

ETHNO-MYTHS ON THE MACEDONIAN POLITICAL SCENE

Abstract: In spite of the short history of pluralism in Macedonia, the heterogeneous structure of the population offers wide basis for researching the political situations from an aspect of political ethnology / anthropology. Namely, the existence of more significant ethno-national myths which are characteristic for the Macedonian political scene (ethno-national myths of the Macedonian and Albanian nations) is introduced in this work. The divergency, which shows up in the Macedonian nation in relation with the ethno-national myth, is particularly interesting.

Key words: political ethnology / anthropology, ethno-national myths, Macedonian political scene, Macedonian nation, Albanian nation, political parties, ethno-ideology, political mythology.

Aristotle, in his work "Politics" is observing the man as a human being, which is political by nature, *homo politicus* (Balandije, 1997: 42) So, the man is the basic bearer and creator of the politics in a society. But, he as an individual is incapable to influence the political process in the society and it is forced to make groups. For that purpose political parties are formed, which absorb in their frames, all the participants in the political life. But, generally, today, a great number of citizens are not interested for direct participation in politics, so there is a functional need in the society, for various organizations which will attract the people to participate in the political process. At the same time organizations appear to agitate and spread ideas and call for participation in the politics. Often it does not have to be political parties. All those organizations make efforts to attract more people, gain their support, particularly on the elections, and thus win the political power, apart from it is about local, parliamentary or presidential elections. The political life primarily is a process in which those organizations are basic subjects and bearers. Also, the political parties often cover up their real face and make efforts to present as organizations inspired by the religious principles, national interests, or by the pure common human interests. Stressing exactly these segments and at the same time creating various stories for their own people, the political parties and organizations are followed by the electorate at large extent.

Beginning with the years of the disintegration of Yugoslavian federation (at the end of the 80-s) in almost all Yugoslavian republics national feeling began to resurrect, accompanied with patriotism, in the mildest form or with strong nationalism, even chauvinism. It is very interesting that particular parties with national character stressed these feelings, which have a great influence on people who liked to listen about their brave ancestors, about the historic past of their people and their religion, which was a taboo in the one party system. Maybe for this reason these ethno-national myths became so significant. But I have to mention that ethno-national myths were not used only in politics. Indeed, under the influence of the politics they were infiltrated in almost all spheres of people's life: the streets, mediums, science, literature, army, education etc. The attempts to revive the national symbols were productive. The result was obvious: there was not any Yugoslavian nationality and if anyone identified himself as such was called by ugly, ironic names: yugonostalgias, serbocommunists, communists, serbophiles, betrayers etc, which have a negative influence on their further proclamation as Yugoslavians. The change of the identity was unavoidable. The former "over national" identity (Yugoslavians) which had

tendency to become even a national identity disappeared, and the national identity (Macedonians, Albanians, Serbs...) from the marginal role that have had in that Yugoslavian society was obtaining greater significance.

Before I begin with my exposure, which, above all, is related to the Macedonian ethno-national myths, I should say a couple of words about the term myth in general. According to Mircea Eliade, (Eliade, 1992: 17) the myth tells a sacred story; it narrates an experience which has happened in a fictive time at the very "beginning". So the point is that there is always a "creation": it is about how something is created, how it started to *exist*. According to Raoul Girardet (Girardet, 2000: 11-12), the word myth has more meanings, which are interpreted on many ways. For the anthropologists and religion historians the myth is a story with a historical theme ("In that time..." "Once upon a time there was..."). Their opinion is that the myths should be understood as stories about past times which have a great value even today: because they explain and justify some fated alternatives in man's life or certain forms of organization of the community or the society. For some theoreticians the concept of myth is reduced to mystification: as illusion, fanaticism or concealment of the truth. So, the political myth is an invented superstructure, twisted or unobjective, uncertain, debatable explanation of the reality (Girardet, 2000: 13). But, despite being a legendary story, the political myth has also a certain exploit meaning. Above all, it has a motivational role and function: to transmit insightful, prophesying messages and to stimulate the appearance of different activities and revolutions. The greatest number of the ethnologists, today, agree with the myth being an answer for the social contra-balance and the tensed relations in some social structures (Girardet, 2000: 204).

The political ethno-myth of the Macedonians can be divided in two opinions. Namely, the issues are two ethno-myths, which are produced and dictated by opposed opinions of certain political power centers. The first view or the first ethno-myth is when the Macedonians declare themselves as direct descendents of the Ancient Macedonians and the second one is when they connect their own genesis with the history of the Old Slavs. This kind of divergency, which appears in the Macedonian ethnos, started to be illustrated at a larger extent after the independence of Macedonia that is in the period when the era of totalitarianism finished.

The World Macedonian Congress (WMC) appears as a main promoter, which emphasizes and gives a patronage to the ancient roots of today's Macedonians, and to which are also joined other political parties and organizations that represent same or similar opinions. One interesting fact which is in favour of the previously mentioned information is the fact that during the second general Assembly of the World Macedonian Congress, held in the Cultural Center in Ohrid in July 2000, the guards who came from this organization (WMC) were dressed as spear-carriers (Macedonian phalanx) of Ancient Macedonians. This scenography should represent continuity, which dated from the period of Ancient Macedonians, and tradition, which lasts till nowadays.

