given by the French artist Charles Langlois in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>6</sup> His works evoke specific historical events glorifying the victories of the French weapon. His panoramas of the battles of Borodino 1812, Sevastopol’ 1855, Solferino 1868, and others were very successful and enjoyed popularity.

The subjects of panoramas transformed as time passed, being less about the sublime and more about military battles and biblical scenes. This was especially

true during the Napoleonic Era, when panoramas often displayed scenes from the emperor’s latest battle, depicting either a victory or a crushing defeat such as in the “Battle of Waterloo” in 1816. The whole trend was re-shaped during the Napoleonic Era.



**Figure 2: Waterloo, Belgium, Panorama of the Battle of Waterloo<sup>7</sup>**

Panoramic art marks its real boom at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the USA, France, Germany and Russia, where dozens of panoramas were built and shown. For one reason or another, most of the first panoramas were destroyed but some of them were later recovered only from old photographs and surviving fragments. This is the case with the panoramas to Borodino and Sevastopol’ in Russia. Except for stunning visual effects, the historical panoramas also function as an extremely useful ideological instrument for the time before the advent of propagandistic films – as an instrument for the so-called “patriotic education”. It is not accidental that later, in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a kind of renaissance of the panoramas would primarily take place in the countries from the Soviet Bloc – in the USSR, North Korea, Mongolia, China, Poland, Hungary and Bulgaria, mostly connected to great war victories.

### **Background of the panorama in Pleven**

The first idea of a panoramic depiction and glorification of the events of the Siege of Pleven occurred very soon after the end of Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878. In 1881, by order of the Russian Emperor, the French artist Paul Philippoteaux painted a panorama called “The Battle of Pleven on 28 November 1877” and displayed it in St. Petersburg. Following the public success of “The Battle

of Pleven” in Russia, the Emperor gave Philippoteaux a new order. Thus, the Panorama “Solemn entry of Russian troops into the conquered Kars on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1877” and the diorama “Winter crossing of the Balkans” with the storyline of the same war. Only a drawing by Arnol’d Bal’dinger has been preserved of Philippoteaux’s panorama.<sup>8</sup>



**Figure 3: Paul Rhippoteaux painting the Gettysburg Ciclorama circa 1883.  
From the archives of Gettysburg National Military Park<sup>9</sup>**

During the early 80s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century another French artist created a third panorama to the War. This was “Passing the River Danube”, which was painted around 1884 by Théophile Poilpot, who was the author of about 13 large panoramas.<sup>10</sup> No fragments of this panorama have been kept.

The actual background of today’s Panorama of Pleven began in the early 60s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In 1961 the idea of a panorama on Šipka Peak was promoted by General Ivan Vinarov, then chairperson of the Committee for Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship.<sup>11</sup> A short note on General Vinarov as a major lobbyist of the idea of a panorama indicates that he was born in Pleven and that the General was an influential communist party functionary after the establishment of the communist regime in Bulgaria. Before that he was an political emigrant to the USSR, known as a Soviet agent in the 1930s (resident in Austria, France and China) and a professor at the

Military Academy “Frunze” in Moscow. After the coup d'état of the 9<sup>th</sup> of September in 1944 Vinarov was a minister. In 1946 a special committee for the creation of the so-called National Park “Kajlaka” in Pleven was organized on his initiative.<sup>12</sup> After his retirement the General lived in Pleven and he was a major supporter/lobbyist of the idea of building a panorama-battle. At the beginning he was thinking of a “Šipka Panorama”, while he would later redirect his idea to another battle – the one in Pleven.

In the mid-1960s the idea of building a panorama about the battles of Šipka was already discussed at the highest political level. During the meetings of the Political Bureau of the Bulgarian Communist Party, the suggestion of building a panorama of Šipka battle was considered since the beginning of November 1961. At this stage however, the suggestion was diverted.<sup>13</sup>

At the beginning of the 1970s, when preparations for the celebration of the approaching 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war had already started and were on the agenda of the party leadership, ideas related to a panorama were discussed once again. Thus the decision to build a “Šipka Epopée” until the autumn of 1971 was taken:

In order to honor the battles of Šipka and the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule, it is necessary to build a panorama of “Šipka Epopée”.

By the end of 1971 the Committee of Arts and Culture, the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of Construction and Architecture are assigned to prepare and submit a preliminary conceptual project and plan for the construction of the panorama as well as a proposal for its location to the Secretariat of the Central Committee of BCP for an approval.

[...] to make a suggestion to the Ministry of Culture of USSR and the Union of Soviet artists to assist our country in creating the panorama.

[...] to be opened on the eve of the liberation [...].<sup>14</sup>

However, in the next decade the panorama enthusiasm faded and the project regarding the panorama mentioned above was not implemented. In the published memoirs of the former party secretary of the Pleven District it was pointed out that during the period of 1972 – 1976 the discussion of the idea about building a panorama was renewed. This time the officials were talking about constructing a panorama in Pleven.<sup>15</sup> The first talks on that began in a manner typical for decision-making in that era – during conversations around a dinner table in General Vinarov's villa further the strategy was toward a gradual intercession and lobbying at the higher levels of authority. It was immediately proposed to exam the Soviet experience in constructing panoramas. Naturally, model to follow was indicated was the famous Borodino Panorama.<sup>16</sup> At this stage however, the discussions were only on a regional party level. In order to realize these intentions on a state level more easily, the local party functionaries sought for the Soviet partners' commitment at first. The real preparation for the beginning of the work and the building of the Panorama itself, started long before the official decision of the Central committee of Bulgarian communist party was made. Maybe the last instance had a clearly propagandistic

effect at a declarative level in mind and therefore delayed its decision. Later the short time between the announcement of the decision of the Central Committee of the Party and the effective period in which the spectacular facility was built would constantly be repeated.

### Construction and opening

In September 1974 at the celebrations on the occasion of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Communist power in Bulgaria, a party delegation from the Soviet town Rostov-on-Don, which was a twin town of Pleven, were guests in Pleven. At this meeting the specific parameters of the Soviet assistance regarding the realization of the panorama-project were discussed. The Soviet “comrades” promised to provide artists from Rostov, who had the necessary experience to help in artistic execution, while Rostov’s industries were to supply the needed equipment.<sup>17</sup>

Nikolaj Ovečkin was proposed to be a general contractor – an artist from the Panorama artists’ studio “M.B. Grekov”, who had worked on the restoration of the Borodino Panorama.<sup>18</sup> Ovečkin was of the opinion that the panorama should reflect the third attack on Pleven and later as well Osman Paşa’s surrendering to captivity on the bridge of the river Vit. Together with Bulgarian architects and museum specialists, he travelled to all the places of the battles for Pleven in order to choose a place to build it. The suggestion of Ovečkin to construct the Panorama on the hill next to the “Kovanlăk” redoubt, where the most crucial fighting took place during the third attack on Pleven, was accepted.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile a competition to develop a conceptual project for the Panorama was organized for January 1976 and a group of designers was sent to Moscow to study the Soviet experience.<sup>20</sup>



Figure 4: The project group of the Panorama – 25 years. Memories and documents of participants in its establishment<sup>21</sup>

At that point there was still no formal decision on the Panorama on behalf of the Bulgarian communist party Central Committee. It was only at the end of November 1976 after the Soviet Embassy had exerted some pressure, when the decision by the Secretariat to build the Panorama was finally made. At the beginning of 1977 its construction started and the deadline for its opening planned for November 7 (the day of Osman Paşa’s capitulation) was in less than eleven months.<sup>22</sup>

The amount of money for the building was estimated at about five million leva at that time, as a great part of the work on the site was done by volunteers from Plevna, as well as soldiers from the military units in the surrounding region. Towards the end of July 1977 the rough construction along with the roof was completed, and by the end of August the artists began to paint the 115-meter canvas. The artistic work at Panorama included ten Soviet and two Bulgarian artists – Hristo Bojadžiev and Dionisij Dončev. The main task of the artists from Plevna was to depict the participation of the local people in the war and the situation in the city. The project ended on the 6<sup>th</sup> of December. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 1977, the day of the very anniversary of the “Liberation of Plevna”, the Panorama was solemnly opened.<sup>23</sup>



Авторът на Панорама “Плевненска епопея 1877 г.” з. х. на РСФСР Н. В. Овечкин (петият отляво) и изпълнителският колектив от съветски художници: А. М. Чернишов, М. А. Анданев, И. С. Кабанов, В. Н. Шчербаков, А. В. Троценко, В. П. Есаулов, Г. В. Есаулов, Ю. Ф. Успенко, В. Б. Таутнев, В. Н. Лемшев, и българските художници от Плевна Христо Бояджиев и Дниосий Дончев.

**Figure 5: The team of artists, which painted the Panorama<sup>24</sup>**

I must say that despite the fact the panoramic construction looked spectacular on the occasion of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war, at that moment this specific commemoration was no the climax of the politics of memory. The priorities then aimed at the preparation of the 1,300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the Bulgarian state. This centenary of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and the 35<sup>th</sup> anni-

versary of the “Socialist Revolution in Bulgaria” as well as the celebration of Lenin’s birthday, were still minor festivities than the planned for 1981 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Bulgarian state’s foundation.<sup>25</sup>

However, even today, the enthusiasm at the presentation of the Panorama “The Epopée of Pleven 1877”<sup>26</sup> is clearly visible. Even nowadays the current director of the Military Historical Museum in Pleven, Milko Asparuhov, depicted the monument-panorama at the Bulgarian National Radio in 2012 in the following way:

Nowadays tourists visiting Pleven can feel the war, if they want to, although in an illusionary manner... The 50 m long Pleven Epopée – or Panorama – is a huge truncated cone, symbolically raised by four big bayonets. The three horizontal rings that the corpus consists of, symbolize the three unsuccessful attacks. The fourth reminds of the siege itself. The first hall represents historical events – the 1876 April Uprising, the fights at the Šipka Peak in the Balkan mountain range during the Russo-Turkish War, etc. A huge, 100 m long and 15 m tall canvas is displayed in the big, panoramic hall. It is covered with realistic pictures, re-creating the battle of September 1877. The 3D effect is incredible, since the drawings in depth depict the main events and those are inwrought by different real objects – guns, barrels, wagons, Turkish and Russian military uniforms full with straw, even trenches have been dug in the hall... The illusion is for a perspective of some 10 km. One has the feeling that he or she is just one step away from the cannons and the whistling bullets.<sup>27</sup>

I would like to give a further illustration of the other commemorations, related to the Pleven Panorama. The so-called “restorations” or theatrical experience of historical events, which have been popular for the last years, were organized at the “Epopée of Pleven” as well. September 2011 could be given as an example, when about 200 people from the Committee “Tradition” organized a reconstruction of the third attack. The event was covered by the national information agencies with the significant title “Past and present merged before the Panorama “The Epopée of Pleven 1877”. The presence of the Head of the Parliament at the event and her speech was indicative: “I am here to make sure in my heart and soul how necessary such recreation of historical battles are. At the moment we are witnesses of a true lesson of patriotism and history.”<sup>28</sup>

It is obvious that a monument such as the Panorama in another political regime – as today’s one - continues to be ideologically loaded. It is still use as an example of an illusion of credibility and as an experience of an event having educational functions. There no longer is the direction of “the education of the Bulgarian people and the future generations in the spirit of the eternal and unbreakable Bulgarian-Soviet friendship”<sup>29</sup>, but it is another step in the political and cultural instrumentalization of the past.

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<sup>1</sup> Pleven Epopée 1877 Panorama, Pleven. Web 21 April 2013.

[http://bulgariatravel.org/en/object/20/Panorama\\_Plevenska\\_epopeya](http://bulgariatravel.org/en/object/20/Panorama_Plevenska_epopeya)

<sup>2</sup> Милко Аспарухов, Панорамата днес [The Panorama Today]. В: Свобода Гюрова (съст.), Панорама „Плевенска епопея 1877” – 25 години. Спомени и документи на участници в създаването ѝ. Юбилеен сборник [Panorama “The Epopée of Pleven – 1877” – 25

years. Memories and documents of participants in its establishment. Collection of papers], Плевен, 2003, 212-217, 213.

<sup>3</sup> Stephan Oettermann, *The Panorama: History of a Mass Medium*, New York, 1997, 13-17.

<sup>4</sup> Rob Lammle, *Rama-O-Rama: A Guide to 5 Visual Extravaganzas!* Web. 12 April 2013 <http://mentalfloss.com/article/49894/rama-o-rama-guide-5-visual-extravaganzas#ixzz2Qi0MhkEr>

<sup>5</sup> Jane Turner, *Grove Dictionary of Art*, 24, New York, 1996, 17.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. François Robichon, Jean Charles 1789 – 1870. *Le Spectacle de l'histoire Musée des Beaux-Arts, Caen* (July 9 – October 17, 2005), Exhibition catalogue, Paris; Caen, 2005, 10-14.

<sup>7</sup> Waterloo, Belgium: Historical landscape of battle which changed the European history, *LandScope*. Web. 11 April 2012. <http://zerrinhosgor.blogspot.com/2010/04/waterloo-historical-landscape-of-battle.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Свобода Гюрова, Създаването на панорама “Плевенска епопея 1877” – феноменално дело на строители и художници [Creating the Panorama “The Epopée of Pleven – 1877” – a phenomenal work of builders and artists]. В: Гюрова (съст.), 1, 113-146, 133.

<sup>9</sup> Dean S. Thomas, *The Gettysburg Cyclorama: A Portrayal of the High Tide of the Confederacy*, Gettysburg, Pennsylvania: Thomas Publications, 1989, 18.

<sup>10</sup> Венцислав Чаков, Французин рисува панорама за освободителната война 1877 – 1878 г. [A Frenchman painted a panorama of the Liberation War 1877 – 1878], *Морски вестник*, април 2009,

[http://morskivestnik.com/compass/news/2009/042009/042009\\_41.html](http://morskivestnik.com/compass/news/2009/042009/042009_41.html).

<sup>11</sup> Люба Нинова, За епопеята по построяване на Панорамата припомниха участници в събитията. Интервю с инженер Пенка Андреева [Participants in the events reminded of the epopée on constructing the Panorama. Interview with Engineer Penka Andreeva]. 6 December 2012. Web. 03 December 2013. <http://infopleven.com/за-епопеята-по-построяване-на-панорам/>

<sup>12</sup> Ташо Ташев, *Министрите на България 1879 – 1999* [Ministers of Bulgaria 1879 – 1999], София, 1999, 92.

<sup>13</sup> ЦДА, Ф. 1Б; оп. 6; а.е. 6431 – Протокол № 329 от 1 ноември 1966 г. от заседание на Политбюро (ПБ) на ЦК на БКП [CSA] –

<http://www.archives.bg/politburo/bg/dokumenti/1960-1969/1324---329--1--1966-->

<sup>14</sup> ЦДА, Ф. 1Б; оп. 6; а.е. 6431, л.1 – Протокол № 329 от 1 ноември 1966 г. от заседание на Политбюро (ПБ) на ЦК на БКП [CSA] –

<http://www.archives.bg/politburo/bg/dokumenti/1960-1969/1324---329--1--1966-->

<sup>15</sup> Пенко Герганов, Моите спомени от историята на строителството на панорама “Плевенска епопея 1877” [My memories of the history of the construction of the panorama “The Epopée of Pleven 1877”]. В: Гюрова (съст.), 1, 14-57, 15.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> Герганов, *Спомени*, 15, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Нинова, *Епопеята*, 11, 8.

<sup>19</sup> Герганов, *Спомени*, 15, 19.

<sup>20</sup> Пенка Андреева, *Панорамата в моите спомени, в моята работа и съдба* [The Panorama in my memories, my work and destiny]. В: Гюрова (съст.), 1, 73-108, 77.

<sup>21</sup> Аспарухов, *Панорамата*, 2.

<sup>22</sup> Нинова, *Епопеята*, 11.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> Аспарухов, *Панорамата*, 2.

<sup>25</sup> Иван Еленков, *Културният фронт. Българската култура през епохата на комунизма – политическо управление, идеологически основания, институционални режими* [The

Cultural Front. Bulgarian culture in the Communist era – political governance, ideological grounds, institutional regimes], София, 2008, 364.

<sup>26</sup> От 2000 г. панорама “Плевенска епопея 1877 г.” е член на Асоциацията на панорамите и на международната асоциация на музеите, разположени на бойните полета [Since 2000 the Panorama “The Epopée of Plevén 1877” has been a member of the Panorama Association and the International Association of Museums located on the battlefields], Cf. International panorama council – <http://www.panoramacouncil.org/>

<sup>27</sup> Živko Stančev, The Plevén Panorama Museum – Radio Bulgaria, September 21, 2012, <http://bnr.bg/en/post/100169451/the-pleven-panorama-museum>

<sup>28</sup> Яана Дамянова, Минало и настояще се сляха пред Панорама “Плевенска епопея 1877” [Past and present merged to the Panorama “The Epopée of Plevén 1877”], Web. 4 December 2013. [http://dariknews.bg/view\\_article.php?article\\_id=773800](http://dariknews.bg/view_article.php?article_id=773800), 11.09.2011.

<sup>29</sup> ЦДА, Ф. 1Б; оп. 6; а.е. 6431, л.4 – Протокол № 329 от 1 ноември 1966 г. от заседание на Политбюро (ПБ) на ЦК на БКП [CSA] – <http://www.archives.bg/politburo/bg/dokumenti/1960-1969/1324---329--1--1966-->

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## **The First Russian Monuments in Bulgaria Devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878: Transformations of Memory**

**Abstract:** *We focused our research on the first steps of the Russian state towards raising 303 gravestone-monuments immediately after the ROW in 1878. The history of the first Russian monuments devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War reveals the lack of any Bulgarian tradition of memory culture in the first decades after the war. The first memorial places were imported from abroad, from the victorious Russian Empire, and were marked by the tradition of the Russian religious memory culture. Depending on the Bulgarian-Russian and later Bulgarian-Soviet relations the monuments changed their meaning and function being reinterpreted in accordance to the political situations.*

In theoretical memory studies, monument is considered as both collective creation of identity and affirmation of interpretation of history by consensus between the state and its citizens. Each monument is socially and politically motivated and objectifies social constellations.<sup>1</sup> It is a social symbol uniting a group or a nation making a collective memory visible and objective. Once created monuments immediately shape public space and projects long term consequences. The lack of monuments in a certain period of history speaks about identity crises and a related disintegration of the state or about a lack of tradition in objectifying the cultural memory of the nation. The period we researched is a transition period following the liberation of the young Bulgarian state from Ottoman rule in 1878.

At the beginning the Bulgarian memory was not a state initiative [...] There were two groups who used to fill up the memory emptiness in their own way. On one side the Russian army and the provisional Russian government as representatives of a foreign power and on the other side the collective patterns of history interpretation of the Bulgarian participants in the war and their veteran associations. Both impacted the beginning of the memory culture in Bulgaria.<sup>2</sup>

Why was it not the young Bulgarian state, who initiated the creation of memory places devoted to the war but left the initiative in the hands of the provisional Russian government? It is an interesting question but we focused our research on the first steps of the Russian state towards raising 303 gravestone-monuments already in 1878.<sup>3</sup> We will discuss some unpopular or ideologically silenced considerations and aspects of the memorial places related to the first Russian monuments of RWO in Bulgaria, while focusing on the memorial complex at Šipka Pass – its history, its functional transformations and its re-evaluations in different historical periods.

### **The Russian monuments in Bulgaria between 1878 and 1902 – A memory imposed from the outside**

The first Russian monuments in Bulgaria devoted to the heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War were raised in the first years after the San Stefano peace treaty and during the temporary Russian government on the initiative of the headquarters of the Russian army on the Balkans.<sup>4</sup> On 11 August 1878 General Ěduard Ivanovič Totleben, commander in chief of the army, made an official suggestion with his letter № 14,775 to the Emperor of Russia Aleksandr II.<sup>5</sup> By the letter № 121 from 21 August 1878<sup>6</sup> Dmitrij Aleksevič Miljutin, the secretary of state for war, informed General Totleben that Aleksandr II had approved the demand. As a result the raising of two types of monuments started. Monuments on the graves of fallen officers and soldiers belonged to the first group. Sources for their construction were to be gathered basically by donations of the part of the officers still alive and soldiers from the same military units. The military units' paymasters added financial contributions to the collected donations. The engineers of the regiment had to supervise the raising of the monuments.<sup>7</sup> A small part of the monuments was financed by relatives and friends of the fallen warriors.

The second group concerned monuments on the places of the major battles. "A decision was taken that such monuments were to be built in Svišov, Nikopol, Kalitinovo, Loveč, Plevn, Čerkovna, Mečka, Arabakonak, Šipka, Plovdiv and Dobrich. Sources for their raising were provided by the Emperor himself."<sup>8</sup> The suggestion included eleven memorials. In 1884 on the request of the Military-History-Commission to the headquarters of the Russian army a register of the raised monuments was edited.<sup>9</sup> The document provides valuable information about the Russian gravestone-monuments erected until 1884. The sums spent are also mentioned.<sup>10</sup>

What does the data of the document speak about? 264 officers and 12,501 soldiers were killed in the battles. 200 officers and 10,695 soldiers died of their wounds and epidemics. For them monuments were raised – 159 to officers and 248 to soldiers, in total 407, of which 38 were common graves. The total costs of the monuments amount to 111,879 rubles. Having in mind the number of the monuments and their value, which in average is 275 rubles per monument, it is obvious that these monuments were of the first type, mostly gravestones replacing the wooden crosses raised on the graves during the war. These earliest monuments were "of one type designed by the architect Vokar. Some were imported from Russia; others were produced on the spot."<sup>11</sup> The tradition of raising such gravestones

can be traced back to the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Military regulations were elaborated to define the type of the monuments, the ways of their financing and the rules for their liturgical commemoration.<sup>12</sup> The second group of the early Russian monuments built in Bulgaria was of monumental type. “[...] formed in common West-European type with an obelisk, they were made of granite, marble, limestone (the Russian monument in Sofia, the Doctor’s monument in Sofia, the monument of Aleksandr II on Šipka and in the outskirts of Pleven etc.).”<sup>13</sup>

By the end of the temporary Russian government a commission of Russian architects and engineers arrived in Bulgaria to define appropriate places for such monumental constructions. The Russian Emperor himself provided financial aid for their building. The engineers’ military units were assigned to the task of their construction. Most of them were designed by the architect Vokar and raised between 1878 and 1881.

They represent architectural elaborations made from marble, granite and limestone decorated with artistic plastic accents – reliefs, bronze applications, symbols, crosses, and state emblems. These monuments were shaped as pyramids rising up to eleven meters with marble decorations surface. Ten of these monuments were popular as victorious monuments, only the monument on Šipka became the hall-mark Russian monument.<sup>14</sup>

Konstantin Jireček, who crossed the Šipka Pass in 1880, has left a description of the atmosphere of that time. In his book “The Kingdom of Bulgaria” he wrote:

Next to the old Šipka road a work on several big marble monuments was going on [...] The place resemble a graveyard: here a big marble pyramid is raised similar to the one in Sofia and many other monuments of different regiments or persons around simple graves with wooden crosses.<sup>15</sup>

Three officers from the Engineers-Army of the Odessa military district were in charge to raise a monument to St. Aleksandr Nevskij under the supervision of Engineer-Colonel Rambach. They arrived at Šipka during the summer of 1880 to start their work, which was finished in 1881. The monument is shaped like a pyramid with a marble cross on top and it is surrounded by a metal chain installed on small metallic pyramids. On the south side there is an inscription in Russian:

Under the reign of the Russian Emperor Aleksandr II on the occasion of the seizure of the Šipka pass on 7 July 1877 by the army of the chief commander General-Adjutant Gurko. On December 1877 the Turkish army was captured by General-Adjutant Prince Svjatopolk-Mirskij and General-Lieutenant Skobelev under the leadership of General-Lieutenant Radeckij.<sup>16</sup>

On the north side of the monument there is a plate with the names of all military units which have taken part in the battles.<sup>17</sup> The message of the monument was ideologically manipulated during the Communist regime. The name of the monument was changed from the original “a monument in honor of the reign of Aleksandr II” to the more neutral “the big monument” which is how it is named until today. During World War II the army of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ukrainian Front installed a plate with verses of the Soviet poet Leonid Gorilovskij inscribed on it on the west side of the monument. In this way the beginning of the widely exploited Communist regime’s cliché about the “double liberators” was imposed by the monuments.<sup>18</sup>

The first monument in the new capital Sofia was the “Russian monument” raised between 1880 and 1882.<sup>19</sup> In his book Nikolaj Ganev stated that the initiative came from Tsar Aleksandr II himself, who also financed it. The monument was designed by two persons: Vladimir Iosifovič Šervud, member of the Russian Academy of Arts, and the architect Vokar, who both took part in raising the Russian monuments in Bulgaria.<sup>20</sup> Then the “Doctors’ monument” was built between 1883 – 1884, designed by the Russian architect of Czech origin Antonij Osipovič Tomiško<sup>21</sup> in the memory of the doctors fallen in the battles at Pleven, Plovdiv, Mečka and Šipka. Most of them were working for the mission of the Russian Red Cross. The list of 529 medical men casualties was engraved on the monument.

Until the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war in 1902, most of the Russian monuments were already built. On the occasion of the celebration devoted to the anniversary the Bulgarian Tsar Ferdinand I presented the Russian Emperor Nikolaj II with an album of the Russian monuments in Bulgaria.<sup>22</sup> We were interested in the published “List of the Russian monuments in Bulgaria, elaborated in 1898 on the occasion of the competition for their artistic representation.”<sup>23</sup> In the document the monuments are grouped into ten regions; their total number is 305 including six Romanian monuments and five house-museums. Probably the list missed some of the monuments since the artists were allowed to paint other monuments as well.<sup>24</sup> For 14 years out of 400 documented gravestone-monuments only 305 were mentioned as artistic accomplishments, including the monumental ones and the house-museums. Probably some of the graves in the smaller settlements were removed to common grave-memorials and are therefore not mentioned in the list.<sup>25</sup>

The biggest and the first Russian church-monument built in that period was the one in the town of Jambol-Bakadžika, on the initiative of the 35-year old General-Lieutenant Skobelev. This is the first church in Bulgaria named after the Russian Saint and Protector of the regiment which liberated Sofia “St. Aleksandr Nevskij”. The building of the church started on the date of Emperor Aleksandr II’s saving, who survived a terroristic act which influenced the choice of the name of his protector for the church. Building church-monuments is in accordance with a medieval Russian tradition – churches as the most important monuments to military victory.

In the first place military victories were not considered as human achievements but as God’s providence. That is why the places of victory and heroism are at the same time places of prayer and liturgy – to express gratitude to God, to commemorate people who sacrificed their lives for the Fatherland.<sup>26</sup>

The General himself chose the place for the future church and the construction started at the beginning of 1879 with the soldiers of the 30<sup>th</sup> Infantry-Regiment settling at Jambol together with the General since the end of 1878. The funds were collected by voluntary donations from Russia, the main donators being the mother of the White General – Ol'ga Nikolaevna Poltavceva-Skobeleva and his sister Countess Belosel'skaja. On 12 May 1879, on the eve of the withdrawing of the Russian troops from Bulgaria General Skobelev donated a gospel and a massive cross to the church. They are both preserved until today. After his departure it was Partenij Pavlovič Geťman (1824 – 1900), a priest in his division, who took the responsibility for building the church. He became the first abbot of the monastery to the church. During World War I when Bulgaria fought against the Entente the Russian monastery was considered a “nest of Russian espionage” and the monks were detained in the town of Kotel. In the 1920s the monastery restored its activities in subjection to the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad. Archbishop Serafim Sobolev (1881 – 1950), who is still honored as Saint Serafim, was responsible for the church in Bulgaria.<sup>27</sup> In November 1925 he ordained the monk Kirill Aleksandrovič Popov (1886 – 1967), who became the last Russian monk in the monastery. In 1934 the monastery was put under the jurisdiction of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. Similar is the story of the second Russian Orthodox Church in Bulgaria – “the Russian Embassy Church” in Sofia. Its building started in 1882 and finished in 1911.<sup>28</sup>

### **The history of the building of the Memorial Complex Šipka – difficulties and obstacles**

Immediately after the finishing of the Russo-Ottoman War Ol'ga Nikolaevna Skobeleva, the mother of the hero of the war General M.D. Skobelev, and Count N.P. Ignat'ev, the former Russian ambassador to Istanbul, voiced the idea of building a church and a memorial complex at the foot of the Balkan Mountains. Two main reasons were emphasized: on one side to commemorate all the victims of the war for eternity – the ones fallen in battles, the ones who died struggling to live through the harsh winter on Šipka Pass, and the ones who died of their wounds and epidemics; and on the other side “to remind the Bulgarians about the heroism of our victorious army done for their liberation.”<sup>29</sup>

On 18 July 1879 the idea was reported to the Procurator of the Holy Synod – Count D.A. Tolstoj, with an application “to solicit to His Emperor's Highness the permission for opening a campaign for fundraising in the Empire for building an Orthodox church at Šejnovo at the foot of the Balkans.” The permission was received on 5 September 1879 and the appeal for gathering donations was officially published in the “Government Newspapers” and the “Church Newspapers”. Donations were to be collected by the economic department of the Holy Synod. The campaign started very successfully. The Tsar-Liberator Emperor Aleksandr Nikolaevič himself donated an icon, armor and 1,000 golden rubles to the church. In the course of the first seven to eight months in the department of the Holy Synod more than 200,000 rubles were collected.

On 25 April 1880 the Emperor permitted the constitution of a committee for building an Orthodox complex at the foot of the Balkans in Southern Rumelia.

Founding members of the committee were Duke Evgenij Maksimilianovič Lejchtenbergsij, Countess Ol'ga Skobeleva, Countess E.L. Ignat'eva, M.V. Durnov, M.A. Sol'skaja, Count N.P. Ignat'ev, K.P. Pobedonoscev, O.P. Kornilov, I.M. Gedeonov, I.P. Kornilov, A.O. Byčkov, P.A. Richter, I.O. Zolotarev, N.A. Mjasoedov, Prince A.N. Ceretelev, V.P. Mel'nickij and Prince P.A. Vasil'čikov.<sup>30</sup> All the members were of noble origin and associates to the Emperor's court. The first meeting of the committee was held on 16 May 1880. Prince P.A. Vasil'čikov was elected as chief of the committee, A.G. Il'inskij, former director of the economic department of the Synod, as deputy chief and V.P. Mel'nickij as secretary. At the meeting new steps were undertaken in order to collect more donations. The appeal was printed in separate brochures which were sent to eparchy governors, leaders of the nobility, local self-governments and similar office holders. The financial report stated "To the committee's enterprise the Russian society answered in full empathy. By the end of 1881 more than 300,000 rubles were donated. Different objects such as icons and liturgical requisites were also donated."<sup>31</sup>

On a meeting which was held on 22 January 1881 specific actions for building the church were considered. Count Ignat'ev proposed the church to be named after Christmas since the last battle on Šipka was during the Christmas days. He also proposed that the north side of the church should be devoted to Saint Nicolas and the south side to Saint Aleksandr Nevskij.<sup>32</sup> A decision was taken for searching an appropriate place at the foot of the Balkans. Ol'ga Skobeleva<sup>33</sup> inspected the possible places, chose a place for the church complex at Šipka and reported about the conditions of its appropriation. The committee took its final decision by listening to the suggestion of V.P. Mel'nickij, that the church was ideally raised in the village of Šipka on the big road from Kazanlāk to Veliko Tārnovo. A project competition was announced for building a memorial complex including a church, a seminary, a hospital and agricultural buildings. The announced rewards were 1,000, 700 and 500 rubles.<sup>34</sup> On 24 November eight projects were submitted to the committee. The project of the academician A.I. Tomiško won the first price, the second was given to the academician V.A. Šrēter and the third to architect F.A. Ziberger. The project of academician Tomiško was approved for realization.<sup>35</sup>

### **The beginning of the difficulties and obstacles to the work of the committee**

By the end of 1881 the chief of the committee A.V. Vasil'čikov undertook a trip to Eastern Rumelia to get acquainted with the local conditions for building the complex. At a meeting the villagers of Šipka expressed their determination to offer two parcels of land for free, the more appropriate being the one on the top of the village.<sup>36</sup>

The committee met many difficulties in obtaining the land. In spite of the villagers' determination, the Ottoman authorities made the acquisition of the land very frustrating for the committee. The main reason for that were rumors going around that the Russians would buy the land to build a fortress. It was not until 1883 that a Sultan's *irade* was issued, permitting construction work on the land granted by the villagers of Šipka. To legalize the transaction a fictive transfer of the land from one of the most prominent leaders Mr. Papazoğlu to the committee was done. In April

1885, after a long correspondence with the General Russian Consulate in Plovdiv, the property rights were entrusted to the chief of the committee.<sup>37</sup>

The committee met even more difficulties when choosing the construction contractor. After the project of the academician Tomiško had been approved, he agreed to supervise the construction with the help of another person dealing with the practicalities. The committee commissioned Tomiško to elaborate a detailed account of the resources needed and the architect Robert R. Marfel'd took a trip to Eastern Rumelia to collect data about the prices of the construction materials and to investigate the terrain. On 3 February 1883 Tomiško presented the final budget of 204,000 – 205,000 rubles, not yet including the iconostasis, liturgical objects and murals. The Construction Department of the Ministry of the Interior reduced the sum to 184,424 rubles.<sup>38</sup>

On 16 January 1885 the committee's members decided to supervise the construction work themselves and to provide the assistance to the engineer Uspenskij. In June 1885 he arrived in Bulgaria and started his preparatory work. At the beginning of September the leveling of the terrain for the future church and the house of the clergy was done. A store for the materials and a house for the construction workers were built. The laying of the foundation of the church was planned for the spring of 1886.

But unfortunately the political complications in Eastern Rumelia coinciding with the beginning of the construction work were obstructive to the planned work. The Rusophobe coup d'état in Rumelia at the beginning of September spoiled the plan of the committee to organize an auction for construction materials. On the other side the outbreak of the Bulgarian-Serbian War during the same year stopped the work.<sup>39</sup>

The chief of the committee prince P.A. Vasil'čikov was encouraged by the Plovdiv Russian Consulate to come to Šipka to investigate the conditions for an auction for construction materials. His visit was met with empathy and understanding on the side of the Bulgarian priesthood and common people. A decision was taken and the auction announced for the beginning of August. The takeover of the Russophobes on 9 August 1886, the dethronement of Prince Alexander Battenberg and the following events made the progress of the work impossible. The persons who took part in the auction were persecuted by the new authorities.

### **The activities of the committee after the breaking of the diplomatic relations between the Principality of Bulgaria and Russia**

After the departure of the staff of the Russian General Consulate in Plovdiv the local department of the committee was dismissed. "The Bulgarian members of the committee were forced to leave the country in fear of persecutions."<sup>40</sup> On 31 March 1887, taking account of the new circumstances and the fact that part of the resources were wasted for administrative and preparatory work, the committee decided to temporarily stop the construction work of the complex. On 29 December

1887 a decision was taken to stop the work completely and to put what was already done under the protection of the French consulate in Plovdiv.<sup>41</sup>

The breaking of the diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Russia and the ceasing of the construction doomed the committee to stagnation.

Then it was impossible even to think about the possibility for a restoration of the construction work. Beside this, the collected materials on the place of the church got ruined. Some of the members of the committee doubted the possibility of the project of raising a church at the south foot of the Balkans ever to be realized.<sup>42</sup>

On 7 March 1891 the question about the expedience of building a church in Bulgaria was discussed by the committee. "Having in mind the political condition and the obstacles they impose on the fulfillment of the project, isn't it better to transfer the activities of the committee on other, more stable ground?"<sup>43</sup> Count Ignat'ev categorically opposed the suggestion; he was supported by other members of the committee – V.K. Sabler, M.M. Juzefovič and others. The decision was taken that the idea of constructing a church-memorial was to be realized later.<sup>44</sup>

Another decision of great importance for the future development of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church was also taken: as long as the construction work was delayed, the interest of the gathered capital was to be granted to "persons belonging to the Bulgarian priesthood or preparing themselves for future clerical work in form of scholarships for studying in Russian Seminaries and Academies."<sup>45</sup> The decision was approved by the Procurator of the Holy Synod and by the Emperor on 19 June 1891. The maximum amount of the scholarship was defined 8,000 rubles per year. If the yearly expenses would not reach this maximum, the saved money was to be used as a special capital for building an ecclesiastical school within the future memorial complex at Šipka.

### **The number of the educated Bulgarian youngsters and clerics (1891 – 1901):**

<b>Year</b>	<b>1891</b>	<b>1892</b>	<b>1893</b>	<b>1894</b>	<b>1895</b>	<b>1896</b>	<b>1897</b>	<b>1898</b>	<b>1899</b>	<b>1900</b>	<b>1901</b>
Number of students	6	40	49	54	71	67	51	41	35	24	11

In total, for eleven years 449 youngsters and clerics had received their secondary or higher religious education in Russia. The total sum of the scholarships being granted was 55,550 rubles. A big part of the Bulgarian bishops after the liberation were Russian graduates, a part of them was supported by the committee.<sup>46</sup>

Most of the founders of the Theological Faculty in Sofia have graduated from Russian Ecclesiastical Academies – Evtimij Sapundžiev, Gančo Pašev, Hristo Gjaur, Dimităr Djuļgerov, Petăr Dinev, Ivan Snegarov<sup>47</sup> and others. Even during the Stambolov's Rusophobe government cultural and educational ties with Russia were not broken. During the Communist regime in Bulgaria this activity of the committee was fully suppressed.<sup>48</sup>

### **The resuming of the construction of the Russian memorial complex at Šipka**

The diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Russia were restored in 1896 and during the same year the construction of the complex was resumed. On 6 May 1897 the committee signed a contract with A.N. Pomerancev and the complex was planned to be built within the next three years. At the beginning of 1898 a new chief of the committee was elected – the former chief P.A. Vasil'čikov had died and Count Ignat'ev had replaced him. We are not going to describe the final construction of the church in details because it is well documented and researched.<sup>49</sup> We would like to pay more attention to the buildings around the church which are a functional part of the memorial complex nevertheless they are rarely mentioned.

100 meters south-east of the church, a three-corpus-building designed to be a seminary is situated. To provide land for its construction the committee had additionally bought a small terrain from the locals. The building was planned to provide classrooms and a dormitory for 80 students. On the third floor of the middle corpus a ceremonial hall, a Russian Šipka-museum and a library were situated. In the western corpus two dormitories were provided on the same floor, while in the southern corpus a dormitory and a bedroom for the supervisor were located. On the second floor classrooms, two rooms, one for the rector and one for the inspector, as well as an office and a room for the teaching staff were situated. On the first floor a canteen, a buffet, and rooms for teachers and employees were built. The building cost 57,000 rubles. On the west of this building, a house was provided for the clerics. On the east of the seminary, a hospital was built with twelve beds and an apartment for the doctor. North of the hospital, there was a building with apartments for the teaching staff and further on the north a bath, a washing room, stables, a garage and several agricultural buildings.

Despite the many difficulties, the construction ended successfully at the beginning of September 1902. In the last months the meetings of the committee were attended by three members – Count Ignat'ev, Senator V.K. Sabler and General-Major N.R. Ovsjannyj, while the architect Pomerancev and secretary Šul'c were also present. Some members left for different reasons, some died. From the committee's very beginning, only Count Ignat'ev was still present and the successful ending of the enterprise was his achievement. The committee finished the construction, reported it and got dismissed. In the financial report of the committee<sup>50</sup> a detailed account of the collected and spent resources was compiled. Most of the finances spent for the church-monument and the buildings around it (seminary, hospital and others) were collected by ecclesiastical institutions – 168,821 rubles of the total amount of 436,561 rubles. The Russian Mount Athos Monastery donated another 8,112 rubles and 83 icons.

### **The consecration of the memorial complex at Šipka**

The consecration of the church-monument "Nativity" was done in September 1902 in the atmosphere of improved relations between Bulgaria and Russia. The festivities were organized by the committee "Tsar Liberator Aleksandr II", which was

constituted in 1899 on the decision of the Second Congress of the Corporation of the Bulgarian Volunteers of the Russo-Ottoman War lead by Stojan Zaimov.<sup>51</sup> The festivities were especially prepared to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Russo-Ottoman War and for the first time theatrical representations of the battles on Šipka and Šejnovo were performed.

V.A. Giljarovskij – a participant in the war, who was especially invited to write about what he had seen, wrote a book about this one week of celebration.<sup>52</sup> All Bulgarian volunteers who had survived took part in the celebration at Šipka<sup>53</sup>. Crossing Šipka Pass they stopped at the battle fields and bitterly felt that on Šipka only Russian monuments were present and not a single Bulgarian. In the article “The volunteers and Šipka celebration” the oppositional newspaper “New Century” pointed out that “We, the Bulgarians, did not even think about to raise at least a wooden cross with the inscription “God save the killed Bulgarians in the battles on 9/10/11 August 1877 for the freedom of their fatherland” on it.”

The lack of Bulgarian monuments is easy to explain. The Bulgarians did neither have a religious-military tradition nor a modern memorial culture. The Bulgarian Monument of Freedom on Šipka Pass opened 25 years later on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war. The problem of the lack of Bulgarian monumental memory about the war was discussed by a Bulgarian journalist in the eve of the opening of the Monument of Freedom on Šipka in 1934.

The history of the Bulgarian people is marked by a row of graves without crosses [...] 50 years after the war neither personal nor an official initiative was born to place a pile of stones on the place where the Bulgarian spirit reached the limit of its aspiration for new life. We had to wait for the volunteers' own initiative, the initiative of the Šipka eagles, the first monument of our liberation to be raised not on the place where they wrote the most impressive pages of our history by their blood but on the place where history inscribed their modest names in golden letters [...] On the initiative of the Volunteers' Society representatives of almost all cultural institutions, societies and organizations, 15 years ago a committee for raising a Bulgarian monument on Šipka was formed. For around 15 years the committee did not collect money but rather begged Bulgarian people for donations to raise a sign of gratitude on Šipka.<sup>54</sup>

During the inauguration in 1902 the newly constructed memorial complex including a church, a seminary and a hospital was consecrated. We are not going to describe the architecture and the artistic decoration of the “Nativity” church since it was described in detail by Hristo Gančev<sup>55</sup> and Marin Dobrev<sup>56</sup>. During the Communist regime it was only the church-monument which was mentioned, thereby neglecting the other buildings which also had religious and social functions. What was the initial status of the memorial complex? “The discussions about the future status of the church-monument started right after its consecration. Since the monastery complex was built by Russian sources the Russian Holy Synod and the government insisted on the right of ex-territory.”<sup>57</sup>

On 29 May 1902 the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs wrote to the Bulgarian diplomatic representative in Russia – Dimităr Stančov a letter considering the future status of the church. The requirements of the Russian Holy Synod taken on 16 July 1902 were the right of ex-territory and that Russian teachers should teach Bulgarian youngsters a Russian curriculum. The Bulgarian Holy Synod did not agree with the latter considering that Bulgarian youngsters were taught to serve in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and therefore Bulgarians should take part in the education in the seminary and in the teaching process in general.<sup>58</sup> The polemic around the destiny of the seminary continued until 1911. No agreement about the juridical status of the memorial complex was reached. In the period 1902 – 1915 the complex was under the guidance of the Russian state represented by the Russian legation in Sofia and the Russian Holy Synod. The liturgy and farming were taken care of by provisional clergymen – one priest and three singers.<sup>59</sup>

Until 1915 three priests served in the complex – Gennadij, Farapont and Maksim, who successfully came back to Russia on 30 September 1915 after the breaking of the diplomatic relations between Bulgaria and Russia. For the period 1915 – 1918 the Russian interests in Bulgaria were represented by the Holland Kingdom Legation in Sofia. On 8 February 1917 the government of Vasil Radoslavov closed the church. The Seminary was transformed into an orphanage and a home for Russian invalids. Since the 1920s the home was a place of refuge for Russian veterans of the war 1877 – 1878.<sup>60</sup> For the period 1919 – 1934 the complex was a Russian estate and was administered by unofficial Russian representatives. In February 1920 Russian emigrants escaping the Bolshevik terror were accommodated here. In 1928 the orphanage “Šipka” was closed and its inventory was transferred to the Russian Red Cross and the Society of War Invalids constituted by the Red Cross.<sup>61</sup>

In 1934 with the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet and Bulgarian governments the complex was granted to the Bulgarian state “as a present from the Russian people stipulating the complex to be governed by a Bulgarian organization excluding any persons from the circle from Russian emigration.”<sup>62</sup> From 1934 to 1947 the complex was governed by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its Department of Ecclesiastical Matters. In 1935 the Ministry delegated the government of the church to the Bulgarian Holy Synod and the bishop of Stara Zagora respectively. On 11 July 1947 and by a governmental decree the Council of Ministers required from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Department of Ecclesiastical Matters that the memorial complex at Šipka was to be transferred to the Ministry of War and its Department “Museums, Monuments and Graves”. In the same year by agreement between the Ministry of War and the Ministry of People’s Health the buildings of the complex were “ceded for temporary use” to the Ministry of People’s Health. A child sanatorium for orphans of the fighters against fascism was established in the building of the seminary. The Russian asylum was transferred to the building of the hospital and was later transformed into a house for elderly people.

