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"Educating the People": Representations of National Identity in the İstanbul Military Museum and the Sofia Museum of National History

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Abstract

Through a case study of two museums, the Military Museum in Istanbul, and the National Museum of History in Sofia, this article reviews the policies of museum education in both countries. By analyzing particular displays this paper will show that both museums endeavour to promate a common culture, based on a single national identity. The second aim is to demonstrate how this involves a deliberate process of othering, as the museums in each country seek to suggest that their respective national identities have been forged out of introducing alternative strategies of education in both countries, based on respect for cultural difference and diversity.

Ulusal Kimliklerin Türk ve Bulgar Müzelerindeki Temsili: İnsanları Eğitmek

Özet

Bu makale İstanbul Askeri Müzesi ve Sofya Ulusal Tarih Müzesi'ni örnek alarak her iki ülkedeki müze eğitimi politikalarını gözden geçirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Sergilenen eserlerin analiz edilmesi yoluyla her iki ülke müzelerinin de tek bir ulusal kültürü desteklemeyi amaçladığı ortaya konulacaktır. İkinci amaç ise her iki ülkenin müzelerinin nasıl kendi açılarından ulusal kimliklerin iki halk arasındaki kültürel ilişkilerden doğan bilinçli bir ötekileştirme süreci içerdiğini göstermektir.Son olarak bu makale her iki ülke için kültürel farklılığa saygı temeline dayanan alternatif eğitim sistemlerinin uygunluğu tartışılacaktır.

"Educating the People": Representations of National Identity in the İstanbul Military Museum and the Sofia Museum of National History

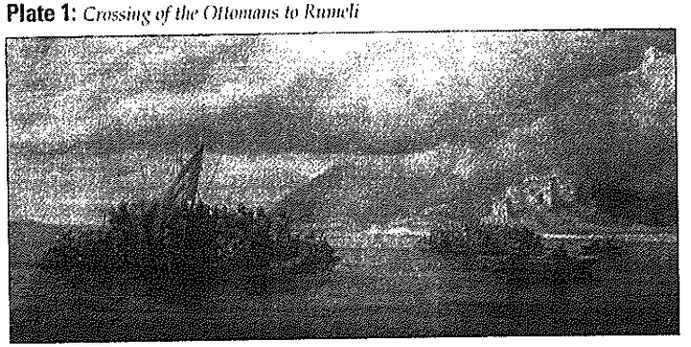
In a recent article for Kültür ve İletişim, Bekir Onur has drawn attention to the importance of a museum as a means of education; of curators using objects to develop their visitors' sense of historical awareness, and sharpen their "sense of aesthetics, criticism and creativity" (27). This may involve the creation of new displays, appealing to specific socio-economic groups, or the promotion of touring exhibitions in alternative spaces. Museum education is particularly important for children, but can prove relevant for adults too. The main objective should be to render museums accessible to all people, something that is characteristic of any democracy (28).

How should museums fulfill this educational role? For the Nigerian director-general of museums, Dr. Yaro T. Gella, their main function consists in emphasizing the importance of the nation, especially for countries who have been subject to colonial rule. A museum is both "the fruit of a people's history and a determinant of history", using its displays to communicate the indigenous ideas, values and systems that give meaning and order to people's lives (Kaplan, 1992: 45). This can be accomplished through various methods; the chronological arrangement of exhibits that focus on ancient, as well as modern history (giving the impression that individual nations have existed for a long time); or the creation of displays that focus on key themes in a nation's history, both in the domestic and international fields.

In this paper, I want to examine how these ideas have been put into practice, through a case study of two museums - the Military Museum in İstanbul, and the Museum of National History in Sofia. There are two main purposes behind this case study. In recent years, it has almost become mandatory that museums in the west should concentrate on the presentation and interpretation of cultural diversity (Lavine, 1990: 155). The British government instructed state institutions to attract more visitors from ethnic minorities, or face a cut in funding - a directive that was only abandoned on the grounds of impracticality ("Ethnic museum", 2001: 2). By contrast, this paper will show that museum education in Turkey and Bulgaria has been designed to foster belief in a common culture, based on a single national identity. The second aim of this paper is to show how this involves a deliberate process of othering, as the museums in each country seek to suggest that their respective national identities have been forged out of cultural encounters between the two peoples. Such strategies are not "biased" or "prejudiced"; these terms are too crude for analyzing what is at stake, because they suggest a simple divergence from "objectivity", which is in itself a disputed term. Through a deliberate arrangement of objects, accompanied by explanatory texts where appropriate, each institution creates a set of narrative discourses that approach the question of national identity from different, often contradictory perspectives.