Also in the Macedonian national programme, designed by the World Macedonian Congress, the issue is primeval time when Ancient Macedonians settled, then formed their state, created the oldest script in the human civilization from which later all the other scripts in the world developed. In spite of the great number of the elements of this kind, I decided to select shortly only the most essential parts of topos of Macedonian ethno-national mythology included into the national programme of this organization: "*Macedonia is a holy, blessed and biblical land, a cradle of Christianity, a mother of orthodoxy and a center of world's literacy. The oldest script*

in human civilization is found in Macedonia, dated from 5000 to 7000 BC. It is one of the oldest organized states in Europe, founded by king Karan in 814 BC, a state that is 38 years older than Athens (founded in 776 BC) and 61 years older than Rome (founded in 753 BC); on the other hand, the first union of Macedonia was accomplished by king Perdiccas in the 8th century BC from which later on arose the Macedonian Empire of Philip of Macedon and his son Alexander the Great. The Macedonian people would never renounce nor accept anyone else to quit, in its name its state, land and national symbols the sixteen-ray, yellow-golden sun and the yellow-golden two-tailed lion on a red shield” (Petrov, 1993).

Besides, when it comes to the emphasis of the principles of age and continuity, it tends to connect the topos and the chronos. The right on a certain territory, especially of that of the neighbors who also have aspirations towards it is proved indifferent ways. Attempts are made to provide continuity from a primeval mythical time till nowadays and at the same time the old myths are revived, the forgotten stories are interrelating, the anathemized charades are rehabilitated and new mythologised political pantheons are created, in which the main protagonists are exactly those, the historical persons. This is especially expressed and best noticed at the festivals at which the national elements are preferred (in this case - Goce fest festival - which is a festival of newcomposed patriotic songs): *“wherever we are / we are Macedonians / children of the legendary / Alexander the Great”* (Risteski, 2001, 298) or *“you are ours, you the land of Alexander / land of Samuel, lend of Goce”* (Risteski, 2001, 299). The latest events related to the war actions in 2001 in Republic of Macedonia led to connecting the history with the presence. The former grandeur and power of Macedonia was emphasized in order to repeat the former triumphal expeditions of the famous emperors of Ancient Macedonia: *“we set out from Macedonia, reached India, but finished at Vaksince, Tanushevci, Vejce...”* (Petrov, 2001).

Together with the emphasis of ancient roots of the Macedonians some political power centers while holding their meetings, in order to accomplish their aims give a patronage to Slavic provenance of the Macedonians and thus representing Macedonia as a bearer and a leader of Slavdom in Europe. That can be especially noticed from the speeches at the meetings during election campaigns of certain leaders of the political parties: *“Macedonia is a biblical country, cradle of panslavic enlightenment and christianisation of the Slav people in Europe”* (Gjorchev, 2000).

These two, confronted and mythologised views that lead to the division of Macedonian ethnos, unite in relation to their origin in a new political ethno-myth connected to the ethnical territory of the Macedonians. Namely, the division of Macedonia, executed during the Bucharest Peace Treat from 1913 when Macedonia was divided among the Balkan allies, is continuously emphasized. The idea of the alleged reunion of Macedonia is still cherished by the Macedonians and it is mainly incited and supported by certain political power centers.

The Albanian political ethno-myth in Macedonia the same as the Macedonian political ethno-myth is easily noticeable and can be recognize everywhere. Mainly, this ethno-myth leans on the emphasizing of the autchthony upon the territory they settle, (Settled on the northern-west part of Macedonia) and that is distinguished with the proclamation of the idea for the allegedly direct origin of the today’s Albanians from the antique Illyrians. Exceptionally significant for the Albanians is that they still put strong accent on the “collective I”, which is particularly represented and used by the political parties and organizations, founded on ethnical base.

The veracity that in the lines of the Albanian ethnos there are political forces which intercede for the foundation of one big state which will unite all the territories where Albanians live, can be supported with the statement of the spokesman, of the Albanian National Army (ANA), Alban Hodga (probable some warlike pseudonym). Among other things he has stated that *this group was formed in December 1999 by a fraction of the Liberation Army of Kosovo, determined to fight for united Great Albania. On the basis of the borders before 1913, it would include territories of Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Macedonia and Grece* (Matoshy, 2001). In that contribution of this statement are also included the meetings held by the Albanian political parties on which unavoidable was the presence of the ethnical symbols, above all the Albanian flag. According to that, the direction of the strategy that the symbol (the Albanian flag) brings, it is not established in the direction of preserving the entity of the Albanian as an ethnical community, but clearly aspires to make an territory expansion, to wit, Albanian statehood on Macedonian loss (Risteski, 2000: 323).

It should be also mentioned that in the beginning of the 90-s it was founded and established new independent territory in the west part of Macedonia - Illyrida, by certain political powerful men of the Albanian ethnical group (from the lines of the Party for democratic prosperity). Among others graphites the one that attracts attention is that on the wall of the building of Macedonian National Theatre in Skopje: *"Macedonia no, Illyrida yes!"* (The letters of the graphite, written Cyrillic alphabet, scrated on the wall of Macedonian National Theatre. The real contence of the graphite is *Maced. no, Illyrida yes!*). This ideology which is consciously feed by the Albanian political power centers comes in conflict with the Macedonian political ethno-myth, which is contrary the Albanian one. This opposition of the ethno-national myths of these two nations resulted in military conflict during year 2001.

From the all mentioned above it can be noticed that the two main collectivities in Macedonia have their own, individual mythologies. But, it should be emphasize that these ethno-national myths are not a symbol of the Macedonian territory, but they are a characteristic for all multi-ethnical societies, independently developed or not. According to that, the role of ethno-ideology and ethno-religious tradition in the political campaigns creates a new political mythology that finds a good position in the multiethnic and multiconfessional societies and places with extremely differentiated cultural polarities. The fear of cultural absorption at some ethnic groups brings to amplified feeling of protecting the *collective I*. According to it, the initiation of constant fear of some ethnical or confessional conflict in the society by the political parties is just one of their instruments for achieving their unique aime - to rule.

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