By 1 July 1951 the Complex was administered by the Committee of Science, Art and Culture. On 10 November 1952 by decree of the Russian Holy Synod, the Russian Orthodox communes, monasteries and clergy in Bulgaria were ceded to

the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. By 22 May 1953 they were governed by the local eparchy. The complex went under the jurisdiction of Bishop Kliment of Stara Zagora.<sup>63</sup> By a decision of the Committee of Culture from 17 April 1953 military history houses, museums and church-monuments on the territory of Pleven, Bjala and Šipka were transformed into centers of culture and enlightenment. From the beginning of 1954 the church was administered by the District Council of Kazanlāk. In 1956 by a decision of the Council of Ministers the historical places on Šipka Pass were declared the “National Park – Museum Šipka”. In 1964 the Park was united with the National park “Buzludža” (founded in 1959 and devoted to the history of the Bulgarian Communist Party). The two parks were declared the “National Park-Museum “Šipka-Buzludža”.

On the occasion of the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule, the Russian “Baltic Construction Company” repaired the Šipka monastery for free. On 3 March 2003 the renewed monastery was visited by the presidents of Russia and Bulgaria – Vladimir Vladimirovič Putin and Georgi Părvanov. The church was still a museum then. On Christmas day, 25 December 2004, a Holy Liturgy was performed in the “Christmas Church” by Bishop Galaktion of Stara Zagora. Two days later by the decree Nr. 1034 of the Council of Ministers to the Government of National Movement, Simeon II ceded the monastery to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, to the bishopric of Stara Zagora.

### Conclusion

The history of the first Russian monuments devoted to the Russo-Ottoman War reveals the lack of any Bulgarian tradition of memorial culture in the first decades after the War. The initial memorial places were imported from outside, from the victorious Russian Empire, and were marked by the tradition of the Russian religious memory culture. Depending on the Bulgarian-Russian and later on the Bulgarian-Soviet relations the monuments changed their meaning and function; their status was reinterpreted in accordance to the political situation. In spite of the drastic political changes in Bulgaria, the monuments of the last Russo-Ottoman War were not destroyed as it happened in the Soviet Union but rather different aspects of historical memory were emphasized and celebrated in the cultural memory, while some aspects of memory were doomed to silence and new aspects were invented.

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<sup>1</sup> Клаудия Вебер “Опити за съживяване” – към началата на българската култура на паметта [“Attempts Of Revitalization” – Towards The Beginnings Of Bulgarian Culture Of Memory], *Балканистичен форум*, 1-2-3/1999, Благоевград, 157-170.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>3</sup> Цонко Генев, Освободителната война 1877 – 1878 [The Liberating War of 1877 – 1878], София, 1978, 301.

<sup>4</sup> Иван Христов, Руските паметници в България, издигнати в памет на загиналите по време на освободителната война 1877 – 1878 г. [The Russian monuments in Bulgaria raised in memory of the fallen ones in the Liberating War 1877 – 1878], 42, София, 1981, 59.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, цит. по ЦГВИА на СССР, ф. 970, оп. 2, а.е. 2243.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>7</sup> Иван Христов; Слави Тодоров, Шипка [Šipka], София, 1988, 42.

<sup>8</sup> Христов, Паметници, 4, 60.

<sup>9</sup> It is preserved in the Central Military History Archive of USSR – ЦГВИА, ф. 16180, оп. 1, ед. хр. 494 and was published in original by Ivan Hristov, cf. Христов, Паметници, 4.

<sup>10</sup> The register provides summarized information about the soldiers and officers who took part in the battles, the number of the killed in the battles and the ones who died of wounds and epidemic. The number of raised monuments and their costs are also given.

<sup>11</sup> Стоян Райчевски, Паметници на признателност за Освобождението на България [Monuments of gratitude for the liberation of Bulgaria], София, 2007, 6.

<sup>12</sup> Вячеслав Котков, *Военное духовенство России. Страницы истории [The military clergy of Russia, pages of history]*, Санкт Петербург, 2003; Петър Воденичаров; Анастасия Пашова, *Руската религиозната памет за Руско-Отоманската Война 1877 – 1878, същия сборник [The Russian Military-Religious Memory about the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878, in the same volume]*.

<sup>13</sup> Стоян Райчевски, Паметници, 11, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Дарина Петкова, Големият руски паметник на Шипка, Национален парк-музей “Шипка-Бузлуджа”, [The big Russian monument on Šipka, National-Park-Museum “Šipka-Buzludža”]. Web. 15 December 2013. <http://sedmica.bg/2012/03/големият-руски-паметник-на-шипка/>

<sup>15</sup> Христов; Тодоров, Шипка, 7, 43.

<sup>16</sup> Петкова, Паметник, 14.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., For the north side it states: “In the battles took part: Eleckij, Sevskij, Brjanskij, Orlovskij, Žitomirskij, Vladimirskij, Suzdal’skij, Uglickij, Kazanskij, Irkutskij, Enisejskij, Krasnojarskij, Jaroslavskij, Šujskij, Kolomenskij and Serpuhovskij infantry; 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> shooting battalions and two companies of the 7<sup>th</sup> intelligence battalion of the Kuban Cossack Army; 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> infantry detachments; Lejb-Dragunskij to His Majesty and the St.-Petersburg-Ulanskij-Regiments; Don Cossack regiments 1<sup>st</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>; Ural Cossack detachment; 9<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> artillery brigades; the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> batteries; the 24<sup>th</sup> artillery brigade, 3<sup>rd</sup> battery, 2<sup>nd</sup> brigade; 2<sup>nd</sup> infantry battery and two cannons of the Don horse guards; five companies of the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> battalions; two units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> engineer park; one unit of the military telegraph park.”

<sup>18</sup> Иван Христов, По следите на освободителите [On the Tracks of the Liberators], София, 1989, 168. The plate was ordered by the political department of the 37<sup>th</sup> army. The author of the verses is Leonid Lazarevič Gorilovskij, a military correspondent. The same plate was placed on the right side of the main entrance of the church in Šipka.

<sup>19</sup> Николай Ганев, Паметниците на столица София [The monuments of the capital Sofia], София, 1939, 5.

<sup>20</sup> Šervud designed the monument of the Russian army in Pleven; Vokar designed the monuments in Plovdiv, Loveč and Stara Zagora.

<sup>21</sup> Маргарита Коева, Руски архитекти работили в България през периода 1879 – 1912 година [Russian architects who worked in Bulgaria for the period 1879 – 1912], Електронно издателство LiterNet, 25.12.2003.

<sup>22</sup> Албум “Спомен от войната 1877 – 1878 г” на Комитета Цар Освободител II от Щаба на българската армия [Album “Memory of the war 1877 – 1878” by the committee “Tsar Liberator” of the headquarters of the Bulgarian army], София, 1902.

<sup>23</sup> Емилия Зорнишка, Албум “Спомен от войната 1877 – 1878 г”, поднесен на Руския император Николай II от Комитета “Цар Освободител Александър II” [Album “Memory of the war 1877 – 1878” granted to the Russian Emperor Nikolaj II by the committee “Tsar Liberator Aleksandr II”]. В: 50 години национален парк-музей Шипка, 130 години от Руско-

Турската война и Шипченската епопея [50 years National-Park-Museum Šipka. 130 years after the Russo-Turkish War and the Šipka Epopee], Казанлък, 2008, 138; ВИМП, Ф. Д. 1, оп. 1, Инв. № 4031, а.е. 697.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>25</sup> For this practice cf. Николай Вуков, Тленните останки на “специалните мъртви” и тяхното колективно погребване след 1944. Паметници-костници и братски могили [The remains of the “special dead” and their collective funeral after 1944. Monuments-Ossuaries and common graves]. В: Смъртта при социализма [Death under Socialism], София, 2013, 21-55.

<sup>26</sup> Константин Михайлов, Взорванна памет. Уничтоженные памятники русской военной славы [Exploded memory. The destruction of the monuments of the Russian military glory], Москва, 2007, 12.

<sup>27</sup> His grave is in the crypt of the Russian Church in Sofia.

<sup>28</sup> Олга Решетникова, Руската църква в София [The Russian Church in Sofia], София, 2010.

<sup>29</sup> Храм-паметник у подножия Балкан для вечного поминовения православных воинов павших в Русско-Турецкую войну 1877 – 1878 [Church-monument at the foot of the Balkans for eternal commemoration of the Orthodox warriors fallen in the Russo-Turkish War 1877 – 1878], *Военный сборник*, 6, 1902, 15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. Later V.K. Sabler, I.A. Zinov'ev, A.A. Bogoljubov, N.R. Ovsjannyj, V.M. Juzefovič joined the committee.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>32</sup> At the beginning the discussion was about building a church on the peak St. Nikolas of the Balkans but the idea was rejected because of the fact that the place wasn't populated and such a construction would have required a lot of money and labor force.

<sup>33</sup> On 6 July 1880 Ol'ga Skobeleva was robbed and murdered near Plovdiv.

<sup>34</sup> The evaluation of the competition proposals was done by the leading specialists in Architecture – Prof. A.I. Rezanov, Prof. D.I. Grimm, Prof. R.A. Gedik, Prof. R.N. Berigardt and engineer Ė.I. Žiber.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. Слави Тодоров, Идея за обезсмъртяване подвига на загиналите за свободата на България [The idea about eternalizing the heroism of the fallen ones for the liberation of Bulgaria]. В: Сборник Храм-паметник “Рождество Христово” край град Шипка 1902 – 2002 [The Church-Monument “Christmas” near the town of Šipka 1902 – 2002], София, 2002, 17-23; Мая Миланова, Изграждане на Храм-паметника и прилежащите му сгради [The construction of the church-monument and the surrounding buildings]. В: Сборник Храм-паметник “Рождество Христово” край град Шипка 1902 – 2002 [The Church-Monument “Christmas” near the town of Šipka 1902 – 2002], София, 2002, 23-37.

<sup>36</sup> Храм-паметник, 29, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 19. Academician Tomiško did not agree to build the church for such a sum. The committee accepted the proposal of the contractor P.I. Gubonin who agreed to build the church for 200,000 rubles. After he got acquainted with the conditions of the contract he estimated that the sum was too small and recommended Captain-Engineer F.E. Struve for the job. In order to supervise the execution of the project, a branch of the committee including local people was constituted in May 1884 in Plovdiv. Captain-Engineer Uspenskij was also invited. During the summer of 1884 Struve and Uspenskij visited Eastern Rumelia to estimate the sum needed for the construction. Uspenskij suggested 196,224 rubles; Struve on the other hand suggested 256,725 rubles. After discussing the two suggestions the committee decided to provide 233,945 rubles and offered Struve to build the church for such a sum, but he wouldn't agree. Papazoglu, a member of the local Plovdiv branch of the commit-

tee, offered his services but the committee didn't accept his offer because he did not have enough capital to bring with him.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Bishop Grigorij of Ohrid and Bitolja graduated the Seminary of Odessa in 1885 and later Moscow's Ecclesiastical Academy; the bishop of Stara Zagora Metodij Kusev graduated the Seminary of Kiev and the Sankt Petersburg Academy in 1896; Bishop Boris of Ohrid graduated Sankt Petersburg Academy in 1889; the bishop of Vraca Kliment graduated the Kiev Academy in 1898; Bishop Neophyte of Vidin graduated the Sankt Petersburg Academy in 1896; the bishop of Sofia Stefan I graduated Kiev's Academy and many others did likewise.

<sup>47</sup> As a student in the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy, Ivan Snegarov started to write Bulgarian clerical and social activists, who had graduated the Kiev Academy. Cf. Димитър Христов, Малко известен труд на Иван Снегаров за българи възпитанници на Киевската духовна академия [A little-known work of Ivan Snegarov about the graduates of the Kiev Ecclesiastical Academy]. Web. 15 December 2013. <http://www.academia.edu/2445036/>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>49</sup> Тодоров, Идея, 35.

<sup>50</sup> Отчет Высочайше утвержденного комитета по сооружению православного храма у подножия Балкана в поинование войнов, павших в войну 1877 – 1878 годов [Report of the highly approved committee about the construction of the Orthodox church at the foot of the Balkans], *Военный сборник*, 9, 1903, 250-258.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Райчевски, Паметници, 11.

<sup>52</sup> Владимир А. Гиляровски, Шипка – прежде и теперь [Šipka – Before and now], Москва, 1902.

<sup>53</sup> Considering the political situation in Bulgaria the feasts were described in details by Маринка Гочева; Снежана Николова, Тържествата за освещаването и откриването на храм-паметника "Рождество Христово" през септември 1902 г. [Feasts for the consecration of the church-monument "Christmas" near Šipka in September 1902]. В: Сборник Храм-паметник "Рождество Христово" край град Шипка, 1902 – 2002 [The Church-Monument "Christmas" near the town of Šipka 1902 – 2002], София, 2002, 37-54; Гиляровски, Шипка, 52.

<sup>54</sup> Dimităr Popov – member of the committee for raising a monument of the revival and liberation of the Bulgarian people, В. Зора, бр. 4547, от 27 август 1934. About the activity of the committee "Tsar Liberator", founded by Stojan Zaimov in 1889 cf. Райчевски, Паметници, 11.

<sup>55</sup> Христо Ганчев, Архитектурата на храм-паметника "Рождество Христово" край град Шипка [The architecture of the church-monument "Christmas" near Šipka]. В: Сборник Храм-паметник "Рождество Христово" край град Шипка, 1902 – 2002 [The Church-Monument "Christmas" near the town of Šipka 1902 – 2002], София, 2002, 63-74.

<sup>56</sup> Марин Добрев, Художествената украса на храм-паметника "Рождество Христово" [The artistic decoration of the church-monument "Christmas" near Šipka]. В: Сборник Храм-паметник "Рождество Христово" край град Шипка, 1902 – 2002 [The Church-Monument "Christmas" near the town of Šipka 1902 – 2002], София, 2002, 75-96.

<sup>57</sup> Мария Захариева, Статут на храма през годините. Предназначение на прилежащите постройките [The statute of the church in the course of time]. В: Сборник Храм-паметник

“Рождество Христово” край град Шипка, 1902 – 2002 [The Church-Monument “Christmas” near the town of Šipka 1902 – 2002], София, 2002, 103-116.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>60</sup> Радиана Петкова, Руски ветерани, родени и живели в Казанлък и Казанлъшкия край [The Russian veterans who were born and lived in Kazanlāk and the Kazanlāk region]. В: 50 години национален парк-музей Шипка, 130 години от Руско-Турската Война и Шипченската епопея [50 years National-Park-Museum Šipka. 130 years after the Russo-Turkish War and the Šipka Epopee], Казанлък, 2008, 161.

<sup>61</sup> Захаријева, Статут, 57, 111.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 115.

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## **The Russian Military-Religious Memory about the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878**

**Abstract:** *The authors research the Russian Orthodox tradition of military churches functioning as churches, military museums and often graveyards. The regiment churches related to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 constructed between 1878 and 1913 are analyzed. Their memorial character is related to the practice that such churches were devoted to the saints celebrated in the days of the military units' victories. It is reflected in the choice of subjects of the wall paintings; the choice of icons in the iconostasis; displayed memorial objects such as relicts, regiment banners, parade uniforms of Emperors and Grand Dukes, weapons, medals, memorial signs (special ribbons, hats), trophies taken from the enemies in successful operations (fortress keys, banners, weapons), icons and church plates from the camp church of the regiment.*

There are only a few researches on the history of the military churches in the Russian Empire. In the most detailed manner it is presented in the book of the pre-revolutionary army priest Grigorij Citovič<sup>1</sup> which is why we will often quote information provided by him. Unfortunately there is not a single research on the later developments concerning the military churches. Therefore our research will be limited from 1878 until 1913, the year when the Citovič's book was published. We are especially interested in the military churches which have preserved memory about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 (in further reference also ROW). We aim at both defining the memorial functions of the military churches in the context of the Russian military-religious tradition and discovering new realms of memory about the ROW.

### **Memorial functions of the military churches – The religious tradition**

The history of the Russian Empire from earliest time was connected to Orthodox Christianity and Church. Since the Middle Ages all important victories were celebrated by raising commemorative churches.

It is useless to search in old Moscow for statues of tsars or military leaders, memorial plaques [...] but that does not mean that the Russian people was not able to preserve grateful memory about the warriors' contributions and glorious victories. Just the means of expression were essentially different. The memorial monument of medieval Russia was a church. The Russian people conceived the military victories not as human achievements but as God's providence. This was why the place of remembering victory and heroism was at the same time a place of prayer and liturgy to express gratitude to God and to commemorate the people who sacrificed their lives for the fatherland. Their heroic deeds were sacred, and the memorials were also sacred in the most direct meaning of this word.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of so many wars with the Ottoman and Persian Empires, the Russian Empire led by Ekaterina II and her heirs in the 18<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century annexed Azerbaijan, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ossetia, Georgia, Kabardia, and the Crimea. The Russian navy and merchant fleet got access to the Black Sea.<sup>3</sup> The permanent military actions of the Empire, led in close cooperation with the Church, caused the development of a tradition of memorial church constructions. Since the introduction of a regular army a church had to be provided to each military unit. At the beginning it was a camp church (altar and church plate) consisting of tents or improvised sections in barracks.<sup>4</sup>

Later permanent churches were constructed, both of wood or stone. They became memorial because they were devoted to the saints whose days were commemorated in the days of the victories. The Russian churches started to function as places of memory about important historical events and persons.<sup>5</sup> In the course of centuries many church-monuments enlarged their functions since new memory associations were added to the existing ones.<sup>6</sup> Many military events from the 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> century were engraved on churches in different parts of the Russian Empire. The construction of churches was financed by the Tsar himself, the Patriarch or by private investors. An enormous memorial to Russian military glory was Moscow itself.<sup>7</sup>

Since the time of Tsar Fëdor III Alekseevič (1676 – 1682) the organization of the regiment churches was under the surveillance of the Tsar himself. He could choose priests and define the quantity of church plates in the regiments. By the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the practice of appointing priests to the army units started and liturgy was to be held in special military churches.<sup>8</sup> Until 1800 the military churches and the priests associated to them were subjugated to the eparchial authorities of that Eparchy where the regiment was billeted at. Only during military campaigns the Holy Synod used to appoint not only priests but their superiors – so-called Ober-Field-Priests for the infantry and Ober-Monks for the navy.<sup>9</sup> This temporary separation of the military priesthood from the eparchial one paved the way for a final separation between them. The subjugation of the military priests to the military Ober-Priests in peace- and war time was regulated by a decree issued on 9 April 1800 by Tsar Pavel. In his report from 28 February 1801 the First Archpriest of the

army and navy Pavel Jakovlevič Ozereckovskij pointed out that priests were appointed to military hospitals, schools and prisons as well.<sup>10</sup>

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Russia also appropriated European codes of commemoration – triumphal arches, obelisks, memorial columns – still churches were also constructed.<sup>11</sup> The “Patriotic War” of 1812 revived the tradition of regiment churches and this time commemorative churches were raised all over the Russian Empire. The places of the main victories and battles from the second part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were commemorated by church-monuments, which also became museums of historical military memory. “If you deprive people of faith, they are not motivated by superior spiritual force – to sacrifice themselves for – God, Tsar, Fatherland” – noted General Aleksej Nikolaevič Kuropatkin (1898 – 1904), Minister of War and hero of the ROW.

The Holy Synod’s decree Nr. 4352, on 29 September 1826 put all stationary military churches under the subjugation of the Ober-Priest of army and navy and associated to the headquarters of His Majesty Emperor. By that time there were 40 church-monuments as enlisted by Citovič.<sup>12</sup> In the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century their number increased: in 1855 there were already 290 churches, in 1878 – 344 churches, in 1905 – 686 churches, and finally in 1914 – 671 churches.<sup>13</sup>

According to the importance of the memorial churches they can be classified into 3 groups – cathedrals (church complexes), churches and chapels. The chapels were constructed as separate buildings or as parts of barracks or headquarters.

### **The memorial character of the churches**

In the first place the memorial character of a regiment church is related to the practice that these churches were devoted to the saints celebrated in the days of the military units’ victories. The memorial function of the military churches was reflected in the choice of subjects of the wall paintings, the choice of icons in the iconostasis, and in its outside and inside arrangements. Different memorial objects such as relicts and military trophies related to the history of the regiment were also exposed in a manner resembling museum exhibition. Furthermore regiment banners, parade uniforms of Emperors and Grand Dukes, weapons, awards and medals, memorial signs (special ribbons, hats), trophies taken from the enemies in successful operations (fortress keys, banners, weapons), icons and church plates from the camp church of the regiment were exhibited. Documents related to the history of the military unit and bullets taken from the wounds of dead or injured warriors were also preserved.<sup>14</sup>

A military church was not only a place of religious practice (liturgy, prayers, religious celebrations, festivities related to the everyday life of the military or to baptism, marriage, and funeral) but also a place of historic commemoration. It was not only a regiment church but a regiment museum. Almost at all military churches commemorative plaques with the names of the officers killed in the battles and the names of the distinguished heroes engraved on them can be found. This practice was regulated by a Tsarist decree in 1848: “In all regiment churches bronze commemorative plaques should be installed with the names of the officers who served

in the regiment and were killed in the battles against the enemy or died of their wounds.”<sup>15</sup> By 1913 commemorative plaques were placed in all military churches.<sup>16</sup>

Since the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and until 1917 on the property of the regiment churches famous military leaders and officers from the different regiments were buried still common graves for soldiers also had their place.<sup>17</sup> By that time chapels, sculptures, columns, obelisks and other monuments devoted to the heroic past of the military units started to be raised in the church yards.<sup>18</sup> Church choirs and libraries were founded.<sup>19</sup> On the Patron Saint day of the regiment official liturgy and parades were organized and the names of the killed and deceased heroes were acclaimed.

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, military churches were turned into memorials – church-monuments to “Russian military glory”. The church became the center of the memorial complex functioning as a church, a regiment museum, and a graveyard for the heroes.<sup>20</sup>

### **The military-religious memory about the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878: New military churches and memory symbols**

After the ROW and until the end of the century the question about the deficit of military churches on the territory of the Empire and especially on the newly annexed territories was discussed many times at the Ministry of War.

Despite the efforts of the authorities to open new Orthodox army churches the need of such churches is vary urgent especially in the West districts and the periphery of our great kingdom. The Christ-loving Russian soldier living in Finland, Warsaw and Vilnius districts is deprived in many cases of the great Christian blessing – to pray in a church. The military churches don't fit the number of the military and in the winter time the service for the low ranks is held in the barracks in an especially improvised place or in rented homes. It is obvious how inconvenient and difficult it is to hold a service in the barracks.<sup>21</sup>

In 1900 the Minister of War A.N. Kuropatkin reported to the Emperor the need of additional funds in order to enlarge the existing military churches and to construct new churches for all military units with priests directly appointed to them. He proposed a project of a one-type military church to be elaborated for saving construction resources. He was motivated in his proposal by the fact that many of the territories newly annexed to Russia were inhabited by peoples of other religions and the Russian military sent there was deprived of the possibility to attend liturgy on Sundays and on the occasions of religious celebrations. The Emperor himself added to the report on 23 August 1900: “Let God in short time make sure the religious needs of the army will be satisfied. I consider this an extremely important matter.”<sup>22</sup>

By an imperial decree to the headquarters from 23 January 1901, a special commission was constituted led by the member of the Military Council Infantry-General Nikolaj Dmitrievič Tatiščev. The commission had to discuss and propose suggestions for “satisfying the religious needs of the army in order to enhance their

religious-moral education.” The commission among several projects chose one design of a military church which was not luxurious but provided many seats. For the first time this model was used in the construction of the church for the 148<sup>th</sup> Caspian-Regiment. The cost of the church was 40,000 rubles and the Emperor approved the endeavor. The military administration provided budgetary resources for church constructions every year.<sup>23</sup> From 1901 until the beginning of the First World War in average five churches of that type were constructed per year.<sup>24</sup> In many cases mosques were converted into Orthodox churches. Halls and gym halls were also reconstructed to serve as churches.<sup>25</sup>



**Figure 1: The approved project of one typed military church<sup>26</sup>**

Citovič in detail described all the churches of the army and navy for the first time in 1913.<sup>27</sup> He researched on the history of the construction of each church and listed the relics preserved in them: camp churches, battle and rewarded banners, gonfalon, icons of the saints-protectors of the military units, commemorative plaques with the names of the warriors fallen in different battles or with the names of the

commanders. We have made statistics of all military churches in Russia by that time and highlight the ones related to the ROW. From 555 military churches in total 149 had preserved some kind of memory about the ROW.<sup>28</sup>

**Statistics of the number of the military churches in Russia by 1913 and the number of the ones related to the ROW.<sup>29</sup>**

	<b>Military districts (12)</b>	<b>Number of military churches</b>	<b>Number of churches related to the ROW</b>
1.	St. Petersburg	84	18
2.	Vilnius	57	4
3.	Warsaw	78	28
4.	Moscow	63	23
5.	Kiev	62	36
6.	Odessa	26	9
7.	Kazan'	29	5
8.	Caucasus	51	26
9.	Turkestan	39	-
10.	Omsk	9	-
11.	Irkutsk	21	-
12.	Priamur'e	36	-
<b>Total</b>		555 military churches	149 military churches which have preserved memory about the ROW

**What was this memory about?**

In the first place camp churches used in the campaigns were exposed.<sup>30</sup> All regiments who took part in the war and survived were granted special inscriptions on their peaked caps, describing the places of the important battles and victories. For instance, the caps of the soldiers of the Izmail-Regiment carried two inscriptions – “For Gorni Dăbnik – 12 October 1877 – granted on 30.09.1878” and “For distinction in the Russo-Ottoman War 1877 – 1878 – granted on 17.04.1878”. The special inscriptions and the documents about them as well as the military trophies – banners, flags, badges and tokens with the years of the war, or rewards received after the war such as St. George's Banners with the name of the regiment and the place and time of the military success recorded – were preserved in the “Holy Trinity Cathedral” of the Izmail-Regiment in St. Petersburg.<sup>31</sup> All the regiments which have taken part in the war were granted special inscriptions on their caps stating the exact place and time of distinguishing in the battles: “For Philippopolis – 5 January 1878”; “For Teliš – 12 October 1877”; “For the capture of Kars – 6 November”, etc. The caps with inscriptions were displayed in the churches. In St. Petersburg's

“Transfiguration Cathedral” all trophies were preserved – altogether 488 banners, 16 flags, 65 keys of different fortresses in Asian and European Turkey and three badges. The awarded St. Andrej’s Ribbons and St. George’s Crosses, as well as the regiment banners of the 9<sup>th</sup> guards-unit of the Preobraženskij-Regiment were also preserved.<sup>32</sup> In all churches St. George’s Flags which had been awarded after the war were displayed as relicts. In the church “St. Konstantin and Elena” of the 7<sup>th</sup> Grenadier-Regiment in Moscow on the St. George’s flag was written: “For distinction in 1807 against the French; for Warsaw – 25 and 26 August 1831; for Plevn – 28 November 1877”. The reward was granted on 13 March 1879.<sup>33</sup>

The places where the regiment had acted heroically were inscribed on special commemorative plaques in the churches. For instance, in the church “St. Aleksandr Nevskij” of the Pavlovsk-Regiment in Petersburg was written: “In the Russo-Turkish War 1877 – 1878 the regiment played a decisive role in the battle for Gorni Dăbnik on 12 October 1877.”<sup>34</sup> In the memorial churches special commemorative plaques with the names of distinguished commanders and officers and the rewards granted to them were also installed. On the commemorative black marble plaques the names of all fallen officers (killed or died from injuries sustained on the battlefield) from the regiment were inscribed in golden letters.

In the church “St. Paul the Confessor” of the Hussar-Regiment in Carskoe Selo a chapel was constructed on the occasion of the war’s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>35</sup> In the same church an icon of the Mother of God, received as a gift from the Bulgarian people during the course of the war was preserved.<sup>36</sup> In other churches also icons given as presents from Bulgarians during the war were displayed. In Warsaw in the church “Reverend Martinian” of the Uglan-Regiment an icon of the Mother of God called “Joy and Consolation” was presented. The inscription stated “To the guards of the Uglan-Regiment as a sign of blessing from the grateful Bulgarian church, 1878, 12 May, Constantinople, Bulgarian Exarch Miletij, Metropolitan of Ohrid Natanail.”<sup>37</sup> In some churches commemorative plaques with all places of the battles of the regiment enlisted were installed. In the church of Novgorod the following inscription was engraved:

1877 – 1878 – The regiment took part in the Russo-Turkish War within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Guardian cavalry division; on 12 October 1877 it took part in the battle for Teliš; on 21 October 1877 – two squadrons took part in the battle near Džurilovo; on 28 October 1877 – the regiment took part in the battle for the town of Vraca; 10 November 1877 – it took part in the battle for the village of Novačin; 16 – 17 December 1877 it took part in the passing of the Balkan; 25 December it took part in the battle for Mečka; 3 – 4 January 1878 a squadron led by captain Burago made 1000 Turks and the Circassians of Sulejman Paša run away and liberated Plovdiv; 6 January 1878 – it took part in the battle for the village of Semidža; 10 January 1878 – it took part in the capture of Adrianople; 13 January 1878 – it took part in the battle for Dimotika.

The heroes of the war were buried behind the altar side of the church.<sup>38</sup> In Bobrujsk in the church “St. Nikolaj” of the 157<sup>th</sup> Imeretian Infantry-Regiment special

regiment coins made of gold, silver and bronze with the inscription “95<sup>th</sup> Krasnojarsk Infantry-Regiment 1812 – 1814, 1877 – 1878” were preserved.<sup>39</sup> In the same town in another military church called “Joan Theologian” of the 159<sup>th</sup> Infantry-Regiment a commemorative plaque with the following inscription was installed: “During the capture of Kars on the night of 6 November 1877 – a small part of the regiment attacked and took the enemy’s main fortification Karadag in a way which decided the outcome of the battles for the rest of the fortresses.” Next to the same church a military graveyard with a chapel called “St. Apostles Peter and Paul” could be found.<sup>40</sup> Military graveyards were common around most of the churches.<sup>41</sup>

Memorial plaques devoted to military priests were also common. For instance, in the church “The Assumption of the Holy Virgin” of the 64<sup>th</sup> Kazan’ Infantry-Regiment in Białystok the following inscription was present: “The archpriest Michail Al’bov in the battles bravely encouraged the wounded ones, the ones suffering of typhus and other infectious deceases sacrificing his life to God’s will in the Russo-Turkish War 1877 – 1878.”<sup>42</sup> In the church “St. Archangel Michael” of the Lithuanian Regiment in Warsaw a copper-silver cross and stole belonging to a priest were displayed. The cross was twice knocked out of the hands of the priest Fëdor Michajlov in the battle for the capture of Arap Tabya the main fortification of the fortress of Kars. The priest was injured on his left hand and traces of bullets on both the cross and the stole were visible.<sup>43</sup>

There were towns in which the memory of the Russo-Ottoman War was especially strong. Such is the town of Aleksandropol’ (today Gyumri in Armenia) – four out of six military churches in the town were related to the ROW. With the permission of the commander-in-chief Grand Duke Michail Nikolaevič two heroes from the ROW were buried in the Aleksandr-Castle-Church “St. Martyr Carica Aleksandra” – General-Major Il’ja Čelokaev, who was wounded in the battle for Kars on 11 May and Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Melikov, who got killed during the assault on Kars on 6<sup>th</sup> November 1877. On their graves marble plates with inscriptions were installed.<sup>44</sup> Among the precious objects in the church was the icon “Lord of Hosts”, a gift from Emperor Nikolaj I and gonfalons with the inscription “In memory of the capture of Ardahan on 6 May 1877”. Against the altar on the grave of the commander of the artillery General-Major Fëdor Aleksandrovič Gubskij, a distinguished hero from the ROW who died on 14 February 1878, a monument was raised. To the castle-church the chapel “St. Archangel Michael” was built on the place of the military garrison’s graveyard called “Hill of Honor” in 1853.<sup>45</sup> With the entire garrison of Aleksandropol’ present, official dirges were held in the chapel on the days of 17 September – the storm of Kars; 24 June – the battle for Bayandour; and 2 and 19 November – the battles for Kiorundar and Başgedikler.<sup>46</sup> The other three churches – the church of the 18<sup>th</sup> Dragoon-Sever-Regiment “The birth of St. Virgin”, the church of the 53<sup>rd</sup> Bakin-Regiment “St. Arsenij Archbishop of Ser” and the church of the 154<sup>th</sup> Infantry-Derbent-Regiment “St. Aleksandr Nevskij” had also preserved memory about the war.

Three new church-monuments were constructed to commemorate anniversaries of the ROW. The biggest of them was the cathedral in Odessa. For the construction of the cathedral in Odessa a special commission led by the commander of the 4<sup>th</sup> infantry brigade – General-Major Vladislav Francevič Baufal, was constituted. On 31 May 1909 the beginning of the construction of the church to the so called

“Iron Brigade” was celebrated. Among the honored guests, heroes of Šipka were present – General Lejdenic who served in the 13<sup>th</sup> regiment, Colonel Merkazin – head of the Cadet school, and Colonel Putjata from the 8<sup>th</sup> army corpus. On 10 September 1912 the cathedral was officially consecrated. At the ceremony architect Lev Fëdorovič Prokopovič and the new appointed brigade priest Leonid Rozanov spoke about the importance of the new church commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Šipka battles, where the warriors of the “Iron Brigade” distinguished themselves. The church was named after the protector of the Bulgarian Archdeacon Stefan. On the occasion of the consecration a special badge was issued. The size of the church was impressive with more than 325 square meters. The dome was higher than 30 meters. On the northern side historical bells were installed: one bell with the portrait of Emperor Nikolaj II; a heroic bell with the portraits of General Fëdor Fëdorovič Radeckij and Josif Vladimirovič Gurko; and a bell to the brigade itself representing the epaulettes of the three regiments. In the upper part of the iconostasis icons devoted to the saints celebrated in the days of the victories of the brigade in Bulgaria were placed. A marble throne was raised in the memory of the chiefs of the brigade, them being Emperor Aleksandr II and Emperor Aleksandr III, Grand Duke Field-Marshal Nikolaj Nikolaevič and Field-Marshal Gurko. Every church plate was manufactured in ancient Russian style. On 22 June 1913 an official prayer was held, while on the day of the church’s feast – on 25 September the same year, a special liturgy was held and the remains of General Radeckij were transferred from the city graveyard to the church. After 1920 the church was destroyed.

The church “Epiphany” of the 80<sup>th</sup> Kabardian-Regiment in the annexed town of Kars was also constructed to commemorate the war. According to Citovič<sup>47</sup> the regiment-church was situated in the center of Kars on the place of the common graves for the warriors fallen in the battles for the fortress of Kars in the night of 6 November 1877. The construction of the stone church was subsidized by the state. It was consecrated on 22 November 1908 and was named after St. Aleksandr Nevskij. By that time the 154<sup>th</sup> Derbent-Regiment was accommodated there. In 1910 the regiment moved to Aleksandropol'. In the church the military coats of the chief of the regiment Emperor Aleksandr III were displayed and twelve marble plaques were installed with the names of the killed Kabardians inscribed, who had fallen in different battles between 1830 and 1878. The church was probably destroyed after the Bolshevik revolution.

A church in Minsk was also constructed to commemorate the ROW.<sup>48</sup> On the graveyard of Minsk’s military hospital many heroes of the ROW were buried. On 2 June 1895 a big cross was raised there and a prayer for all killed heroes was held. Soon after that the decision was taken to build a church commemorating the fallen warriors of the ROW. For the construction of the church-monument the governor of Minsk granted the sum of 11,227 rubles and 39 kopeks. The local garrison also contributed its share and relatives of fallen soldiers did so as well. The construction started during autumn 1896 and finished by spring the next year. In 1898 the church was consecrated and named after St. Aleksandr Nevskij. The church received the status of the regiment-church of the 119<sup>th</sup> Infantry-Regiment of Kolomenskoe. The regiment’s relicts from the camp-church and regiment’s gonfalons

were transferred to the newly built church. On the west side, inside the church two black marble plates were installed with the names of 118 killed officers and soldiers of the 30<sup>th</sup> Artillery-Brigade and the 119<sup>th</sup> Infantry-Regiment of Kolomenskoe from the battles around Pleven. The relicts and the plates are still present in the church. Behind the altar two common graves were placed and obelisks and monuments were raised as well.<sup>49</sup> In 1932 the church was closed just like all churches in Minsk were. However, in 1991 the church was renovated. A baptiserium, a Saturday religious school and a municipality hall for religious discussions were added. The military relicts – the camp church and the regiment's gonfalons from the time of the ROW – were restored. With the help of voluntary donations the 40 graves around the church and the dome were also renovated, and six new bells were installed. Since 1991 requiescats were held four times a year, with the names of all fallen warriors acclaimed.

After the October Revolution in 1917, a great part of these 149 memorial churches was destroyed, some were desecrated. "I believe that in no other country in the world so many national relicts, so many monasteries and cathedrals, so many military memorials were destroyed as in Russia. The destruction of the monuments of the past and the military memorials after the October Revolution was executed by following a special program, whose guidelines were outlined in the famous decree of Lenin "About the monuments of the Republic" issued in 1918. The decree related the right of existence of monuments to their ideological value [...] The monuments of the victories of the Russian Empire were not allowed to exist – a systematic destruction – detonation, melting, misrepresenting – started.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Григорий А. Цитович, Храмы армии и флота [Churches of Army and Navy], Пятигорск, 1913; Cf. Виталий Д. Доренко; Валерий В. Клавинг, Морские храмы России [Navy churches of Russia], Санкт Петербург, 1995; Валерий В. Клавинг, Военные храмы России [Military churches of Russia]. В: Православны летописец Санкт-Петербург, 2, Санкт Петербург, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Константин Михайлов, Взорванная память. Уничтоженные памятники русской воинской славы [Detonated memory. The destruction of the monuments of the Russian military glory], Москва, 2007, 11.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>4</sup> Елена В. Петкау, Храмы воинской славы [The churches of military glory], *Ленинградская панорама*, 10, 1990, 24.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Евгения И. Кириченко, Запечатленная история России [The imprinted history of Russia], 1, Москва, 2001; Елена В. Исакова, Храмы-памятники русской воинской доблести [Church monuments of Russian military courage], 11, Москва, 1991; Петкау, Храмы, 4; Игор В. Хохлов, Мемориальные функции полковых церквей русской армии XIX – начало XX в. Традиции и современность [The memorial functions of the regiment churches of the Russian army by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Traditions and present], 8, Москва, 2008; Виктор В. Антонов; Александр В. Кобак, Святыни Санкт-Петербурга [The relicts of St. Petersburg]. В: Историко-церковная энциклопедия в трех томах, Санкт-Петербург 1994 – 1996; Сергей С. Шульц, Храмы Санкт-Петербурга. История и современность [The churches of Saint Petersburg. History and present], Санкт Петербург, 1994.

<sup>6</sup> Михайлов, Память, 2, 12.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>8</sup> Константин Г. Капков, Памятная книга Руссийского военного и морского духовенство XIX – начало XX веков [The memorial book of the Russian military and navy priesthood in the 19<sup>th</sup> and at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century], Москва, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> Цитович, Храмы, 1, 5.

<sup>10</sup> Вячеслав Котков, Военное духовенство России [The military priesthood of Russia], Санкт Петербург, 2003, 131.

<sup>11</sup> Цитович, Храмы, 1, 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>13</sup> Капков, Книга, 8.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Кириченко, История, 5; Исакова, Храмы-памятники, 5; Петкау, Храмы, 4; Хохлов, Функции, 5; Антонов; Кобак, Святыни, 5; Шульц, Храмы, 5.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Кириченко, История, 5, 276; Петкау, Храмы 4, 25; Хохлов, Функции, 5, 123; Капков, Книга, 8, 108.

<sup>16</sup> Капков, Книга, 8, 108.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Кириченко, История, 5, 277; Петкау, Храмы, 4, 25; Хохлов, Функции, 5, 126.

<sup>18</sup> Капков, Книга, 8, 109.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 110.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Кириченко, История, 5, 195-198.

<sup>21</sup> Всеподданнейший отчет Обер-прокурова Светейшего Синода К.П. Победоносцева по ведомству православного исповедания за 1890 – 1891 года [Report of the Ober-Prosecutor of the Holy Synod K.P. Pobedonoscev about the Orthodox denomination for 1890 – 1891], Санкт Петербург, 1892, 66.

<sup>22</sup> Цитович, Храмы, 1, 6; Капков, Книга, 8, 110.

<sup>23</sup> Цитович, Храмы, 1, 14.

<sup>24</sup> Капков, Книга, 8, 110.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>26</sup> Цитович, Храмы, 1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>28</sup> On the project's website [www.memoryrow.weebly.com](http://www.memoryrow.weebly.com) a list is provided with the names of all 149 churches related to the ROW. The names of the regiments and the places of the churches are also mentioned.

<sup>29</sup> По книгата на Цитович, Храмы, 1.

<sup>30</sup> See Хрисанф Григорович, Походная церковь и образцовый иконостас [Camp church and model iconostasis], *Вестник военного и морского духовенства*, 1916, 6, 175-179. Cf. also Web. 15 December 2013. <http://temples.ru/library.php?ID=35>

<sup>31</sup> Цитович, Храмы, 1, 31.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 257.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 50.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 76.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 191.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 372.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 417.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 418.

<sup>47</sup> Цитович, Храмы, 1, 412.

<sup>48</sup> *Военное Кладбище*. Web. 15 December 2013. <http://www.minsk-old-new.com/minsk-3273.htm>

<sup>49</sup> Александр А. Лукьянов; Александр Л. Самович; Андрей А. Шумков, Российский некрополь [The Russian necropolis]. В: Минское военное кладбище: захоронения дореволюционного периода [The military cemetery of Minsk: Burials in the prerevolutionary period], Санкт Петербург, 2002, 2-31.