An example of how a display has been arranged in one of the museums should make my intentions clearer. In 1994 the İstanbul Military Museum mounted an exhibition of paintings on Turkish military history, largely drawn from its own collections, supplemented by loans from the city's Maritime Museum. Beginning with the crossing of the Ottomans to *Rumeli* (1353) and ending with the march of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror from Edirne to Constantinople, exactly a century later, the main purpose was to suggest that the Ottomans were not only good fighters, but constituted a dynamic and unifying force in a period of anarchy. One picture, the anonymous "Crossing of the Ottomans to *Rumeli*" (*plate 1*) shows the standard in the foreground, while one soldier points the way forward. The emphasis in on discipline: the soldiers stand in serried ranks, while their colleagues row them across the calm sea - the perfect start to a successful campaign.

Plate 1: *Crossing of the Ottomans to Rumeli*



Military success is also the theme of two paintings by Chelebowsky of the battle of Varna (10 November 1444), where an Ottoman victory sealed the fate of the Balkans and the Byzantine Empire. One shows an Ottoman soldier mounted on a white horse, cutting a swathe through a mass of soldiers, his sword at the ready (*plate 2*). He is followed by his compatriots bearing the standard. The Ottoman forces are represented as skilful, as they preserve their military formation in the midst of a chaotic struggle. The second painting (*plate 3*) communicates a

Plate 2: *The picted battle of Varna*

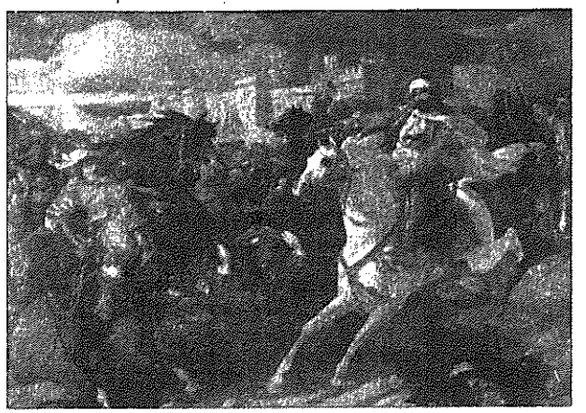
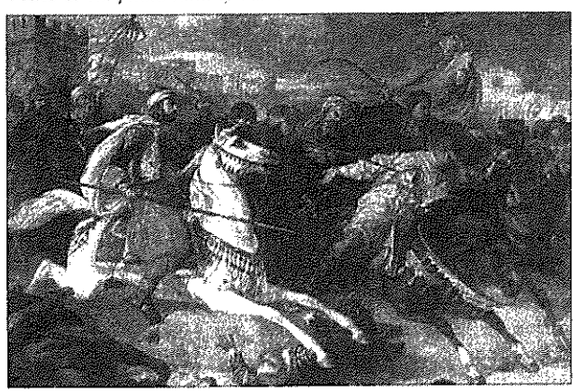


Plate 3: *The picted battle of Varna*



similar message, with the Ottoman soldier mounted on a white horse, galloping towards the Byzantine forces, followed by the standard-bearer and the troops.

Two other paintings focus on Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror's Constantinople campaign of 1453. The siege itself lasted fifty-four days, with a regular Ottoman army of not less than 50,000 faced by a defending force of 8,500. It was a triumph of modern technology, with the Ottomans entering the city through a breach in the walls opened by cannon (İnalcık, 1973: 23). One painting, Hasan Rıza's 1936 version of the "March of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror with his army from Edirne to

İstanbul" (plate 4), gives pride of place to the cannon glistening in the sunlight. Sultan Mehmet sits astride a white horse, his troops behind him, the standard proudly flying. The other painting, the anonymous "Launching of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror's shops to the Golden Horn" (plate 5) stresses the orderliness of the troops as they board the ships, their pride in the national flag (prominently displayed in Sultan Mehmet's private barque) and their respect for the Sultan himself.

Plate 4: *March of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror with his army from Edirne to İstanbul*

Plate 5: *Launching of Sultan Mehmet the Conqueror's shops to the Golden Horn*

Compared to the Ottoman troops, the opposing armies of Hungarians and Wallachians, with Bulgarian support, are depicted as poor horsemen and/or soldiers. In Chelebowsky's first painting of the Battle of Varna (plate 2), a cavalryman is clearly not in control of his horse; it is clear that he will prove no match for his Ottoman opponent. The other Varna painting (plate 3) depicts the death of a soldier, as he tries to retreat from the marauding troops. By choosing to flee rather than fight, he does not deserve to live.

All five paintings were arranged in historical sequence, with the earliest events placed closest to the gallery entrance. Displays of this kind are invariably found in military museums elsewhere: both the National Army Museum and the National Maritime Museum in London contain extensive collections of paintings depicting important battles on land or at sea. What differentiates the Turkish museum from its British counterparts is the purpose behind its exhibitions. The National Army Museum tells the stories of British soldiers from a variety of different social and ethnic backgrounds, offering the visitor "a unique insight into the(ir(lives and experiences ... (through(paintings, photographs, uniforms and equipment" (www.national-army-museum.org.uk/intro/htm). For the 1994 show, the İstanbul Military Museum was not concerned with soldiers as individuals, preferring instead to recognize their collective contribution to the development of the Ottoman Empire, and (later on) the Turkish Republic. In their visual account of the period 1353-1453, certain historical facts were omitted - for example, the way in which the Empire survived civil war, crusader invasions and other crises (İnalcık, 1973: 17). Instead the museum chose to emphasize the importance of good leadership, singleness of purpose and iron self-discipline amongst the troops, which brought success on the battlefield.

These virtues were also prominent in adversity, as well as in triumph. Part of the exhibition focused on the Russian wars of 1877-8, which concluded with the signing of the San Stefano Peace Treaty, giving Bulgaria some form of self-government. The Russians tried to justify their invasion of the Ottoman Empire on the grounds that they were acting on behalf of the Bulgarians, their Balkan Christian neighbours; in reality their main reason for fighting was to exploit potential trade routes.

The British mobilized their forces in defence of the Ottoman Empire when it realized that the Russians were about to enter Constantinople; and thus threaten vital trade routes to India.

Needless to say, none of these events appeared in the Military Museum's version of the campaign. The Ottoman Empire might have been disintegrating, with major foreign powers controlling its finances, and different ethnic groups struggling for independence; but the exhibition concentrated on the Turkish soldiers fighting to preserve its borders against potential colonizers. Simon Agopyan's picture of an unnamed Ottoman-Russian battle (plate 6) shows the Ottoman forces defending a small hill at night. One soldier brandishes his sword - a seemingly easy target for the Russian foot soldiers, all of whom are armed with rifles. Perhaps the most striking aspect of this picture is the smallness of the human beings, compared to the moon and the landscape. Clearly the intention was to suggest that the invading forces could and would not occupy Turkish territory. Another Agopyan painting of the battle of the bastion of Aziziye (plate 7) depicts a similar theme, with Ottoman soldiers firing at the (unseen) enemy, supported by cannon-fire from the ramparts.

Plate 6: *Ottoman - Russian battle*

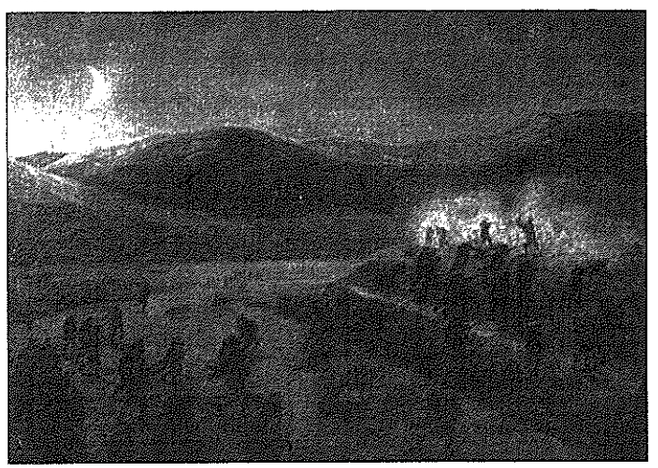
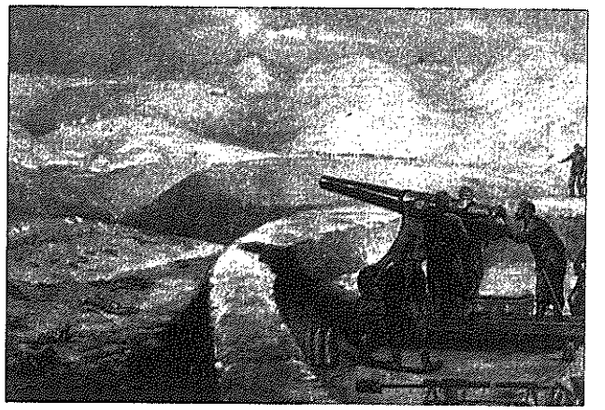