<sup>50</sup> Михайлов, Паметь, 2, 16р.

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## **Memorials to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Gyumri / Armenia**

**Abstract:** *The Hill of Honor, located between the town of Gyumri and its fortress, became an official garrison cemetery after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and after the construction and sanctification of a chapel on the hill. A considerable amount of Russian soldiers was stationed at the then so-called town of Aleksandropol', where also the main military hospital was located. The present article sheds light on the circumstances of the construction and consecration of the chapel, which led to the place becoming a central point of remembrance to the Russo-Ottoman War. The article also considers the fate of the Hill of Honor throughout the Soviet period, especially focusing on the 1950s, when the systematic destruction of the monument was ordered by local authorities. At last information is given on the situation today, as the restoration of the Hill of Honor had been planned and conducted in the last decade and led to the monument's reopening in 2010.*

In the 30 – 40s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a city, which by its cultural and community complex was significantly different from other cities of the Yerevan province, was formed in Eastern Armenia, attached to the Russian Empire. By maintaining its brightly expressed ethnic and traditional characteristics, the city and its residents were able to successfully implement their values and cultural elements in its specific characteristics combining elements of cultural-household complexes of both Russian and European cities. Alexandropoulos was founded in the area adjacent to the historic Kumayri, on the left bank of the river Akhuryan. The settlement called Kumayri was mentioned first in written sources of the Armenian historian Ghevond, who connected it to the events of 774, when the Armenian prince Artavazd Mamikonyan revolted there against the Arabs.

After the conquest of Georgia in 1801, the striving to take possession of Armenian lands increased in Russian political circles. Within these plans and due to its very important strategic importance, Kumayri/Gyumri was not ignored by the Russian army. There even were some aspirations to turn it into a military stronghold in favor of Russia's strategic plans. In 1804, when the first Russian Cossack hundreds led by General Pëtr Nesvetaev entered Gyumri the urban hinterland of the city was empty. A residential settlement, which today still exists under the name

“Cossack Post”, was built around the village for the soldiers of the Cossack garrison stationed there. Sometime later well-fortified border stations for the larger garrison located around the city were created. Gyumri became sufficiently reliable due to the presence of Russian troops and began to attract Armenians who were scattered by war and in need in different ways. The annexation of Gyumri by the Russian Empire was formally ratified by the Treaty of Gulistan on 24 October 1813.

During the Russo-Persian War of 1804 – 1813 and the Russo-Ottoman War of 1806 – 1812 Gyumri and its surrounding localities became a scene of a series of bloody battles. The bloodiest battles took place between May and July 1807 on the outskirts of Gyumri and near the village Hli-Gharakilisa (now Azatan), where the numerically outnumbered Russian army under General Ivan Gudovič's command defeated an Ottoman army of twenty thousand soldiers. Then in July 1809 the Persians unsuccessfully tried to recapture Gyumri. After these violent and chaotic events the population of Gyumri breathed freely for about 13 years. At the beginning of the Russo-Persian War of 1826 – 1828 the Persians managed to force the Russians to retreat back to Gyumri. However they were not able to achieve any other significant success. During the Russo-Ottoman War of 1828 – 1829 Gyumri became a major outpost of Russia's troops, from where the army of General Ivan Paskevič launched an attack on Akhaltsikhe, Akhalkalaki and Kars. The outcome of this war fundamentally changed the fate of Gyumri and became the basis for the creation of a new settlement – Aleksandropol'.

The renaming of the newly created city is strongly connected with the visit of the Russian Tsar Nikolaj I to Gyumri on 4 October 1837. At the end of 1837, when Tsar Nikolaj I visited the Caucasus, Gyumri was first granted city status and sometime later it was renamed in Aleksandropol'. Here he also got acquainted with the progress of the works on the fortress construction. The city itself was named after the Holy Martyr Aleksandra by order of the tsar, and in 1840 he ordered that the city was to be renamed Aleksandropol' in honor of Saint Aleksandra, not in honor of his wife Aleksandra Fëdorovna, as some researchers suggest. The Russian authorities were well aware of the importance of the strategic position of Gyumri early on as General Pavel Cicianov offered Tsar Aleksandr I already in 1805 to found a mighty fortress on that spot. This idea was embodied only in the 1830s while the construction of the fortress at Gyumri was basically completed in October 1837.

In times of peace, the number of Russian soldiers within the Aleksandropol' garrison ranged from 16,000 to 20,000 soldiers (including other military staff). In accordance with the construction of powerful fortifications, a quarter named “Russian Svoboda” appeared in the southern part of the city. Near the new quarter there was an old Armenian cemetery with a small chapel, which had been neglected because of the formation of the new Armenian necropolis in the eastern part of the city.

According to contemporaries there is a hill in Aleksandropol', right between the town and the fortress of the same name, which was chosen as a place for a cemetery even before the war<sup>1</sup>. But that hill was full of mostly flat monuments made from colored stone with Armenian inscriptions, and only in rare cases pyramidal monuments with Russian inscriptions could be found there, indicating the final resting place for military or civilian officials, who served in this city”.<sup>2</sup> In fact, until 1853 on that cemetery all dead Orthodox Christians, both civilians and military officials,

were buried. A separate sandy hill, located on the southern tip of the cemetery, was named the “Hill of Honor” in 1853 and became a place of eternal rest only for warriors who were either killed in battles or had died after being injured in war. “Now, on the contrary” – writes the contemporary – “monuments of different forms inscribed in Russian take complete advantage over the flat prismatic monuments with Armenian inscriptions. It is now known as the Hill of Honor; there were no graves before the war, but by 1856 it was all littered by them”<sup>3</sup>.

Another eyewitness of the events of the Crimean War on the “Hill of Honor” writes:

[...] I went to the nearest elevation to look at the Arpa-Chai<sup>4</sup> – and everything remained the same there. I got to the Hill of Honor, which was called that way after the Battle at Baškadyklar, because all the officers fallen on the field of battle were buried there, and the same quiet graves covered it while only the number of crosses and monuments had increased significantly. May peace be upon you, valiant warriors. Do not let the stop of your enemy touch your peaceful homes. And who of the Christian inhabitants does not know this hill? And some of them will even tell the curious newcomer about the names and fates of resting soldiers. Who does not remember the Hill of Honor as for the soldiers, who served in the corps at the Turkish border; as the final resting place of some of the bravest officers, friends, and maybe co-workers who were killed and depict the field of Bayandur, Baškadyklar, Kyuryukdar and Kars with their blood?<sup>5</sup>

On the first church service and burial at the “Hill of Honor”, the contemporary writes:

On September 1, 1856, at 9 o'clock in the morning, on the west side of the Hill of Honor a service was held in presence of all the generals, staff and senior officers, with a certain number of lower ranks of the troops, who were in Aleksandropol' at that time. The prayer was said for the soldiers, who died on the fields of honor and glory during the last war in Asiatic Turkey. September 1 was chosen, not because this day was memorable for any special event during the war, but because it was the last day in Aleksandropol' for the corps acting at the Turkish border and they wished to pay their last farewell debt to their deceased brethren. The next day, these troops, after three years of military exploits, dispersed to their assigned apartments.<sup>6</sup>

Our studies show that up to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, the “Hill of Honor” situated next to the Orthodox grave, was not an official garrison cemetery and it received that status only after the war and after the construction and sanctification of the chapel on that place. It should be noted that after the Crimean War, many participants of battles on the Caucasian front began to volunteer to raise

funds for the construction and improvement of the cemetery chapel on the site. An eyewitness on this occasion:

After the funeral the following thought was articulated: To collect a sum of money of manageable shares, and when the amount needed is collected, the main part will be saved to pay for the construction of the image, out of which the names and surnames of all the generals and officers killed during or died from their injuries from the war will be cut out, while the other part of the amount will pay the costs of the funeral services, annually held on the Hill of Honor, commemorating the Battles of Bayandur, Baškadyklar, Kyuryukdar and the storming of Kars. If the amount collected is not big enough, then we'll postpone the construction of the image and we will hold only one memorial service for all those murdered in the war, serving the remembrance of the names of all the generals and officers who died in the aforesaid battles.<sup>7</sup>

This proposal was sent in written form to all former and current commanders taking part in the Crimean War on the Caucasian front. The letters stated that the image would include the representation of St. Nicholas, St. George and of Archangel Michael, that the image would always be in the St. Aleksandra Church and only on the days of fighting (24 July, 17 September, 2 November and 19 November) it would be imposed on the "Hill of Honor". It was also planned that the light of a lamp or candle light should constantly be in front of the image and that all the money must be directed to the commandant of Aleksandropol', who issued a book on this subject to be signed by those generals, who were in Aleksandropol' at that time. So the priest of Aleksandropol' fortress would during the prayer know the names of generals, staff and senior officers, who were killed or who died of wounds in the battles of Bayandur, Baškadyklar and Kyuryukdar, and during the storming of Kars, the heads of units had to deliver name lists to the commandant of Aleksandropol'. It is noteworthy that many officers and generals gave response to these letters (e.g. the brother of the Minister of Education Evgraf Petrovič Kovalevskij – Pëtr Petrovič) and soon a significant sum was collected. But over time another idea was born – to build a chapel next to the "Hill of Honor".

This initiative has been closely associated with the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. At the beginning of the war, the bulk of Russian troops of the Caucasian front was concentrated in Aleksandropol', where also the main military hospital, where the wounded soldiers of the Russian army were brought to, was located. The "Hill of Honor" at this time too was littered with the graves of fallen heroes, and after the war in 1882 a small but graceful church was built in the name of St. Michael the Archangel, and was consecrated in 1886 by the Exarch of Georgia, Archbishop Pavel. From that time until the Soviet era the "Hill of Honor" officially became the military garrison's cemetery in Aleksandropol'. Financed by Russian officers who had participated in the War of 1877 – 1878, a rotunda with a white marble obelisk inside in memory of their fallen comrades on the Caucasian front was built on the "Hill of Honor" in 1882. In the same year, in front of the garrison's church named after St. Aleksandra an obelisk was erected on the grave of a hero of the Russo-

Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. The obelisk is dedicated to the Chief of artillery of the Caucasian Front – to Major General Fëdor Alekseevič Gubskij from his colleagues and friends, as the inscription on the monument indicated. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century postcards with the view of the “Hill of Honor” and a marble rotunda with an obelisk dedicated to the memory of Russian officers killed in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 were published.<sup>8</sup>

In the first years of Soviet power and up to the 50s of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the “Hill of Honor” continued to function as a military cemetery and the hero guards of Leninakan’s (Aleksandropol’ was renamed Leninakan in 1924) border patrol killed at different times during the protection of the state border (Kishkin Kartinin, Žukov, Nadziradze Karapetyan and others) were buried here. During World War II, a new cemetery was constructed next to the “Hill of Honor”, where up to 1955 German prisoners of war were buried. The situation completely changed in the 1950s, when a systematic destruction of the monument was ordered by local authorities. Graves and tombstones to heroes of the Russo-Ottoman Wars were destroyed by bulldozers and a Children’s hospital was built on the hill. The same fate befell the cemetery of the German prisoners of war. What was the chance that the chapel of St. Michael the Archangel would not be destroyed and it would not share the bitter fate of other Armenian, Catholic, Greek and Russian Orthodox churches and temples which were destroyed by Soviet militant atheists? The obelisk monument to Major General Gubskij was also destroyed and fell in miserable condition. The situation was intensified after the devastating earthquake of 1988. Many homeless families moved into the building of the children’s sanatorium while in the yards of the “Hill of Honor” makeshift houses emerged spontaneously, causing the monument’s final demolishing. It should be noted that because of the efforts of the employees of the local history museum in Shirak, four tombstones were saved and are currently stored in the museum.<sup>9</sup>

The beginning of the revival of military and historical monuments is connected with the name of the former mayor of Gyumri – Vardan Ghukasyan. On his initiative and with financial contributions by his family the garrison church of St. Aleksandra was first restored and then newly consecrated. The monument to General Gubskij was also restored but the main achievement were the revival of the “Hill of Honor” and the restoration of the church-chapel of St. Michael the Archangel. The whole area around the monument was cleared from any buildings and fenced with a stone wall. It was decided to restore the monument to the liberating Russian soldiers that was once erected in Kars and destroyed by Kemalists in the 1920s. With the blessing of the Patriarch of the Russian Orthodox Church, the participation of the Russian Embassy in Armenia, the South Caucasus Railway, and the administration of the Ulyanovsk region and with the financial support of different sponsors, the mayor of Gyumri managed to revive the monument to military glory in very short time. In August of 2010 the presidents of Russia and Armenia, Dmitrij Medvedev and Serzh Sargsyan, opened the restored monument.

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the Crimean War of 1853 – 1856 [Comment by Grigor Aghanyan].

<sup>2</sup> Archive of the Museum-Reserve “Kumayri” case 1233, Folder 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Akhuryan river [Comment by Grigor Aghanyan].

<sup>5</sup> Archive of the Museum-Reserve "Kumayri" case 204, Folder 1.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> The war cemetery "Hill of Honor" of Aleksandropol', Conference abstracts [in Armenian language], Gyumri, 1998, 18.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

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## **Memorial Places of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Georgia**

**Abstract:** *The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 had a huge impact both on the countries involved in the conflict and the different nations living there. The memory of the War is alive and is represented in different forms, such as memorial places, family memory, speech, etc. In the given article we try to present these forms of memory existing in present Georgia and in particular the region of Ajara, which was freed from Ottoman rule in course of the War. A field expedition helped us gather interesting information, which is why we are able to present the photo materials kept in the families and archives showing important participants and memorial places of the conflict. We also show the toponyms which still exist in our region and which were influenced by the presence of the Ottoman Empire in Ajara.*

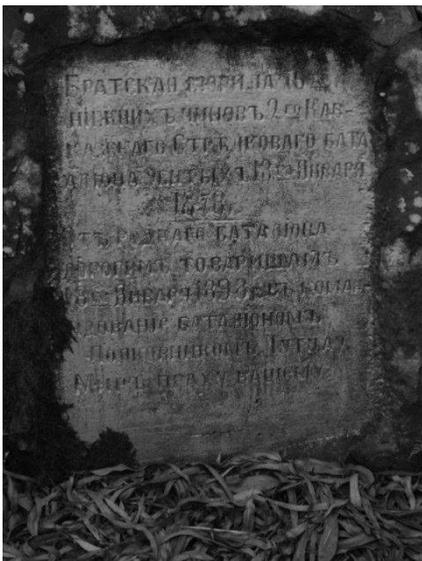
135 years after the end of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 research has been carried out in the framework of the project “MEMORYROW – Politics of Memory and Memory Cultures of the Russo-Ottoman War 1877/1878: From Divergence to Dialogue” in order to map the Georgian memorial places dedicated to that very war.

### **Material heritage**

a) In the village of Khutsubani, county of Kobuleti, we find the memorial dedicated to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, which in particular glorifies the soldiers who died in the battle near Tsikhisdziri on 18 January 1878. The text on the memorial says that it was erected in 1902 by the Russian officers of the ground forces of the Zakatala-Regiment. The memorial was officially opened in 1903 – 25 years after the end of the war.



**Figure 1: Memorial today**  
Khutsubani village, Ajara, Georgia.  
The photo was taken by  
researchers from Shota Rustaveli  
State University during the field  
expedition conducted in the  
framework of MEMORYROW.



**Figure 3: Memorial to the officers of**  
the 164<sup>th</sup> Zakatal'skij-Infantry-  
Regiment Khutsubani village, Ajara,  
Georgia. The photo was taken by  
researchers from Shota Rustaveli  
State University during the field  
expedition conducted in the  
framework of MEMORYROW.



**Figure 2: Memorial to the**  
officers of the 164<sup>th</sup> Zakatal'skij-  
Infantry-Regiment Khutsubani  
village, Ajara, Georgia. The  
photo was taken by researchers  
from Shota Rustaveli State  
University during the field  
expedition conducted in the  
framework of MEMORYROW.

- b) In the village of Kochakhi, county of Khulo, a memorial was erected on the grave of Sherif Khimshiashvili and dedicated to him in order to commemorate the Georgian hero. The construction was financed by a committee of scientists in 1980.



**Figure 4: Obelisk to Sherif Khimshiashvili in the village Skhalta. Available on the website of the museum <http://www.adjaramuseum.ge/ge/?page=showmus&mid=11> (15.01.2014).**

- c) Many memorials have been destroyed and the memory about their existence is kept only among the local families living in the areas where the memorials were located. One of the residents of the village Kvirike, Tengis Chelebadze says that on the hill of Kvirike, where nowadays a cemetery is located, Ottoman troops were stationed during the war. Even today we can find some burials with epitaphs in Arabic language of Ottoman common soldiers and officers (according to the inscriptions even generals were buried here).



**Figures 5 and 6: Cemetery Kvirike village, Ajara, Georgia.**

The photos were taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.



**Figures 7 – 9: Fragments of inscriptions on the gravestones. Cemetery in the village of Kvirike, Ajara, Georgia. The photos were taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.**

- d) Museums: In the village of Skhalta, Sherif Khimshiashvili's house, which was built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is located on the territory of the Skhalta temple on the left bank of the river Skhaltis Tskali. In 2002 and with the help of Teimuraz Komakhidze's and Nargiz Abashidze's financial support the house was re-opened as a museum.



**Figure 10: House of Sherif Khimshiashvili Today a museum Skhalta, Ajara, Georgia. The photo was taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.**

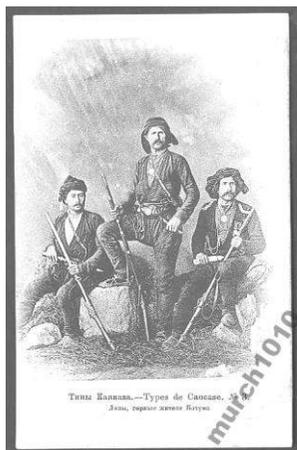


**Figure 11: Museum entrance Skhalta, Ajara, Georgia. The photo was taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.**



**Figure 12: Picture of the museum from the inside Skhalta, Ajara, Georgia. The photo was taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.**

In addition to that, the signatures of Batumi's residents are being collected and with the help of Georgia's patriarchs, they are trying to gain back another house of the Khimshiashvili family located in Khulo in order to open another museum dedicated to the events of that period. Several photos and maps of the routes used by the military are kept in the local history museum of Ajara. They were created by Giorgi Jhujhunashvili and were used during the war of 1877 – 1878.



**Figure 13 and 14: Pictures show the soldiers of Sherif Khimshiashvili in the battlefield. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**

### Toponyms

During research several toponyms of Turkish origin have been outlined. For example, *ყავახლუღისყავღალუღი* or *ყარა დერე* [black stream], *ლახ ოღლეზი* [Children of the Laz people], *ყლაი ბონი* [Stone graveyard] and others. The etymology of these toponyms is currently studied, but it has to be mentioned that these types of toponyms were typical in the period of Ottoman rule. After the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 most of them were substituted with Georgian equivalents but some of the toponyms of Turkish origin (in some cases Arabic) were so integrated in everyday speech that they would remain and are still used today. It is very interesting that the toponyms in Ajara before and after the war can be classified in three lexeme groups:

1. Toponyms of Georgian origin that survived the period of Ottoman rule;
2. Eastern toponyms that were introduced by the officials of the Ottoman Empire (Ajarian Sandjak, Ajaristan, Gurjistan);
3. Toponyms presented in military and documentary literature of the Russian Empire.

The last group describes the so-called division of Georgia into “Russian Georgia” and “Turkish Georgia”. The former was said to be populated by “Russian Georgians”<sup>1</sup> while the latter was thought to be populated by warrior tribes of Asia Minor such as Ajarians, Kobuletiens and tribes related to Georgians (Gurians, Megrelians, and others) but of Muslim belief who would serve the Ottomans. Out of these terms the most commonly used became “Turkish Georgia”. It was used by the Russian general of Georgian origin Giorgi Kazbegi. He published a book, which was republished with the original title “სამი თვე თურქეთის საქართველოში” [Three Months in Turkish Georgia] in Batumi in 1995.

During research several streets in Georgian cities were identified as carrying names of participants of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878.

1. The street of Sherif Khimshiashvili (1829 – 1892) in the city of Batumi, Georgia. The street was named after him in 2005. He was the leader of the national liberation movement and one of the most important figures in liberating Ajara from Ottoman rule. He was the first person from Ajara who was granted the rank of a general. For some time he also was the governor of Erzurum.



**Figure 15:**  
Picture of Sherif  
Khimshiashvili.  
Reprinted with  
permission of  
the National  
Archive of Ajara.



**Figure 16: Picture**  
of Giorgi Tsereteli.  
Reprinted with  
permission of the  
National Archive  
of Ajara.

გიორგი წერეთელი

2. The street of Giorgi Tsereteli (1842 – 1900) in Batumi. A writer, publisher, public figure, the first editor of the newspaper “Droeba”, war correspondent and active propagandist of reuniting Ajara with Georgia.

3. The street of Abdul Mikeladze (1853 – 1919) in Batumi. He was born in the village of Dzetsmani, county of Keda. He finished military school at Trabzon but later majored in medicine. The first correspondent of newspapers and magazines from Ajara.

4. The street of Grigol Gurieli (1819 – 1891) in the city of Batumi. The street was named after him in 2011. He had the rank of a general-major. He was often visiting the Muslim family of Jashi in Ajara. He was exchanging letters with Sherif and Nuri Khimshiashvili, the Abashidzes and the Tavdgiridzes. He also was in contact with the progressive thinking part of Ajara’s society who fought for reuniting it with Georgia, which was a very important motive during the war. He himself participated in the battles for Batumi. He was awarded with two medals. He was leading the army in Kobuleti and Batumi and was working as the chief of district in Batumi.



**Figure 17: Picture of Gulo Kaikatsishvili. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**

5. The street of Gulo Kaikatsishvili (1840 – 1923) in Kobuleti, Georgia. An active propagandist of reuniting Ajara with Georgia. One of the initiators of establishing Georgian schools in Ajara. In 1895 his leadership and financial support helped to establish the first Georgian school in Kobuleti. The first library and reading hall was opened in his house. After the end of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 he was participating in the movement against Muhajirism. After the defeat of the Ottoman forces, he greeted the leaders of the Russian army and Georgian militia on behalf of the residents of Kobuleti. He joined Kobuleti’s militia as a junker and soon became sergeant.

6. The street of Dimitri Bakradze (1826 – 1889) in Batumi. A historian, archeologist, ethnographer, member-correspondent of the Russian academy of sciences. He finished Moscow’s Theological Academy. Before the war he traveled to “Turkish Georgia” in order to study the reaction of locals in case the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire would start.

7. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the street in the coastal city Batumi, which today is named after Irakli Abashidze, was bearing the name of the Russian commander, participant of the Russo-Ottoman War, and one of the liberators of Bulgaria – Michail Skobelev (1843 – 1882). He was also known as the “White General” because he was always wearing a white uniform. Later the same street was renamed Vorovskij’s Street,



დემეტრი ბაკრადზე

**Figure 18: Picture of Dimitri Bakradze. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**

afterwards Blagoevgrad's Street, and today it is named after Irakli Abashidze.

Unfortunately, there are few documents indicating the renaming of the streets in the municipal archives. The existing materials are currently analyzed to shed light on related questions and motives.

### **Renaming of public institutions**

To honor the heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War, not only streets were named after them but also schools, libraries and other public institutions. Unfortunately there are only a few buildings remaining:

1. The "Sherif Khimshiashvili Public School" located in Mtisubani, Khulo municipality.

2. The library named after Gulo Kaikatsishvili at Kobuleti. Some windows are covered with cellophane or cardboard instead of glass. Instead of a door there is a curtain where almost 20,000 books are kept. Library members and staff are asking the government to help to preserve both the books and the building.



**Figure 19: Library named after Gulo Kaikatsishvili, Kobuleti, Ajara, Georgia. The photo was taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.**

### **Touristic commercialization of memorials**

There are several objective reasons why the resounding victories on the Balkan front such as in the Battles of Šipka Pass, at Plevna or Loveč and others were more memorable than the ones in the Caucasus. In addition to the less impressive success of the Russian army, both sides were less active on this front. That is why there are not that many memorial sights which could be commercialized in order to attract more tourists. The only example of material-memorial heritage to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 presented on touristic routes is the house and museum of Sherif Khimshiashvili. Tourism industry is in the process of development in Georgia and it is planned to include more sights connected to the Russo-Ottoman War and touristic routes in the future.

### **War materials in literature and school**

The 300 years of the so-called "Ottoman Yoke" did not succeed in killing the Georgian spirit among the population of the Ajarian Sanjak (Ajaristan). Victory in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and the reunion of Ajara with Georgia played a

vital role in restoring the national self-consciousness of Georgians at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Folklore, fiction, social and political journalism demonstrate the joy about Ajara's reunion with its "motherland" and praise Georgian and Russian soldiers. The same pathos can be seen in the textbooks published for Georgian schools right after the end of the war, as before the war and therefore in the period of Ottoman rule there were no Russian or Georgian schools in Batumi.

Georgian folklore as well as Georgian social and political journalism also show one important issue which was directly connected to the end of Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878: the issue of Muhajirism. Leaving the motherland, close relatives and one's own house became an unhealed wound which was not mentioned in Soviet textbooks. Only when the *perestrojka* set in, certain ideological changes and developments in Georgia's and particularly in Ajara's sociopolitical situation affected school and university textbooks as well, as they would start to print materials showing the imperial ambitions of Russia and describe that the process of Muhajirism was in favor of both sides – of Russians and Ottomans.

### **Settlements and sights where military operations took place**

Before the war Russia's government sent many public figures to the Georgian territories occupied by the Ottoman Empire – the so-called "Turkish Georgia". Russia did so in order to identify the intentions of the locals in case a war would break out. Ivane Kereselidze, Aleksandre Mefisashvili, Giorgi Tsereteli, Dimitri Bakradze, Giorgi Kazbegi and others travelled through the occupied provinces. People were in favor of starting a war as soon as possible, as they thought it would bring them freedom. That wish is still preserved in the cultural memory of the local people. A local from Nigazeuli, Shakro Khimshiashvili says that his ancestors joined the liberation movement the same moment the war started.<sup>2</sup> Sherif Khimshiashvili's story matches the information obtained from historical documents. When speaking with Ivane Kereselidze, Sherif Khimshiashvili said: "With God's help, the war will start soon. I am ready to immediately join my country's Georgian sons and Georgia shall become the same as it was before."<sup>3</sup> In the people's cultural memory the names of the heroes, who fought for a reunion of Ajara with its motherland, are still preserved. Nugzar Mgeladze from the village of Khutsubani lists Gulo Kaikatsishvili, Abdul Mikeladze, Akhmed Khalvashi, Dede Nijharadze and Akhmed Khalifashvili amongst others. Some information about these names can also be found in scientific literature.<sup>4</sup> While military operations were mostly carried out in the territories around Khutsubani, Tsikhisdziri, Mukhaestate, Kvirike and Zeniti, Russian and Georgian troops at other times were also stationed at several other places such as Ozurgeti, Nagomar-Orpiri, Mukhaestate and Choloki.

### **Ozurgeti**

Before the beginning of the war, Russian and Georgian forces were stationed in Ozurgeti, at St. Nokolozi's checkpoint (Shekvetili, near Natanebi), in Nagomari and Orpiri. Ozurgeti became the troop's main center and soon the headquarters were transferred there. Reinforcements were built in Ozurgeti and on the hills surrounding it, as well as new hospitals were founded there. A bridge was built across the river Bjhujhi. The forces stationed in Guria were named "Ozurgeti forces", which

were led by the General-Majors Levan and Dimitri Gurieli.<sup>5</sup> The cultural memory among locals does not show any signs of remembrance on this topic.

A recruitment of people for the national army was started in Guria, Samegrelo, Kartli, Kakheti and other places. For the so-called “militant forces”<sup>6</sup> in Shoropani, out of 100 peasants 20 were recruited, while the norm were a mere two per hundred. According to the respondent locals, Ketevan and Rezo Motskobili, the recruiting process of the national army in Guria was conducted by Giorgi Kazbegi. Information on the creation of a national army was regularly published.<sup>7</sup> In the end 4,000 recruits were enrolled in the national army. It is important to stress that the whole population of Guria by that time was 25,000 people.<sup>8</sup>

The national spirit of the population and the unity amongst the Georgians impressed the Russians which can be seen in scientific literature.

Respondents are talking about it passionately: “The whole of Guria stood up. Everybody wanted to go to war. Children who not even were fifteen were begging and crying to take them to war.”<sup>9</sup>



**Figure 20: Volunteers from Guria. Photo taken in 1878. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**

**Figure 21: Territory near St. Nikoloz’s checkpoint. The photo was taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.**

On the sunrise of the 12 (24) April 1877, Russo-Georgian forces crossed the defensive line of the Ottomans.

Three divisions went on offensive:

1. The right division moved from the checkpoint at St. Nikoloz (Shekvetili-Natanebi) under the lead of Colonel I. Abashidze;
2. the middle division started its offensive in the direction of Otchkhamuri under the lead of General-Major Shelemetiev;
3. the left file began to move towards the checkpoint at Choloki under the lead of General-Major Danibegov (Danibegashvili).<sup>10</sup>



**Figures 22 – 25: Ozurgeti today. The photos were taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.**

The ground forces of the middle division were led by Ivane Chavchavadze, while Iese Gurieli was in charge of the left division. The middle division was in charge of General I. Oklobjio, Colonel G. Kazbegi, Colonel G. Gurieli and Colonel A. Mefisov (Mefisashvili).<sup>11</sup>



**Figures 26 and 27: Shekvetili today. The photo was taken by researchers from Shota Rustaveli State University during the field expedition conducted in the framework of MEMORYROW.**

### **Khutsubani**

The Ottomans were trying to use the local population and to manipulate it by using religion in order to turn them against the Russians. Respondent I. Goliadze from Khutsubani says: “I have heard from my great-grandfather that the Turks kept the locals in fear, they were trying to bribe them, even using force in order to use them in the Ottoman’s favor. They managed to form a few units under the leadership of Muslim Osman and Ali-Pasha Tavdgiridze”. In the memory of local people we still find the memory about the specific deeds of pro-Islamic Georgians. Their supposedly anti-Georgian activities are described in the poem “ალი ფაშამ გვიღალატა” which means “Ali-Pasha betrayed us”. There were very few of them however. The majority of the population was in favor of reuniting Ajara with its motherland. Kurshub Chkhonia from Kobuleti for example, after the capturing of Mukhaestate, together with his unit abandoned Ali-Pasha Tavdgiridze and went to Grigol Gurieli in order to fight under Russian leadership in the future.

After the battle in Khutsubani on 29 April (11 May) 1877, Russo-Georgian forces captured Khutsubani (a coproduction of General Danibegashvili together with General Shelemetiev). The territories between the rivers Achkva and Kintrishi were

captured by Ivane Makashvili's and G. Kazbegi's units.<sup>12</sup> But they couldn't hold the positions for long and on 22 June 1877, the Russo-Georgian forces had to leave Khutsubani.



ხუცუბანი. ტელეგრაფის სადგური, 1878 წ.

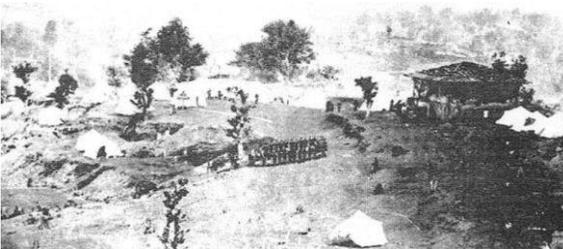
Figure 28: Telegraph station, 1878  
Khutsubani, Georgia.

Reprinted with permission of the  
National Archive of Ajara.



რუსეთის ჯარის ბანაკი ხუცუბანში

Figure 29: Russian camps  
Khutsubani, Georgia.  
Reprinted with permission of the  
National Archive of Ajara.



რუსეთის სამხედრო შტაბი სოფ. ხუცუბანში, 1878 წ.

Figure 30: Russian  
headquarters.  
Khutsubani, Georgia, 1878  
Reprinted with permission of  
the National Archive of Ajara.



**Figure 31: Panoramic view of Khutsubani from the North-West.**  
Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.



**Figure 32: Premises of the red cross.**  
Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.

It is true that during military operations in 1877 Russo-Georgian forces did not succeed in liberating Batumi and Ajara in general, but it was the success of the Russian army in Anatolia and the Balkans which decided over the final outcome of the war. On 15 November 1877 joint forces recaptured Khutsubani.



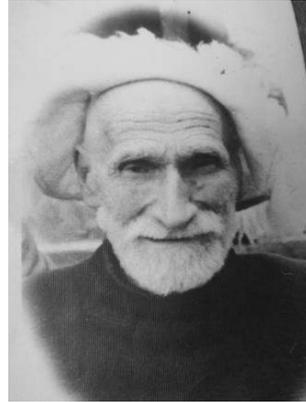
**Figures 33 and 34: Khutsubani today.**  
The pictures were taken during the field expedition.

### **Tsikhisdziri**

According to respondent Ketevan Motskobili, the population of Guria was united in its attitude towards the Ottoman Empire. The Russians were amazed by the situation in their favor in the region.<sup>13</sup>



**Figure 35: Respondents Ketevan (right) and Rezo (left) Motskobili. Interview and photos taken during the field expedition organized by the researchers from Batumi Shota Rustaveli State University.**



**Figure 36: Respondent's ancestor Akhmed. Participant of the war, died at the age of 100. Family photo album.**

Respondent Rezo Motskobili tells us very interesting information. He has heard it from his grandfather. He says that the head of the Rioni unit, General Oklobjio (1830 – 1884), was of Serbian origin. At the same time, the head of the Batumi-Regiment of the Ottoman forces, Derviş Paşa, was also of Serbian origin. They met in Tsikhisdziri and had a conversation. And after the meeting was finished both had tears in their eyes. It is possible that this type of sentimental behavior is exaggerated but it is a fact that that meeting took place, as it was witnessed by Giorgi Tsereteli. He describes some details of the meeting:

Two enemies were standing near the same table. Eight people were attending it. Devrish Pasha was sitting in front of Oklobjio. Time after time, during a friendly talk they would use Serbian language and they both considered it as their mother tongue but because of their lack of practice they both spoke it pretty badly.



**Figure 37: Oklobjio. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



**Figure 38: Devrish Phasha. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



რუსეთ-ოსმალეთის 1877-1878 წწ. ომი.  
ქართულ ოფიცერთა ჯგუფი. ციხისძირი, 1878 წ.

**Figure 39: Group of Georgian officers, Tsikhisdziri, Georgia, 1878. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



მომრავი ღაზარეთი ციხისძირში, 1878 წ.

**Figure 40: Kitchen near the river, Zakatala-Regiment. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



**Figure 41: Transportable hospital, Tsikhidziri, Georgia, 1878. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



**Figure 42: Group of disabled soldiers, Tsikhisdziri. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



**Figure 43: Group of hospital attendants, Tsikhisdziri. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



**Figure 44: Hut, where General-Lieutenant Kamarov used to live, chief of Kobuleti unit Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**

In the end of April 1877, joint forces under the lead of Colonel Bučkiv/Buchkiashvili began preparations for an offensive on Tsikhisdziri.



**Figures 45 and 46: Old and modern Tsikhisdziri, Kenchieti district. Picture on the left reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara. Picture on the right was taken during the field expedition.**

On the picture we see a hill, where the Ottoman forces were located. Opposite of it, near the stream, joint forces of Georgians and Russians were stationed.



**Figures 47 and 48: Tsikhisdziri today. Pictures taken during the field expedition.**



The offensive to capture Tsikhisdziri on 11 June 1877 was unsuccessful. Elderly people still remember some information about General Danibegashvili and Colonel Giorgi Kazbegi from their ancestor's stories. Soldiers were astonished to find out that Goguadze, who had three medals from the Crimean War, had taken his 14 year old son to the battle.<sup>14</sup> The results of the battle were devastating. There were several reasons for that but the most significant was the fact that the Ottomans had concentrated a lot of troops in that area while in addition to that, the Russians did not have correct topographical data for that very region. Respondent Ketevan Motskobili says that over 2,000 soldiers were shot that night by Ottoman forces.



Figures 49 and 50:

Area where over 2,000 soldiers were shot. Pictures were taken during the field expedition conducted by the researchers from Batumi State University in the framework of MEMORYROW.

On 1 (15) November 1877, Russo-Georgian forces achieved a temporary success but they had to abandon their newly acquired positions soon enough. On 18 January 1878, another offensive wave to capture Tsikhisdziri started but it again proved to be unsuccessful. A memorial erected in Khutsubani was dedicated to the soldiers who died in this particular battle.

### **Kobuleti**

On 29 April 1877, Georgian forces captured Kobuleti with minimal losses. They had to continue fighting to keep the city however.



**Figures 51 and 52:**  
**Kobuleti (Churuk-Su), view on the forest and swamps.**  
Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.

After the battle in January, the city was completely burned down. The majority of the population died, while the rest stayed without shelter and had to flee.



**Figures 53 and 54:**  
**Kobuleti today.** Picture on the left available on [www.ucnauri.cim](http://www.ucnauri.cim) (15.01.2014).  
Picture on the right was taken during the field expedition.

Giorgi Tsereteli wrote:

The valley from the river Kitrishi was empty, clean as a palm of the hand. Instead of wealthy villages surrounding it, you could see only the remains of chimneys. As if they stayed there to witness everything that happened. Here and there were homeless dogs, as if they wanted to die there to prove their loyalty to the old owners. They would guard the homes of the fugitives or the ones who got shot with our bullets.<sup>15</sup>  
After the end of war the locals happily greeted Russian and Georgian forces.

Descendants of Gulo Kaikatsishvili still remember their great-grandfather's words:

Our Georgians, our brothers, our relatives and cousins, I thank you for giving me a chance to see my old brothers here in Kobuleti. I thank God and I respect his judgment to make our dreams come true. God has united us. With God's help, we will get stronger because the Georgian army of our brothers, cousins and relatives is here. Our hearts and souls will rise and when we get stronger the country will prosper, just the way it was in the times of King Tamar. Let us cheer to our unity and the rise of Georgia like in the times of King Tamar.

### **Ochkhamuri**

It was temporarily freed in April 1877, but it was completely freed only after the success of the joint forces on the Balkan front.

### **Leghva**

On 13 (25) April 1877, Russo-Georgian forces captured Leghva.



Figures 55 and 56: Leghva today. Pictures taken during the field expedition.

### **Mukhaestate**

On 13 (25) April 1877, Russo-Georgian forces freed Mukhaestate. In June 1877, Russian and Georgian forces were already stationed there.



Figures 57 – 59: Mukhaestate today, Kakucha district. Pictures were taken during the field expedition. According to respondent Shota Lazishvili the battles took place in these areas.

**Mountain of Kvirike**

On 12 June 1877, the battle on the mountain of Kvirike was unsuccessful.



**Figure 60: The view of Sameba and Kvirike, the camp of II Caucasus battalion. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



**Figures 61 and 62: Kvirike today. Picture were taken during the field expedition.**

**Sameba**

On 16 May 1877, Sameba was captured but in June Russian and Georgian forces had to leave the settlement on the left bank of the river Kintrishi. It is undoubtful that the name of the settlement comes from the religious toponym.



**Figure 63: Place from where they used to shoot the cannons (1877 – 1878). Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.**



**Figure 64: Sameba today. Sight where the battles were fought. Picture taken during the field expedition.**

**Chakvi**

The units containing volunteers were also recruited in Chakvi under the lead of Khusein Beg Bejhanidze. In Lower Ajara forces were given under command of Sherif Beg Khimshiashvili<sup>16</sup> but the Ottomans couldn't use all of them in their favor. They couldn't force Khimshiashvili to fight against the Russians. That is the reason why the Ottomans considered him a traitor and burned down his house. Khimshiashvili had to flee to Akhaltsikhe.



ხუსეინ ბეჟანიძე

**Figure 65: Khusein Bejhanidze.**  
Reprinted with permission of the  
National Archive of Ajara.



გენერალ-მაიორი ალექსანდრე  
(შერიფ) ხიმშიაშვილი

**Figure 66: General-Major  
Aleksandre (Sherif)  
Khimshiashvili.** Reprinted  
with permission of the  
National Archive of Ajara.



**Figures 67 and 68: Pictures of Chakvi today. Taken during the field expedition.**

### Batumi

At the front at Batumi, the Ottomans had an army of 40,000 soldiers, while the joint forces of Russian and Georgians could count only 25,000 soldiers.<sup>17</sup> According to Sergej Meschi: “Only 5,000 of them are militants on the battlefield. Of course they will be the ones to fight but the rest won’t be able to join the battle according to military laws, as unarmed people do not have the right to fight against their enemy.”<sup>18</sup>



Figures 69 – 71: Views of Batumi, 1877. Reprinted with permission of the National Archive of Ajara.



Figures 72 and 73: Batumi today.  
Available on [www.culture.ge](http://www.culture.ge) (15.01.2014).  
Available on [www.blackseamarinas.com](http://www.blackseamarinas.com) (15.01.2014).

On 25 August 1877, Russian forces entered Batumi. They were led by the deputation of the reunited territories – Sherif Khimshiashvili from Upper Ajara and Nuri Khimshiashvili from Shavsheti.<sup>19</sup> On Azizie square (nowadays Gamsakhurdia square) they organized a feast for the commanding Russian officers.<sup>20</sup> Sherif Khimshiashvili proposed many toasts and in the end he said: “This is the toast to the ones who participated in this war to unite old and newly divided Georgians. Let us wish them happiness and that they may live long. Let us or our descendants never forget their deeds.”<sup>21</sup>

### Zeneti

Similar to Ochkhauri, it was temporarily freed in April 1877, but it was completely freed only after the success of the joint forces on the Balkan front.

### Conclusions

Our research reveals the following:

1. There is an evident lack of material heritage and monuments such as memorials or statues, and as well a lack of ceremonies and events to commemorate the soldiers and participants of the war. There are two main reasons for that:
  - a) In comparison to the Balkan front, the front in the Caucasus was less important.

- b) South-West Georgia was an outskirt region of the Russian Empire. That is why it was not prioritized by the government to create any kind of cultural heritage to commemorate the dead and to demonstrate the wartime glory.
2. The government became interested in developing tourism infrastructure related to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 only within the last decade, which for instance is the reason why the house of Sherif Khimshiashvili was implemented into touristic routes.

Information on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 as presented in textbooks did not undergo any significant changes. The main reason for that is that the interests of the Russian Empire and Georgia were matching. Russia wanted to widen the borders of its empire and Georgia wanted to gain back its lost territories.

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<sup>1</sup> Сергей П. Зыков (ред.), *Война в Азиатской Турции* [The War in Asian Turkey], Санкт Петербург, 1882, 177.

<sup>2</sup> Information gathered on a field expedition, organized by the researchers from Shota Rustaveli Batumi State University in the framework of MEMORYROW on 27.01.2013.

<sup>3</sup> Zakaria Chichinadze, *History of former Ottoman Georgia*, Batumi, 1912, 230.

<sup>4</sup> *narkvevebi samkhret-dasavletis saqartvelos istoriidan* [From the history of South-West Georgia], Ajara, III, Batumi, 2008, 44.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>7</sup> *Droeba*, March 1877.

<sup>8</sup> *narkvevebi* 4, 45.

<sup>9</sup> According to respondent Shafatava in the village of Natanebi.