Plate 7: *Battle of the bastion of Aziziye*



Two other paintings show Ottoman troops returning from Russian battlefields, defeated but unbowed. On 10 December 1877 the great fortress of Plevna, south of the Danube in what is now Bulgaria, fell to the Russians after a six-month struggle. Three hundred thousand refugees - Greeks as well as Turks - fled the city by railway-truck and ox-cart (Mansel, 1995: 305). The painter Bedri's 1901 version of these events, "Wounded people returning from the Plevne" (plate 8) depicts three soldiers returning to Turkey - one blinded, one mounted, and the third looking warily around for potential enemies, as he leads the horse by the bridle. The emphasis here is on companionship: Turkish soldiers stick together in the face of adversity. Sami Yetik's painting focuses on the hard winter of 1877-8, when Turkish soldiers braved snowstorms and sub-zero temperatures to return to Constantinople and defend their capital. Even if they are half-dead with cold and hunger on the way home, they have sufficient presence of mind to stay together (plate 9).

Given the right circumstances, the Turkish army could utilize these qualities of loyalty and companionship in the service of the nation. In a book written just after the Gallipoli campaign of 1916, the British poet and writer John Masefield commented on the Turkish forces that, despite suffering

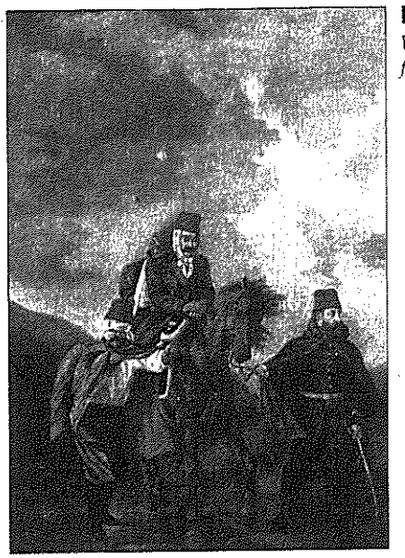


Plate 8:
Wounded people returning from the Preine

Plate 9: *Back from the eastern frontline*

Plate 10:
Dardanelles War

considerable loss of life (like their Allied counterparts), were nonetheless "very good fighters, furious in attack and resolute in defence" (Masefield, 1917: 173). Ercüment Kalnık's 1945 painting of the campaign (plate 10) gives the reason for Masefield's admiration. The troops keep together in battle, driven by a common loyalty to the national flag, held high by an (apparently unarmed) bearer. The painting's composition is remarkably similar to Chelebowsky's versions of the Battle of Varna (plates 2 and 3), with one significant difference - the soldier's head is swathed in bandages. Yet he continues to defend his country against the invaders.

That the country is quite capable of doing this is made evident by a display in the museum's permanent collection, devoted to the various campaigns between 1792 and 1908. There are several items of European origin from the Russo-Turkish war that belonged to the Ottoman army, including German and British rifles and pistols (Askeri Müze 1968: 42-4). As a result of its pro-western policies, dating from the *Tanzimat* (reform) period in the 1840s, the Ottoman Empire had acquired an arsenal which could in no way be considered inferior to that of their of their European counterparts (Emiroğlu et.al., 1973: 58).

Clearly the Military Museum's purpose is to focus attention almost exclusively on the achievements of the Ottoman/Turkish armies, whose bravery on the battlefield ensured that the nation could rid itself of foreign intervention. In the 1994 exhibition, the Russian, Hungarian or Bulgarian troops are either left out altogether, or depicted as militarily inferior (*plates 2 and 3*), or as shadowy figures (*plate 6*). Yet perhaps we should not expect the Military Museum to accommodate different (i.e. non-Turkish) perspectives in its displays. Its origins date back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Sultan Ahmet III desired to set up a museum, based on the Enlightenment principles of objective and/or universal knowledge (Emiroğlu et.al., 1973: 48). By exhibiting actual examples of weapons captured from the enemy in the various Ottoman campaigns,

Ahmet III hoped to promote some sense of nationhood by stressing its highest values and its proudest moments. The purpose of the modern-day museum is much the same: visitors to the 1994 exhibition participated in a narrative deliberately structured by the curators, which sought to emphasize the history, beliefs and identity of the nation. This narrative was distilled down to a series of triumphs, and largely purged of social, ethnic and political conflict. Carol Duncan has described this experience as being very similar to a ritual, which "confers identity or purifies and restores order to the world through sacrifice, ordeal or enlightenment" (Duncan, 1990: 92).

How does museum education function in this particular context? At the beginning of this paper, I invoked Bekir Onur's suggestion that museums should be rendered accessible to everyone. On the one hand, the İstanbul Military Museum certainly meets this objective; its exhibitions are designed to show all visitors how the past has contributed to national stability, and are free of charge. According to a document issued by the American Museum Education Division of the National Art Education Association in 1985, this should be one of the purposes of museum education, "to [help all people] recognize and understand the ... achievements of civilized societies" (Berry and Mayer, 1989: 7). At another level, the museum does not acknowledge that there may be visitors who do not understand the historical significance of the exhibits. This is what prompts Onur to call for new kinds of display, appealing to an individual's "sense of aesthetics, criticism and creativity". However, such displays might also prompt people to question the museum's function as a provider for the common (and by extension, the national) good.

The Sofia National Museum of History was established in 1973, with the express purpose of preserving and / or illustrating the Bulgarian cultural-historical heritage. Its permanent collections are divided into a series of rooms defined by historical period: on the first floor there are galleries devoted to old coins and treasures, prehistoric society, Bulgarian lands in ancient times and the Bulgarian state during the Middle Ages; on the second floor attention shifts to Bulgarian history from the fifteenth century to the present day. For the purposes of this paper, I shall analyze the displays in two galleries - "Bulgarian lands in the fifteenth to the seventeenth century", when the country was part of the Ottoman Empire, and "The Bulgarian National Revival", covering the period from the mid-nineteenth century until the end of the Russo-Turkish War in 1878.

Compared to the Military Museum, which excludes other voices in its historical account of the period, the first of these galleries continually refers to the Ottoman presence - as witnessed, for instance, in the display of a plate from İznik, or gold coins minted during the reign of Süleyman I (1520-1566). Through a series of explanatory texts, printed beneath the exhibits and in the guidebook, the museum stresses that, despite their attempts to "civilize" the Bulgarians, Ottoman authority was never total or complete. The "authentic" voice of Bulgarian culture not only survived, but also appropriated some of the Ottoman power in order to redefine the terms of its knowledge (Bhabha, 1985: 179). Local crafts flourished; printers secretly produced texts such as *Chassoslovetz* (1566), a book of sermons "intended to satisfy the people's search for [Christian, rather than Islamic] education" (Dmitrov, 1994: 128). Religious icons produced at this time are perceived as symbolic of "the Bulgarian struggle for national survival ... (It was(the monasteries where cultural life seethed, literary work developed, icons and murals were painted" (Dmitrov, 1994: 118).

Some of the language contained in the explanatory texts might seem a little excessive, particularly to the non-Bulgarian visitor. Here is an example:

> *Through brute strength and weapons, a theocratic monarchic order was established which was alien to the age-old traditions of the Bulgarian people. It was supported by the Sultan and his army, and Islam became the dominant religion. The Bulgarian*

people, deprived of rights, were subjected to cruel religious and ethnic discrimination (Dmitrov, 1994: 117).