<sup>10</sup> *narkvevebi*, 4, 50.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>13</sup> According to respondent Ketevan Motskobili in the village of Tsikhisdziri.

<sup>14</sup> According to respondent Rezo Motskobili in the village of Tsikhisdziri.

<sup>15</sup> Giorgi Tsereteli, *Social and political essays* [in Georgian language], Tbilisi, 1973, 230.

<sup>16</sup> *Droeba*, 7 September 1878.

<sup>17</sup> Владимир А. Золотарев, *Русско-Турецкая война 1877 – 1878 гг.* [The Russo-Turkish War of 1877 – 1878], Москва, 1977, 119.

<sup>18</sup> Sergej Meschi, *Short Stories* [in Georgian language], II, Tbilisi, 1963, 310p.

<sup>19</sup> Александр Френкель, *Очерки Чурук-су и Батума* [Essays on Çuruk-Su and Batumi], Tbilisi, 1879, 96.

<sup>20</sup> According to respondent Ali Darchidze in the village of Darchidzeebi.

<sup>21</sup> According to respondent Iskender Beridze in the village of Darchidzeebi.

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## Visualizing a Heroic Past – The Russo-Ottoman War in Russian Popular Culture

**Abstract:** *War has always been one of the most common subjects of visual representation but the medial channels have developed a lot since the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. The present article gives an overview over the Russian visualization of the war in form of popular prints and fine arts at the times of the war itself, to the emergence of film and the embedding of Soviet/Russian film in the genre of the historical epic, prominently visualizing the respective nation's history. The Soviet influence on Eastern European cinema is highlighted as well as the significance of the reemerging Russian cinema on the picking up of the war as a central motive is at the end of the 1990s. The production of full-length films, TV-series and documentaries as well as the organization of prominent exhibitions about the Russo-Ottoman War clearly show that the war and its related narratives have become an important part of Russia's popular culture again.*

As difficult as it may be to trace back the history of images to a starting point or even to clarify what the first manmade images may have looked like and what they were made of, it is fair to say that mankind has always been interested in visualizing its history and thereby preserving it. When looking at the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it becomes clear that industrialization and technological developments allowed the visualization of life a completely different framework to take place in as in the centuries before. The introduction of photography is usually dated with the first daguerreotypes in 1839, which made photography a practical medium for the first time, and with Talbot's negatives becoming a possibility to reproduce analogue photography a couple of years later the way was paved for the world's medialization.<sup>1</sup> The way however proved to be a long one and despite some culture's inherent wish to visualize the world, a change in medial channels did not happen from one day to the next with new techniques proving to be costly and also having to deal with certain ideas of how the depiction of life should be like. The idea of images in Russia was strongly connected to an Orthodox understanding of visibility and it took art a long time and partly even into the 20<sup>th</sup> century to emancipate itself from that sacral understanding of imagery, which had grown and been established over centuries. The development of photography certainly did its part in this process, as it inevitably produced secular images.

The pictorial turn of the 1990s has prominently put visual cultures on modern researchers' agenda and although it took memory cultures long to lay their focus on the enormous effect of visual cultures on memory, images have always influenced people's perception of the world and hence must be considered in their socio-political context. Therefore it is interesting to analyze if and how the depiction of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 has developed. Not only have the medial channels changed over the last 136 years and include a wide spectrum from paintings to photography and film but also the understanding of what images are supposed to illustrate has been subjected to change and last but not least the production of images about the war has taken places in the imperial Russian Empire, in the Soviet Union and in post-Socialist Russia, which's political climates all had their own specific interests when addressing the issue of the war with the Ottoman Empire at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Russian Visualization of the War in 1877 – 1878: The *lubok***

War has always been one of the most common subjects of visual representation and throughout the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – mostly connected to the advent of the mass medium of the illustrated press – images have become an effective part of modern warfare. Martina Baleva<sup>2</sup> shows that the Russian Empire is no difference in this development and argues that the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 was an especially good example for showing up which kind of actors were involved and what kind of tactics and strategies were used at the image frontline that ran between the Russian and Ottoman Empires. The visual war was fought on both sides and not only in Ottoman or Russian illustrated newspapers such as “Vsemirnaja ilustracija”, but was also picked up by the major powers who were directly or indirectly involved in the Eastern Crisis.<sup>3</sup> The usage of explicit depictions of massacres from the Russo-Ottoman War was somewhat correlating with the political ambitions of the respective Western power. As Great Britain still considered that the Ottoman Empire should be preserved, British media did pick up the topic but the treatment was relatively sober, especially in comparison to examples published in French or Russian illustrated newspapers.

Photography however was still an expensive medium and despite its high commercial potential it had not been established as the main medium of visualization in Russian newspapers at the time of the War of 1877 – 1878. It was not until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, that photography would effectively reach the masses but while the Ottoman side did not hesitate to use their own images of wounded and mutilated civilians in both Ottoman and Western media during the war, the visualization of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 has caused a much stronger reverberation in Russian culture, it only had to rely on other channels of visual transportation. The Russian Empire could not only claim the victory on the battlefield but also a moral victory in a war built up as a “holy war” against an infidel opponent. Therefore not only during the war but especially in its aftermath, the clash between the two empires was strongly picked up by Russian culture and found its manifestation mostly in two different artistic expressions: in the *lubki*, popular prints, and in fine arts.

The tsarist wartime *lubok*, dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and over time became the primary visual source in the imperial Russian Empire.<sup>4</sup> These images had a central part within Russia's visual culture and articulated national identity. *Lubki* are lively illustrations and usually carry short texts or slogans at the very bottom of the picture. From their inception, the popular prints always had a propagandistic function in Russian culture, rooting in their initial usage in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when they were manufactured for city dwellers who used them to understand their Orthodox belief.<sup>5</sup> The picture-friendly Orthodox theology, which in Russia massively expressed itself through imagery, led to a stress on the visual culture of religious faith and therefore to an extensive use of icons in a Russian's everyday life. The demand for visual representations helped the *lubok* business to flourish and soon enough it was not limited to religious subjects but picked up political connotations, especially connected to Russia's wars. While the war *lubok* had first appeared during the Seven Years' War of 1756 – 1763 and its first mass productions had accompanied Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 was especially suitable for the spreading of war *lubki* within the framework of the new image warfare in illustrated newspapers.

The reason why the war of 1877 – 1878 was that suitable, is because it related to the initial purpose of the *lubki* – the war had a propagandistic religious connotation and was understood a “holy war” in Russia. The victory over the Ottoman Empire was considered a triumph of Orthodox Christianity under Russian leadership over a Muslim opponent and was prominently celebrated in Russian popular culture. The concept of Russian Orthodoxy freeing fellow Christians in the Balkans and the Caucasus continued to be a part of popular culture in the Russian Empire for a considerable amount of time. The popular prints were ideal for visualizing the Russian understanding of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 as proof of Orthodoxy's superiority over Islam, strengthening faith as an element of Russian patriotism and nationhood.<sup>6</sup> Besides the *lubki*'s preoccupation with a Muslim-Christian contrast, they also did visualize another important source of patriotism – heroism and its personification. The images helped to create new heroes and it was especially “The White General” Michail Skobelev who was present in numerous prints of the time and whose leadership was picked up as a central theme by the Russian press. The visualization of Skobelev's triumph on the Balkans made him one of the most popular figures in imperial Russia and the popular prints about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 turned out to be only the starting point of a “Skobelev phenomenon”, remaining vivid also after his death and right into World War I.<sup>7</sup> First appearing in a *lubok* during the summer of 1877, Skobelev was portrayed among the Romanian prince Karl I and five other Russian generals.<sup>8</sup> Soon enough and closely connected to the successful siege of Pleven, Michail Skobelev appeared in a number of prints and not at last the prominent visualization of his person and his campaigns made him one of the most celebrated military leaders in Russian history.

The *lubok* “Raz! Dva! Tri!” [“One! Two! Three!”] (Fig. 1) illustrates the Russian confidence during the war and especially after the capture of Pleven and shows a Russian peasant triumphantly celebrating Russia's victory over the Ottoman Empire.<sup>9</sup> The print is dominated by a larger-than-life peasant, a theme referring to the enormous size of the Russian Empire defining its identity, who easily hops over the river Danube. Behind the peasant one can see the three captured fortresses of

Pleven, Kars and Ardahan, labeled as such from left to right, to which the title equally alludes to as to the three cities marked in the distance as Sofia, Adrianople and Constantinople. In contrast to the mighty Russian giant, the Ottoman population is depicted as small and intimidated. To the left of the peasant a small man fearfully points out the advancing and conquering Russian to an Ottoman woman. The clothing and especially their headgear does hint at the small persons in the picture to be Ottoman, but as typical for the Russian popular prints, the opponents are clearly not in the middle of the viewers' attention. The personified Russian heroism takes the center of the stage, while the illustrated "Ottoman cowardice" is to be found somewhere in the background of the print.



Figure 1: "Raz! Dva! Tri!" ["One! Two! Three!"]<sup>10</sup>

In a time of high illiteracy the popular prints served another important intention – they reached the peasantry in the countryside and propagandistically informed them about the proceedings of the Russo-Ottoman War on both frontlines in the Caucasus and the Balkans. Having studied the reception of the war in the countryside, the Russian historian Aleksandr V. Buganov has argued that the *lubki* created a feeling of national consciousness among the Russian peasantry.<sup>11</sup> By reaching out to the illiterate part of Russia's population, the depiction of the "holy war" of 1877 – 1878 did not only find entrance into the mass in production but effectively spread the propagandistic image of the Ottoman Empire among the masses of Russians living in the countryside and thereby strengthened their idea of a Russian nationhood and patriotism based on heroism and Orthodox belief. The *lubki* as visual narratives were able to reach the illiterate population, which helped not to reduce the newspapers' recipients to the minority of the population able to read. The mass-production of visual accounts of the war enabled Russians to envision the

conflict and the Russian heroism allegedly accompanying all campaigns and furthermore gave an insight into values understood as important to an imagined community, so therefore to the Russian nation at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

An important side-effect of the popular prints, which predominantly addressed Russian heroism, was that they also spread the narrative of Ottoman atrocities among the Russian peasantry. As a result Buganov further suggests that these stories and the related images about the foes' cruelties before and during the war had inspired sense of sympathy with the Slavic and even more importantly Christian "brothers" suffering under the "Turkish yoke".<sup>12</sup> It were not at last the *lubki* that added their share to the peasants of Russia conceiving the war as a struggle for Christianity and thereby against Islam – a narrative recalled in several provinces also years after the clash of 1877 – 1878.

### Russian Visualization of the War in 1877 – 1878: Fine Arts

The second platform for the war's visual accounts was fine arts. Artists like Vasilij Vasil'evič Vereščagin, Pavel Osipovič Kovalevskij and many others<sup>13</sup> actively took part in the war and documented its actions in their paintings. It would exceed both limits and intentions to discuss Russian art about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in depth, but it is most certainly the name of Vereščagin that comes to one's mind, when trying to determine the artist responsible for the most influential paintings of the war. His oeuvre prominently contains depictions from the war on the front in Southeastern Europe and especially his "Balkanskaja serija" ["Balkan Collection"] including famous paintings like "Pered atakoj. Pod Plevnoj" ["Before the Attack. At Plevna"] and "Šipka-Šejnovo. Skobelev pod Šipkoj" ["Šipka-Šejnovo. Skobelev at Šipka"] massively influenced the perception of the war in Russia. When taking a look at the latter painting, one can again see General Skobelev on his white horse in the foreground and his soldiers triumphantly celebrating with him, while a good part of the picture is filled with slain victims of the war – interestingly both in Russian as well as Ottoman uniforms. With Russian art at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century traditionally emphasizing triumph and victory over the unworthy enemy and a focus on the depiction of parades and military maneuvers, Vereščagin's work do also present war as the tragedy it actually was. The painting "Pobežděnnye. Panichida" ["Defeated. Memorial Service"] (Figure 2) illustrates the experiences Vereščagin had made during the war very well and shows a personal note aside the heroic narratives transported in the *lubki*. Loneliness and death dominate the painting, in which a lone military officer and an Orthodox priest stand in front of a seemingly vast field, which on closer inspection turns out to be a mass grave with the priest apparently saying a funeral prayer for the dead and asking for the soldiers' salvation.

With many of the painters taking part in the war in higher positions than common soldiers – Vereščagin for instance accompanying Skobelev as his personal secretary – they were expected to produce paintings, which supported the war's official notation of heroism and justice. On the other hand, they also experienced the atrocities in the war either with their own eyes or even by getting seriously injured like Vereščagin did, which took influence on their works. Because they served a propagandistic function, the widely spread *lubki* do not show the other side of the

war, a side not soaked in victorious heroism but rather marked by death and difficulty. The latter view on war can be found in some of the artists' works. There is no doubt that Russian fine arts predominantly depicts the war in a similar tone as the popular prints and emphasize the Russian army's greatness but the artists' personal experiences added a pensive and bleak note to some of their paintings.



Figure 2: Vasilij V. Vereščagin, *Pobežděnyje. Panichida*. [Defeated. Memorial Service]<sup>14</sup>

### The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and the Emergence of Film

At the time of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, photography was not an adequate mass medium yet. However technology advanced and while war photography played an important role in the Balkan Wars of 1912/1913 and certainly in World War I, the way how people remembered historical events was massively influenced by another upcoming medium: film. Most prominently related to the brothers Auguste and Louis Lumière, the first cinematographic productions were realized during the 1890s and it didn't take long for the countries involved in the War of 1877 – 1878 to get onto the development of moving pictures and produced their own films. As early as 1908, Aleksandr O. Drankov founded the first film company and by 1917 a total of more than 1,200 films had been produced in Russia.<sup>15</sup> Regarding early Ottoman cinema, it is interesting to note that according to many Turkish film critics, the first film by an Ottoman citizen was a film related to the Russo-Ottoman War. An army officer named Fuat Uzkinay produced the film "Ayastefanos Abidesinin Yıkılışı" ["The Demolition of the Russian Monument at San Stefano"] in 1914, which showed the demolition of the monument only.<sup>16</sup> However, the film did not survive and also the chosen theme is not really representative for the films in

the late Ottoman Empire respectively the young Turkish Republic and seems to be an isolated case.

In (South-)Eastern Europe on the other hand the theme of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 was quickly picked up and for instance integrated into early classics of the Balkan cinema like the 1912 Romanian production “Independența României” [“The Independence of Romania”], subtitled “Războiul Româno-Ruso-Turc 1877 – 78” [“The Romanian-Russo-Turkish War 1877 – 78”] and directed by Aristide Demetriade. The film is not only a good example for early film productions picking up the theme of the War of 1877 – 1878 but also for transferring the significance of the war into the then present. While showing the Russian and Romanian soldiers celebrating the victory in the war together, still indicating a hierarchical order between them with the Russian general on his horse shaking the hands of the simple Romanian soldier<sup>17</sup>, an insert transfers the action into the year 1912 and a military parade celebrating 35 years of Romanian independence is shown.<sup>18</sup>

Like in many other countries, in Russia early cinema had a tendency to prominently illustrate historical themes. Films like Vasilij Gončarov’s and Aleksandr Čanžonkov’s “Oborona Sevastopolja” [“Defence of Sevastopol”, 1911] or of course Sergej Ėjzenštejn’s “Bronenosec Potëmkin” [“Battleship Potëmkin”, 1925] with the Crimean War respectively with the Russian Revolution of 1905 picked up historical themes and became milestones in Russian early cinema. Especially the latter director would pick up historical episodes from Russian history for a couple of other highly acclaimed films in “Aleksandr Nevskij” [1938] and the two-part production “Ivan Groznyj”<sup>19</sup> [1944/1946]. However not only for Ėjzenštejn’s work but for the entire Soviet cinematography it is interesting to note that the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 is not to be found in any feature film exclusively produced for the Soviet audience. Besides historical themes, film as most of art in the early Soviet Union addressed major socio-political topics of the time but was subjected to censorship and bureaucratic state control. With the consolidation of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, art became subject to state control, which with the outcome of WW II and the established political dichotomy in Europe massively influenced the development not only of Soviet but of (South-)Eastern European film in general.

### **Visualizing History – Eastern European Historical Epics**

The Soviet influence was omnipresent in the film productions of post-war Eastern Europe. Countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, Yugoslavia<sup>20</sup> and others had during or in the aftermath of World War II become a part of Moscow’s sphere of influence and were therefore culturally heavily influenced by Socialist realism. In order to be considered officially approved art in the Soviet Union, it had to follow the doctrine of Socialist realism, as in 1932 the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decreed that Socialist realism was the obligatory norm for visual arts, music and literature. Means of producing art were thought of as powerful propaganda tools and were therefore put under the state’s control. While World War II had forced the film industry to a cessation of work, the production of films was resumed right after the war had ended. As the Communist regimes of the Eastern Europe were perfectly aware of the propagandistic potential of cine-

ma and film, it was immediately nationalized and supported by substantial state subsidies. As the Eastern European states followed Moscow not only politically but also culturally, Socialist realism was the dominant style of art in these countries as well. Consequently the development of Eastern European cinema followed Soviet cinematography, which also brought the necessary know-how to the developing film industries of Eastern Europe.

The early landmarks of post-war (South-)Eastern European film were strongly influenced by Soviet filmmakers. The first Albanian film was the 1953 Albanian-Soviet production “Velikij vojn Albanii Skanderbeg” [“The Great Warrior Skanderbeg”], directed by the Russian Sergej I. Jutkevič and employed a large Soviet production team and cast with the Georgian Akaki Chorava playing the part of Gjergj Kastrioti “Skanderbeg”. With the Albanian historian Aleks Buda being a consultant to the film team and amongst others, the Albanian actor Besa Imami miming one of the main roles, the Albanians were strongly included in the film and were trained for future productions. Ideological reasons lead to the hero’s advisors being Russians and interestingly to the partly skipping of the Ottoman “othering”, as the Tito-Stalin split made it more desirable to, historically incorrect, antagonize the Serbs as the main political opponent in the film.<sup>21</sup> Dobreva<sup>22</sup> concludes that the Soviet’s interest in such common productions served a twofold purpose: it set up a national film industry and it promoted a pro-Soviet Marxist agenda by interpreting Skanderbeg as a hero of the people rather than retelling a story of a Balkan feudal lord involved in a local power struggle.

In both the Soviet Union as well as in the Eastern European states influenced by Soviet cinematography, historical topics were prominently visualized in the period of state socialism. The historic film, preferably picking topics before World War I out as their central theme, was among the most favored genres in Socialist cinema. These large-scale historical blockbusters were usually chronicling episodes from the glorious past of a nation’s history and were supposed to fulfill the demands for its romanticized adaptations. It is clear that not every historical film is synonymous with straightforward realism but in contrast they have quite a stylistic diversity.<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless the epic staging of a nation’s history should be considered a transnational phenomenon and genre. Every fifth film produced in Romania until 1968 can be categorized as such an historical epic, while 15% of Yugoslavia’s film production falls under this category.<sup>24</sup> Such historical themes helped to visualize a certain historical narrative stabilizing a nation as an imagined community,<sup>25</sup> which is of course valid for other regions as well and no special feature of Eastern European films and nations. However, it is obvious that prior to 1989 almost every Eastern European cinematography produced at least one large-scaled and big-budget historical epic, based on events selected as essential to the history of the particular country and aiming to establish a continuity with its past in order to strengthen national pride and sentiments. The historical episodes chosen for the movies show a broad variety of links to the past such as the foundation of a medieval state in “681 – Veličieto na Hana” [“681 – The Glory of Khan”, Bulgaria, 1981], released on the occasion of the 1300<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Bulgaria, or the resistance against the Nazis in “Valter brani Sarajevo” [“Walter defends Sarajevo”, Yugoslavia, 1972].<sup>26</sup>

Despite the wide range of subject matters, one shared topic stands out as particularly important: the different countries' and nations' struggle against the Ottoman Empire. It might be positioned strongest in Bulgarian film after WW II, with films like "Kalin Orelăt" ["Kalin the Eagle", 1950] and "Pod igoto" ["Under the Yoke", 1952] prominently visualizing the Bulgarian struggle against Ottoman rule already in the 1950s but when taking a look at other nations' cinemas, it is clear that the theme of the Ottoman "Other" is a transnational phenomenon. It is films like "Velikij voin Albanii Skanderbeg" ["Skënderbeu" / "The Great Warrior Skanderbeg", Albania/Soviet Union, 1953], "Egri csillagok" ["Eclipse of the Crescent Moon", Hungary, 1968], "Pan Wołodyjowski" ["Colonel Wołodyjowski", Poland, 1969], "Mihai Viteazul" ["Michael the Brave", Romania, 1971], "Mera spored mera" ["Measure for Measure", Bulgaria, 1981], and "Boj na Kosovu" ["Battle of Kosovo", Yugoslavia, 1989], which as historical epics put the Ottoman Empire into the role of the "Other" and thereby offer space for complex interactions between Marxism, Orientalism and nationalism.<sup>27</sup>

The consistent "othering" of the Ottoman Empire not only rooted in the long tradition of the narrative that the High Porte allegedly had brought only misery and slavery upon the peoples of (South-)Eastern Europe, but also in the possibility to channel Marxist ideology in film productions. The Marxist-Leninist historiography's portraying of the Ottoman Empire as a primitive feudal entity was absorbed by state socialism's film production, which furthermore embraced aspects of respective national identities of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries based on a European common ground, thereby rejecting the Ottomans as the "Oriental Other". The Ottoman Empire was perceived as an obsolescent state model, bringing no more than suppression and stagnation to the (South-) East of Europe. This narrative did not alter over the years and during the Socialist transformations in Eastern Europe, but was firmly embedded in the region's forms of national consciousness. Nikola Dobrev<sup>28</sup> points out that these films and other historical epics from Eastern Europe all were subjected to many thorough studies before, but that they weren't considered a genre before, although it makes perfect sense not only to regard them as essential parts of individual Eastern European national cinema traditions but of the region's cinema in an transnational understanding.

Considered a genre, the Eastern European historical epics addressing the issue of the Ottoman episode within the respective country's history do show striking similarities in composure and realization. As most of the historic films from the period of state socialism last more than 2.5 hours, in the case of "Mihai Viteazul" or "Mera spored mera" even 203 respectively 288 minutes, they are indeed epic by their length already, but more importantly they all center on an epic hero, who is involved in monumental events changing the course of history of his nation. The heroes are depicted as brave and unselfish, fully committed to the struggle of the common people to whom he is connected through a strong bond, and inspiring in leading it against the advancing or ruling Ottomans. The protagonists are embedded in various mass scenes and battles, as the films are staged as spectacles, sometimes degrading historical accuracy to a footnote of the production. The spectacles include appropriate background music, especially suited to contribute to the epic display of the plot.<sup>29</sup> In long takes the Ottoman armies are scored to "Oriental" music, allowing an aural juxtaposition of them to the films' heroes, who are often

included in local celebrations featuring folk music and dancing. These scenes do not really contribute to the plot but are supposed to create an atmosphere of both local color and authenticity.<sup>30</sup> The emphasizing of the epic hero is a vital point in the visual presentation of the conflict between Eastern Europe's nations and the Ottoman Empire, as the productions try to illustrate a national archetype of a hero, bravely opposing the external threat to their national sovereignty. The heroes' close ties to the common people is supposed to illustrate the importance of the national agenda in the heroes' actions, while all the films dealing with an epic hero fighting the Ottoman Empire are prominently broaching the issues of loyalty and unity.<sup>31</sup>

The local people and the depicted heroes are contrasted by the distant Ottoman Empire, which is consistently kept in the role of the "Other". While the background, motivations and ambitions of the films' heroes are thoroughly disputed and displayed, the ambitions of the Ottoman Empire and its representatives remain unclear and unspoken of. The sultans, viziers and military leaders remain subject to an occasional glimpse to the viewer and aren't examined in detail, while the Ottoman soldiers stay anonymous in their masses.<sup>32</sup> Portrayed very one-dimensionally, they are still considered a mighty and worthy opponent, which highlights the enormous efforts undertaken by the films' protagonists to stop and fight the Ottomans. Stemming from mythical tradition the efforts of the brave defenders are even heightened due to the Ottomans always outnumbering the local armies. The strategic superiority claimed by the protagonist and his followers secures not only moral but actual victory on the battlefield. The uncritical portray of the Ottoman Empire as an unstoppable force seeking to conquer it all, behind which's actions no reason is to be sought but only countermeasures are to be found, might be explained by having a look at official historiography during Eastern European state socialism, where Ottoman rule was displayed as the rule of an outdated entity, characterized by brutality and hindering the regions' nations to flourish.<sup>33</sup> The narrative of the primitive feudal Ottoman Empire transcended national borders in Eastern European historiography and found its visual manifestations in a variety of films representing the time of Ottoman advance and rule on European ground.

### 1954 – Geroi Šipki / Geroite na Šipka

The first time a postwar feature film picked up the theme of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 for its plot was in 1954, when a Bulgarian-Soviet co-production produced the film "Heroes of Šipka" ["Geroi Šipki" / "Geroite na Šipka"]. The background of the film as well as its planning and its process of development are extensively analyzed by Mariyana Piskova<sup>34</sup>, who concentrates primarily on the film's role in Bulgarian cinematography but it is also interesting to take a look at how it fits into Russia's popular culture. The award-winning film (with director Sergej D. Vasil'ev winning the split *prix de la mise en scène* at the 1955 Cannes Film Festival, running in the competition under the title "Hommes en guerre") and the huge success in both Soviet and Bulgarian cinemas is a good example of how the young nationalized cinemas in Eastern Europe were tied to the Soviet Union's Socialist realism and what kind of narratives were transported in so-called co-productions between Russian and Eastern European film studios. As an official co-production

between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the film indeed was rather symmetrically planned and realized, with the staff coming from both countries. However, the film was planned before Stalin's death and realized before Chruščev's thaw, which becomes quite evident when taking a look at the two main ideological narratives the film prominently transports.

Produced within the first decade after World War II, "Heroes of Šipka" was a part of cinematography, characterized by the dichotomy of the Cold War with full ideological and medial opposition, while Socialist realism had a tight grip on art in the Soviet orbit. Cinema in general was thought to educate the people in compliance with Socialist ideology and to make sure of the audience's identification with the official interpretation of history. The first main narrative focuses on the historically grown friendship between the people of Eastern Europe, in this case the Bulgarians, and the Russian nation. Constantly portrayed as a relationship of cordial friendship, the Russian soldiers and the Bulgarian volunteers, as well as the Russian and Bulgarian peoples in general, equally work together to achieve their goals. No matter how ambitious their goals are, it is exactly the equality and cordiality in their co-operation that makes them accomplish every step seemingly easily. Of course the understanding of a Soviet patronage over the (Slavic) people of Eastern Europe is a constant in the Socialist understanding of the time and it is no accident that the first cinematographic co-operation between the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of Bulgaria would happen to pick the theme of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. The two people fighting side by side is staged in every single scene of the film and is supposed to give the viewer the impression of two historically connected nations assisting one another in any times of need.

The second narrative is closely connected to the first and explains why the Socialist film industry was even interested in depicting heroism from Imperial Russia in such a large-scaled project. It concerns the connection between the Russian advances on the Balkans in 1877 – 1878 with the Red Army's fight against the Fascist troops in Eastern Europe. Similar to the closing scene of "The Great Warrior Skanderbeg", where the action is currently transferred into the People's Republic of Albania with Enver Hoxha holding a speech on the eternal friendship between the Russian and Albanian peoples, nothing illustrates the Russians' depiction as "double liberators" better than the final scene of the film "Heroes of Šipka". While the film's plot about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 ends with General Skobelev talking to his soldiers about their bravery and repeats that "Russia will proudly remember its glorious sons"<sup>35</sup> and about how "they helped their brothers, the Bulgarians"<sup>36</sup>, the camera suddenly fades out and shows Soviet tanks making their way onto Šipka Pass (Figure 3). They join a celebration of veterans from the War of 1877 – 1878 at the Šipka Memorial, which is decorated with both a Soviet and a Bulgarian flag at its left respectively its right side. The "units of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Ukrainian Front of the victorious Red Army"<sup>37</sup> dedicate a memorial plaque "to the heroes of Šipka" and thereby transfer the plot of the film all of a sudden into the 1940s. The showing of the Red Army celebrating the participants of the Russo-Ottoman War is supposed to evoke the image of the Russian liberating Bulgaria twice – the first time from Ottoman rule and the second time during World War II. This narrative was highly present in Socialist historiography and "the most stable fulcrum of postwar life"<sup>38</sup> in Bulgaria and was therefore also included in the film.



**Figure 3: Soviet Tanks on Šipka Pass<sup>39</sup>**

### 1977 – Julija Vrevskaja

After “Heroes of Šipka” it took more than 20 years to have to theme of the Russo-Ottoman War picked up for a full-length feature film and again it was not primarily realized for the Soviet audience but as another Bulgaro-Soviet co-production, the film “Julija Vrevskaja” was thought to inform and entertain Bulgarian viewers as well about the title-giving nurse, who actively participated in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. Realized by the Bulgarian director Nikola Atanasov Korabov and after the director’s and Sem’on Lungin’s screenplay and with the main actors being both Russians as well as Bulgarians, the film was actually more equally co-produced than “Heroes of Šipka” was in the 1950s.

The film “Julija Vrevskaja” is based on the life of Julija Petrovna Vrevskaja, born to a lieutenant-general and therefore a member of Russia’s military elite even before getting married to General Baron Ippolit A. Vrevskij, who would die soon after their marriage and leave her widowed before turning 20. Vrevskaja was then invited to the court at St. Petersburg and got soon acquainted with some of the most important figures of the Russian Empire including writers and artists such as Ivan S. Turgenev and Vasilij V. Vereščagin. Travelling across Europe with the Emperor’s wife Marija Aleksandrovna, she would also get to know to famous contemporaries like Victor Hugo all over the continent.

Even before the film sets in with Julija Vrevskaja’s decision to join the Russian army as a nurse in the Russo-Ottoman War in 1877, paintings of the war give the viewer an early insight into the war’s visualization, as they score the pre-title sequence. The credits are then capped by a quote of Turgenev, who during the film

is often referred to as a correspondent to the protagonist and is not only illustrating the entrance to the film with his verses but is also writing to Julija Vrevskaja when she passes away in the end of the film. Not only is Turgenev early introduced to the world of Julija Petrovna but also Victor Hugo, whom she meets in Paris in 1876 and who is so fond of the struggle of the Bulgarian nation that he enthusiastically exclaims what a heroic little nation<sup>40</sup> the Bulgarians were and asks when their martyrdom would finally end. The figures of Turgenev and Hugo may well have been important to Julija Vrevskaja's life but in the film the quotes of the two do have another function – they illustrate an approval of the war by both Russia's cultural elite as well as of the Western world. The first are also represented by Vasilij V. Vereščagin, who in the film is accompanying the Russian army and is responsible of capturing its heroic deeds.

The great powers of Western Europe are furthermore represented by an English correspondent, who is constantly around the generals of the Russian army and also stands in the first row to congratulate them on their victory over the Ottoman army in the end of the film. The Russian general in his response to the congratulating corresponding is stressing that it were of great importance that everyone would get to hear the truth about the war.<sup>41</sup> By this the Russian commander implies that the war would have been motivated by justice and it would have primarily been fought in order to liberate the suppressed Bulgarian people – a narrative well transported in both Bulgarian and Soviet historiography. Not only is this message implied in several sayings by the leading military men in the film but the motivation of justice in the already known theme of a "holy war" is also directly addressed during the battle scenes as for instance the Russian general while crossing the river Danube and leading them into the battle shouts out loud "Soldiers! For the right cause!".<sup>42</sup> The Russians are depicted as the Bulgarians' eternal partners, who would, as Julija Vrevskaja herself puts it in the film, personally do "everything for their freedom"<sup>43</sup>, leaving the Bulgarian leader in the battlefield, Nikola Karabelov, thankfully behind.

It is not only the Russians bravely fighting in the "holy war" but in tradition of the Bulgarian-Soviet co-operation, a main focus of the film rests on the relationship between the two nations and their understanding of being "Slavic brothers". The Bulgarians are depicted as extremely tough and brave in their enduring of the "Ottoman yoke" and in their struggle against their oppressors. Personified by their leader Karabelov they are described as willing to give their lives in order to free the Bulgarian people, manifesting in several quotes by Karabelov such as "Freedom or death!"<sup>44</sup> or "There is no freedom without any sacrifices!"<sup>45</sup> Also the unlimited backing of the operations through the Bulgarian people is illustrated when the Russian headquarters receive a telegram by General Stoletov stating that the forced would together fight until the last man falls.<sup>46</sup> Being a co-operation not only on the battlefield but also in the film studios of the 1970s and therefore in a cultural climate of thought Socialist equality, the Bulgarians and Russians in the film are equally contributing to the advance against the Ottoman forces. Karabelov is to be seen next to the Russian generals whenever they reach any Bulgarian town and are enthusiastically celebrated as liberators from Ottoman rule by the local population or by the soldiers.<sup>47</sup>

Although being depicted as equivalent partners, the film lets no doubt about the great importance of the Russian Empire in the war against the Ottoman Empire.

The Russians are shown as the liberating force in the Balkans, which is underlined by great pathos and suggested heroism. The Russians' heroism is once again strongly personified by the character of the "White General" Michail Skobelev, who leads his army together with the Bulgarian *dobrovol'cy* seemingly without any problems and setbacks against the Ottoman army to victory. The extensive battle scenes in the film show the Russian troops as heroes forcefully advancing at cost of the enemy, who against this heroism seems to have no chance at all. The Ottomans even seem to cause the Russians less problems than diseases like typhoid, which cause the more prominent victims and not at last the death of Julija Vrevskaja.

Interestingly enough, the enemy is never shown in the film. The Ottomans are completely excluded from the film's scenes, even in the battle scenes which only show the heroic advance of the Russian army, and the plot reduces the opponent to a few characterizations of them by the protagonists on the Russian respectively Bulgarian side. In that sense Sultan Abdülhamid is quoted in saying that "the Russians may well come to Bulgaria but they wouldn't find any more Bulgarians there."<sup>48</sup> Picking up the theme of the Batak massacre, which had been introduced in the first few minutes of the film and Victor Hugo's reception of it, the Ottomans are not in the picture but are always described as extremely brutal oppressors of the local population in Southeastern Europe. The only scene actually showing some *başıbozuki* has them murdering and plundering the Bulgarians, leaving behind only burnt-down houses, corpses and fear. The Ottoman Empire and its representatives are only described from a well-kept distance, thereby anonymizing and generalizing all of them as primitive and brutal.

The description of the Ottomans obviously antagonized them in the film but the differential markers in the film are still applied on the Russians rather than on the Ottomans, mostly because they aren't even in the picture and their motivation remains unclear. Following the known narrative of the "holy war" against the Muslim opponent, Christianity again has the function of marking the difference between just and unjust in the war, even in a co-production of two Socialist countries' film studios. Several scenes framing the cornerstones of the historical development around the war, it being the Russian decision to support the Bulgarians in their struggle against the Ottoman Empire or it being the proclamation of Bulgaria being free are shown in important churches in St. Petersburg or Veliko Tärnovo.

While picking up all the well-known narratives on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, the story about Julija Vrevskaja in fact becomes more a side plot to the heroic advance of the Russian army. However it is worth noting that she is portrayed as the perfect archetype of a tough independent woman, who stands strong in the middle of all cruelties of war and takes care of the wounded and traumatized. She supports the army by reprimanding the captain of the medical corps when he pessimistically considers typhoid to cause too many soldiers to inevitably die. She furthermore rejects the offer to go home after the end of the war, stating that she couldn't leave the wounded on their own<sup>49</sup> and personifies the working morale of the ideal citizen aware of his or her responsibility in society, when she decides to skip her promised vacation as she is simply not seeing her out of the work she's obliged to do as a nurse in war.<sup>50</sup>

The film ends not only with showing Julija Vrevskaja's grave and several monuments to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in general and to the protagonist in particular, but also a still of the memorial complex on Šipka Pass and a text saying “The film is dedicated to all, who left their life for the liberation of Bulgaria.” (cf. Figure 4) in front of it.<sup>51</sup> The text again makes no difference between the Russians' and the Bulgarians' contribution and is dedicated to them both, thereby stressing the partnership between the two nations, just as pan-Slavism had envisioned it in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and just as the Socialist orbit had understood it in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Figure 4: “The film is dedicated to all, who left their life for the liberation of Bulgaria.”

### Russian cinema in the 1990s – New themes and features

With the end of the Soviet Union and the state's loosening grip on art and thereby on film industry, Russian cinema with the 1990s acquired new themes and features. Another reason for Russian cinema looking for a reorientation was the extremely low number of viewers in Russia's cinema and also a very low number of Russian productions. Only 34 full-length films had been produced in 1996, a figure which had had been almost four times as high even in 1913.<sup>52</sup> Then in the end-1990s, an increasing number of so-called *blockbusters*, films primarily produced to attract large audiences and are therefore commercially oriented, was produced and the disappearing dogma of films having to be in compliance with Socialist realism brought new narratives on cinema screens. The reinvigoration of Russian blockbuster-cinema is closely connected to the films “Brat” [“Brother”, 1997] and “Brat 2” [“Brother 2”, 2000], directed by Aleksej O. Balabanov, and Nikita Michalkov's “Sibir-

skij cirjul'nik" ["The Barber of Siberia", 1998], which reconceptualize moral values of post-Soviet Russia and, especially interesting regarding the visualization of the Russo-Ottoman War, re-envision the hero in Russian cinema.<sup>53</sup>

The return of commercially oriented films in Russia's film studios more or less coincided with a new wave of history in Eastern European film.<sup>54</sup> With the end of Europe's East-West-dichotomy and the end of Soviet cultural dominance over Eastern Europe, not only in the new states in Europe many directors felt the need to produce historical epics once again in order to strengthen their countries' national identity, but also in supposedly established nations such as the Polish, the Hungarian and as well the Russian such films were produced. "Sibirskij cirjul'nik" serves as a good example for Russian cinematography idealizing the Russian Empire of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as Michalkov felt a need to oppose the picture of Russia as a poor country full of poverty and heavy drinkers.<sup>55</sup> With such films firmly established at the box offices in Russia, around the turn of the millennium it became interesting again to produce such *blockbusters* with historical themes both for cinema and television, which among other themes brought the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 back on the screens of Russia's audience in two major productions: the TV-serial *Bajazet* in 2003 and the film adaption of Boris Akunin's novel "Tureckij Gambit" ["Turkish Gambit"] in 2005.

### 2003 – Bajazet

In 2003 the TV serial "Bajazet" aired in Russia, consisting of 12 episodes à 45 minutes. The action of the serial is based on Valentin Savvič Pikul's novel of the same title and the Russo-Ottoman battle for the fortress of Bajazet (Doğubeyazıt), which the author in 1960, when he wrote his novel, set in relation to the Red Army's defense of Brest Fortress in 1941 and concluded that "history, probably, also exists, so that we readers wouldn't forget about our ancestors."<sup>56</sup> While the plot takes place in the East of the Ottoman Empire and centers on the decisive siege for the fortress of Bajazet, the first episode still sets the tone with the reference to the well know narrative of the Russians liberating their Slavic brothers on the Balkans, which would have been the only reason to have entered the war in the first place.<sup>57</sup>

The story of the serial is quickly retold: The twelve episodes display the 23 days of the Siege of Bajazet, where the Russian troops, after capturing the town in April 1877, were caught by the Ottoman army and were forced to the defense of the fortress only two months later. The Russian contingent is in a numerically inferior position compared to the Ottomans, a fact massively stressed by the serial, but despite treason, hunger and strike, it is able to fight back the advancing opponent and heroically holds the fortress. Heroism is again the main motive and motivator behind every step of the Russian protagonists in the serial. With the main focus of the serial on Russia's higher-ranked military officers, the main hero of the serial, Lieutenant Andrej E. Karabanov, is a part of a Russian society circle depicted as heroes, both morally superior and brave in the battlefields. Already the first episode introduces Karabanov as a duel-winning hero, who successfully earns the respect of his comrades. The protagonist's heroism as the main motive lasts from the first episode until the very last scene of the serial, when he sinks to the ground on the

walls of the fortress, exhausted from having fought to grain of strength; a symbol for the heroic Russians always fighting until the last man, convinced of their moral superiority against their opponent. The last scene furthermore combines Russian heroism with the theme of religious justification of the war's cruelties. The hero lies on the walls above the corpses of slain Ottomans and asks the serial's heroine for forgiveness, only to have her answer that god would forgive them.<sup>58</sup>

The Ottomans on the other hand aren't exactly portrayed in detail, although they are described as worthy enemies, mostly because of the masses they form. The seemingly exchangeable Ottoman soldiers are, if they even get to say something, speaking some Russian gibberish and addressing the Russians as *ghiaour* and infidels. However they are also anonymously shown in rather long takes and scored to "Oriental" music, allowing an aural juxtaposition of the Ottomans to the serial's Russian heroes. This is especially true for the Ottoman women in the serial, who are mostly shown veiled and to the same "Oriental" music. In both the themes of Russian heroism and in the illustration of the Ottomans, a parallel to the *lubki* of the 19<sup>th</sup> century can certainly be spotted.

### 2005 – Tureckij Gambit

Džanik Fajziev's film "Tureckij Gambit" ["Turkish Gambit"] debuted in February 2005 and immediately shattered all records for the highest-grossing films in Russian history. The mystery set amidst the Russo-Ottoman War was considered a risky production, as Russia's cinematography traditionally favored art films over mainstream blockbusters and the unusually high budget of \$5 million was far from being guaranteed to be even covered by ticket sales alone.<sup>59</sup> The film however went on to earn \$18.5 million, besting not only the previous year's blockbuster "Nočnoj dozor" ["Night Watch"] but any film to that point.<sup>60</sup> It took only a few months for the Afghan War picture "9 rota" ["9<sup>th</sup> Company"] to again top the numbers of "Tureckij Gambit". The trend in Russia's cinema to large-scale blockbusters was not at last connected to the great success of films like "Tureckij Gambit" and caused a new orientation of Russian filmmakers. Together with Russian film producers they were interested in developing "audience-friendly" films for Russian consumers.<sup>61</sup> However, not only the style of the films changed but also the content, as the leading lights of the Russian film world were focused on making films with an adequate "Russian" content.

The film "Tureckij Gambit" was obviously considered as adequate for a Russian blockbuster and so was the novel it was based on – "Tureckij Gambit" by Boris Akunin, which had been published first in 1999 and had sold millions of copies even before the film was realized. Boris Akunin, a pseudonym for the Tbilisi-born Grigorij Chkvartishvili, in terms of sold copies is one of the most successful writers in post-Socialist Russia, but he is more than that. Boris Akunin, as Stephen Norris puts it, is also "the creator of an alternate past, a place described by the author as "a country resembling Russia," where the forces that sustained and ultimately dissolved the Romanov Empire are turned into playful points of debate [...]."<sup>62</sup> In his 1998 novel "Smert' Achillesa" ["The Death of Achilles"] Akunin had already picked up the storyline around the murder of one of the Russo-Ottoman War's heroes, General Skobelev, and he continued to choose that setting with "Tureckij Gambit". The fact

that the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 was considered ideal “Russian” content also for a film and brought groundbreaking revenues with it, is very interesting and led to debates about Akunin’s books in general and the film adaptation “Tureckij Gambit” in particular being ideologically nostalgic of a 19<sup>th</sup>-century-Russia lost in 1917 and a post-Soviet preoccupation with the desire to understand the Romanov Empire.

Successful on many different levels (film scripts, even dramatic adaptations for Moscow’s theatres), Akunin is best known for his detective series starring Èrast Fandorin, a member of the tsarist police force. In “Tureckij Gambit”, for which the author himself also wrote the screenplay, Akunin picks up the theme of the last Russo-Ottoman War and puts his series’ protagonist in the middle of the war’s action. The film’s plot takes place in Bulgaria, where Èrast Fandorin is trying to get a hand on a shadowy agent named Anwar Effendi, who is a master of disguise and seemingly unseen takes influence on the decision-makers in both the Russian and the Ottoman headquarters. The spy Anwar Effendi’s gambit, a term coming from chess and describing an opening in which a player sacrifices material with the hope of the sacrifice resulting in an advantageous position, is to draw Russia further and further into the war and at last to lure the commanding General Michail Sobolev (obviously alluding to General Michail Skobelev) into the city of Istanbul, thereby hoping to cause Great Britain and other European powers to side with the Ottoman Empire against any further Russian advance, trigger off a general European war leading to an end of Russia’s presence on the European continent. The spy’s gambit is made unsuccessful by Fandorin in both the novel and the film, but the two versions differ massively regarding the end of the plot. Anwar Effendi in the novel turns out to be the French correspondent while he’s the Russian military attaché Perepëlkin in the film and although both the film and the novel leave the viewer respectively the reader wondering about the Russian Empire’s role at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the different characters personifying treason couldn’t be more self-explaining. When the film was extended into a four-part miniseries in 2006, the French Charles d’Hevrais was restored as Anwar Effendi, which however was the main difference to the cinema version with other deviations from the novel staying the same.

In the character of Anwar Effendi the novel has a protagonist agitating against the Russian Empire out of pure ideological motivation. The film on the other hand shows the traitor as a man from the Russian military, motivated by greed and personal interests rather than large-scale ideology. The novel keeps the reader wondering about d’Hevrais’ words being a hint at imperial Russia also being a harbor to opposing forces such as the Bolsheviks, especially when he phrases his ideas about change such as “I don’t see salvation in revolution but rather in evolution.”<sup>63</sup>; wordings which are not included in the film. The film critics Elena Prochorova and Aleksandr Prochorov pick up the difference in the novel’s and film’s wordings and argue that the 2005 film audience was perfectly aware of Russians fighting Muslim separatists in Chechnya *now* and wouldn’t need any kind of explanation why Russians were fighting “treacherous Turks in Bulgaria” *then*.<sup>64</sup> The difference between Akunin’s novel and Akunin’s screenplay might indeed be seen in the first playing with Russia’s imperial history and the latter stronger addressing Russia’s

contemporary history. However as far as the different critics diverge – from Akunin romanticizing tsarist Russia and personifying a nostalgia for the imperial empire in post-Soviet Russia, to him being a Russophobe, hating his homeland<sup>65</sup> – the open suggestions by Boris Akunin on Russian history at least show one thing: the Russian audience is more than willing to cope with the history of their homeland before the 20<sup>th</sup> century and therefore before the Soviet era, looking for strength in Russia's national narrative in its historical accomplishments.

Of course far from being historically accurate, the visualization of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, which in “Tureckij Gambit”, despite the war's prominent role in Russia's historiography, had been picked up only for the first time in Russian cinematography as a feature film's theme, in many ways influenced the audience's understanding of the war. The only other video footage about the war were still the moving pictures from “Heroes of Šipka” from the 1950s, which of course was not known to such a large audience like the new film's anymore. “Tureckij Gambit” is staged as a spectacle, with mass scenes of determined Russian soldiers (Figure 5) and twists and turns in the plot. With the pure ideological motivation and background in films like “Heroes of Šipka” and “Julija Vrevskaja” missing, productions like “Tureckij Gambit” follow other generic conventions than the historical epics from Socialist times. However, with ideological frontlines similar to the Russo-Ottoman understanding of a “holy war” at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the same themes are picked up once again, only partly more subliminal.



**Figure 5: Determined Russian soldiers advancing towards Pleven<sup>66</sup>**

### **Documentaries**

Having considered all the impact historical films have on the possibility to spread certain narratives, there is of course one more medium which today might be the most effective when it comes to reaching masses with historical contents: television. History in television is first and foremost a business, where the demand regulates the supply. This can be seen best, when anniversaries of historical events cause several documentaries to be produced and thereby either strengthen the focus on an anyway well-lit topic or otherwise bring historical episodes, which had

not been in the center of public interest to the masses. The year 1914 is a good example for the first case, as WW I is a well-researched topic at any time but the centenary of the war's outbreak has not only caused a myriad of publications to hit the book market and many conferences to deal with the events happening 100 years ago, but also a high number of documentaries aiming to educate the viewer. The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 for Russian television seems more to fit into the latter scheme. The theme wasn't of much interest for Soviet television productions and Russia's TV stations didn't pick it up during the 1990s either. With the boom of Russian productions in cinema and the 130<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the war coming up, the years 2007 and 2008 all of a sudden brought several new documentaries about the war on Russia's TV screens, which is also true for the 135<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012.

As usual, the titles of the TV productions like Aleksej Denisov's "General Skobelev" [2006], Vladimir Šterjanov's "Skobelev. Belyj general" ["Skobelev. The White General", 2008] or Leonid Fišel's "Osvoždenie. Bolgarija 1877 – 1878 gody" ["Liberation. Bulgaria 1877 – 1878", 2012] are speaking for themselves and show that the documentaries about the war are thematically very similar. Interesting about the documentaries is their evident focus on the front on the Balkans and the role of the Russian Empire in the development of Southeastern Europe at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While the Caucasus has a prominent spot both in Russian culture *per se* and in especially in Russian film and literature, the issue of Caucasus front in the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 is not broached in the documentaries. With historical accuracy not the primary focus, the TV productions are supposed to entertain and with the only video material of the war available in form of feature films, the battlefield scenes in the documentaries are all taken from "Heroes of Šipka". Other visual support is sought from Vereščagin's paintings and stills from the many Bulgarian monuments to the war. In terms of their main themes, the documentaries are similar to the known visualizations of the war to that point. They are supposed to tell a story full of heroism, circling around a strong hero figure in General Skobelev, and again show a superior Russian nation helping out their Slavic brothers on the Balkans in their struggle against Ottoman rule.

## Conclusions

When taking a look at the history of Russia's visualization, one can easily see that the medial channels have changed from popular prints, the so-called *lubki*, and fine arts to a depiction of the war in cinemas and on TV screens, but the themes did not alter decisively. No matter if one takes a look at prints from 1878, watches the 1954 film "Heroes of Šipka" or turns on the Russian history channels today – the Russo-Ottoman War is always visualized as a heroic episode of Russian history centered on heroes serving as role models for bravery and toughness. However, as soon as the visualizations are allowed to function slightly outside an ideological corset they also show personal notes and alterations in their approach to the war. This is clearly visible when having a look at Russian fine arts at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as the war was prominently visualized by some of the most famous Russian artists of the time such as Vasilij V. Vereščagin, who were able to express their

personal experiences in their paintings, giving the visualization of the war a darker note aside the heroic tone of the *lubki*.

Russian film about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 cannot be understood without having a look at wider cinematographic developments throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is interesting to see that the blooming Soviet cinematography consistently omitted the war of late Tsarism from its favored themes for the Soviet audience, while the Soviet influence on other Eastern European film productions lead to films such as “Heroes of Šipka” or “Julija Vrevskaja” in Bulgaria. The consistent “othering” of the Ottoman Empire in Eastern European film was in fact one of the main themes of many historical epics in the countries under Soviet cultural dominance after World War II, but in Soviet film itself it was not picked up. Late Tsarism did not find its way onto Soviet screens, besides people’s uprisings against autocracy and Tsarism such as the Revolution of 1905. Even the co-operations with Bulgarian film studios for the two named films had to be capped with references to the then Soviet presence.

This changed with the end of Europe’s East-West-dichotomy as not only in the new states in Europe many directors felt the need to produce historical epics once again in order to strengthen their countries’ national identity, but also in supposedly established nations such as the Polish, the Hungarian and as well in Russia such films were produced. A return of historical epics<sup>67</sup> onto the screens since the 1990s is evident in so many of the countries who had formerly been Soviet republics or under Soviet cultural dominance, which brings new themes and features into cinemas. One of these themes is not at last the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, which hadn’t been prominently visualized throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century but experiences a revival in Russian popular culture today. New preoccupation with history might be a transnational trend in the former Soviet orbit, but the picking up of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 is, besides the well-established Bulgarian narrative of the “Liberation War”, a contemporary Russian feature. Not only are films, serials and documentaries coining the Russian audience’s understanding of the war, but exhibitions are organized in Russia’s most important museums, exclusively displaying photography and paintings from the time of the war. With the end of Socialist realism, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 became a visible part in Russian popular culture again.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Karl Kaser, *Andere Blicke. Religion und visuelle Kulturen auf dem Balkan und im Nahen Osten*, Cologne; Vienna; Weimar, 2013, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Martina Baleva, *The Empire strikes back. Image Battles and Image Frontlines during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877 – 1878*, *Ethnologia Balkanica*, 16 (2012), 273-294.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 281pp.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Stephen M. Norris, *A War of Images. Russian Popular Prints, Wartime Culture, and National Identity 1812 – 1945*, DeKalb, 2006, 3pp.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 220p.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 89pp.

<sup>10</sup> Vladimir Denisov, *Lubok i vojna*, Petrograd, 1916, 17.

<sup>11</sup> Aleksandr V. Buganov, *Russkaja istorija v pamjati krest'jan XIX veka i nacional'noe samoznanie*, Moscow, 1992, in: Norris, *War*, 4, 97.

<sup>12</sup> Aleksandr V. Buganov, *Otnošenje krest'janstva k russko-tureckoj vojne 1877 – 1878 godov (po materijalam poslednej četverti XIX v.)*, *Istorija SSSR*, 1987/5 (September/October), 182-189, 185p., in: Norris, *War*, 4, 100.

<sup>13</sup> For further artists and works cf. also Olga Chernyshova's and Alla Kondrasheva's article "The Places of Memory in Russia regarding the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878: Stages of Transformation." in the same volume.

<sup>14</sup> Available on <http://www.artlib.ru/index.php?id=11&fp=2&uid=1457&iid=13875> (17.05.2014).

<sup>15</sup> Mira Liehm; Antonín J. Liehm, *The Most Important Art: Soviet and Eastern European Film after 1945*, Berkeley, London, Los Angeles, 1977, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Asuman Suner, *New Turkish Cinema: Belonging, Identity and Memory*, London; New York, 2010, 2.

<sup>17</sup> *Independența României* (01:19:19).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* (01:20:10).

<sup>19</sup> The film "Ivan Groznyj" in fact is a good example of how tight the grip of Soviet censorship was. Sergej Ėjzenštejn could not only finish his film, which was planned to consist out of three parts, but while the director received the Stalin price for the first part of the film, the deliberate parallels between Stalin and Ivan Groznyj became all too apparent and although the second part was finished, it was not shown and its existence denied until 1958. The third part of Ivan Groznyj was never finished. Cf. Julian Graffy et al. (eds.), *The BFI Companion to Eastern European and Russian Cinema*, London, 2009, 69.

<sup>20</sup> With the Tito-Stalin Split in 1948 and Yugoslavia becoming an integral part of the Non-Aligned Movement, the country's political way differed from other countries in (South-)Eastern Europe and so did the development of its cinematography.

<sup>21</sup> Michael J. Stoil, *Balkan Cinema. Evolution after revolution*, Ann Arbor, 1982, 41-119, in Kaser, Blicke, 1, 239.

<sup>22</sup> Nikolina Dobрева, *Eastern European Historical Epics. Genre Cinemas and the Visualization of a Heroic National Past*. In: Anikó Imre (ed.), *A Companion to Eastern European Cinemas*, Oxford, 2012, 344-365, 349p.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Dina Iordanova, *Cinema of the other Europe*, London, 2003, 48.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Kaser, Blicke, 1, 239.

<sup>25</sup> Following Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities. Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London; New York, 2006<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Dobрева, *Epics*, 22, 344p.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 345p.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 353.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 357.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 354.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 359p.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Mariyana Piskova's article "Documentary Evidence of the Creation of the Film "Heroes of Šipka" in Bulgarian Archives" in the same volume.

<sup>35</sup> *Geroi Šipki* (01:53:01).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.* (01:54:00).

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.* (01:56:09).

<sup>38</sup> Liehm; Liehm, *Art*, 15, 133.

<sup>39</sup> Geroi Šipki (01:55:02).

<sup>40</sup> Referring to the Batak Massacre in 1876, Victor Hugo is quoted with “Quand finira le martyre de cette héroïque petite nation?”, Julija Vrevskaja (00:09:28).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. (01:59:51).

<sup>42</sup> [Солдаты! За правое дело!], Julija Vrevskaja (00:39:04).

<sup>43</sup> [Я сделаю всё что смогу для вашей свободы], ibid. (00:27:43).

<sup>44</sup> [Свобода или смерть!], ibid. (00:18:22).

<sup>45</sup> [Без жертв нет свободы!], ibid. (00:18:33).

<sup>46</sup> [Солдаты и болгарские ополченцы отбрасывают врага камнями. Будут держаться до последнего содлата, включая и себя.], ibid. (00:58:43)

<sup>47</sup> Cf. for instance the celebration scenes in ibid. (00:40:20 – 00:41:38 or 01:15:04 – 01:16:10).

<sup>48</sup> [В Болгарию можете вступить, только болгар Вы там не найдете.], ibid. (00:13:20).

<sup>49</sup> [Я не могу бросить в ранениях], ibid. (01:40:55).

<sup>50</sup> [Я получила отпуск и могу уехать в любой часть, но не уеду. Очень много работы], ibid. (01:43:37).

<sup>51</sup> [Всем, отдавшим жизнь за освобождение Болгарии, посвящается этот фильм], ibid. (02:09:42).

<sup>52</sup> Cf. Nancy Condee, *The Imperial Trace. Recent Russian Cinema*, New York; Oxford, 2009.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Birgit Beumers, *Soviet and Russian Blockbusters: A Question of Genre?*, *Slavic Review*, 62/3, 2003, 441-454, 444.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Jurica Pavičić, *Postjugoslavenski film*, Zagreb, 2011, 78-84.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. ibid., 80.

<sup>56</sup> [История, наверно, для того и существует, чтобы мы, читатель, не забывали о своих пращурах.] Valentin S. Pikul', *Vajazet*, Moscow, 2013 (1960), ot avtora – čitatelju.

<sup>57</sup> [Шёл 1877 год. Россия, защищая братские славянские народы на Балканах, вступила в войну с Турцией. Линия фронта пролегла и на её южных рубежах, в Закавказье...], *Vajazet*, Episode 1 (00:01:17).

<sup>58</sup> [Прости меня! Бог нас простит], *Vajazet*, Episode 12 (00:38:16).

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Stephen M. Norris, *Blockbuster History in the New Russia. Movies, Memory, and Patriotism*. Bloomington; Indianapolis, 2012, 84.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. ibid., 73.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. ibid., 4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 75.

<sup>63</sup> [Я вижу спасение не в революции, а в эволюции.], Boris Akunin, *Tureckij Gambit*, Moscow, 1999, 258.

<sup>64</sup> Aleksandr Prochorov; Elena Prochorova, Džanik Fajziev, *Turkish Gambit [Tureckij Gambit]*, (review), 2005. Web. 17 May 2014. <http://www.kinokultura.com/reviews/R10-05gambit.html>

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Tat'jana Blažova, “Gospodin nechorošij”: B. Akunin i vokrug, *Literaturnaja gazeta*, 7, (February 18 – 24, 2004), Nr. 5961, in: Norris, *Blockbuster*, 59, 80p.

<sup>66</sup> *Tureckij Gambit* (01:19:21).

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Dina Iordanova, “Rise of the Rest.” *Globalizing Epic Cinema*. In: Robert Burgoyne (ed.), *The Epic Film in World Culture*, New York, 2011, 101-123; Pavičić, *Film*, 54, 78-84.

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## Documentary Evidence of the Creation of the Film “Heroes of Šipka” in Bulgarian Archives

**Abstract:** *The purpose of this paper is to present the Bulgarian-Soviet production of the first feature film about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 called “Heroes of Šipka” in the light of the newly discovered archival traces. “Heroes of Šipka” is designed and realized as a model and template for the Bulgarian national cinema – with a Soviet script, direction and performance but with Bulgarian funding and on Bulgarian soil. I elaborate on the relations and dependencies in an otherwise coproduced film. Official documents by Bulgarian institutions do not unilaterally outline the three stages of influence and dependence. The first one is the effective selection of the theme of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. The second one is the use of the topic for the second “liberation” of Bulgaria in 1944 and the perpetuation of the myth of the “double liberators”. The third one is the creation of bilateral teams as the Soviet school served as a guideline for the qualification of Bulgarian filmmakers. We discovered details that show the ambiguity of this dependence with examples of Bulgarian activities and the Soviet help and protection, which often was sought and not only imposed on Bulgaria.*

“And how do you see the opportunity to create a national Bulgarian cinema led by a Russian director? Furthermore, he is one of the greatest”<sup>1</sup>  
**Michail Kalatozov – Deputy Minister in the film industry of USSR**

History of cinema is still one of the unexplored or fragmentary studied areas in the culture of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria and especially in archival sources.<sup>2</sup> Researches on individual films as well as reviews on the history of the Bulgarian cinema are definitely present.<sup>3</sup> There are analyses and comments on “Heroes of Šipka” and other movies for the period of Ottoman rule and the Liberation of Bulgaria in 1878. On an anniversary of the ROW in 1998 Nedelčo Milev in the newspaper “Kultura” published a review, which was explicitly dedicated to Bulgarian films inspired by the liberation.<sup>4</sup>

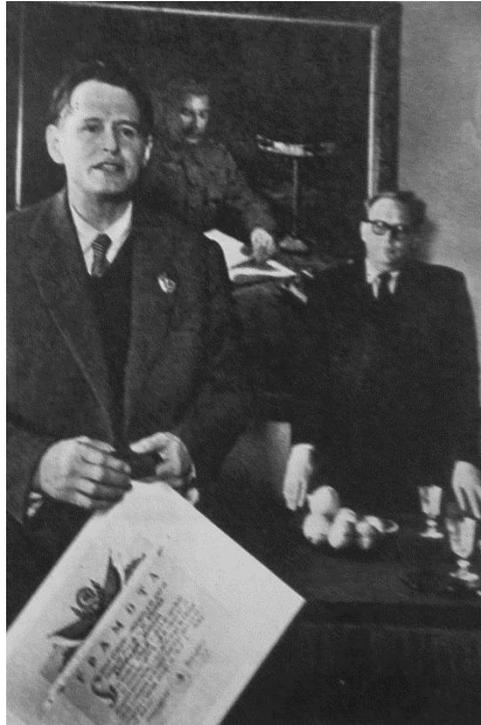
### Political context

“Heroes of Šipka” is the tenth consecutive film of the studios for feature films after the nationalization of cinematography in 1948 and the first joint production with a Soviet film studio. It is a historic feature film which depicts events and facts of the RWO of 1877 – 1878, more specifically the actions on the Balkan front. The film was conceived and developed as an epic historical drama. The main focus is on the battle scenes on which the dramaturgical line is based. An emphasis is placed on the liberating nature of the war and its role in strengthening the friendship between the Russian soldiers and the Bulgarian volunteers, as well as between the Russian and Bulgarian people in general. Further the Russian Tsar and the aristocracy are presented in ironic colors.

The film is set during the reign of Vălko Červenkov<sup>5</sup>, who was the head of the Committee for Science, Art and Culture (CSAC) before becoming Prime Minister of Bulgaria. The institution was especially created in 1948 to guide the scientific and cultural institutions, including the cinema. The communist regime in Bulgaria then was characterized by extreme intolerance towards dissidents, regardless of whether they were party members or not, and with an increase of the repressive apparatus and political terror. This was the time of the buildup of Socialism through a Cultural Revolution, decreeing as well as normativizing the doctrine of socialist realism which became a mandatory “creative method”.<sup>6</sup> Regarding the Bulgarian cinema during the years of the 1950s until the mid-1960s, a first crisis of identity can be spotted, as Bulgarian cinema became the subject of social engineering. The main mission of the cinema at that time was to make the audience accept communist regime and to identify itself with it.<sup>7</sup>

In the Soviet Union the process of film making is marked by and separated by Stalin’s death on 5 March 1953. Since the mid-1930s until early 1953, the Soviet cinema was controlled directly by Stalin. The leader compiled the program on his own and decided about which historical events and historical figures films should be made. Of all arts he especially planned to see after the program of the cinema. During this regime art got heavily influenced by the state i.e. requiring the government’s permission and the state’s funds to start to work, Stalin treated directors not as individual artists but rather as interpreters who would only implement the preliminary written scripts.<sup>8</sup> In the spring of 1952 the film director Sergej Vasil’ev, who meanwhile was appointed an artistic director of Bulgarian cinematography, was sent to Bulgaria. Before Stalin’s death also the screenwriter of the film was defined – Arkadij Pervencev. They both had been awarded with Stalin’s award twice and they were both cavaliers of the “Order of Lenin”. They were among the most decorated and influential film makers in the USSR. The Soviet consultant, historian and colonel Pavel K. Fortunatov is the author of the book “The War of 1877 – 1878 and the Liberation of Bulgaria” issued in 1950 by the Ministry of Education of RSFSR. Three years later in a journal of the Institute of Slavic Academy of Sciences of USSR, Fortunatov published a study<sup>9</sup> on the Russo-Bulgarian union in the war of 1877 – 1878, in which the emphasis is again placed on the “combat friendship of Russians and Bulgarians and the ancient friendship between the two fraternal Slavic peoples.”<sup>10</sup> Dedicated to the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Bulgaria the journal, according to its editors, aimed to counter “the experience of the bourgeois Eng-

lish, Austrian and German historiography to falsify history and damage the Russo-Bulgarian friendship.” Instead it should provide the validation of the story of the “double liberators from the foreign yoke”; of Russia’s leading role in the history of the Bulgarian people and the history of Russo-Bulgarian relations as a means of strengthening the unbreakable Soviet-Bulgarian friendship.<sup>11</sup>



**Figure 1: Sergej Vasil'ev granted with diploma and a golden star medal by the Alliance of the Soviet-Bulgarian unions for “active role in enlarging and deepening the friendship, cooperation and unity between the Bulgarian people and the nations of the great Soviet Union.”<sup>12</sup>**

The time of making the film “Heroes of Šipka” is marked by the highest ideological confrontation and media war between the two sides of the Iron Curtain. The Cold War had already affected literature and the repertoire of dramatic theaters. Even the classics of Soviet cinematography had shot their anti-western and anti-American movies such as “Farewell, America” by Oleksandr Dovženko, “Plot of the Doomed” by Michail Kalatozov, and “Secret Mission” of Michail Romm. And when the so-called ideological thaw had just started after the death of Stalin, the film “Heroes of Šipka” had already been completed and its time on the screens began.

## When was the idea of the film “Heroes of Šipka” born? A little background

We offer to negotiate on one-two co-productions with the Soviet cinematography. We will use them as a school for our entire film making. In our opinion, the Liberation War of 1877 – 1878 is the most fruitful and the most fertile, which is beneficial for both sides.<sup>13</sup>

After 9 September 1944, the Bulgarian cinematography turned to total commitment to the communist regime and to a great extent it became dependent on the Soviet cinematography. In November 1944 a specialized institution for propagandistic imaging in Bulgaria – the “Bulgarian Mission Foundation” – got the visit by the representative of the “Soviet Institute for Trading Movies” Nikolaj Bol’šakov<sup>14</sup> for three weeks. Officially the purpose of his visit was to get acquainted with the film work in Bulgaria. During the talks the cooperation and trade links between cinematographic institutions of both countries were negotiated. It was envisaged that “in Bulgaria the great feature films should be shot under the guidance of prominent Soviet directors, directors of photography, specialists, technicians, etc. The artists and the plot should be Bulgarian.”<sup>15</sup> Another proposal of the Soviet messenger planned the development of a laboratory for duplication, replication and synchronization of Soviet movies in Bulgaria, which were meant to be spread in Turkey, Greece, Yugoslavia and later Hungary. Negotiating the Soviet dependence continued in 1945 with the first business trip of the director of the “Bulgarian Mission Foundation” – Strašimir Rašev – to Moscow. All possible aspects of this dependence were outlined in his proposals: education and qualification, material conditions for the creation of Bulgarian movies, the construction of a temporary cinema studio and a future cinema center, the first Bulgarian film script and the sending of a Soviet scriptwriter to assist the Bulgarian writers. Among the twelve specific proposals one can find Bol’šakov’s conviction to start the production of a major feature film. The script was required to be Bulgarian and the actors had to be Bulgarian as well but the artistic and technical guidance had to be in Soviet hands. In order to implement this task in the summer of 1946 it was envisaged that a Soviet “creative team of eminent specialists led by a first-tier film director should arrive and that he will realize our first big cinema production.”<sup>16</sup>

Two years later the same proposals were still relevant. They were included in the contract agreements for mutual cooperation and mutual assistance between BG and the USSR since March 1848. Again Strašimir Rašev, as a member of the Communist Party, and a governmental delegation led by Georgi Dimitrov in Moscow, together with Slav Slavov, the recently appointed director of the cinematography, represented them in the Soviet cinematographers. For “the preparation of an average technical and creative frame” they offered to agree on one or two joint productions with the Soviet cinematography, which would play the role of a school for the Bulgarian staff. “The most important and most influential topic that was interesting for both sides was the Liberation War of 1877 – 1878.”<sup>17</sup> The topic was suitable regarding one of the objectives of this cooperation – the forthcoming establishment of a Bulgarian national cinematography. During the talks in Moscow, the text of the Law on nationalizing Bulgarian cinematography was finalized. The deputy minister

of Soviet filmmaking, Michail Kalatozov<sup>18</sup>, determined the “right” formula for the development of the Bulgarian national cinema under the leadership of one of the best Soviet directors. The choice was made a week later and it was Sergej Dmitrievič Vasil’ev, who was chosen.<sup>19</sup> As the son of a participant on the Balkan front of the war of 1877 – 1878 he found himself emotionally and personally connected with the topic:

My father Dmitrij Vasil’evič was part of the liberating Russian army in Bulgaria under the command of General M.D. Skobelev. After the war he was the guardian of the Military Archives of the Russian army. We even lived in the building of the archive.<sup>20</sup>

The veterans gathered here in the yard and I breathlessly listened to their stories. Since early childhood my imagination had been captured by their memories: a rapturous welcome of the Russian army – Liberator of Bulgarians from five centuries of slavery; [...] for “The White General” Skobelev; [...] much later I tried to show all of it in my movie “Heroes of Šipka”.<sup>21</sup>

When in the spring of 1952 Sergej Vasil’ev arrived in Bulgaria, the filming period of the historical drama “Under the Yoke” was already in progress. He received a translation of the script into Russian and took over as an artistic director of the movie. The preparation of “Heroes of Šipka” was under way – the film about the Russo-Ottoman War which was expected to become a “school for the qualification of the Bulgarian cineaste and technical staff”.

### **In what Bulgarian regulatory environment and institutional structure was the film based on the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 created?**

By April 1950 there should be created three Bulgarian realistic movies that reflect the heroic struggle of our people against foreign oppression and fascism, especially the nationwide boom in the construction of socialism.<sup>22</sup>

In April 1948 a new law on cinematography nationalized the cinema production and film distribution in Bulgaria and a state monopoly was introduced<sup>23</sup>, thus assisting the exercise of political control over the cinema production as well as the import of movies.<sup>24</sup> The private legal foundation “Bulgarian Mission”, established in March 1941 as an institution for visual propaganda, was successfully transformed for the purposes of the “Fatherland Front Government” after 9 September 1944. With the law of 1948 however, it was eradicated and a state company called “Bulgarian Cinematography” was established in its place. A year later the results of the new institution were extremely disappointing and gave reason for personnel changes.<sup>25</sup> They were justified and announced by the Committee on Science, Art and Culture’s a special decision “On the status of the Bulgarian cinematography’s work” published in a special issue of “Cinema and Photo” in 1949.<sup>26</sup> Success was recognized only in the area of weekly newsreels, chronicles and documentaries as well as in short films. The lack of a “Bulgarian national feature film” can be explained by the opportunistic behavior of cinematographers, who refused to create feature films without facilities. A long list of accusations followed, including an alleged lack of

vigilance regarding foreign movies, the admission of supposedly decadent, corrupt, kitch American and Western European films, the failure to exert efforts to create a taste for highly artistic Soviet movies for viewers, etc. The leadership was accused for the poor organization of work across the enterprise.

Ultimately and explicitly in the final part of the decision it says: "Until 1 April 1950 three Bulgarian realistic films should be created that reflect the heroic struggle of our people against the foreign yoke and fascism and especially the nationwide boom during the construction of Socialism."<sup>27</sup> The formulated task was concrete and it should reorganize the scenario committee's composition and work so it could contribute to the creation of screenplays. As a result, the development of various theses for movies started and included details and instructions on how they should be created. An example in this sense is the first film of the already nationalized Bulgarian cinematography – "Kalin the Eagle". The shooting of the film was launched before 9 September 1944 but it was completed only in 1949. As a result, a romantic and heroic drama with a plot from the National Liberation struggle of the Bulgarian people against the Ottoman oppressor turned into a film work in which the rebel Kalin declares his conceptual proximity with Marxism in an operetta-style production.<sup>28</sup> Such guidelines were also prepared for the film version of "Under the Yoke", aiming to help and not limit scriptwriters – at least according to Slav Slavov, the chair of the script committee.<sup>29</sup>

An even stricter ideological framework outlined the next governmental norm – the decree of the Council of Ministers issued on 31 January 1952. It officially introduced socialist realism into Bulgarian cinema.<sup>30</sup> As well as the text shows a positive assessment of the Bulgarian cinematography, it relates to the fraternal Soviet aid, thanks to which the stage of a backward filmmaking had been overcome and the BG cinema had been turned into a socialist-type enterprise with five independent film studios. The Soviet films shown in Bulgaria were more than 80% of all days on screen. Their aim was to strengthen the friendship with the Soviet Union. The majority of the decree's text consists of specific critical findings in all areas of activity. In the spirit of the time, the main reason for "the unsatisfactory state of the ideological and artistic life in cinematography as well as the weaknesses in the work" was "the low level of Marxist-Lenin preparation of its leaders and creative staff." A major mistake of the leadership was considered to be "the long delay in studying the experience of the Soviet cinematography and "the insufficiently pressing invitation to the Soviet specialists who should help the development of the Bulgarian cinematography."

Cinema as the "most important for the ignorant" (Lenin) and as the "most popular of all arts" (Stalin) was the impetus for the Council of Ministers to set 32 independent upcoming tasks for the Bulgarian cinematography. For feature cinema the following accents were displayed: The movies had to strengthen the brotherly friendship with the Soviet Union; films about the heroic national liberation struggle of the Bulgarian people against the "Turkish oppressors" should be created; the written scripts had to absorb the experience of Soviet dramaturgy; by the end of 1952 representations should be made to appropriate the production of the first experimental color films; etc. The decree also included the instruction regarding the recruitment of ideologically suitable staff.

Only a month after the publication of the decree, in March 1952 the Committee for State and People's Control subjected Bulgarian cinematography as a target to a thorough check. At the beginning of 1953 the Minister of Interior Georgi Cankov reported in a letter to Prime Minister Vălko Červenkov that in relation to the established weaknesses in the Committee for Cinematography a thorough inspection was scheduled to be carried out.<sup>31</sup> The failure to implement item 15 of the decree, which required the Committee for Cinematography "to basically clear out its staff from talentless, reactionary, self-seeking and useless employees" was pointed out as its main weakness. According to the Minister, during the inspection in the Committee there were over 25 legionaries, 15 *brannici*, two *kubratisti*, three *ratniks*<sup>32</sup>, four former Tsar officers, 20 policemen, 13 Nikola-Petkovisti<sup>33</sup> and more than 47 persons were regarded as enemies of the people for different reasons. The accusation that "the leadership of the committee would not have the proper attitude towards the Soviet specialists as well as the Soviet experience"<sup>34</sup> is no less important. In conclusion of the long list with "identified" irregularities there is the proposal of the comprehensive investigation of the Committee for cinematography to be done by the Committee of State Control.<sup>35</sup>

It is hardly possible to describe the atmosphere in which the movie "Heroes of Šipka" was created in a more precise way than by using the words of the chair of the Committee of Cinematography Trajčo Dobroslavski. In response to the survey he put up a statement to Prime Minister Vălko Červenkov which reads:

Soon I will have been working in the field of cinematography for three years. There has been no day without investigating – criminal militia, State Security, auditing, government control. State control authorities have not gone out of cinematography for more than a year. Ministry of Interior comrades want a complete audit of government control. [...] I am about to be accused of anti-Soviet relations relying on the following story: in the last days of the stay of the Soviet art director Aleksandr Sergeevič Žaryonov shocking facts became known – an unacceptable attitude towards our people and him offending our Party. I have condemned the comrades who have not told me about Žaryonov's behavior. I was convinced not to raise this issue [...] to testify that it was a drinking accident. It goes on: The document signed by Minister Cankov arouses suspicion on the management that it does not seek or use Soviet help in a good way. [...] I showed persistence on the joint production "Heroes of Šipka" and these days I will present to you a draft treaty with the Soviet Ministry of Cinematography, which is really favorable for us.<sup>36</sup>

The management does not please anyone although the script committee has a few more deviations. Thus, we had a hard struggle with the writer Stojan C. Daskalov but we forced him to improve our requirements for the screenplay "No landmark". We have very strong and convincing success regarding cinematography and the spread of films. I remind of this success not to soothe myself or make my head swell, we seek our undetected errors with hard consistency and we fight against the exposed ones. I remind of them in order to cry out the pain not to be constantly under surveillance, even during intentional body examinations by the Ministry of Interior. Why was there a blockade by the Ministry of Interior? Why did the staff have to be filled in by former authorities of State Security? They bring in quite incorrect methods of work; [...] I resent their rude and non-beneficial ways of

working. Let there be some check, let there be surveys but they should be well-intended without the aim to destroy the criticized ones but to help him. In our country the audits have Šejgunov's character; still it is a regular and bitter witness against the leadership of cinematography. We need to help and facilitate principles; more fight against the lack of principles is needed.<sup>37</sup>

The outcome can be seen in the archives of the Department of "Agitation and Propaganda" according to which: the Prime Minister determined the method of inspection of cinematography as erroneous; it was underlined that it was actually the Central Committee of the BCP that manages cinematography and there was opposition against the arbitrariness of individual employees of the Ministry of Interior. In conclusion, it was proposed that cinematography should be taken more closely into the hands of Central Committee and that Trajčo Dobroslavski should be included in the "Propaganda" Department.<sup>38</sup>

However, the investigations did not stop. In one of the files of the film "Heroes of Šipka", one can find the Committee on Science, Art and Culture's decree №528 from 12 October 1953 relating to the revision conducted by the financial and institutional control. The findings there are widely ranged – from costs illegally permitted by the director of the production A. Hristov before the budget of the film was approved to "no sprinkling on the winter wardrobe of the production with naphthalene." A total of 15 offenses correspond to 15 prescriptions for their removal and the penalties range from "severe reprimand" to "note".<sup>39</sup>

Even those illustrations are indicative for the climate of limited creative freedom and the spirit of intimidation, which hovers over the Bulgarian cinematography. Along with the party and governmental regulations of the 1950s, the cultural engineering in the field of cinema is also guided. The administration of the creative process turns movies into wheels and cogs of the communist propaganda machine.<sup>40</sup>

## **How does the film fit into the world cinema developments?**

### **Some parallels**

The end of the 1950s and 1960s in world cinematography is referred to as a process that little later critics would call "blast of documentaries". It covered all European and almost all developed cinematographic states. It is characterized by a flourishing of documentary filmmaking, an increasing number of feature films – who's core are actual historical facts and events, and a strengthening of documentalism's position.<sup>41</sup> "Heroes of Šipka" in a way anticipated these global trends in film making towards films, which reflect actual historical facts and events. The historical genre as well as the choice of the topic of the Russo-Ottoman War is politically and ideologically founded. The choice made and the film itself are a result of an officially conducted policy of the Soviet cinematography's patronage over young cinematographers of the socialist countries, especially those which started to develop their national cinema without any previous experience such as in Albania, Bulgaria, Romania or Korea.<sup>42</sup> At the same time the Soviet cinema had declined in 1951 – 1952, when only ten Soviet art films were created per year.<sup>43</sup>

Bulgarian politicians had already followed the Soviet example of the proven successful Soviet economic principle of a total state monopoly on cinemas and film distribution. There were first steps in implementing the aesthetic Soviet principle

known as “socialist realism”. In these conditions of cultural engineering as a tool for propaganda and legitimating communist ideology, a specific film model appeared in Bulgarian cinema – the officially approved films of the early 1950s. It validated and developed itself. There were other movies that were related to this defined model, which were created in the artistic style of socialist realism – films with manipulative character following to ideological agenda. The historical revolutionary film that was made by Soviet cultural engineers and that was widely spread around the Soviet satellite countries was defined as a leading form of that model.<sup>44</sup>

The joint Soviet-Bulgarian production of “Heroes of Šipka” was nominated for the Golden Palm at the Cannes Film Festival in 1955 but only Sergej Vasil’ev was awarded as the best director.<sup>45</sup> Among the details that are not that essential but can be noticed after taking a closer look at his original award, I would like to mention that Sergej Vasil’ev was awarded as the best director for the Bulgarian movie [sic!] “Heroes of Šipka” in the official charter of the festival.<sup>46</sup> The film can be determined by the mentioned model of Bratoeva as an informal film that was created in compliance with the criteria of social realism.

Accidentally or not, at the previous 1954 Cannes Film Festival a special prize for the Senior Technical Committee Director was awarded to another Soviet author – Sergej Jutkevič.<sup>47</sup> The award has again been given to a joint production – to the Soviet-Albanian film “The Great Warrior of Albania Skanderbeg” [alb. “Skënderbeu” / russ. “Velikij vojn Albanii Skanderbeg”].<sup>48</sup> The action of this movie takes place four centuries earlier in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and it is connected to the resistance to the imposition of Ottoman rule on Albanian feudal principalities. There is a striking congruence in the subject line, especially in the finale which connects the struggle against the Ottoman Empire with the struggle against fascism with the help of the Russians. The script of the film about Skanderbeg is the work of the Soviet ethnographer Michail Grigor’evič Papava. He gathered materials for his script in Albania, where he studied the archives and cultural monuments. The main topic of the script is the struggle of the Albanian people for independence and the almost 25 years of the Ottoman Empire’s attempts to conquer Albanian lands after the fall of Byzantium in the Balkans and the related immediate threat to the whole of Europe.<sup>49</sup> The finale of the movie however, abruptly transfers the action to the capital of the People’s Republic of Albania, where they inaugurate a monument to Skanderbeg. The speech of the leader of the Albanian people and the head of the Party of Labor of Albania, Enver Hoxha, stresses the difference between the resistance and fight of the Albanian people and Skanderbeg against the “Turkish occupiers” and the close ties as well as the eternal friendship with the mighty Soviet people and the people’s democracies that Albania has had in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>50</sup> The warriors of the young republic stand honor guard with rifles in their hands. There are partisans passing by the monument, workers, students, mountaineers and among them are the notable faces of contemporaries of Skanderbeg. The pioneer red scarf (a sign of the membership in the Communist Youth Organization) of the child that is observing the monument and the helmet of Skanderbeg are the symbols of 500 years in which the victory is on the side of the Albanian people.

The last episode of “Heroes of Šipka” repeats/copies the model of the movie about Skanderbeg. Troops of the Soviet army led by Marshal Tolbuchin are moving

towards the monument of Šipka, which was erected in honor of the heroes of the Russo-Ottoman War. There is a meeting of the veterans and volunteers of 1877 – 1878 with the Soviet army and the Bulgarian National Army. The director's decision is that it should be Marshal Tolbuchin, the young Cossack Saško Kozir and some other officers to place a commemorative plaque "To the heroes of the war liberating the Slavs from Ottoman rule – from the parts of the Third Ukrainian Front of the victorious Stalinist Soviet Army."<sup>51</sup> The impact of this episode is enhanced by a especially designed song performed by a military band. Its lyrics are also engraved in the commemorative plaque and it functions as proof that the victims are not forgotten. This end was identified by Bratoeva as "the most vivid example of the film on manipulative identification of the Soviet army that occupied Bulgaria after the Second World War, with the Russian army that liberated Bulgaria from Ottoman rule" and as "an absurd happy end to the epos of the Liberation War 1877 – 1878 which ended with the entry of the invading Soviet tanks into Bulgaria in 1944."<sup>52</sup>

It is known that the proposed placement of a commemorative plaque<sup>53</sup> by the Red Army was made by the Political Department of the 37<sup>th</sup> army that first came to Bulgaria in September 1944. The text was written by the special military correspondent for the newspaper "Sovetskij Sojuz" (Soviet Union), the 37<sup>th</sup> army's guard Major Leonid Lazarevič Gorilovski, and the painting is the work of the artist Ivan Grigor'evič Los', artist from the Political Department of the Soviet Army. The solemn inauguration of the plate by Lieutenant General Michail Šarochin<sup>54</sup> on 17 October 1944 is considered to be "the first organized celebration of the Bulgarian-Russian friendship growing into a Bulgarian-Soviet friendship."<sup>55</sup> In the final episode of the movie "Heroes of Šipka" this official moment is also presented under the sounds of the National Anthem of the Soviet Union. Thus, the finale of the movie is nothing else but a repetition of the scenario already established in the political life. The myth of the double liberators was established on Mount of St. Nicholas (now Šipka) on 17 October 1944 and ten years later the very ritual was filmed.

The mixture of images of events distant in time in both "Heroes of Šipka" and "Skanderbeg", aims at highlighting the influence of the Soviet power on the contemporary development of both countries. The task for the Soviet-Bulgarian production went even further and is related to installment and maintenance of the myth of the double liberators. This was one of the main tasks of the cinematography of the 1950s – to change history with newly created myths and images.

**What kind of official archival documents have remained since the production of "Heroes of Šipka" in the funds of the studio for feature films? How are they organized in the archive?**

The studio were established with the law on cinematography of 1948, aiming to produce full-length feature films as initially named under the Soviet model studios for art films. In 1950 the studio was converted into a department called "Feature Films". By the decree № 91 of the Council of Ministers on 31 January 1952 it was defined as a state enterprise of self-support – studios "Feature Films".<sup>56</sup> In the Central State Archive the adopted documents from the studio are divided into a separate archival fund № 404. The composition of the archival fund includes those documents that, according to the methodical rules, are valuable and allow following the

tracks of history and the activity of this institution. Their volume comprises 812 archival units. The earliest document dates back to 1950 and the latest are from 1995. The submission of these documents to the Central State Archive was made after the sixth consecutive expertise on their value, the results of which are arranged in six separate inventory descriptions. The first receipt is from 1965 and through the state archive ten archival units with the earliest documents of the studio come from the period from 1950 to 1954. For the film "Heroes of Šipka" there is only one archival unit among them, in which the files and the correspondence are collected in relation to the movie as well as protocols from the Arts Council and orders for studying the Soviet experience. As a particularly valuable source in this archival unit we should mention the mounting sheet on which the film is dubbed in Bulgarian. All lines of this 138-minute film are gathered in a total of 33 pages of which the first four carry the names of the actors and performers.



Figure 2: The drawing of the suit of the general Skobelev<sup>57</sup>

The next five receipts from documents of studios are from the years 1970, 1979, 1981, 1984 and 1996. The most voluminous of them is the receipt of 1981, which records Bulgarian feature films since the 1950s and 1960s. The valuable documents of this receipt form 529 archival units. Unfortunately, records of movies since the 1970s have been described but have not been transferred to the national archives. The responsible expert commission has decided their future transmission to be into the Bulgarian National Film Archive. As a result of this violation of the Law

on the State's Archival Funds, today these files can be found in neither the official archive of the film archive nor the state archives.

The fate of the archival files about the film "Heroes of Šipka" however is another one. Two separate files and directorial script are adopted in the Central State Archive and are described under the numbers 24, 25 and 26 in the fourth list. As a result, we have a total of 636 sheets of documents that accompany the creation of the film. In their integrity they are all composed by Bulgarian institutions, in Bulgarian language and they cover the process of the production of the movie – planning and implementing the production; the creative process of making the film; financing; reporting; coordination between cinematographic units and external institutions such as museums, the Military Ministry, churches, etc. Among them there are different types: letters, memos, orders for personnel, general orders, plans, and financial records. They are shaped like originals, signed and sealed; typewritten and handwritten copies, drafts, charts, tables. Along with the official administrative documentation the specific documents are of particular interest – directorial scenarios, mounting sheets concerning the dubbing, summer and autumn shootings, editing and technical sheets.

The director's screenplay by Sergej Vasil'ev, a volume of 176 typewritten pages, is divided into a separate archival unit.<sup>58</sup> The translation from Russian was made by Atanas Dalčev, famous BG poet and public intellectual persecuted by the communist authorities. The literary archetype, the screenplay, is the one by Arkadij Pervencev. The main title of the director's script is "Liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Yoke" and the subtitle in brackets is "Heroes of Šipka". The value of this archival unit is even greater having in mind that there was neither a literary script nor an explication of the film in the archive.

**What story do the rest of the documents compose since the creation of the movie? What do they conceal and what do the official documents reveal?**

### **Financing**

The means of making the film were provided by the Bulgarian state while the Soviet Union provided the reel. As shown through archival evidence, the production was exceptionally unpredictable in its financial and production plan by the Studio for Feature Films in 1953.<sup>59</sup> Initially the proposed budget for the production was 16,000,000 leva<sup>60</sup>, which was reduced to 14,000,000 leva later and approved by the order № П-1201 of the Council of Ministers. There is a period of 10 days until 5 September 1953, when an order to revise the budget in accordance with its limit was given.<sup>61</sup> In 1954 several requests to adjust the budget were made. On 8 February 1954 in connection with the extension of the filming period, which instead until 8 January was expected to be completed until 28 February 1954, the producers requested an increase of 1,694,387 leva.<sup>62</sup> On 24 March 1954 another demand for increasing the funds with 1,876,828.10 leva was expressed.<sup>63</sup>

A letter to the director of the Feature Films Studio A. Hristov describes the reasons for the expenditure of funds: an inconclusive literary script that led to the shooting of episodes that had dropped out subsequently; the lack of normal pre-

shooting and a preparatory period; a large-scale development of battle scenes and other scenes; a hard summer including 23 summer days disadvantageous for film which had not been anticipated in the production plan; the late start of the winter; and the costs of maintaining military units – allowances, railway transportation, heating, and restoring the summer camp at Pančarevo.

The budget increase was requested on 25 December 1954 in a report by the director Aleksandăr Hristov to the Studios for Feature Films in connection with the establishment of the calendar plan and the account for the costs of duplicating the film “Heroes of Šipka” on 35mm-film.<sup>64</sup>

“Heroes of Šipka”	Declared sum	Received sum
Limit (5 September 1953)	<b>16,000,000</b>	<b>14,000,000</b>
Salary Fund		3,771,214
Investments exceeding limit		231,800
8 February 1954 – requested increase	3,252,328	
24 March 1954 – requested increase	1,876,828	
25 December 1954		
▪ Dubbing	242,303,58	
▪ Costs of Soviet guests	100,260,00	
Total	342,563,58	
From 1 April 1953 to 24 February 1954 for the entire production	<b>15,876,828</b> budget for the whole movie	<b>15,718,864.96</b> actually spent

### Is “Heroes of Šipka” a “Bulgarian-Soviet” or “Soviet-Bulgarian” production?

Despite the parallel ideological motives, attitudes and positions of the Soviet and Bulgarian politicians as well as filmmakers and despite the unifying theme of the Russo-Ottoman War, in the process of creating the film differences in hierarchical relationships appeared. A good example can be found in an official correspondence form. The earliest documents from March and April 1953 are made on a form which defines the output as “Bulgarian-Soviet”.<sup>65</sup> The same confirmation is the seal that was made for the “Bulgarian-Soviet production of “Heroes of Šipka”. From the next months and until the very end of the movie’s production, the correspondence was led on behalf of a “Soviet-Bulgarian” production. Only the unchanged seal remained to remind not only of the violated rights of the documentation but maybe of the position given away to the Soviet side as well as the included Soviet accent.<sup>66</sup>

### What Soviet accents can be read between the lines in the documents?

Many external signs of the joint production show parity but still the “Soviet” remained crucial in most cases. As a whole the team is formed in accordance with the symmetry to represent of both sides. Exceptions to that were that the screen-

writer was the director of the production as well and that the script was written by a Soviet writer. Other positions were treated symmetrically for example: Soviet director of the production Povorotov and Bulgarian director of the production Hristov; Soviet military consultant Colonel Fortunatov and Bulgarian military consultant Major Čolpanov; Soviet composer Krjukov and Bulgarian composer Kutev; Soviet assistant directors and Bulgarian assistant directors; Soviet directors of photography and Bulgarian ones etc. It is noteworthy that the symmetric presentation also correlated the proposal to award the filmmakers of “Heroes of Šipka” with governmental awards. The director of the production Aleksandăr Hristov attached a list of the participants to the proposal.<sup>67</sup> The summarized data for the proposed awards show a balanced representation of both the Soviet and the Bulgarian side as well as their positions and functions.

“Heroes of Šipka”	Bulgarian	Soviet
Administrative, managerial positions	6	7
Actors	12	9
Technical assistants	22	23
Total:	40	39

But this is only superficial. The documents show the emergence of internal hierarchies rather than the described symmetrically allocated positions. For example, in early February 1954 one of the film’s directors Janko Jankov made a written request to the director of the production asking why he was not informed and subsequently not admitted to the first screening and discussing of the film on 27 January 1954. The answer is indicative:

The Soviet director Povorotov informed the Bulgarian director A. Hristov that by order of the chair of the Bulgarian cinematography of the projection in front of the Arts Council, those who were allowed to be present are: the Council, the art director of the film, the chief director of photopgraphy and director of the production and therefore the directors Bogoljubov and Haritonov as well as Apsolon were not present.<sup>68</sup>

However, without being mentioned in the letter, this first film screening was attended by the Minister of Education Demir Janev and the head of the department “Agitation and Propaganda” of CC of BCP.

### “Soviet” as a key to solve problems

In most of the documents “Soviet” is used as an argument or as an instrument to solve problems – as a motivation, as an incentive and proof. This argument is especially applicable in justifying the necessity of additional financing. Or as a reason to provide hot meals for the teams:

If there is no canteen, warm food, nutritious food which the Soviet comrades are used to and need it as well as the workers from the Bulgarian team, we expose ourselves to them in a bad way and leave them to suffer deprivation along with us due to the lack of a canteen during the production.<sup>69</sup>

Bad conditions, uncultured and anti-sanitary service of the Soviet specialists at hotel "Leningrad" (Plovdiv) is reported. This comes as a sharp contrast to their great merit and contribution to the Bulgarian cinematography and this is one of the reasons for the written request of the director of the studios for feature films to the hotel manager, aiming at improving the service.

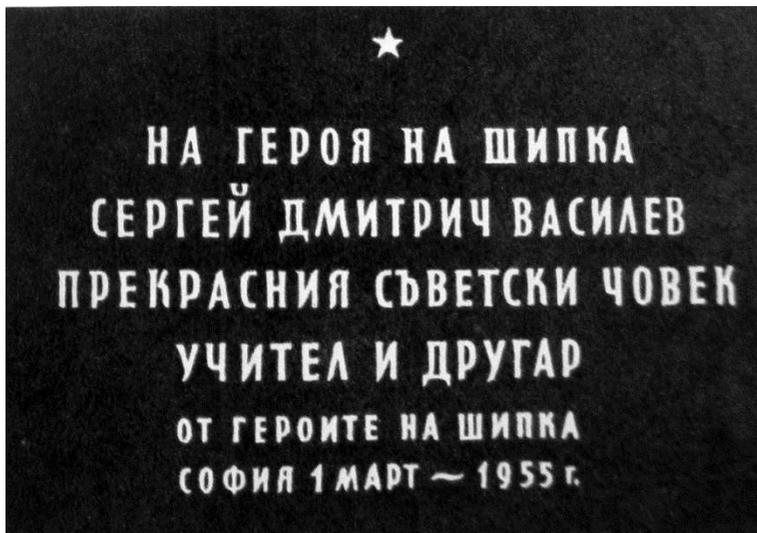


Figure 3: Sign "in memory of the Heroes of Šipka" granted to Sergej Vasil'ev on the occasion of his departure to USSR on 19 March 1955 in the friendly presence of Strašimir Rašev, Tr. Trifonov, Dako Dakovski, Bončo Karastojanov, Georgi Popov, Ivan Ivanov, Georgi Stojanov Bigor, Slav Slavov, Ljuben Danov.<sup>70</sup>

The written request for mediation to the Minister of Defense which says that the time in which military technique (tanks and also other motor-powered vehicles) is provided should be increased from three to six hours per day. The request for this increase states that it should be "to sizes that would allow the performance of the demands of the Soviet directors regarding the historical and artistic truth searched for."<sup>71</sup> "The Soviet directors" and "the historical truth" – these are the arguments used by the BG director. Indeed, it appears that the time when the tanks were working for the production was insufficient and did not allow anything but the movement to the spot where the filming took place. The request was made out of the necessity to allow enough time for rehearsals at the filming site Kazanlāk-Šipka.

"The Soviet" is often the basis of the low self-esteem as well as of the self-evaluation of Bulgarian participants in the implementation of the production. A striking example is the report of the head of the planning department, L. Bankov, to the director of the studios A. Hristov, which seeks justification for the money spent prematurely.

According to the general staging plan of the Soviet-Bulgarian production "Heroes of Šipka", the filming in Bulgaria had to be finished on 8 January 1954 and it

has provided three months for winding it up until 31 March with an approved budget of 1,989,161 leva for 1954. However, the Bulgarian administrative and artistic leadership of the production failed to create the needed conditions for the Soviet team to fulfill the plan in time although changes were made to the plan so that there was an opportunity to catch up with the deadline. For example, shooting in bases in Vraca, Tărnovo and Šejnovo were canceled. Pictures were taken around Sofia and the transfer time to Vratsa, Šejnovo and Tărnovo remained a reserve of the production to catch up with the completion of the plan. There was a cut of famous staff and replacement of episodes №4 – Livadia, № 12 – Meeting of Gurko and episode № 8 – Warsaw station, which was filmed in Bulgaria and the first two episodes will be shot in the USSR. The allocations will not be enough due to the bad planning of the production as well as the weak performance during the monthly plans.<sup>72</sup>

### **“Soviet” reversed**

For the Bulgarian state “the Soviet” argument proved crucial even in a situation when the expenditure of funds did not go into the direction of additional savings. In a report, signed by the director of the production A. Hristov to the Vice President of the Committee for Science, Art and Culture S. Rašev we can read:

Today, in the presence of Major Efremov from the Ministry of Defense, in the presence of the Soviet director Povorotov and the director Bogoljubov, I insisted that the indicative timetable for using the labor and military units during the film in winter are changed and for this purpose I suggested the filming of a part of the episode “Passages” whose pictures would be held in the shooting base in Kokaljane from 24 January to 3 February 1954 instead of from 4 to 11 February. In this way we would release 750 out of 1,500 soldiers camping in Pančarevo 8 – 10 days earlier and we would save 100,000 leva from business trip money from the commanding officer and sergeant composition for heating materials and other possible costs of maintaining the camp in Pančarevo.

This suggestion of mine was categorically opposed by my Soviet comrades with the arguments that the Soviet actor, acting as Radeckij should come back to the USSR as soon as possible and if you change the order of shooting, we risk not being able to finish the filming in the winter in our country.

Reporting to you the above-mentioned, if you think my suggestion is correct, we ask for your intervention before the Soviet comrades to accept the proposal. At the request of the Ministry of Defense which from tomorrow 13 January on will start transporting military units with their vehicles, I sent the indicative timetable to the head of unit 35,540 through Comrade Major Efremov.<sup>73</sup>

Despite the convincing arguments, the proposal was not accepted.

### **“Soviet” that is not a subject to inspection.**

According to a confidential decree of the Council of Ministers from 24 April 1953 the Committee for Cinematography could import and export to and from the USSR all filming materials for the production of the film “Heroes of Šipka” duty-free as well as all the facilities, equipment and materials that the Soviet filming company imported or exported for the production of the film.<sup>74</sup> This concerned also the rolls of

the movie, which were transported to Leningrad to be finish there. It was loaded onto a train composition with six open and five closed wagons.

### Control, domination, censorship

It was not allowed to do whatever adjustment to the literary scenario. The option that was brought to Bulgaria by Arkadij Pervencev was considered to be final and it was neither subjected to further discussing nor to any kind of change in Bulgaria.<sup>75</sup> The director's script by Sergej Vasil'ev had been discussed and approved successively by the Arts Council of the cinema studio "Lenfil'm" at the Ministry of Culture of the USSR and finally in a more formal way at the Committee for Cinematography in Bulgaria. The last word, however, appears to be the one of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party.

The testimony of the party control is included in the report of Deputy Director Ivan Kordov, who explained the delayed weekly report as follows:



Figure 4: Sergej Vasil'ev during the shooting of the movie "Heroes of Šipka"<sup>76</sup>

The weekly program has not been sent only once so far. The review has been delayed by a day due to the insistence of the party group so that there are no changes in it. The regular report of the weekly activity does not depend on us because up to now the production required a common meterage and ration; finally we agreed to render an account of the numbers only.<sup>77</sup>

The permanent form of control which is evident from the minutes of the Arts Council was exercised through the participation in the meetings of the representative of the Propaganda Department in the CC of the BCP. Control, inspection and checks were carried out continuously in Bulgarian cinematography by the State Security, militia, and services of state and national control. The data for these checks within the period 1950 – 1953 were revealed through recently declassified documents from the collections of the Central Party Archive.<sup>78</sup>

Other documents contained evidence for the control of the cinematographic process. The preserved mounting sheet of the film meant for duplicating into Bulgarian allows tracing back the transformations that accompanied the creation of the film. The authentic original came back from the state enterprise's film distribution into the Dubbing Department of the Studios for Feature Films on 5 April 1955. The resolution on the accompanying letter refers "To the case of the film". This is how its destiny was decided, so nowadays one has the opportunity to exactly trace back the adjustments that were made in the process of dubbing. According to the director's script, in the prologue of the film the Bulgarian rebels who are doomed to die have a choice and could be saved if they responded affirmatively to the question: "Do you want to accept the faith of Mohammed?"<sup>79</sup> Later, when it is time to dub the film into Bulgarian this question had changed and it is now "Do you obey the will of the Sultan?"<sup>80</sup> This directorial version of the text reflects the change of the accent and pushes the religious motive out of the picture and euphemistically replaces it with the ruler of the Ottoman Empire.

### **What is not mentioned in the official documents**

One of the clearest examples of the lack of information and unmentioned information in the official documents is related to the changes that occur in the director's script during the shooting of the film. When shooting one of the scenes, it appears that "the voice" of the CC of the BCP is deciding and that the Soviet director was forced to withdraw his creative position. A dispute between Sergej Vasil'ev and the Director of the filmmaking, Slav Slavov, arose. It was about the representation of the fight at "Eagle's Nest". The Soviet director refused to film the throwing around of corpses.

The arguments of the Bulgarian director are based on the epic cycle of poems "Epoee of the Forgotten" by Ivan Vazov. The twelve poems/odes were written by Vazov in the period between 1881 and 1884 and are dedicated to the greatest historical figures of the National struggle against the Ottomans. They are chronologically arranged and represent eleven individuals – Vasil Levski, Paisij of Hilandar, Georgi Rakovski, Georgi Benkovski, and others. The last poem is dedicated to the volunteers of Šipka and the battle on 11 August 1877. The volunteers that had no ammunition anymore to fight the army of Süleyman, started throwing stones, trees and the bodies of their killed comrades. Vazov writes: "Corpses flew all of a sudden." Despite the stubborn resistance and arguments of Sergej Vasil'ev against the scene with throwing the bodies of slain volunteers, he was called to the CC of the BCP and under pressure he was forced to retreat and to shoot the scene.<sup>81</sup> But all this could be revealed about 20 years later, as in 1974 finally the publication of such control of the director was not an expression of protest but rather a defense of the Bulgarian storyline and of Bulgarian heroism of the volunteers. They did not speak of this change in the script openly until the middle of the 1950s. During the latest meeting of the Arts Council where the film that had already been shot was to be discussed, this pressure from the CC was not brought up by the director. The protocol includes only his words said in response to the assessment by the Deputy Chair of the Arts Council Hristo Ganev that the director's script would present the "Epoee of Šipka" in a good way based on Vazov's work but if in his case stones, bodies,

trees were being thrown in the film [...] a body could only be a Turk.” Sergej Vasil'ev responded:

I deliberately decided to throw a Turk. In poetry corpses of slain comrades can be thrown but here, imagine when you need to present it in the film, what impact that would have on the Bulgarian audience – to see that corpses of their own countrymen-heroes were thrown. That is why I chose the Turk.<sup>82</sup>

### **Concealed events that will always be reminded of in documents**

While watching the film we do not understand that in the process of its creation there was an accident and one of the sound operators died – Aleksandar Maksimovič. His name is not enclosed in the footage. However, from the documents that were kept one can learn that the means for the production covered the expenses for the transportation of the deceased from Moscow and Kiev. Without archival papers other casualties would have been hidden from any public audience. They were extensively documented in the second footage of the film. During the crossing of the Danube there was a detonation and the soldier Jordan Jordanov died in the boat. They did not even find the body. The boatman lost his hearing in the same accident. There were repeated attempts to obtain compensations. The archival traces speak of another accident and lives that were lost. The most experienced military sapper Hristo Asenov Cankov died in the disposal process of stored explosive materials which were not needed for the production anymore. In one of the files about the movie there is an official order to dismiss the pyrotechnician Gerojčo Urušev Milušev. Most likely he had taken the responsibility for the accidents and therefore had to serve as the scapegoat for the measures which had led to the young people being killed.

### **Routine**

In the archival documents there are a lot of examples of everyday shooting of the film “Heroes of Šipka” in Bulgaria. Some of them show the smaller problems like photos being delayed due to the undelivered costume for the personage Jonka or because of the impossibility of the make-up artist to finish 80 beards and moustaches all by herself for filming a single episode.

Other documents speak of the cold winter that resembles the one of 1877 – 1878. Hence it was required to justify the need for purchasing four pairs of hiking shoes for the Soviet directing and operating group. Another request is connected to the providing of 25 grams of cognac and four hot teas for the winter shooting for Soviet and Bulgarian shooting groups and actors. In the extremely cold winter the horses involved in the movie were housed in rooms to keep them warm, which is why they looked for additional amounts of money to pay the rent. Wooden materials were required so that the horses would not weaken but have nutritious food. In a letter the military unit that did not participate in the shooting of the film, described the difficulties arising when feeding the horses in the autumn as well as in winter. The problems were overcome with the help of one of the drivers of Georgi Fasta-

kovskij. The commander of the unit suggested that this should be announced at a general meeting and that he should serve as a role model.<sup>83</sup>



Figure 5: A French poster of the movie “Heroes of Šipka”<sup>84</sup>

Another issue of a minor character but revealing relevant details to its history is the trade union attitude. A justified proposal was kept that was supported even by the union’s organization for providing a possibility for a rest in Velingrad for all the participants in the production, who would not travel to Moscow and then to Lenin-grad. That was supposed to be a little compensation for the winter filmmaking.<sup>85</sup> There were also worrying signals of missing items from the school in which labor forces involved in the shooting were accommodated.

Other documents about the film have remained, which nowadays raise a smile. On 24 March 1954 there was a last remainder of the person in charge of the rescuers Nikola Nikolov to return five tracksuits that were given to him for the pictures along the Marica River near the village of Ljubimec. The next step was the filing out of a claimed case. The next letter makes it clear that the tracksuits were taken in 1953 by the Sports Committee at the studios. The matter was then referred to the legal advisor at the studios.<sup>86</sup>

### Permissible criticism

In fact, the tone of critical comments is usually set by those that have political power and are ideologically seen as the “right” people. No difference is the example

of the first showing of the yet unfinished film in January 1954. Then the Minister of Education Demir Janev opened the discussion and recommended:

If only one could make those scenes to reflect more powerful joy with which our people that had suffered enough, welcomed the brothers-liberators. The scene where the Russian troops are welcomed by the Thracian population is a beautiful one but it would be better if there were one or two similar mass scenes.

As far as criticism was allowed to the Soviet artists, their Bulgarian colleagues directed their remarks mainly towards strengthening and enhancing the role of the brothers-liberators to a grande finale of the film, i.e. not against but in favor of the official line. Another group of notes outline Bulgarian specifics and a national reading of history. The assessment of the April Uprising of 1876 can be added to the already discussed problem around the battle of "Eagle's Nest" as an inconsiderate and hasty act as well as the allegation of a more liberated representation of the image of the Bulgarian girl. In these notes the Soviet primacy is respected and all notes aimed only at the Bulgarian part of the joint production. A psychologically unjust portrait of the heroine Jonka is attributed to the role of the actress Katja Čukova but in this case Sergej Vasil'ev takes the blame upon himself with the explanation that he does not know the psychology of the Bulgarian girl from that era and he considers it acceptable: "Maybe the expression of feelings is done more freely but it is the director's vision and I have allowed it."<sup>87</sup>

### **What kind of movie is it? Self-assessments**

At a specially held closed meeting to discuss the movie on 27 January 1954 the Chair of the Arts Council Hristo Ganev concluded: "The Artistic Council believes that the film "Heroes of Šipka" is very good."<sup>88</sup> Reflections of this conclusion are visible when one takes a look at other participants' evaluations as well as at other evaluations found in official documents:

Demir Janev – Minister of Education:

The monumental historic picture that this color film will perpetuate, this is a picture of the friendship of our two people [...] There is a friendship between troops and it is very well-presented.<sup>89</sup>

Ljubomir Tenev – Professor at the State Higher Theatre School:

New genre, film with historical and epic character, a real achievement.<sup>90</sup>

Aleksandăr Hristov – Director of the production:

For the first time in Bulgaria has there been a film of such a great scale like in the USSR for 25 years now [...] an award should be given to the screenwriter for writing a script for the Bulgarian-Russian friendship. The film made according to this script contributes a lot to

the strengthening of the friendship between the Soviet and the Bulgarian people as well as the increase of the patriotism of our peoples.<sup>91</sup>

Trajčo Dobroslavski – Chairperson of the Committee for Cinematography:

The friendship between the two armies feels even enhanced. In all fights except for Pleven, it looks as if along with the Russian troops there are also the Bulgarian volunteers.<sup>92</sup>

Ljubomir Pipkov, composer:

One of the most interesting battle movies. The battles of Šipka are fully depicts the spirit of the historical era.<sup>93</sup>



**Figure 6: Soldiers from the Kazanlak Unit who had taken part in the shooting of the Šipka battles in the movie “Heroes of Šipka”<sup>94</sup>**

Strašimir Rašev:

The Bulgarian part sounds like a Bulgarian one. The Epopee of Šipka is presented very well and it will be perceived very well at home. However, the music should include more Bulgarian accents and then the movie will start sounding like a native one for our people. [...] The picture of slavery takes little space, which is good. But that is not the core. The main thing is the impregnable people.<sup>95</sup>

Sergej Vasil'ev:

The whole picture has the task to show the friendship and the joint path of these two brotherly nations. So during all this time, these two motives, Russian and Bulgarian, will sound inextricably linked. Nikolaj Krjukov is responsible for the Russian and Filip Kutev for the Bulgarian and Turkish music in the film.<sup>96</sup>

### Conclusion

Statistics from the early years after the creation of "Heroes of Šipka" indicate that it had the greatest number of viewers in Bulgaria's cinema history – 5,868,387. The same statistics show that it had 855,440 viewers more than the audience's until then favorite movie "Under the Yoke" from 1952.<sup>97</sup> In the Soviet Union the film was watched by almost five times more viewers – 24,500,000.<sup>98</sup> Even if this data might be inflated and may include involuntary, planned or organized visits of the filmmaking, they testify that the movie "Heroes of Šipka" has fulfilled its inherent ideological function. It is evident that as a means of implementing the state policy in the middle of the 1950s, this movie had justified the money spent and the effort taken. According to the director of the production Aleksandăr Hristov, in the particular international environment, the film has played "a great role both in our country and abroad to clarify the deep blood ties that bind the two brotherly peoples."<sup>99</sup>

"Heroes of Šipka" are designed and realized as a model and template for the Bulgarian national cinema but with a Soviet script, direction and partly cast but with Bulgarian funding and on the Bulgarian land. Archival traces of the film allow the detection of a more hidden part of the relations and dependencies in an otherwise co-production. Official written documents only by Bulgarian institutions though, do not unilaterally outline the three stages of hierarchical dependence between the Russian and the Bulgarian parts of the production. The first one is through the effective selection of the theme of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. The second one is the use of the topic for the second "liberation" of Bulgaria in 1944 and maintaining the myth of the double-liberators. The third one is the forming of the joint team and the Soviet school for the qualification of Bulgarian filmmakers. The documents also allow the discovery of details that show the ambiguity of this interdependence with examples of Bulgarian activity and the often sought and not only imposed Soviet help and protection. Another advantage of working with archival sources is the possibility to specify details and to remove inaccuracies. An example in this sense is the controversial name of the Bulgarian film studio that made the film. In the most recent studies it is denied that the film was made in Bulgaria; the very existence of such studios was not allowed and it is suggested that its creation were related to secret Soviet documents. Actually the documents indicate that this is the name of the studios for feature films and already in November 1952 its emblem was created under a special order.<sup>100</sup> Thanks to another special order<sup>101</sup> since 15 July 1950 the archiving of the office, the productions and the various departments of the studios for feature films were regulated. The order determined the number and types of obligatory files of feature films as well as the place of their

filing and storage. The composition of the documents in every file was also specified. The instructions were followed but partly, regarding “Heroes of Šipka” for example, records of earlier movies such as “Under the Yoke” are more numerous complete. Most probably a part of the documents was not submitted to the archive because it was the result of the joint nature of the production. But even this volume and composition makes the archival heritage of the Central State Archive a source that contributes a great deal to the research on the political, ideological, social and cultural context of the film “Heroes of Šipka”. The archival documents allow the film to be shown as one of the many successful aspects of the politics of the cultural memory and its occurrences. Cultural memory is determined by Maurice Halbwachs as a set of significant societal traditions and images of the past that take the form of myths and are acquired by rituals, festivals, literature and art. This memory is formed in words, gestures, images in the highest degree.<sup>102</sup> For handling the public perception, these kinds of images are more suitable than the best processed texts. Our experience here is rather to contribute to the reading of the texts and official documents from the administration and the office of the cinema production, which shed light on the non-written visual aspects on the cinema document “Heroes of Šipka”. The publication of these silenced researches and less familiar archival texts and sources is a step towards the study of visual and spatial signs from the film “Heroes of Šipka”.

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<sup>1</sup> Слав Славов, За Сергей Дмитриевич Василев в България [For Sergej Dmitrievič Vasilev in Bulgaria], Кино и време, 8, 1974, 5-31, 7.

<sup>2</sup> Наталия Христова, Изследванията на литературата и културата на НРБ в контекста на (не)прочетените архиви [Research on Literature and Culture of PRB within the context of (non-)read archives], *Литературен вестник*, 21.10. – 06.11.2012, 35, 12р.

<sup>3</sup> Ингеборг Братоева-Даракчиева, Българското игрално кино от „Калин Орелът“ до „Мисия Лондон“ [Bulgarian feature films from “Kalin the Eagle” to “Mission London”], София, 2013; Александър Грозев, Началото. Из историята на българското кино [The Beginning. From the History of Bulgarian Cinema], София, 1985; Александър Грозев, Киното в България [Cinema in Bulgaria], София, 2011; Петър Кърджилов, Загадките на филма „Балканската война“, [Mysteries of the Movie “The Balkan War”], София, 2006; Петър Кърджилов, Филмът „Балканската война“ в историята на българското кино [The film “The Balkan War” in the History of Bulgarian Cinema], София, 2011; Неделчо Милев, Българският исторически филм [Bulgarian Historical Film], София, 1982; Неда Станимирова, Кинопроцесът – „замразен временно“. Български игрални филми 1950 – 1970 г. в документи, спомени, анализи [The Cinema Process – “frozen temporarily”. Bulgarian feature films 1950 – 1970 in documents, memories, analyses] София, 2012; Александър Янакиев, Синема ВГ [Cinema VG], София, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Неделчо Милев, Освобождението – на екрана, *Култура* [Culture], 10 (2019), 1998. Web. 28. September 2013. <http://www.kultura.bg/bg/article/view/547>

<sup>5</sup> Váiko Červenkov was the Prime Minister of Bulgaria from 3 February 1950 to 18 April 1956.

<sup>6</sup> Пламен Дойнов, НРБ-литературата – речници, диалози (не)разбиране [PRB-Literature – dictionaries, dialogues (non-)understanding], *Литературен вестник*, 21.10. – 06.11.2012, 35, 9.

<sup>7</sup> Братоева-Даракчиева, Кино, 3, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Константин М. Симонов, Глазами человека моего поколения [With the eyes of the man of my generation], Москва, 1990, 180-185, cited in Евгений В. Волков, Белое движение в культурной памяти советского общества: эволюция „образа врага“ в игровом кино [The white movement in the cultural memory of the Soviet society: evolution of the “image of the enemy” in feature films]. Web. 28. September 2013. <http://orenbkazak.narod.ru/kino.doc>

<sup>9</sup> Павел К. Фортунатов, Боевой русско-болгарский союз в войне 1877 – 1878 годов [The fighting Russo-Bulgarian union in the war of 1877 – 1878], В: Любомир Б. Валев; Сергей А. Никитин; Иван Н. Третъяков (ред.), Освобождение Болгарии от турецкого ига [The liberation of Bulgaria from the Turkish yoke], Москва, 1953, 45-70.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; Павел К. Фортунатов, Война 1877 – 1878 г. и освобождение Болгарии [The War of 1877 – 1878 and the liberation of Bulgaria], Москва, 1950, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>12</sup> Николай Кладо; Даря Шпиркан, Братя Васильевы. Жизнь и творчество, [Nikolay Klado, Daria Shpirkin, Vasiloevi brothers, “Life and creativity”], Москва, 1978, 167.

<sup>13</sup> Славов, Сергей, 1, 7.

<sup>14</sup> Марияна Пискова, Из документалното наследство на фондация „Българско дело“ [From the documentary heritage of the “Bulgarian Case”], Изв. на държавните архиви, 80, София, 2000, 136.; doc. №16 Letter from the Foundation “Bulgarian Case” to the Minister of Propaganda Dimo Kazasov regarding cooperation and trade relations with the Soviet Cinematography [ЦДА/2/1/109: 136р.]; doc. № 27, Letter from the Foundation “Bulgarian Case” to the Minister of Propaganda Dimo Kazasov for the achieved agreement with a representative of the Soviet Trade Organization Nikolaj Bol’sakov, [I, 161-165].

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> ЦДА/1Б/15/123:1-4 [Central State Archive (CSA)] – Report by Strašimir Rašev, Director of the “Bulgarian Case” to the Prime Minister Georgi Dimitrov, 4 February 1946. Cf. also Пискова, Надледство, 11; and published documents from ЦДА/2/1/109: 52, 100, 184-189 [CSA].

<sup>17</sup> Славов, Сергей, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Michail Kalatozov (Kalatozoshvili) – a Soviet/Georgian film director and screenwriter. Mikhail Kalatozov was a Deputy Minister of cinematography when the idea of the film “Heroes of Šipka” appeared to him.

<sup>19</sup> Sergej Dmitrievič Vasil’ev (4 November 1900 – 16 December 1959). One of the Vasil’ev “brothers”. The greatest glory, international awards and number of visitors got the first sound movie of the “Vasil’ev Brothers” – “Čapaev” (1934), which is the reason for researchers to determine S. Vasil’ev as one of the fathers of socialist realism in the Soviet cinema.

<sup>20</sup> Moscow, 3 Vaumanska Street.

<sup>21</sup> Николай Кладо; Даря Шпиркан, Братя Васильевы. Жизнь и творчество [The Vasil’ev Brothers. Life and Art], Москва, 1978, 12, 10.

<sup>22</sup> Кино и фото, 1949, 6, Зр.

<sup>23</sup> Закон за кинематографията [Law on cinematography], Държавен вестник, 78, 5 април 1948 г., 2.

<sup>24</sup> Чичовска, В. Главлит /1952-1956/ Изграждане на единна цензурна система в България [Glavlit /1952-1956/ Construction of single censorship system in Bulgaria], Либерален преглед, януари 2013, <https://librev.com/discussion-bulgaria-publisher/1922--1952, 1956>.

<sup>25</sup> Among the documents of the department “Agitation and Propaganda” there is information on the foundation “Bulgarian Case” since 16 October 1946. Without a doubt it confirms that the attempts to change the management of the foundation and the spirit of “witch hunt” were around long before the decision of the Committee on Science, Art and Culture. All sorts of accusations were brought to Strashimir Rashev. They were enough to impose his dismissal.

The resolution of Vălko Červenkov also shows that the issue is not referred to “a case” but rather requires a report on the case. See ЦДА/1Б/15/123:17pp. [CSA].

<sup>26</sup> *Кино и фото*, 1949, 6, 3.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Грозев, Началото, 3, 136.

<sup>29</sup> *Кино и фото*, 1949, 4.

<sup>30</sup> ПМС от 31 януари 1952 г. „Относно състоянието и задачите на Българската кинематография [Decree from 31 January 1952 “On the status and tasks of the Bulgarian cinematography”], *Известия на Президиума на НС*, 15, 4-9; Братоева, Кино, 2, 41.

<sup>31</sup> ЦДА/1Б/15/625:1.

<sup>32</sup> These are nationalist organizations from the 1920s to the 1940s – Union of Bulgarian National Legions; Brannik Youth Organization; Kubrat – Bulgarian People’s Union and the Union of Champions for the progress of Bulgaria. They are defined as National-Socialist, pro-Monarchical, anti-Communist, anti-Semitic, with connections to the totalitarian regime of the Third Reich and Italy.

<sup>33</sup> The political party of BANU “Nikola Petkov” was established in 1945 after the union is in opposition to the Fatherland Front and the government called it “BANU with Secretary Nikola Petkov”. It was disbanded in 1947 and since August BANU “Nikola Petkov” was prohibited by law. On 22 – 23 September in the same year, the leader of the anti-Communist powers Nikola Petkov was hanged. Being outlawed, the members of the BANU “Nikola Petkov” (Nikola-Petkovistite) were persecuted and arrested as oppositionists, developing “enemy actions”.

<sup>34</sup> ЦДА/1Б/15/625:1. [Central State Archive (CSA)].

<sup>35</sup> ЦДА/1Б/15/625:3 [Central State Archive (CSA)].

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 17.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 18.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 19. The resolution is: “Back CC”. According to the accompanying letter of Vălko Červenkov from 16 February 1953; *Ibid.*, l. 20. The letter was signed and sent on 14 February 1953.

<sup>39</sup> ЦДА/404/1/9: 122pp. [Central State Archive (CSA)].

<sup>40</sup> See Братоева, Кино, 3, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Николай М. Суменов, Документализм в игровом кино [Documentalism in feature films], *Новое в жизни, науке, технике*; 9/1979, 4.

<sup>42</sup> Дмитрий С. Писаревский (ред.), *Искусство миллионов. Советское кино 1917 – 1957 г.* [Art of the Millions. Soviet Cinema 1917 – 1957], Москва, 1958, 445.

<sup>43</sup> In comparison to 1958, there were already 108 feature films.

<sup>44</sup> Братоева, Кино, 3, 43-46.

<sup>45</sup> In fact, the award for 1955 was shared with another director – Jules Dassen for the film “Riffi”.

<sup>46</sup> Кладо; Шпиркан, Братя, 12, 165.

<sup>47</sup> It is worth mentioning another coincidence. Both Soviet filmmakers were awarded at the Cannes festival. According to the regulation of the festival, the award-winner was to be a jury member in the next year. Thus, Sergej Jutkevič was one of the supporters of his compatriot Sergej Vasil'ev to be awarded best director.

<sup>48</sup> The film is a co-production of Mosfilm and Albanfilm.

<sup>49</sup> Михаил Папава, Киносценарии. Георгий Скандербег. Академик Иван Павлов. Быковцы /Родные поля/ [Cinema script. G. Skanderbeg. Academician Ivan Pavlov. Vukovcevi (Home Fields)], Москва, 1953, 7.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>51</sup> ЦДА/404/оп.4/24:176 [CSA].

<sup>52</sup> Братоева, Кино, 3, 77.

<sup>53</sup> Actually, the memorial plaques, on behalf of the Third Ukrainian Front, at Šipka are completely identical in content and layout and they are placed on the West side of the Great Russian Monument of Šipka and on the right side of the main entrance of the temple-monument on Šipka Pass.

<sup>54</sup> Such a plate was later placed at Skobelev Park in Pleven. “Stalin’s Army” was renamed into a “victorious red army” and this version is engraved on the plaque at Šipka.

<sup>55</sup> Иван Христов По следите на освободителите [On the Tracks of the Liberators], София, 1989, 168.

<sup>56</sup> ЦДА/404/3/1:1а,2 [CSA].

<sup>57</sup> Bulgarian National Film Archive, archive unit “Heroes of Šipka”.

<sup>58</sup> ЦДА/404/4/24 [CSA].

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., /26:45.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., /404/2/2:107.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., /404/4/26:117. – 5 August 1953.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., /404/1/10:156/.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., /404/2/2:107.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., /404/1/10:41.

<sup>65</sup> Such is the production on the form issued on 28 March 1953, Decree №212 for the beginning of the preparatory period of the production that was scheduled to finish on 30 April 1953 – cf. ЦДА/404/4/26:18 [CSA].

<sup>66</sup> In the order of the Council of Ministers from 12 February 1953 for the conclusion of the contract on “Heroes of Šipka”, a co-production was envisaged in order to produce a full-length color feature film named “Heroes of Šipka”, cf. ЦДА/136/14/149 [CSA].

<sup>67</sup> ЦДА/404/1/10:36pp. [CSA].

<sup>68</sup> ЦДА/404/1/10:171p. [CSA].

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., /4/26:67.

<sup>70</sup> Кладо; Шпиркан, Братъя, 12, 167.

<sup>71</sup> ЦДА/404/4/26:160 [CSA].

<sup>72</sup> ЦДА/404/4/24:22 [CSA].

<sup>73</sup> ЦДА/404/1/10:198 [CSA].

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., /4/26:41.

<sup>75</sup> The practice of compiling the script in this period of time was different, judging by the third preserved version of the literary script of the movie “Under the Yoke”. It was composed by two authors (Pavel Spasov and Georgi Kranzov), but the text of the title page shows “This version is made with the valuable assistance of Slav Slavov, chairperson of the script committee, Angel Vagenštajn – scriptwriter, Dako Dakovski and Borislav Šaraliev – directors” – See ЦДА/404/4/6:1-88 [CSA].

<sup>76</sup> Кладо; Шпиркан, Братъя, 12, 152.

<sup>77</sup> ЦДА/404/4/26:126 [CSA].

<sup>78</sup> ЦДА/1Б/15/625:1-15 [CSA].

<sup>79</sup> ЦДА/404/4/24:3.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>81</sup> Славов, Сергей, 1, 28.

<sup>82</sup> ЦДА/404/4/25:10 [CSA]. Indeed, in the literary analyses it is accepted that Vazov exaggerates and even gives the suggestion of the feat of the living people inspiring even the dead warriors. It should be noted though, that in the memories of the immediate participants in the battles of Šipka, there is the tale of throwing corpses of killed people. In the book of Владимир А. Гиляровский, Шипка прежде и теперь. 1877 – 1902 [Šipka before and now. 1877 – 1902], Москва, 1902, 64, there is a recreation of the conversation of the author with a Turkish participant in the fights on 11 August 1877: “When I reached the very top “Eagle’s

Nest” and the defenders were out of bullets, they did not even reach the stones, they started throwing corpses on us. At the very top a corpse flew towards me, I grabbed it and we flew along the steep terrain. I fell on the body and this might have saved me. At night I came to myself, I got out of the corpses and went [...] to the sea.”

<sup>83</sup> 13 March 1954, ЦДА/404/1/10:122 [CSA].

<sup>84</sup> Bulgarian National Film Archive, archive unit “Heroes of Šipka”.

<sup>85</sup> ЦДА/404/1/10:167 [CSA].

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>87</sup> ЦДА/404/4/26:8 [CSA].

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 5-10.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>94</sup> The personal archive of one of the participants – Kostadin Velkov Ivanov, born in 1929.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>97</sup> By the end of 1989 the film “Heroes of Šipka” had in terms of audience visits been surpassed by “Hităr Petăr” (1960) only. Even productions such as “Han Asparuh”, “Boris I” and films which are undoubtedly organized collective hits such as “Time of Violence” failed to reach its figures. Cf. also Янакиев, Синема, 2, 297-311. Of course, the interest of the audience in the years up to 1989 should be considered as a product of manipulated statistics. This is what Cvetan Todorov shares in his book „Движещи се сенки” [Moving Shadows], Ловеч, 1998: “At the time of Nikola Nenov – then director general of the Bulgarian cinematography (up to 1989), for each ideological important movie there were control numbers of viewers. The people need to see the movies according to these numbers. By this logic, the active part of the audience was to “watch” some of these titles two or three times to get the desired effect of BCP. This, of course, never happened. “The viewers” were only in the reports [...]”

<sup>98</sup> To compare – according to the ranking of the most watched films from the 1950s in the USSR – “And Quiet Flows the Don” (1957, Sergej A. Gerasimov) had 46,9 million viewers and another historical revolutionary movie “Ljubov’ Jarovaja” (1953, Jan B. Frid) achieved a total of 46,4 million viewers.

<sup>99</sup> ЦДА/404/1/10:5 [CSA].

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., /5:123.

<sup>101</sup> ЦДА/404/3/1:12. [CSA].

<sup>102</sup> Морис Халбваск, Колективната памет [Collective Memory] София, 1996; Ян Асман, Културната памет [Cultural Memory], София, 2001; Пиер Нора, Колективната памет [Collective Memory]. В: Лилияна Деянова (ред.), Духът на „Анали“ [The spirit of the „Annales“], София, 1997, 233-237.

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## **Sunrise on Peak Šipka: Places of the Russo-Ottoman War in the Student Excursions in Bulgaria (1896 – 1912)**

**Abstract:** *School excursions were introduced in Bulgaria by the Minister of Education Konstantin Veličkov (1855 – 1907) in 1896. He was inspired by Johann Friedrich Herbart's ideas about "experience-based education" and aimed to "expand the horizon" of the pupils. The excursions' statistics pointed out that among the most frequently visited places were the memory places to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 as well as places presenting the industrial progress in Bulgaria. By analyzing the school trip experiences, observations published in the journal "School review" and the school annuals, one can draw the conclusion that school excursions at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century created a space of new knowledge, social entertainment and emotional experience. As a result of these trips, on a mental map places of memory of the Russo-Ottoman War were connected to modern enterprises and state power institutions, which shaped the Bulgarian landscape as symbols of heroic past, nature's beauty and national progress.*

In his book about the modern nation as an "imagined community" Benedict Anderson presents the way the nation is constructed as a community which claims to be "natural" and "immortal".<sup>1</sup> He outlines the importance of print technology and printed media in the construction of the national links and the sense of imagination of the united community as well as the modern school system and its impact on the entire population. He also points out the role of communication and space and social mobility – the traveling between different times, statuses and places. In that process "centers of the sacral geography" were created. Traveling was also intensified - first of all within the national borders. It was not about traveling of a few people but of an immense number of people, which reflected the growth of rail road transportation, of steamships, as well as the emergence of new categories of bureaucracy such as sanitary staff, water supply administration, teachers, clerks and the army in general. In this paper, I will try to present the phenomenon of school excursions as a travel practice in its importance for the modern national education of the youth and for the nation building process in Bulgaria.

In her book "In the Search of Nation"<sup>2</sup>, the German Historian Claudia Weber stressed the importance of the school excursions within Bulgaria's memory culture. Parallel to the traditional methods of national education we have to pay attention to alternative methods like excursions, festivities or commemorations as events of national building oriented experience.<sup>3</sup> Through traveling to the Black Sea coast or the Balkan and Pirin Mountains, the Bulgarian national identity was identified by the Bulgarian landscape. During this process, around 1900 the symbolic landscape was shaped as well as main national topics, heroes and enemies.<sup>4</sup> According to the Bulgarian historian Rumen Daskalov, the school system at that time was oriented towards patriotic but not towards irredentist nationalistic goals in contrast to the school programs of the 1930s.<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 1: Students excursion in the 1920s<sup>6</sup>**

The school excursions were introduced as a pedagogical method in Bulgaria in the mid-90s of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although they were already practiced earlier in some schools. This mobility was designed first of all for the secondary schools and for lower grade pupils, who were meant to participate much more in shorter forms. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were about 30 full course secondary

schools in Bulgaria (18 for male and 12 for female pupils) with 8,371 male and 4,243 female students.<sup>7</sup> Although over 80% of the population lived in the villages, the majority of the students came from the urban population and only 18.6% of the secondary school students came from the rural areas.<sup>8</sup>

The majority of the pupils didn't have any travel experience. First tourist initiatives started in that time but they were single attempts. Some enthusiasts tried to spread touristic ideas among young intellectuals and clerks. It was not easy to travel as a modern travel infrastructure was not developed yet. Bulgaria had 1,195 km of railroads until 1904.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, a lot of major towns were already connected by this fast and safe transport system: Sofia, Plovdiv, Stara Zagora, Ruse, Varna, Pleven and many others. With the development of the railway infrastructure in Bulgaria, a stimulus for school excursion was introduced for groups over ten students. They travelled with a price reduction of 75% on tickets.

Teachers registered the low mobility of the children in the countryside. The pedagogy expert (and later school historian) Nikola Vankov tried to research the mobility of the pupils according to their social background in 1901/1902.<sup>10</sup> He questioned 1,611 children in schools in Central North Bulgaria (Loveč and Tărnovo region) and published the results in the Journal "School Review". He outlined the differences between rural and urban children as well as the gender difference in the level of mobility.<sup>11</sup>

#### Urban children mobility:

Pupils	Have visited villages	Have visited more than three villages	Have visited towns	Have visited other countries
Male	88,2 %	57,7 %	46,5 %	4,4 %
Female	82,2 %	36,2 %	42,2 %	4,8 %

#### Peasant children mobility:

Pupils	Have visited villages	Have visited more than three villages	Have visited towns	Have visited other countries
Male	97,7 %	63,3 %	60,1 %	0,9 %
Female	100,0 %	26,3 %	25,5 %	0,0 %

Nikola Vankov noticed also that the most of the children from the mountains areas had no image of a plain and vis versa most of the urban children did not know how different goods they used were produced.<sup>12</sup> According to him there were no big differences between the children according to their social background in the practice of visiting near places. But there were remarkable class differences in visiting places outside the small region and to foreign countries. The school excursions could be the first travel experience outside of their small region for many of the students, especially for some groups of the children: female pupils, peasant's and worker's children.<sup>13</sup>

**Pupils who have visited villages (according to the father's occupation)**

Occupation	%
Priests	100,0 %
Farmers	97,6 %
Merchant	96,7 %
Tavern-keepers	96,2 %
Workers	89,8 %
Lawyers	89,2 %
Without parents (orphans)	87,0 %
Teachers	85,1 %
Unemployed	82,7 %
Craftsmen	83,4 %
Clerks	83,0 %
Servants	74,6 %
Physicians	66,6 %
Small clerks	60,0 %

**Pupils who have visited a town in their region  
(according to the father's occupation)**

Occupation	%
Priests	70,5 %
Teachers	60,9 %
Lawyers	60,7 %
Merchants	57,0 %
Tavern-keepers	55,5 %
Clerks	53,0 %
Craftsmen	48,5 %
Physicians	44,4 %
Farmers	41,7 %
Workers	41,3 %
Orphans	40,3 %
Workers	29,3 %
Servants	23,9 %
Small clerks	0,0 %

**Pupils who have visited towns outside of their region  
(according to the father's occupation)**

Occupation	%
Physicians	100,0 %
Lawyers	71,4 %
Teachers	62,9 %
Clerks	53,0 %
Priests	52,9 %
Merchants	46,1 %
Tavern-keepers	30,8 %
Orphans	29,0 %
Unemployed	27,5 %
Craftsmen	21,4 %
Small clerks	20,0 %
Servants	19,7 %
Workers	14,6 %
Farmers	9,3 %

As Nikola Vankov has shown, farmer's children (who were the last group of the pupils at that time) had a very small chance to go outside their small world of nearby villages and towns. Vankov insisted that school trips had to be a compulsory part of the education. It is remarkable also that according to the questionnaires, children of families of physicians, priests, lawyers and teachers had a higher mobility than children from other families.<sup>14</sup> Nikola Vankov, who was a supporter of the establishment of student excursions, also outlined the gender difference in the mobility (the male students traveled much more) as well as some of the consequences of immobility: most of the children didn't know how important goods were prepared.<sup>15</sup> The school excursions were the first traveling experience for many of the pupils, especially for the girls.

The school excursions were introduced in Bulgarian schools as a pedagogical innovation connected to experience- and sense-perception-based education and reform pedagogy.<sup>16</sup> In 1895 Konstantin Veličkov (1855 – 1907), a writer, translator and artist, educated in Istanbul and Paris (Law) and Florence (Art) became Minister of Education. He was an adherent of the famous pedagogue Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776 – 1841), who supported the experience based education and the formation of sustained intellectual interests of students in the process of education.<sup>17</sup> At the beginning of 1896 Konstantin Veličkov officially recommended the organization of student excursions. In the following months via orders by the Ministry of Education he regulated many details concerning the management of the excursions – methods, tasks, finance, documentation, etc. The ministry's orders did not recommend any travel routes and did not demand certain sites to be visited but rather gave some examples of the usefulness to visit remains from antiquity like the Roman place Nikjup (near the river Danube). They furthermore underlined the positive influence on the physical condition of the students, the joy of participating in the excursions as a social event, the raise in the teacher's authority, the development of

a sense for the nature's beauty and ethical and organizational skills as well as the opportunity for learning by observation without getting mentally exhausted.<sup>18</sup> In May 1897 Konstantin Veličkov recommended measures for the improvement of the organization of the student excursions, especially concerning the prevention of illnesses. He personally suffered from tuberculosis and was interested in social health prevention.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile the International School Hygiene Section at the 12<sup>th</sup> Medicine Congress in 1898 also recommended to organize school excursions in order to prevent illnesses among children.<sup>20</sup> That way, school excursions were included in the list of biopolitical measures for the young generation.

In the next years many articles were published to explain the necessity of the student excursions; some of them based on translations from the journals "Natur und Schule" and "Naturwissenschaft und Schule". In Russia a special pedagogical journal about student excursions called "School excursions and School Museum"<sup>21</sup> started to be published a bit later, and it was also used by Bulgarian pedagogues. The journal spread the idea of student excursions as a tool of patriotic experience – "to see the Russian land by one's own eyes."<sup>22</sup> Another task was to train the students to see their environment: to point out views, images and colors, as well as the beauty of nature.<sup>23</sup> This training of the visual reception was a very important task of the student excursions. They were an effective method to shape the "visual identity"<sup>24</sup> of young generation.

According to ministerial orders the school boards had to elaborate a three-year project to visit "the most interesting places".<sup>25</sup> School teachers made their choice about the routes and places to be visited. The management details were fixed: every participant had to have an excursion notebook; pictures had to be taken and had to be used for the school rooms and for school albums. A school doctor (school doctors were introduced as part of the school staff in 1904) had to accompany them during the excursion in order to observe and supervise the health condition of the students.<sup>26</sup> After the excursions the weight of the students was checked. Upon coming back, students had to write essays on different topics of their observations, working in different fields such as botany, geology, geography and others and had read them in front of the class. Excursions were placed in a larger context of education and social life. Yet the trips were an event not only to be considered within school life. Every excursion was a great event for the local communities too. To their departure pupils were escorted by their parents, relatives and a lot of citizens. It was like an emotional local festivity. In some towns municipalities supported the trips financially.

Young people set out singing school and patriotic songs full of joy.<sup>27</sup> Leaving their towns, the students started to see the landscape in a new way, learning about history they hadn't known yet. A teacher described an excursion from Kazanlāk (in Central Bulgaria) to Varna in 1898. The goals of the excursion were to be make students familiar with geography, geology, natural and cultural sites, to visit places related to both ancient and modern history and to study how to organize an excursion as future teachers. During the first part of the trip the students walked and after that they took a train.<sup>28</sup>

[...] Students saw at first the surroundings of Kazanlāk which they knew about but they didn't know the history related to them. The

history teacher told them about the Celtic culture and about the Celtic capital of Tille. They saw Roman and Thracian mounds. [...] As they reached the village of Dervent on their way a student told about the events of the war [Russo-Ottoman War – K. P.] and General Gurko's retreat as well as about the sufferings of the refugees from Stara Zagora [in 1877 – K. P.]. They entered Stara Zagora which had a very unhappy destiny during the war. They saw many destroyed buildings and ruins and they were told about the brutalities of Sulejman Paša against the population. They visited the new buildings of the secondary schools for boys and for girls and the Officer's club. In the village of Gunarly they saw the monument devoted to the Liberation War – a cone made of simple stones but connected to a glorious memory about the heroic acts.<sup>29</sup>

Then the students saw the railway building process and embarked on the train. After seeing the sites of the Russo-Ottoman War the students continued their way to Burgas and Varna. They visited there important places representing the industrial and technical progress: in Burgas they observed a telephone installation in the secondary school and a relief map of the Balkan Peninsula. They saw the industrial factory for pasta, the brewery and the saw mill. Students collected shells on the beach and got introduced to the building process of the breakwater. At the harbor of Burgas they took the steamship "Bulgaria" to Varna. In Varna they were allowed to the royal residence in Evksinograd where they also saw the botanical garden and the zoo and observed how Champagne was made. They visited the cotton factory and the secondary schools in Varna – "a model for modern hygiene, cleanliness and order". They managed to make astronomic observation, and on the way back they saw a lot of beautiful views, "which fascinate even the most *uncivil* eye [K. P.]; which influences the most hardened heart."<sup>30</sup> According to their teacher, students collected countless impressions and lively memories.<sup>31</sup>

"The uncivil eyes" of another 41 students from the small town of Bjala near Ruse were trained during a trip in 1898 by a similar combination of places of memory from the Russo-Ottoman War and places of modernization and technical progress. The aim was to visit the Model Agricultural Farm in Ruse as well as "to expand their horizons."<sup>32</sup>

The pupils also started their trip by singing famous patriotic songs, escorted to their departure by parents, relatives and citizens. On their way they saw

[...] the big monument, built by our Liberator in memory of the big battle in this area. One local peasant described in detail this horrible battle and its importance for us Bulgarians. We paid attention to the emblem, we spoke about it. Many of the students wrote the stone's inscriptions in the notebooks they had.<sup>33</sup>

After that they all met at an oak forest and the botanic teacher spoke about pest infestation. The culmination was when the students saw a train. After they had reached Ruse, they saw a steamship and visited the local brewery. The excursion was evaluated as very useful – the teachers knew better the “soul of our students, their thirst and their wishes.” They travelled 30 km and the rich students paid five leva, the middle class students 2.50 leva and the poor students nothing, while the municipality contributed another 100 leva for the trip.<sup>34</sup>

In 1900 the Ministry of Education became more active in the politics of memory. An order was sent to every school that a branch of the committee “Tsar Liberator” was to be organized in every place, thereby aiming to collect money for the monument to Tsar Aleksandr II and for an veterans’ home as well as for a museum of the Bulgarian Revival. The committee branches’ members were teachers and school directors. In 1902 students and teachers were obliged to take part in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations of the Liberation War. A bust of the Tsar Liberator was produced and it was recommended by the Ministry to be spread for the prize of 100 leva. At the same time the Ministry enlarged privileges given to children of *opálčenci* and *pobornici* as for instance school taxes for them were reduced.<sup>35</sup>

All these measures of the Ministry of Education’s memory politics gave teachers impulses to include historical places in the excursion itinerary. The three-year excursion project of Varna’s secondary school was given as an example as it included Pleven with the aim to show “the memorials of our Liberation.”<sup>36</sup>

According to statistics of the years 1906/1907 only three secondary schools didn’t organize any excursions. In general 32 large-scaled excursions were made by 14 secondary schools; four of the excursions were reported in details, four of them were briefly reported, and the rest was not described.<sup>37</sup> According to this statistics, the places chosen by different secondary schools were often the same places as chosen by other schools. The historical places like Tárnovo, Pleven and Šipka were among the most visited places:

<b>Main destination of the excursion</b>	
Tárnovo	6
Sofia, Varna, Rila	5
Kjustendil, Ruse, Aboba (Pliska)	3
Plovdiv, Bjala čerkva, Vraca, Silistra	2
Burgas, Sađovo, Persenk, Čepino, Gabrovo, Šipka	1

<b>Visited towns during the excursion</b>	
Tárnovo	11
Sofia, Pleven	7
Šumen, Varna, Ruse	5
Plovdiv	4
Gabrovo, Šipka, Aboba (Pliska), Samokov, Rila Monastery, Bačkovo Monastery, Radomir	3

It is possible that teachers and school boards were influenced in setting their itineraries in cooperation and communication with their colleagues and shared experiences with other teachers published in the Ministry of Education's journal "School Review" or in the school annuals. The statistics of the visited places do not give enough information about the importance of the places of the Russo-Ottoman War in the student excursions, neither about the context they were visited within. But in the school reports to the Ministry, published in the secondary schools' reviews, there were distinct sections about the student excursions: itineraries, places, goals, results and other details were described.

In 1904/1905 female students from the secondary school in Plovdiv visited Sofia. First they visited the Parliament and the Military Club. In the Military Club they saw pictures of the Liberation War and mannequins dressed in the uniforms of all Russian troops which had taken part in the Liberation War. They entered the big parlor of the Military Club and watched the machinery section, a steam generator, a reciprocating engine, an electric engine, and an accumulator. They also saw the Monuments to the Liberation War in Sofia.<sup>38</sup> In another annual report of the female secondary school in Stara Zagora one can see that in the following school year of 1905/1906 young girls also made their way to Sofia.<sup>39</sup> The report describes the emotions and experience of the participants. First they observed the ancient Roman thermal baths near their town and after that they walked to Šipka. They slept in the village Šipka and early in the morning they walked on to the summit of Šipka Pass.

[...] We crept on the mountain. In front of us lay the most beautiful, still the most difficult way. The weather was calm and cool. As the sun shone on us, we were already almost at the top. The landscape was wonderful. During the trip (we walked very slowly) we had a conversation about the events of the Russo-Turkish War. We observed every monument. At four o'clock we arrived in Gabrovo. In the time till the evening we saw the Rašev's factory, which produced fabrics especially for the state's needs.<sup>40</sup>

The same combination of visits to war memorials and modern institutions was experienced by the students in Tărnovo and Pleven. In Sofia the students stayed for four days, sleeping in the hotel "Tsar Osvoboditel" (Tsar Liberator). They visited the historical museum, the state printing house, the Doctor's Monument (dedicated to the Russian medical staff during the Russo-Ottoman War), the telegraph station and the telephone installation, the sugar factory, the zoo, the electric power station, and the Prince Boris Park.<sup>41</sup>

Many other descriptions and reports repeat the same line of visited places: Russo-Ottoman War memorials, beautiful landscape, factories, powerful state institutions, or electric power stations. Sunrise in the mountains on Šipka top and evening in a textile factory were also experienced on the same day. For most of the students (especially for the female students) it was their first trip – their first introduction to unknown other places. The experience of the trip was shared with other friends and classmates and was remembered and discussed long after the students had come back to their schools.<sup>42</sup>

Teachers were impressed by the intensive emotional reactions of the students. Some teachers even wanted to postpone school excursions to the time of vacations because students were so excited by the trips that they could think and speak only about them long before and after the excursions had taken place and therefore the normal education process was challenged.<sup>43</sup> Other teachers were positively impressed by the emotional reactions caused by the visits to historic sites. They encouraged students to enjoy the beautiful nature and to admire the war heroes: the feelings of the students were also shaped. N. Kostov wrote for his survey of the student excursions about the trip of female students who visited historic sites of the Russo-Ottoman War and their emotions during these days:

[...] for example, on Saint Nikola Peak where Russian and Bulgarian sons fulfilled one of the glorious heroic acts of the Liberation War and where a wide beautiful panorama view is opened to the viewer, he [the teacher – K. P.] was moved by listening to one of the female students cry “It is true that Bulgaria deserves to be loved”; at that time another female student said to the other girls who picked flowers at that time: “be slow, my friends, because every grass here is soaked with heroic blood.” The heroic historical events had changed the landscape in an invisible way: the grass and the flowers were soaked with heroic blood. Another female student from the same group expressed her own feelings after meeting other travelling people on their way, who wished them a nice trip. She cried: “How nice and polite are the people here. They seem to be our brothers and sisters!”<sup>44</sup>

These descriptions present the way how student excursions contributed to the establishment of national ties and to the nation as an “imagined community”. Landscapes got their historical “time dimensions” and the national identity was expressed geographically.<sup>45</sup> School trips at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century created a space of new knowledge, social entertainment and emotional experience. National history, beautiful Bulgarian landscapes and modern technical inventions were united to “expand the horizons” of the young people from the secondary schools. Places like the Russo-Ottoman War memorials – especially the war memorials at Šipka, Pleven and Sofia – through these trips they were connected to modern enterprises on a mental map. Thus Bulgarian landscape was shaped with symbols of heroic past, natural beauty and national progress.

<sup>1</sup> Бенедикт Андерсон, *Въобразените общности [Imagined Communities]*, София, 1998.

<sup>2</sup> Claudia Weber, *Auf der Suche der Nation. Erinnerungskultur in Bulgarien von 1878 – 1944*, Münster, 2006.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>5</sup> Румен Даскалов, *Българското общество [The Bulgarian society]*, Volume 2, София, 2005, 392.

<sup>6</sup> Personal archive C. M.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 356.

<sup>9</sup> Румен Даскалов, Българското общество [The Bulgarian society], Volume 1, София, 2005, 190.

<sup>10</sup> Никола И. Ванков, Няколко цифри в полза на екскурзиите [Some figures in favor of the excursions], *Училищен преглед*, 9, September 1902, 354-361.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Васил Станчев, Класификация и цел на екскурзиите [Classification and aims of the excursions], *Училищен преглед*, 9/2, September 1906, 277-288.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Йордан Колев, Константин Величков, Реформаторът на българското образование [Konstantin Veličkov, the reformer of Bulgarian education], София, 2005, 52.

<sup>18</sup> Ministry order Nr. 3232, 19 March 1896, *Училищен преглед*, 4, April 1896, 339-345.

<sup>19</sup> Ministry order Nr. 3849, 28 March 1897, *Училищен преглед*, 5, May 1897, 550.

<sup>20</sup> Училищната хигиена на 12. международен конгрес в Москва [The School Hygiene on the 12. International Congress in Moscow], *Училищен преглед*, 1, January 1898, 41-55.

<sup>21</sup> Журнал *Школьные экскурсии и школьный музей*, 1913 – 1915.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Иван Акинфиев, Как устраивать экскурсии с учащимся [How to organize student excursions], *Школьные экскурсии и школьный музей*, 1914, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Joshua Hagen, Preservation, Tourism and Nationalism: The Jewel of the German Past, Ashgate, 2006, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Никола Костов, Ученишките екскурзии в нашите гимназии през миналата учебна 1905/1906. [The school excursions in our secondary schools in the school year 1905/1906], *Училищен преглед*, 5, May 1907, 408-426.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Иван Николчов, Екскурзия на Казанлъшкото педагогическо училище до Варна [An excursion of the Kazanlăk Pedagogical Secondary School to Varna], *Училищен преглед*, 7/8, July/August 1900, 637-657.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Петър Костов, Екскурзията на учениците от Беленското трикласно училище [The excursion of the Bjala-3-class school students], *Училищен преглед*, 6, June 1899, 680-685.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ministry Order Nr. 12477, 29 August 1903, *Училищен преглед*, 11, November 1903, 303.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Костов, Ученишките екскурзии, 25, 408-426.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Годишник на Пловдивската девическа гимназия за учебната 1904/1905 година, [Annual of Plovdiv's female secondary school for the school year 1904/1905], Пловдив, 1905, 55.

<sup>39</sup> Годишник на Старозагорското държавно педагогическо училище за 1905/1906 година [Annual of Stara Zagora's female pedagogical secondary school for the school year 1905/1906], Стара Загора, 1906, 54.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Годишник на Великотърновската държавна мъжка гимназия за учебната 1904/1905 година [Annual of Veliko Tŕrnovo's state male secondary school for the school year 1904/1905], Велико Търново, 1905, 99.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Костов, Ученишките екскурзии, 25, 408-426.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Hagen, Preservation, 24, 3.

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## **The Memorials to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in the Tourist Movement after 1944**

**Abstract:** *The tourist movement in Bulgaria started at the end of the 19th century. In the interwar period the tourist movement ideology became more nationalistic and more connected to the state institutions. After the Communist takeover on 9 September 1944 the tourist movement was based on a new ideological and organizational foundation. It was included in the whole system of control over leisure time. The new ideology as well as the new heroes after 1944 – the guerilla fighters (partisans), demanded a new kind of collective admiration and creation of new places of memory. In 1966 the Bulgarian National Tourist Movement “Get to Know Bulgaria – 100 National Tourist Sites” was established which still exists today. Five places of memory of the Russo-Ottoman War were ever-presented – Svištov – the place where the Russian troops crossed the Danube, the memorial church at Šipka, Stoletov Peak at the Stara Planina Mountains, the “Liberation Monument” (Šipka Monument), and the memorial church “St. Aleksandr Nevskij” in Sofia. The “Museum of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship” in Sofia was also included. Today the number of touristic visits to these spots decreased several times but they are still the most admired national symbols according to researches throughout the last years. The memorials to the Russo-Ottoman War are recognized as leading places of memory in Bulgaria.*

The tourist movement in Bulgaria started at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century on the initiative of the famous Bulgarian writer Aleko Konstantinov (1863 – 1897) who in August 1895 organized the first excursion to the Vitoša mountain, on the outskirts of Sofia. In 1899 a Bulgarian tourist society was founded by 26 people. The tourist movement grew rapidly and within two years 26 tourist societies with 1,100 members were organized.<sup>1</sup> After 1905 – 1907 the number of the organized tourists declined because the Bulgarian State Rail Way Direction had removed the prize concessions for tourists. Only thirteen societies with 297 members remained active.

In 1913 a Youth Tourist Movement started and until 1914 it had amassed 550 members. The organizations published several journals and newspapers in the time before WWI. The main goal of the tourist movement according to its statutes was to get to know the beauty of Bulgarian nature better and to present it to the whole society. To spread the touristic idea many articles about tourism were translated from Czech and German periodicals. After the War the tourist movement became

more widespread and reached the number of 6,000 organized members. The Youth Tourist Union united another 10,000 – 15,000 members until it was included in the Bulgarian State's Youth Organization "Brannik" in 1940. Step by step touristic shelters and huts were built in the mountains on the initiative of the touristic societies. In 1922 the first high-altitude mountain hut, "Skakavica" in Rila Mountains, was built. The touristic movement became more popular and the young generation, especially students and high school pupils were interested in it. In the time between the two World Wars the tourist movement ideology became more nationalistic and stronger connected to the state institutions.

After the Communist takeover on 9 September 1944 the tourist movement was based on a new ideological and organizational basis. It was included in the system of control over leisure time. In July 1945 the Bulgarian Tourist Union, the Youth Tourist Union and the Bulgarian Skiing Union were united in the so called People's Tourist Union, which was then united with other sport organizations. The result was a centralized mega-structure which united both tourism and a lot of sports. During the unification congress in Plovdiv, the journalist Marin Vážarov<sup>2</sup>, a former guerilla fighter, outlined the new directions of the tourist movement.<sup>3</sup> The previous model of tourism was negated as "Western influence", as "a movement of people who graduated in Western countries" or as "a movement for persons, who didn't work among people but would escape in the mountains". The tourist movement before 1944 was labeled a "closed movement of intellectuals distant to the people". A mass tourist movement did not need to be organized by any kind of societies but by the "people's power" and had to be near the people itself. In the spirit of the new collectivistic ideology the goal of total control of the tourist movement was defined. This goal was reached by a set of tourist sections in schools, in factories, in the army – the so-called "organizational principal of production place" or "working place principal" instead of a "territorial principal". It meant that an organization had to be set up at the place where people work or study. A Supreme Committee of Physical Culture and Sport based on a hierarchical territorial structure was established. It introduced the state's leadership over tourism. Tourist sections were established at every level of the state's nomenclature, at every administrative unit of Committees for Sport and Tourism and at every local unit of cities or municipalities. In 1952 a Department for Recreational Excursions was established by the central council of the Trade Unions. In 1957 the Bulgarian Tourist Union announced it would have more than 250,000 members, mostly tourists and alpinists. In July 1958 a National Tourist Fair was organized in the Rhodope Mountains at Jundola.

That way the tourist movement became a vehicle of the state's control over the leisure time of the population. The pleasure of individuals or smaller groups and the amusement in tourism and sport were institutionalized to a collective responsibility of "getting to know Bulgaria's nature and to admire sacred national sites". The new ideology of mass tourism demanded that the experience of tourism also had to have a deep social, high patriotic and educational purpose. Marin Vážarov wrote that: "It is the last time for the old tourist movement to be sent into history – the movement of pleasures and light amusement. Today we are soldiers of the people's culture and as soldiers we have to go ahead."<sup>4</sup> A war was proclaimed against the random enjoying of nature. The aim was "to uproot the rests of the sheer aesthetic experience, of the groundless poetic elitism, to the snobs, to the great Bulgarian

chauvinism, to the danger of escaping from life; and instead of all this the aim was to create a unified, clear, progressive tourist ideology without any contradiction.”<sup>5</sup>

Special attention was paid to scientists who had to come out of their cabinets in order to be among the people and to work in the mountains. Mass excursions and marches with special scientific tasks were organized. Those tasks included researches in nature or the research of historical events. The physical education was not underestimated because the tourists had to be prepared not only for a fight on an ideological front but also for a real battle with the enemies of the new society. Special attention was paid to the importance of tourism for the defense of the fatherland. It had to be a tool to create “strong, healthy and robust citizens, active workers for the socialist building process, and courageous defenders of the fatherland against every aggression of imperialistic aggressors.”<sup>6</sup> Tourism was a very important factor for political unity of the people and for its patriotic education. In addition, the tourist had to follow the example of the Soviet army, of the “double” liberators.

### Following the steps of heroes

The new ideology as well as the new heroes after 1944, the guerilla fighters (partisans), demanded a new kind of collective admiration and the creation of new realms of memory. As early as the first months after the political change the president of the Touristic Union Marin Vážarov suggested that the touristic itinerary of the “new tourist” had to follow the partisan routes in order to educate the new comrades.<sup>7</sup> Additional to the “trails of the partisans” the routes of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 were also included. “Our mountains are closely connected to the heroic fight of our people against Turkish and Fascist slavery. In the harsh years of fighting they provided shelter and protected the people and its fighters.”<sup>8</sup>

A communist “tourist pantheon” was shaped by mapping out sites of the heroic past:

[...] places, connected to the revolutionary activity of Vasil Levski, places on the way of Hristo Botev and his revolution unit, places where the April Uprising 1876 took place, historical places where the liberating Russian army in 1877/1878 strode; partisan objects of the partisan activity of Slavčo Trănski partisan unit, of the partisan Brigade of “Čavdar” as well as the places of the battles of all other partisan units. These are the new objects and new paths, which all tourists and excursion participants have to follow and where they have to be educated.<sup>9</sup>

Mass touristic marches were organized into the mountains of Rila, Pirin and Vitoša or to historical places such as marches following the route of Botev’s detachment (1876) from Kozloduj to Okolčica. In the year 1956 1,600 persons participated in the touristic march following the steps of the Botev unit. On the occasion of the other battles’ anniversary, that kind of marches were also organized following the steps of the Šipka heroes and the places of their camps. To reach the monu-

ment, which was high on the mountain hill, 890 steps were built “in order to feel ourselves nearer to the heroes, to experience their enormous efforts and difficulties endured by the defenders [of Shipka pass] in the summer heat and winter cold.”<sup>10</sup>

The symbols of the new tourists were invented. In 1951 the badge “People’s tourist” – first and second level was established.<sup>11</sup> To receive the first level the tourist had to fulfill one march and one 2-day long route. Norms and exams, where the historic and geographical knowledge of the tourist were tested, were fixed. The goals of a tourist march were formulated: it had to fulfill socio-political, scientific, athletic and educational aims, which had to be combined. The educational and political aims were underlined especially if the marches were connected to a historical event; e.g. in “The Liberation [1878] Tourist March”, in “Dimitrov’s Tourist March” and others. The marches were led by a tourist leader and his assistant, who was also a political leader in charge of the political, educational and propaganda work during the march. A tourist guide was also appointed (by rule it had to be a local person), a person to write a march-diary, a supplier, a sanitary person in charge of the march’s first aid kit. After the tourist march a report as well as a wall-newspaper had to be completed about the tourist march.

In 1966 the Bulgarian National Tourist Movement “Get to Know Bulgaria – 100 National Tourist Sites” was established and it still exists today. Every participant received a special printed book where 100 important national sites were marked. Every place had to be visited in order to get a special place in the book stamped. All historical museums in the district centers were included as well as ancient historical monuments, along with sites from the National Revival and Socialist buildings. Five realms of memory related to the Russo-Ottoman War were presented: Svištov, the place where the Russian troops crossed the Danube River, the memorial church on Šipka Pass, the peak Stoletov at the Stara Planina Mountains, the Liberation Monument (i.e. Šipka Monument), and the memorial church “St. Aleksandăr Nevski” in Sofia.

The Museum of the Bulgarian-Soviet Friendship in Sofia was also included. In the 1960s Bulgarian-Russian and Bulgarian-Soviet friendship were already synonymous. The war monuments were important for the indoctrination of the imposed direct link between two narratives: the liberation from Turkish “joke” and from Fascist “slavery” and the presentation of the 9 September coup d’état (1944) as liberation. This line was affirmed also in the tourist guides. Two special tourist guides of the type “On the roads of the Liberators”<sup>12</sup>, written by historians and tourists, were published. The first of them was published in the end of the 1960s and the second, which included the routes of the Russian troops in 1877 and the routes of the Soviet army in 1944, was published in the middle of the 1980s and was edited three times.<sup>13</sup> Selected documents and memoirs presented “the heroic march of the Russian troops and the Bulgarian volunteers from Svištov to Šipka, and almost seven decades later – the way of the Soviet Army at the same places.”<sup>14</sup> The goal of such touristic guides which were dedicated to the National liberation movement<sup>15</sup> was “to revive the heroic days of battles and marches”<sup>16</sup> and a direct suggestion was made that the history of heroic battles and tourist marches were unbreakably connected. To stimulate the initially peacefully tourist activity a military language was introduced. On the other side the places of the heroic memory were an emanation of the “wonderful beauty” of the Bulgarian nature and by visiting them the tourist could “get

healthy, strengthen and with a new surge of patriotic pride of the glorious deeds of the heroes, he would be inspired by the work for the progress of the Socialist motherland.”<sup>17</sup>

While walking on the paths of the liberators, the tourist could see also the changes made by the socialist state. For example, when passing the Hainboaz pass (Stara Planina Mountains), the tourist had to know that it was changed because “20 years ago the Balkan mountain echoed with the sound of the shevels as well as with the songs of the working brigade participants, who built a new way over the Hainboaz pass – the Pass of the Republic”. And when coming to Stara Zagora town – in the center of the city garden:

[he] has to see the monument of the soldiers fallen in the battle of 19 of July 1877, [he] has to visit the Akardža place with the common grave of colonel Kalitin and 461 Russian soldiers and Bulgarian volunteers, who fell while saving the Samara banner. And he is obliged to see the nitric fertilizer factory – the pride of our building activities. Parallel to it there is a 12-meter high monument over the small grave. This is a glorification monument to the heroes of Džuranlij (Kalitinovo) and Stara Zagora. Both monuments side by side remind of the heroism in the past as well as of our wonderful present day.

Tourism was defined as one of the basic and mass sport activities with a huge cultural, ideological and social importance for the new political regime. The monuments on the places of the battles of the Liberation War, the September Uprising of 1923 and the guerilla places were visited by organized “endless trains of hundreds of thousand tourists and alpinists crossing our mountains; they visit Oborište and Batak, Okolčica, Buzludža and Šipka.” That way the Bulgarian tourist movement was turned into a “powerful factor of patriotic education of working people and youth, of the implantation of the emotion of glowing love to the Party, the people and our Socialist fatherland”.

The growing nationalism of the Communist regime in the 1960s and 1970s put Šipka in the center of the places of national pride. The Liberation Monument on Šipka Pass (but not the church-monument) became a symbol of Bulgarian liberty, of national pride. The monument’s image was printed on 1 lev banknotes in 1962 (the most commonly used banknote) and again in 1974 and as well on coins in 1978 (10 leva) and 1988 (20 leva). In fact, the image of the monument replaced the image of the Aleksandăr Nevski Church which was used for a banknote in 1925<sup>18</sup> after its official opening in 1924, but it became less acceptable for the atheistic communist regime.

### **The touristic statistics**

The statistical research of tourism and related sociological surveys started in the 1970s as tourism became an important part of the state’s income and as sociology was recognized as a science and not discarded as “bourgeois discipline” anymore as it has been the case in the 1950s. The first sociological researches of tour-

ism demonstrated that Šipka was a leading touristic place and it became a central national symbol.<sup>19</sup> The sociological research covered more than 1,000 participants from the districts of Šumen (Northern Bulgaria) and Jambol (Southern Bulgaria). According to this research, the Šipka Liberation Monument was the most visited place for every decade, followed by the Soviet Soldier Monument in Plovdiv (so called Al'oša Monument) and the Soviet Army Monument in Sofia.

For the Jambol tourists, the first place was taken by Šipka, followed by the old medieval capital Veliko Tărnovo and the small ancient town Nesebăr at the Black Sea coast. The three objects were of different touristic interest. Šipka took the first place not as an architectural sight but because of its national-historical importance. According to sociological researches, the more educated tourists were better informed about these touristic places. As for the Šumen district's tourists Šipka was at the fifth place only after archeological objects near Šumen, namely Pliska and Preslav (old Bulgarian capitals), Madara and Veliko Tărnovo.

The monuments were visited mostly by tourists in the age group between 40 and 49; highly educated (academic or vocational education) people who had a monthly income of over 150 leva and who had an own furnished home. According to their occupation, most of the visitors were people from the fields of science and education or from state administration. Most visitors were members of the Bulgarian Communist Party and or part of the boards of Communist Party supervised NGOs. There was no Bulgarian Youth Communist Union's member under 19 years who didn't visit any of the historical monument, which pointed out that all children in the schools were obligatory involved in the touristic activities. The most favorite free time activities of the visitors were technical and scientific activities; a remarkable number of tourists indicated as their preferred hobby also free entertainment and leisure time. It's interesting to note that the number of the last group was twice as many as people who indicated that their favorite activities were sport and tourism. This meant that visiting historical sites was not strictly qualified as an athletic and touristic activity. According to the sociological research, most of the people who didn't visit any historical monument were persons who didn't work or who worked in their own household and/or people who didn't belong to the Communist party. This is an indicator that tourism was organized first of all according to the working place.

As we can see from the sociological data, in the 1970s the Šipka Memorial Complex was the most visited historical place. It was open all days all year. After its opening as a Memorial Complex in 1964 it was annually visited by about 800,000 people (about 400,000 Bulgarians, 300,000 Russian Tourists and the rest were other foreigners).<sup>20</sup> Only half of them also visited the Memorial Church in Šipka of "Nativity". Until today the number of the touristic visits has decreased several times but it is still the most popular national symbol according to the research in the last years. It is recognized as a leading memorial site. According to the inquiries, 80% of the visitors recognized this place as a place of national pride and even as a "holy place".<sup>21</sup> Attention by mass media is also guaranteed, especially during the annual celebrations. This is the direction of the new marketing strategy.<sup>22</sup> Today's target groups not only include Bulgarians and Russians but also foreign tourists. The marketing strategy aims to attract them with the beautiful nature, the monumental architecture and the possibility to experience the "Bulgarian Thermopiles". There are attempts to organize tourist attractions similar to historical places like Waterloo and

others, including recreation of battles etc. A similar strategy to attract tourists is used by the other places of memory included in the 100 National Tourist Sites such as the Panorama “Pleven Battles” as well as the Memorial Complex “The defenders of Stara Zagora”. The tourist strategy is based also on a so-called “event marketing” – especially focused on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of March (signing of the Treaty of San Stefano that ended the Russo-Ottoman War) or on August (the days of the most crucial battle) when the main media attention is directed to Šipka. At that time exhibitions, publications and interviews on a large scale are made about these events and media prime time is always reserved.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1900 there were four touristic societies with 325 members. In 1901 they were already 26 societies with 1,100 members.

<sup>2</sup> Marin Văžarov was chief-editor of the journal *Ведрина* [Serenity] in the time 1945 – 1946 and after that chief-editor of the newspaper *Народен Спорт* [People’s Sport] from 1949 – 1961.

<sup>3</sup> Марин Вăжаров, Идейни и организационни задачи на туризма, Доклад изнесен от Марин Вăжаров пред делегатите на първия (33) обединителен туристически конгрес, състоял се на 12 – 13 юли 1945 г. в Пловдив [Ideological and organizational tasks of tourism, A report held by Marin Văžarov in front of the delegates of the First (33) Unification Tourist Congress on 12 – 13 July 1945 in Plovdiv], София, 1945, 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>5</sup> Туристическото движение по нови пътища (тезиси по случай агитационния туристически месец) [The Tourist Movement on New Paths (Tourist Months Agitation theses)], Народен физкултурен съюз, Централен туристически комитет, София, 1947, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Борис Минковски (ред.), Народен Турист, Сборник материали по значката «Народен турист» [The Peoples Tourist, A collection of materials for the «Peoples Tourist»], София, 1953, 108.

<sup>7</sup> Вăжаров, Задачи, 3, 15.

<sup>8</sup> Минковски (ред.), Турист, 6, 5.

<sup>9</sup> Вăжаров, Задачи, 3, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Васил Петров (ред.), По пътищата на освободителите. Сборник маршрути [On the Roads of the Liberators. A collection of routes], София, 1969, 29.

<sup>11</sup> Минковски (ред.), Турист, 6; Петър Златев; Борис Минковски; Михаил Минковски; Христо Христов (ред.), Наръчник на значката турист НРБ [A handbook for the medals of the PRB], София, 1959.

<sup>12</sup> Петров, Пътищата, 10; Написан от Цонко Генов – директор на музея за българо-съветска дружба, Дойно Дойнов – научен сътрудник във военно-историческия музей, заслужили деятели на БТС.; Иван Христов, По следите на освободителите [On the Tracks of the Liberators], София, 1989.

<sup>13</sup> Христов, Следите, 12.

<sup>14</sup> Христов, Следите, 12, 10.

<sup>15</sup> През 70-те и 80-те години са издадени редица подобни пътеводители, напр. Иван Пощов, По бойния път на Хвърковата чета на Бенковски [On the martial path of the flying band of Venkovski], София, 1976; Николай Ликовски, По пътя на четата на Панайот хитов [On the road of the band of Panajot Hitov], София, 1982; Зина Маркова, По стъпките на четата на Хаджи Димитър и Стефан Караджа [On the footsteps of the band of Hadži Dimităr and Stefan Karadža], София, 1982; Георги Данов, По стъпките на Левски [On the footsteps of Levski], София, 1987, и др.

<sup>16</sup> Петров, Пътищата, 10, 5.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 65.

<sup>18</sup> Христо Харитонов, Руско-турската война от 1877/1878 г. в сюжета на българските парични знаци и аспекти на експозиционното им представяне [The Russo-Turkish War of 1877/1878 in the context of Bulgarian financial signs and aspects of their exposition presentation]. В: 50 години национален парк-музей Шипка. 130 години от Руско-турската война и Шипченската епопея [50 years National-Park-Museum Šipka. 130 years after the Russo-Turkish War and the Šipka Epopee], Казанлък, 2008, 190-199.

<sup>19</sup> Атанас Илиев (ред.), Туризмът през погледа на българина. Избрани резултати от социологически и статистически изследвания 1960 – 1976 [Tourism through the eyes of the Bulgarian. Selected results of sociological and statistical research 1960 – 1976], София, 1977.

<sup>20</sup> Слави Тодоров, Храм-паметникът – обект на вътрешния и международния туризъм [Memorial Church – subject to domestic and international tourism]. В: Храм-паметник “Рождество Христово” край град Шипка 1902 – 2002 [The Memorial Church “Roždestvo Hristovo” near the city of Šipka 1902 – 2002], София, 2002, 143.

<sup>21</sup> Мая Миланова, Маркетингови стратегии в културния туризъм и тяхното прилагане в Национален парк-музей „Шипка” [Marketing strategies in cultural tourism and their implementation in the National-Park-Museum “Šipka”]. В: 50 години, 18, 217-223, 220.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 218.

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## **The Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Armenian Literature**

**Abstract:** *A number of representatives of 19th century Armenian literature adopted the topic of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and also the expectations of the Armenian people from the War in their writings. The present article analyzes some works of those writers, including works by Raffi, Hagop Baronian and Givani, who not only represent the events of the period but also the reflect on the hard situation of the Armenian people and their disappointment of the outcome and aftermath of the War.*

The Russo-Ottoman War gave high expectations to the Armenian people to become free at last from the so-called “Ottoman Yoke” and to join the Russian Empire. As it is well known, those aspirations were balked. After the victorious ending of the war, only the Kars Oblast and the Ardahan District were integrated into Russia, while the bigger part of Western Armenia remained under Ottoman control. The 61<sup>st</sup> article of the Congress of Berlin includes a very vague point about some reforms the Ottoman government had to put into effect among the vilayets (provinces) populated by Armenians. These so-called reforms remained on paper only and gave Abdülhamid II a good opportunity to start a new wave of persecution and destruction of the Armenian people.

Passionate discussions about the possibilities to achieve freedom of western Armenians were held in both press and in literature, which are two very different streams in Armenian social thought. Armenian classical literature, by following its credo to always respond to the most important challenges of life and looking for sources in the heroics of the past, inculcated liberation ideas to the people and became the strongest uniting feature of national forces. A political event of such high significance like the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, which had a decisive importance for the Armenian people and was rich of historical-political occurrences, obviously influenced arts and literature too.

The subject of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 most and thoroughly affected the work of the famous Armenian writer Raffi (Jacob Melik-Hakobyan, 1835 – 1888), who was witness to these events. During the war he cordially greeted the

struggle of the Balkan people, praised the victorious advance of the Russian army on both fronts and strongly criticized the double-dealing political intrigues of the European states in the Eastern Question, especially of Great Britain. The famous writer defended the idea that the Armenian Question could be resolved only by armed forces. This idea runs through all of his works written in those years such as in "Jalaleddin", "The Fool" or "The Sparks". In all of these works the writer tries to answer the questions troubling Armenia's contemporary society the most.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Ottoman Empire was seeking to suppress the Armenian liberating movement as soon as possible and to split up the cohesion of the Balkan peoples once and for all. Therefore religious hostility between Armenians and Kurds was initiated. Armed Kurdish sheikhs like Jalaleddin and Ibadullah, who were committing barbaric raids in the Western Armenian provinces, brutally slaughtered Armenian men, kidnapped girls and burned down defenseless villages. These facts are vividly described in the story "Jalaleddin". Although Raffi titled his work "Jalaleddin", all the actions takes place around a different main character – Sarhat. The latter remained faithful to the ideal of the struggle for national liberation until the end of his life and who fought against tyranny in the name of the people's independence.

After the Russo-Ottoman War, Raffi created his next great works like "The Fool" and "Sparks", where he painted terrible images of the western-Armenians life. He highly appreciated the heroic struggle of the Armenian people and outlined the programs on which the fate of the motherland and the independence of the Armenian people depended. The novel "The Fool" originally appeared in installments in the newspaper "Mshak" in 1880. In 1881 it was published as a book. "The Fool" begins with a stunning scene of the siege of the city Beyazit. A handful of Russian soldiers act together with Armenian squads on the defensive, thereby fighting off numerous combatants of the regular Ottoman army, Kurdish gangs and *Başıbozüks*. Then the storyline moves on a few years. The peaceful life of a village in the province of Alashkert is described. In the end "The Fool" returns to the period of war again. Raffi depicts the moment of the Russo-Ottoman War, when General Arshak Ter-Gukasov had to temporarily leave the area occupied by him, and the Armenians, who had greeted the triumphant entry of Russian troops and had helped them in every possible way, had to escape to Eastern Armenia to be saved from Ottoman massacres because of the sudden change of the Russian army's military success. The author managed to express the whole tragedy of the Western Armenian peasantry's situation in "The Fool". The main storyline of the novel – the fate of the village's elder Khacho family – is developing rapidly: It is based more on historical and political events taking place during the described period, rather than on actions and deeds of the protagonists. In the course of the novel Raffi often cites facts and various episodes from the life of farmers in rural areas, which themselves reflect the true state of affairs. "The Fool" is *sui generis* a programmatic work. With this novel, just like with his other creations, the writer tries to ideologically influence the society and the paths of its development. In all his works and especially in "The Fool" Raffi was seeking to answer the question: "What to do?" – An issue from the specific political situation. After the Congress of Berlin the question "What to do?" stood in all its sharpness in front of the Armenian community.

The answer to the question of the novel is given in an artistic form, demonstrated by the actions of the heroes Vardan and Levon Salman. Raffi titled his novel "Khent" ("The Fool"), referring to the first nickname of the main character Vardan. The author painfully speaks about the facts, that people, who do break with evil (in this case with the "Turkish yoke") and people with heroic character, who are capable of sacrifice for the sake of national happiness, are considered to be insane. Raffi introduces his characters at the beginning of the book and very quickly he wins the warm sympathy of the reader. One can see one of the protagonists in the ranks of the heroic defenders of the besieged fortress Beyazit. Pretending to be a fool, Vardan passes through the line of the enemy's armies and delivers General Ter-Gukasov the news about the plight of the besieged.

The writer artistically embodied the self-determination of the western part of the Armenian people and the answer to the question "What to do?" in the storyline around the other protagonist, Levon Salman (Dudukchyan). Following Dudukchyan, Darwin's theory of the struggle for existence is applicable on human society. According to Raffi<sup>1</sup>, the struggle for existence always takes different forms and features in both nature and human society. In terms of life expectancy, education, skills and capabilities of nations, the ways of self-defense change as well. The civilized nations of the world seek to enforce their dominance on other peoples with the help of culture, civilization, materialistic strength and on wild nations by violence and weapons. According to Raffi<sup>2</sup>, the lessons of human history testify, that if any person or nation won't protect the right for reasonable self-preservation, it will inevitably be doomed to failure. Vardan as well as Dudukchyan openly accentuate the need for an armed struggle. He believes in the forces able to carry out this task, while he believes in their readiness for decisive battles without any haste in being the key to success in the struggle for national independence.

Another work of Raffi, called "Wanderer of Mush", is closely connected with "The Fool" in its ideological content. Written in 1879, this work is essentially an artistic document about the life of Western Armenian people after the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. In the "Wanderer of Mush", the tragic plight of the Armenian wanderers, who were driven from their homes by the war and found themselves on the banks of the Bosphorus, is shown with the power of creative synthesis. The cruel oppression by the Sultan's government is portrayed as well as the cases of protesting Mush-wanderers. In this work, Raffi considered the possibility to bring together the different layers into a single battle of ideas, as a prerequisite for the aspired political victory of Armenia.

Another major work of Raffi, the novel "Sparks", is the epitome of literary impressions of the political events of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. Although he considers the liberation from Ottoman despotism as the most important thing in the novel, it also addresses and directs the people to ideals and shows it the way to achieve them. The ideological perception of the liberation struggle, patriotic passion and the fact that the heroes of the novel prefer social to personal achievements are fundamental issues broached by the novel.

In an analysis of the works mentioned above, I found an interesting coincidence between ideas independently elaborated by two authors writing as representatives of two people, who were experiencing a similar suffering – by Raffi and

by the Bulgarian writer Ivan Vazov. A comparison of historical facts has led us to the conclusion that, in both Vazov's novel "Under the Yoke" as well as Raffi's "Jalal", "Hunt" and "Sparks" are in tune with the conditions of social and political life of the Armenian and Bulgarian peoples and also with the possibility of a national liberation struggle. The masterfully portrayed protagonist Kralič Ognjanov in Vazov's novel, similar to the heroes of Raffi, after the murder of two Turks bitterly says: "You and I killed two people but these animals – thousands and thousands. The Bulgarian people will only breathe freely when everyone will take axes and destroy these blood-suckers."<sup>3</sup>

The Russo-Ottoman War got an artistic manifestation in new clarity and severity in the work of the famous satirist Hagop Baronian (1843 – 1891). Baronian's political satire featured sarcastic character at a time of complex international events including two of the most delicate political problems of that particular era – the so-called "Eastern Question" and "Armenian Question". During this period the militant satirist exposed the internal and external policies of the Ottoman government as well as the deceitful game of European diplomacy and showed a truly tragic situation of the Western Armenians. These issues are vividly expressed in his "Diary of Osos" – one of the masterpieces of his political satire.<sup>4</sup> Here the writer remarks that the sultan's government, under the guise of implementing reforms, would have tightened surveillance on progressive Western Armenian intellectuals and reshaped the political map of the western part of our people, while in schools and other spheres of public life the usage of the words "Armenian" and "Armenia" were prohibited. Furthermore Ottoman tyrants, not yet content with all this, would falsify population data and claim that the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire would contain only a negligible percentage of Armenians. Looking for new possibilities to expose the ugly and terrible events of the time's political life, satirists and other artists came up with allegories or Aesopian language, masked personalities or transform actor into animals. For example in the small allegorical work "Wooden man and steer" Baronian anticipated the inglorious end of Abdülhamid's political activities.

In the crucial period of the Armenian people's liberation struggle during the Russo-Ottoman War, the poetry of the time also contributed its share, just like the songs of Raphael Patkanyan (1830 – 1892) did. The poet was convinced that the liberation of the Western Armenians from Ottoman rule during the War and their accession to Russia was possible only in this period of political events if a correct solution to the "Armenian question" was found. Characteristically, the recognition of Patkanyan's poetry is closely connected to his main working period in the 1870s and 1880s, when many of his poems were written and when he published a collection of "Free Songs".<sup>5</sup> The poems "Prison Turk", "Song of a Van Peasant", "Complaints of the Armenian" and others show the plight of the Western Armenians and encourages the people to fight for their liberation. His poems raised the morale of the Armenian people, strengthened their national identity and dignity. After the Congress of Berlin, where the "Armenian Question" was not resolved, Patkanyan's lyrics sounded again and expressed the sentiments of the liberation struggle, carrying hope and despair. In the poems "The Congress", "61<sup>st</sup> article", "Woe Armenian" and others, the poet continued to accurately address the predatory nature of European states and condemned their diplomatic intrigues. Written in 1880, Patkanyan

expressed renewed faith in the future in his poem “Hope”. The poet articulated with great hope and faith that in this unequal battle the Armenian people will celebrate the final victory, as its struggle is fair and justified.

The subject of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 and in particular the issue of the Armenians did not only draw the attention of professional writers to it but as well of minstrels, amongst whom the famous Ashugh Givani (Serovbe Levonyan 1846 – 1909) is of special interest. For half a century the Ashugh Givani addressed all exciting issues of the Armenian people in his work, consisting of songs, poems and parables, while his oeuvre had the function of a mouthpiece of the main part of Armenian society, reflecting all its hopes and aspirations. During and after the War of 1877 – 1878 Givani stayed in Aleksandropol', where he was head of the department of folk musicians, and closely followed the progress of the fighting and of the conflicts subsequent to the War. He sang his songs and read his poems dedicated to the War and the Armenian issue in the café-club Alexandropoulos. It should be noted that almost all of Givani's songs and poems on these topics are written in English and are deeply allegorical in Aesopian tradition. Allegories were an often chosen form of creative expression by the Ashugs of the East and in addition this style has helped Givani to avoid tsarist censorship. The allegorical songs and poems of Givani were clear to his contemporaries, as all described events were of current interest in the time he had written and published them. Therefore the vast amount of hints and nicknames in Givani's songs and poems on the War and on the “Armenian Question” was easily understood at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but demand explanation today. Let's give some characteristic examples of the many songs and poems by Givani:

In the song “Stand up!”<sup>6</sup> Givani identifies the Armenian people with the morning star and different planets in the sky such as Jupiter, Saturn and Mars symbolize the Balkan peoples. Furthermore Givani dreams of an Armenian people, who will join a “caravan of the liberated nations” and will take its place among the “free stars in the sky”. After the aspired release from Ottoman rule, Givani like many in Eastern Armenia connects the future of their Western Armenian counterpart to Russia. In the poem “The Great Uncle”<sup>7</sup> the author no longer hoped for a “two-faced Europe” to release his people but was looking forward to the “Russian Uncle”, expecting him to help Armenia. Another interesting allegory reads the following: “Aunt Srbuhi” stands for Serbia, “Burgen” for Bulgaria and “Beauty Helena-Herzegovina” obviously for Bosnia-Herzegovina, who are all subject to the liberating efforts of the “Great Uncle”, while “Haykuhi” – Armenia (Hayastan) and “Mariam” – Macedonia who both “cry blood” and have the name of the “Great Uncle on their lips” cannot wait for their release to freedom. The question of Armenia's liberation aided by Russian weapons also arises in other poems and songs by Givani such as in “Silent Cry of the South” or “Lullaby”.

In his work Givani reflected the severe consequences of the Russo-Ottoman War for the Armenian people and in particular of the events that took place during and after the Congress of Berlin. Hence in poems and songs such as “Star”, “Song,” and “O beauty-beauty!”, Givani allegorically tried to indicate how the Great Powers would manipulate the Armenian issue and how cold-blooded Empires would look at the suffering of the Armenians. In the song “Star”<sup>8</sup>, the star “born in the East”

stands for Armenia, the Moon for the Ottoman Empire, “a collection of seven large stars” for the Congress of Berlin, the Sun for Russia and the “liberated four stars” for the Balkan peoples. In the poem (“Song”) Givani by writing “bitter cold option” alludes to Russia, with “flame” to the Ottoman Empire, with “the vast sea” to England, who would each have their individual and opposite interest in the “Armenian Question”. Despite the difficult situation of the Western Armenians, who were caught in the crossfire of the Great Powers’ diplomatic games, Givani was not discouraged and in the song “On the beauty-beauty!”<sup>9</sup> he optimistically praises the bright future of his beautiful Armenia, not forgetting to link it to Russia, which he allegorically calls “a woman giving medication”.

Thus by having a look at the works of the writers mentioned, it becomes clear that in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and especially during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878, Armenian political life was strongly influenced by a brilliant generation of writers and poets, whose spiritual heritage has gone down in the treasury of the culture of the Armenian people.

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<sup>1</sup> Raffi, *Collected Works* [in Armenian language], 3, Yerevan 1963, 188.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>3</sup> Иван Вазов, *Под игом* [Under the Yoke], Москва, 1970, 8.

<sup>4</sup> Nağor Baronian, *Collected Works* [in Armenian language], Yerevan 1969, 373-481.

<sup>5</sup> Rafael Patkanyan, *Collected Works* [in Armenian language], 1, Yerevan 1963.

<sup>6</sup> Aghasi Sahakyan (ed.), Givani. *Literary and artistic publications* [in Armenian language], Yerevan, 1988, 139.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 242.

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## **The Reflection of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Armenia’s Periodical Press**

**Abstract:** *The present article gives an overview of the reflection of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in Armenia’s periodical press. War-related publications in Armenia’s most important newspapers have been reviewed exclusively and include articles issued in Constantinople, Smyrna, Nicomedia, Tbilisi, and Baku, and therefore points of view from both the Western and Eastern Armenian sides. Of special interest is the situation of the Armenian press in the center of the Ottoman Empire – the Armenian press in Constantinople. The article furthermore shows that the journals and newspaper addressed a great variety of topics, still having the Armenian questions constantly on their agenda, which manifested itself also after the War of 1877 – 1878, when the periodical press pointed out that there was no reason for vengeance by the Kurdish or Turkish population since it was especially Armenian peasants, who supported them during the war at the cost of significant personal sacrifices.*

Despite the centuries-old basis of the Armenian periodical press, at the intermediate stage of our research it has become evident that it would be necessary to look beyond the geographical territory of Armenia and the political centers of Armenian reality, which in turn led to some other insights into the Armenian press as well. I have decided to review only publications and analysis related to the period of 1877 – 1878 in this article, considering the huge amount of information caused by the fact that the Armenian people had great political expectations of the above-mentioned war and especially of the following international developments. On the basis of unfavorable objective and subjective conditions, the Armenian people not only lost their state but as a national unit were also divided into several parts, which was expressed on a geographical level. Generally speaking the duality of Armenian identity in geographical sense was to be seen in a split between East and West, which was predetermining the differences in political, social and economic life and in the respective outlook on the future.

In the context of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 the Armenian periodical press can be examined both on a geographical level and in terms of political views and preferences. The above-mentioned geographical phenomenon becomes very typical firstly for the role and participation of the Armenian people in the Russo-

Ottoman War and as well for the periodical press, dividing it into two specific parts – an eastern and a western part. Ironically, the two parts of the Armenian people were on the opposite sides of the barricades in the Russo-Ottoman War. The eastern part of the population was under the rule of tsarist Russia for about 50 years at that time and therefore had a very pro-Russian attitude. If we would consider the Armenian generals of this war just as high-ranked officers of the Russian army (I would like to mention especially highly decorated generals such as Arshak (Arkadi) Ter-Ghukasov, Hovhannes (Ivan) Lazarev, or the commander of the Caucasian Corps Miqayel (Mikhail) Loris-Melikov), who were simply fulfilling their obligations and there weren't even a little national implication in their actions, it would be an exaggeration as already the fact that the regulation of the Caucasian front's most important direction (i. e. the liberation of historical Armenian territories mostly populated by Armenians) was left to them, which proves that such a military choice was no coincidence. There is no doubt that the Russians had favored Armenians as generals in the Russian army, taking into account that the population of Asian Turkey, which was going to become the second battlefield in the upcoming war, was mostly composed of Armenians.

According to Russian thinking, beside the occupational war the Armenian generals would also struggle for the independence of their country and consequently would gain the sympathy and confidence of the local population. Thereby an image of the Russian army as a conqueror would be diminished which would create more favorable conditions for the general's activity. Besides, a mobilization and a volunteer movement, which included a high number of Eastern Armenians, were organized rearwards. The situation among Western Armenians was quite different as the results of the previous Russo-Ottoman War (1828 – 1829) had upset the Western Armenians. The Russian army had retreated from the battlefields, forgetting about the contribution of the Armenian population in the victory of the Russians, and Russia was no longer interested in the fate of the Western Armenians after the war. The policy of the Western Armenians was very cautious during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878: Distrusting the Russians, the Western Armenians were trying to avoid getting involved in the war. They feared that they would fall in between two stools again, i. e. that they would experience only the terrible consequences of the war, whether it was persecution or forced mass migration. On the other hand, the Constitution adopted in the Ottoman Empire in 1876 aroused some expectations in Western Armenians and they became hopeful that the application of the constitution would provide them a decent life.

I would like to break off my reasoning at this point to make a short observation, which is directly connected to my future statement and will help to get a better understanding of the peculiarities of the Armenian periodical press in that period on the background of the Armenian population's political situation: The inquiry is that the governing centers of both the western and the Eastern Armenians' reality were formed beyond their homelands, only Vagharshapat (now Ejmiatsin) – the residence of the Catholicos of All Armenians was an exception, as the Catholicos was the only person in power, though it was sometimes *de jure*, and had a pan-Armenian nature. This situation affected the formation and location of the Armenian periodical press. In 1877 – 1878 the centers of the Western Armenian press were Constantinople (for quite a long time Istanbul was not perceived in the Armenian

consciousness, and in Armenian printed texts the city was simply called Polis (colloquial for Constantinople), which was the first city on the number of published press, Smyrna (now Izmir), Astacus or Nicomedia. Tbilisi was the center of the Eastern Armenian periodical press, while one periodical was issued in Baku. I examined 14 papers and journals from 1877 – 1878, all in Armenian language and in chronological order, and I shall try to reveal the main subjects within these materials, which would give reason to several other interesting related questions, which I'll leave for a more comprehensive and detailed analysis at another occasion.

In 1877 – 1878 the following periodicals were published in Constantinople:

- “Masis” (published in 1852 – 1908)
- “Avetaber” [Herald] (1855 – 1915)<sup>1</sup>
- “P'ownj” [Bunch] (1866 – 1908)<sup>2</sup>
- “Hayrenik” [Homeland] (1870 – 1896)<sup>3</sup>
- “Lowys” [Light] (1874 – 1885)
- “Nor dar” [New century] (1876 – 1878)<sup>4</sup>
- “Lragir” [Journal] (1875 – 1880)

At the same time, in Smyrna the following periodicals were published:

- “Aršalowys Araratean” [Ararat Sunrise] (1840 – 1887, it was the first journal in Turkey)
- “Arewelian Mamowl” [Eastern Press] (1871 – 1909)

In Nicomedia (Astacus):

- “Howys” [Hope] (1864 – 1878)

In Tbilisi:

- “Mšak” [The Toiler] (1872 – 1921)
- “Meļu Hayastani” [Bee of Armenia] (1858 – 1886)
- “P'ordz” [Experience] (1876 – 1881)

In Baku:

- “Haykakan Ašarh” [Armenian World] (1877 – 1878, Yerevan, 1879)

It should be noted that the Armenian press of that period was extremely sensitive towards the process of the Russo-Ottoman War and the events that preceded and followed it. The variety of topics is high: balance of power in international relations, expectations of both sides, outbreak of hostilities, rearrangement and movement of military forces, the question of eastern Christians, and finally the armistice and especially the postwar phase of diplomatic negotiations. There is also a great diversity of genres: editorials, analysis, feuilletons, international, political and military theories, or just daily news. Especially in the case of international news, there are many references to Russian and European periodicals such as “The Times”, “Le Moniteur universel”, “National-Zeitung”, “Political Correspondent”, “Pester Lloyd”, “Neues Wiener Tagblatt”, “Kölnische Zeitung”, “Independence Belge”, “Daily Chronicle”, “Daily Telegraph”, “Weser-Zeitung”, “Голос” [Voice], “Тифлисский вестник” [Tiflis bulletin], “Кавказ” [Caucasus], “Новое Время” [The New Times], “Правительственный вестник” [Government Gazette], “Северный вестник” [Northern Herald], “Петербургские ведомости” [St. Petersburg Gazette], and “Православное обозрение” [Orthodox review].

Each of the Western and Eastern Armenian periodicals had its own orientation due to the fact that they were on opposite sides of the geographical and political processes, but they were also not entirely homogeneous on the inside and were often attached to ideological principles of various socio-political movements. Among the Eastern Armenian periodicals "Mšak" was the daily press organ of the progressivists. Under the editorship of the famous publicist Grigor Artsruni (1845 – 1892) "Mšak" became a fervent supporter of the ideology of liberalism. Of the entire Armenian periodical press, the newspaper "Mšak" provides by far the most information about the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878. First of all the publications can be grouped by the states and regions that were directly or indirectly related to the war: the Russian and Ottoman Empires, Bulgaria, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, England, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Italy, France, Greece, and Georgia. Secondly, the publications can also be grouped by a thematic approach and therefore by on the Eastern Question, the hostilities of the Russo-Ottoman War itself, on the basis of living conditions, human resources and the process of negotiations such as the peace treaty of San Stefano and the Congress of Berlin or of course by the Armenian Question. "Mšak" also had a radical position on the liberation of the Armenian people from the Ottoman yoke. Sharp editorial articles and various publications illustrated that the newspaper considers the liberation of Western Armenia by Russian armed forces<sup>5</sup> a crucial issue, as well as the mobilization of the Armenian forces with the same purpose. The situation of the Western Armenians was consistently presented as poor, based on a background of exploitation and general oppression of the Armenian population. In addition to the editorials of Grigor Artsruni, the series "Letter from Turkey"<sup>6</sup> was also intermittently updated, and I am not mistaken if I assume that at that time the materials in this series were unique in terms of the issues touching upon the problems of Western Armenians.

The periodical "Bee of Armenia" under the editorship of Stepan Mandinyan and later under Petros Simonyan was more conservative. The open ideological antagonism of "Mšak" and "Melu Hayastani" also showed itself during the aforementioned war. They were assessing the military situation differently and their opinions diverged especially on the issue of armed participation of the Armenian people in the war. Having a very pro-Russian policy in its observations of the movement of the Russian army, "Melu Hayastani" still didn't agree with "Mšak" in the issue of the participation of armed Armenians in the war, hence taking a more cautious stance in this matter. In relation to this question we can read in the "Bee of Armenia":

In response to the article of the 10<sup>th</sup> issue of "Mšak" entitled "One of the journals of Tbilisi and its negative attitude towards the Armenians of Constantinople" we would like to reaffirm our appeal to the Western Armenians, stay away from any kind of demonstrations, fusses and rebellions which require strength and capabilities.<sup>7</sup>

The mood of "Melu Hayastani" changed after the Peace Treaty of San Stefano. Based on the new post-war situation this change was not only the feature of "Melu Hayastani" but a common tendency in Armenian periodical press. The treaty of San Stefano made the Armenian Question a matter of international relations for the first time. Later on, the Congress of Berlin was also actively discussed in Arme-

nian periodicals. Neglecting its previous position, “Melu Hayastani” began to widely consider the Armenian Question in the context of the Eastern Question and began to develop ideas of an Armenian autonomy and of reforms in the areas inhabited by Armenians, tying its vain hopes to the decisions made at the Congress of Berlin. Referring to the postwar situation in Western Armenia and to the ethnic conflicts, the newspaper quoted one of the local beys: “Armenians, when the Russians leave I’ll build a house with your bodies and I will cover the walls with money.”<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately such threats of the Ottoman Empire’s social elite and even the execution of these threats happened quite often at that time.

The journal “Haykakan Ašarh” doesn’t burst upon the eye with an analysis of political processes conditioned by the war. It mainly referred to the Russian press connected to this question and presented the publications concerning the Eastern and especially the Armenian Questions. The correspondent of “Голос” [The Voice] outlined an interesting self-portrait about the Russian position on Western Armenians:

The poor Armenians really suffered because of us. Confident that we have a specific purpose, they welcomed us with open hearts and were under our influence. Now the Turks are looking at them as traitors and often deprive them of their property, and even reave their lives. All due to the fact that the Armenians believed that we could free them from the Ottoman yoke, and to input Russian administration in it. Turks do with them what they want; they spare neither women nor kids.<sup>9</sup>

The governance of the municipality of Armenians living under the yoke of the Ottoman Empire was quite special. Most of the Armenians were concentrated in Western Armenia but the national elite, which was regulating the commune’s life wasn’t located in Western Armenia but in the capital of the Empire. It is believed that in the 15<sup>th</sup> century, in 1461 the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II Fātih gave the right of the patriarchal throne in Constantinople to the Armenians. After the conquest of the Eastern Christian world the Ottoman authorities pursued their political, social and economic reasonable objectives and wanted to push back the owners of the city. Through large-scale resettlement policy they created a counterbalanced to them at the expense of other ethnic communities. The Armenian community of Constantinople quickly took the lead in western national life and played a decisive role in many crucial issues. Thus, there was a situation where the majority of Armenians living in the historical territory of Western Armenia were on a completely different level of socio-economic life than the Armenians living in European Turkey, which often caused some situations where the problems of one half of the population was alien and therefore not entirely clear to the other. This situation became topical for Western Armenian periodicals. As it can be seen above, in 1877 – 1878 the Western Armenian media centers were in Constantinople and Smyrna and were therefore located or close to the European part of the Ottoman Empire. On the pages of “Melu Hayastani” we read that “in Western Armenian reality, too, there were opposition forces and opinions, according to which the Armenians had to become

disseminators of European values in Turkey, for which they had to be provided with a safe life.”<sup>10</sup> With the outbreak of hostilities, the periodical press, which in some ways reflected the views of Western Armenians’ leading power, not without any reason has taken a more or less conservative position.

One of the more active centers of the Western Armenian periodical press was Smyrna, where journalism was on a quite high professional level in that period of time. Smyrna’s Journalism was mainly represented by the periodicals “Aršalowys Araratean” and “Arewelian Mamowl”. Their relationship was not exactly amicable and they had some serious ideological confrontations. The editor of “Arewelian Mamowl” Matt’ēos Mamuryan, had good analytical skills and contributed reactionary views to the journal “Aršalowys Araratean”, thereby calling the editor of the latter Ghugas Paltazaryan “obscurant”. Nevertheless, the two periodicals had common views in the question of evaluating the Russo-Ottoman War.

During the study I looked through the issues 1058 – 1082 (1877) and 1086 – 1108 (1878) of “Aršalowys Araratean” and all 24 issues of “Arewelian Mamowl” (1877 – 1878). In the articles related to military activities the Russians are considered to be enemies from the very beginning. In his political analysis Mamuryan writes:

Although Russia claims that its purpose is to improve the well-being of the Christians, he is silently doing the opposite and is always afraid that the sick people (society) can recover. The law in modern politics does not embody justice, love of freedom or humanity but only the will of the stronger.<sup>11</sup>

The question is described in more detail by Shahnur in his column “Correspondence”: “But what does the Armenian think? Doesn’t he think that his religion, nationality, language, his identity will be at danger, if the Russian flags appear on the ruins of Ani and Lake Van?”<sup>12</sup> The question had such an importance in the journal that many discussions followed, in which the participants became translators of the political situation. In one of those conversations in which the anti-Russian stance continued, a young Armenian man does not believe in Russia, thinking that: “Russia’s policy is to gradually erase nations from the earth’s surface and to russify nations under its authority.”<sup>13</sup> “Aršalowys Araratean” was also worried about the war against the Ottoman Empire. There are numerous publications in the journal related to the events on the battlefields. This periodical also favored a victory of the Ottoman army, which is why one can find many ideas like the following in it: “We got good news about the Ottoman army, which is fighting with courage and drives away the enemy towards Asia and the Danube”<sup>14</sup> or “It is more than authentic that the Ottoman army stopped the attack of the enemy with bravery.”<sup>15</sup> Still, it would not be correct to assert that the Armenian media had a blindfolded bias favoring the Ottoman army. The “Arewelian Mamowl” followed the course of events attentively and examined the war’s geopolitical background, hence stating that:

After the victory of the Ottoman Empire in Asia, the Russians retreated towards the frontier and lifted the blockade of Kars. But the glory of this victory will be saddened if it turns out true that the Kurds are

raiding Armenia, rob villages and torture innocent people, not taking into account that thousands of Armenians did everything for the Ottoman Empire thereby neither sparing money nor effort or labor.<sup>16</sup>

The Armenian periodical press of Constantinople gives us a more diversified image. Here the two main periodicals called “Lragir” and “Masis” are in confrontation. In one publication of “Lragir” one can read: “Masis” is officially an elected national newspaper [...] as it is the secret body of the patriarchate and each publication of this journal is firstly presented to them before being published.”<sup>17</sup> I have reviewed the issues 1925 – 2061 (1877) of “Masis”<sup>18</sup> and the issues 771 – 875 (from 26 August until 30 December 1878) of “Lragir” but the fact that the majority of the publications of “Lragir” coincide with those of “Arewelean Mamowl” (and I am familiar with all of its issues from the years 1877 – 1878) let me assume that “Lragir” shared the ideology of the “Arewelean Mamowl”, which is important in terms of the assessment of the events in 1877.

First of all I'll present the political orientation of the newspaper “Masis” in relation to the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 in chronological order: Keeping up with their colleagues, “Masis” followed the hostilities as well as the international developments related to this war very attentively. In addition to the political theory, the columns “Latest News” and “News of War” were constantly updated, while the relationship between Christian nations of the Empire and the High Porte before the War of 1877 – 1878 and following negotiation processes were also presented in a very detailed way. The newspaper tried to stress unreasonableness of any interference of other powerful states into matters of Eastern Christians:

But when it comes to Turkey – it is an exception. For instance the Emperors of Germany or Russia do not accept the role of the patriarch in the protection of Russian or German Catholics but not even leading the church they want to protect the Christians of Turkey and send some imprudent messages to the Sultan in this context. Neither the Christians nor the Muslims can accept gladly the offers of these foreigners because the latter simply pursue their own objectives.<sup>19</sup>

In another edition the newspaper referred to internal problems of Russia: “The favorite subject of the tsar is the poor situation of the Christians of Turkey but who should pay attention to the problems of the subjects of the Russian Empire?”<sup>20</sup> The press, as it occurs quite often, expressed the official position of the state or of party politics – independent and impartial press is a unique phenomenon. We have already mentioned that the Western press expressed the position of the Western Armenians' social elite but there were also opposed evidences. There is no doubt that in Western Armenian reality there was a group of public figures who lead the way of the Armenian people's liberation from the Ottoman yoke and in that context had some expectations in the Russian military forces but this is subject of another study. In the present context I would simply like to add that having its own orientation, the Western press also stated the opposite orientation of the Western Armeni-

ans' other part. Evidences for this are quite numerous and are given here within two examples:

Russia's intention was to lead the Christians of the Ottoman Empire to an open revolt but only Bulgarians and Bosnians fulfilled their dreams. Armenians are the most peaceful and honest people of Turkey; the most convenient for the Ottoman Empire, because there are many reasons for compliance, bilateral peace and unity between them. Armenians have never rebelled, have not created political problems; nevertheless Russians tried to show them in a suspicious light in order to break the friendly relations between Armenians and the Ottoman Empire and to make them an easy prey for themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Pashas who were the most important tool of administrative units of the country largely depended on Armenian bankers, as the High Porte trusted them the regulation of the provinces only under the warranty of Armenian bankers. The result of the natural sympathies of Armenians towards Russia was the fact that the Turkish government began to openly question the fidelity of Armenians.<sup>22</sup>

The situation changed completely after the war. The states which had never participated in the war began to play important roles in the new geopolitical situation and derived their own political profits from it. In this sense, the following remark of "Arewelian Mamowl" is very accurate: "Russia besotted with its own victory rather lost than deceived the allies [...] European politicians wished to resolve the Russian or Eastern Question without having to seize their arms."<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, diplomacy does not always adhere to the principles of justice. The following note of "Lragir" concerning the forces that entered the game after the war is very accurate:

All the declarations about the protection of the Slavs, freedom of Christians, war against brigands – all this is of no value; it's just a struggle for power, which is likely to turn Europe into another part of Asia [...] Russia got what it needed. It wanted to have power over Constantinople. Austria got the opportunity to suppress Serbia. England got what was necessary to maintain the Asian empire next to Syria and Egypt [...] Big states do the same thing with friendly relations as big animals do in the wild: They devour the small states to feed themselves.<sup>24</sup>

The "Arewelian Mamowl" also responded to the postwar transformation of the geopolitical map and to the change in political interests.<sup>25</sup> As it was impossible to unite all the occupied regions with Russia, concerning the Western Armenians it was decided to implement article 16 of the peace treaty signed at San Stefano on 3 March 1878. Article 16 reads:

As the evacuation by the Russian troops of the territory which they occupy in Armenia, and which is to be restored to Turkey, might give rise to conflicts and complications detrimental to the maintenance of good relations between the two countries, the Sublime Porte engages to carry into effect, without further delay, the

improvements and reforms demanded by local requirements in the provinces inhabited by Armenians, and to guarantee their security from Kurds and Circassians.

On 8 July 1878 during the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Congress of Berlin, the Armenian Question was watered down and expressed by article 61. Referring to the Armenians as contributors to the treasury of world culture and as the oldest Christian nation in comparison to other peoples of Eastern Christian civilization, the Armenian public mind asked rhetorical questions in demanding justice: "If rapes perpetrated by the Kurds were known to Europe, the suffering of the Bulgarians would show them not so terrible, but alas, the mountains of Armenia are very high, and the cries of the unfortunate victims drown in the Euphrates valley" – writes "P'ordz"<sup>26</sup>. A wave of disappointment spread. When first mentioned that one should not give much importance to the initiative of discussing the Armenian Question on an international level, everybody badly treated the person who had expressed that idea as everybody believed in this initiative.

But all the efforts of the Armenian people were in vain, other nations involved in the Congress had arms in their hands [...] Could we win freedom only with the help of cross and klobuk? [...] Enlightened people of the 19<sup>th</sup> century want Armenians to commit genocide, to give them a prize.<sup>27</sup>

In the "Aršalowys Araratean" it reads: "The voice of weapons was louder than the voice of the pen [...] Armenians thought that their age-old loyalty is enough to obtain peacefully the things that others would like to win by force of arms."<sup>28</sup> The same "Aršalowys Araratean" also wrote: "This is how the Congress left all peoples unsatisfied. Just like international law taken against radical evil, it is like light therapy, hence the basis of peace will also be ephemeral."<sup>29</sup> Such comments show only that the wave of excitement that was to overcome all parts of the population, didn't last long and it is noteworthy that it happened more rapidly in the western part than in the eastern part of the population. However, the latter was involved in the situation from a certain distance though.

Despite the efforts of national public figures to neutralize the war's effects on the life of Western Armenians, the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 did have serious consequences. Parallel to the retreat of the Russian army, the Western Armenians began to migrate, and some people's fear that Armenia would remain without Armenians did come true. It is obvious that after the war the question of the Armenians' safety had to be solved, which is also reflected in the press: "But what did the Armenian people do wrong to the Kurds or Turks to fear their vengeance. Armenians and especially the peasants only helped them during the war at the cost of great sacrifices."<sup>30</sup>

On the background of massacres that followed the Russo-Ottoman War it is very sad to read the words of the last sultan of the Ottoman Empire Abdülhamid II (1876 – 1908) addressed to the Armenian Patriarch of Constantinople Nerses: "I know that my Armenian nation suffered a lot because of this war but it should know that it will be rewarded for its sorrows; it will reap the fruits of its fidelity."<sup>31</sup> The reward was not long in coming as the slaughter and depopulation of Armenians that had already begun in 1894 – 1896 reached its apogee in 1915 by the commitment of the Armenian Genocide. The denial of it will leave an indelible mark of shame not only on the political successors of the crime but also on the face of humanity. On

the background of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the following innocent words of the journal "Arewelian Mamowl" coming from the depths of the 19<sup>th</sup> century sound like a prophecy: "In a way, the Armenians for the Turks are the same as the Jews for Europe."<sup>32</sup> – A situation which had a tragic end for both nations.

In this article I have tried to give a general picture of the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877 – 1878 as it was reflected in Armenian periodicals. The mass of information did not allow me to give a complete presentation of the subject, which would in detail include all of the events that took place before and after the war. Nevertheless, in the context of the duality of the Armenian people, which was split into two opposite parts, divergent publications and articles of Armenian periodicals gave me the opportunity to avoid one-sided conclusions and to make a comprehensive study of the question, sometimes requiring noticing and elaborating on the messages that are hidden between the lines.

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<sup>1</sup> Only issue Nr. 3 (March 1, 1877) of *Avetaber* was available to me.

<sup>2</sup> The issues available of *P'ownj* were 1146-1151, 1156-1159 (1877) and 1313-1316 (1878).

<sup>3</sup> I analyzed the issue Nr. 321 (March 5, 1877) of the periodical *Hayrenik*.

<sup>4</sup> I have looked through the issues 1967, 1971 and 1972 (February, 1877) of the paper *Nor dar*.

<sup>5</sup> Raffi on the needs of western Armenians to take arms: "Those are just vain hopes", cit. in *Mšak*, 1878, 14 February, 22, 1p.; and on the need to rise in rebellion in Western Armenia: "It's not too late yet", cit. in *Mšak*, 1878, 16 March, 41/42, 1p. Hrant on the other hand stated on the need to save the western Armenians from the Turks: "Let's be prepared", 1877, 28 November, 86, 1p.; while Grigor Artsruni said: "It is necessary", 1878, 1 March, 30, 1; and that the independence of Armenia and the need to join Russia was "the only issue" 1878, 19 May, 35, 1p.

<sup>6</sup> Gr. Nikoghosyan on the entrance of Lazarev in Turkey, 1878, 2 January, 105, 3; on the consequences of the Armenian Question in the Congress of Berlin, 1878, 3 August, 131, 3; on the mistakes of the governors of Erzurum and on the migration of the Armenian people, 1878, 11 August, 137, 2p.; on the content of the letter sent to the Patriarch by the Armenians of Erzurum, 1878, 5 September, 151, 3; on the Eastern Question and the Consequences of the Congress of Berlin, 1878, 7 September, 153, 3; on the migration of the Armenians of Erzurum to Russia, 1878, 14 September, 157, 3; on the robberies of Turks, 1878, 25 December, 225, 3; on the order of Lazarev to forbid the migration of Armenians from Turkey to Russia, 1878, 5 October, 170, 1; on the geographical and economic situation of the village next to Erzurum Qeopri-Qeo after the Russian army's invasion, 1878, 15 November, 197, 3; on the opening of the monument dedicated to the killed Russian soldiers, 1878, 18 November, 200, 3; on the meeting of General-Consul Obermiller and the English politician Trotter concerning the Armenian Question, 1878, 25 November; on the situation of Western Armenia after the Congress of Berlin, 1878, 20 October, 180, 3; on the mobilization of Armenians, 1877, 19 January, 4, 3; on the robbery of Armenian and Bulgarian population by Turks, 1877, 7 November, 82, 3; on the demands of Armenians after the war, 1878, 22 February, 28, 2p.; on the question of autonomy of Armenia, 1878, 17 March, 42, 4; on the voyage of Khrimyan Hayrik from Constantinople to Europe related to the Armenian Question, 1878, 23 March, 46, 3; on the situation of the Armenian people when the Russian army left Erzurum, 1878, 9 August, 135, 3; on the article of the treaty of San Stefano concerning the Armenian Question, 1878, 5 April, 54, 3; on the Armenian Question, on the peace creating process between Russians and Turks, on the massacres of Mush, Van, Bayazet, Alashkert etc., 1878, 26 April, 64,

3; on the trip of Khrimyan Hayrik and archbishop Khoren to Berlin, 1878, 21 June, 101, 3; on the acceptance of Khrimyan Hayrik and archbishop Khoren by German officials, 1878, 6 July, 112, 3; on the Congress of Berlin, 1878, 22 July, 124, 3; on the rebellion of the Armenians of Zeytun because of denial of the Armenian Question, 1878, 8 August, 134, 3; on the Armenian Question, 1878, 24 October, 181, 3; on the mobilization of Armenians, 1878, 29 January, 11, 3; on the passage of Erzurum to Van and on the economic situation of the latter, 1878, 8 May, 81, 3; on the letter of the Armenian Patriarch sent to the High Porte, 1878, 22 September, 162, 3; on how the Turkish army had ruined Van, 1877, 24 February, 13, 3p.; Arpiar Arpiaryan (who signed as Haykak) on the Armenian Question, 1878, 14 November, 196, 3; on the works of the meeting in Constantinople related to the Armenian Question, 1878, 28 November, 205, 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Metu Hayastani*, Tiflis, 1877, 5, 2; 6, 1p.; 7, 1-4.

<sup>8</sup> *Metu Hayastani*, 1878, 15, 3.

<sup>9</sup> *Haykakan Ašarh*, Baku, 1877, 7p., 219.

<sup>10</sup> *Metu Hayastani*, 1877, 10, 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1877, 4, 156p.

<sup>12</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1877, 5, 186.

<sup>13</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1877, 8, 311.

<sup>14</sup> *Aršalowys Araratean*, 1877, 1066, 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Aršalowys Araratean*, 1877, 1068, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1877, 7, 279.

<sup>17</sup> *Lragir*, 1878, 837, 2.

<sup>18</sup> The incompleteness of series of the article's publications is the result of their absence in library collections.

<sup>19</sup> *Masis*, 1877, 1941, 1.

<sup>20</sup> *Masis*, 1877, 1965, 1.

<sup>21</sup> *Masis*, 1877, 2026, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Lragir*, 1878, 803, 1.

<sup>23</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1878, 5, 38.

<sup>24</sup> *Lragir*, 1878, 786, 1.

<sup>25</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1878, 7, 98-102, 116-120; 8, 161-164; 11, 287p.; 12, 327p.

<sup>26</sup> *P'ordz*, 1877/1878, 4, 436.

<sup>27</sup> *P'ordz*, 1878, 832, 1p.

<sup>28</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1878, 5, 9p.

<sup>29</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1878, 7, 120.

<sup>30</sup> *Metu Hayastani*, 1878, 34, 1.

<sup>31</sup> *P'ordz*, 1877/1878, 2, 379p.

<sup>32</sup> *Arewelean Mamowl*, 1878, 6, 46.

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