Yet despite this hardship, the people's spirit could not be suppressed:

Although brutally oppressed and jolted from its natural path of historical development, the Bulgarian people did not stop living, but rather struggled and created. Its resistance against the foreign rule found expression in various forms the most striking of which were the people's uprisings at the end of the XVI-XVIIth century (Dmitrov, 1994: 117).

The guidebook draws a distinction between the Bulgarian people and their Ottoman conquerors, whose very presence disrupted "the natural path of historical development". This "development" is equated with modernization and/or Europeanization; by implication, then, the Ottomans are anti-modern and anti-European.

I have already referred on numerous occasions to Euro-American approaches to museum education, emphasizing the notions of difference and diversity. In the Bulgarian context the museum's chief aim is to provide positive images of a national culture, which has often been derided by western commentators. Ludmilla Kostova has shown how eighteenth and nineteenth century British writers customarily promoted the Turkish presence in the Balkan region, "for a long time it [the region] was known as *Turkey in Europe*" (12). The letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu provide an example of this. Ottoman aristocratic women evidently enjoy "more liberty than we (i.e. the British(have, no woman, of what rank so ever being permitted to go in the streets without two Muslims, one that covers her face all but her eyes and another that hides the whole dress of her head, and hangs halfway down her back .... This perpetual masquerade gives them entire liberty of following their inclinations without danger or discovery" (71). The poor Bulgarian woman dresses herself "in a great variety of coloured glass beads and [is] not ugly, but of tawny complexion" - a clear sign that they were different from the Turkish women of Sofia, much admired by Montagu for their "shiningly white skins" (Montagu, 1993: 59, 65).

The disparity between Bulgarian and Ottoman cultures in the Balkan region was re-emphasized a century later by two travel writers, Stanislas G. B. St. Clair and Charles A. Brophy, who observed in *A Residence in Bulgaria* (1869) that "unlike the Bulgarians, the Turks are good, clean, hospitable and industrious", even if they are threatened by a western world too easily influenced by "anti-Moslem propaganda", and by Ottoman bureaucrats "who cheat, steal, and seem to be every bit as lazy as the despicable Bulgarian *rayah*" (Kostova, 1997: 125). Even those writers who supported the Bulgarians against the Ottomans often represented them in negative terms. The British politician William Ewart Gladstone praised the Bulgarians for their "industr[y], primitive [ways] and docility" but also thought of them as "lambs". It was the Montenegrins, with their aggressive and warlike capacity forged through years of "cold, want, hardship and perpetual peril", who ultimately secured victory over the Ottomans (Gladstone, 1879: 308).

At least some Bulgarians benefited from Ottoman rule. Every spring, two or three thousand of them, "strong rude men" in brown jackets and green caps, drove flocks of lambs and goats into Constantinople. During the summer they worked in the fields outside as milkmen and gardeners. Many Bulgarians made their home in the city; by the beginning of the nineteenth century, there were over 40,000 residents, some of whom occupied important positions in the Ottoman hierarchy. Stefanaki Vogoridi, the Grand Logothete of the Patriarchate (also known as Stefanaki Bogoridi), while encouraging the Bulgarian cultural revival and ecclesiastical independence, nonetheless remained a loyal Ottoman. He assured the British ambassador in the late 1850s that "the Bulgarians would be the warmest defenders of the Turks against Russia if they could see a chance of success" (quoted in Mansel, 1995: 282).

Nonetheless, the community hoped to achieve some form of autonomy within the Ottoman state. In 1845, acting for the first time as a separate national group, the Bulgarians chose two representatives, Ilartion Makariopolsky and Neofit Bozveli, who asked for a Bulgarian church in Constantinople, and bishops in districts with a Bulgarian majority.

In the National Museum of History, the exhibits from this period (housed in the "Bulgarian National Revival" gallery) once again stress the theme of resistance; how local industries, such as wood-carvings and metalwork, were influenced by western European art (*plate 11*), and thereby guaranteed the survival of Bulgarian culture in a context dominated by "backward Ottoman feudalism, which was not prepared to meet the biddings of the new time [i.e. the Enlightenment]" (Dmitrov, 1994: 129). Makariopolosky and Bozveli are characterized as the main protagonists in "a true nation-wide movement for church independence", in which "the Bulgarian community in Constantinople became the center of the struggle". Both men "worked out a program for national-cultural autonomy, i.e. an

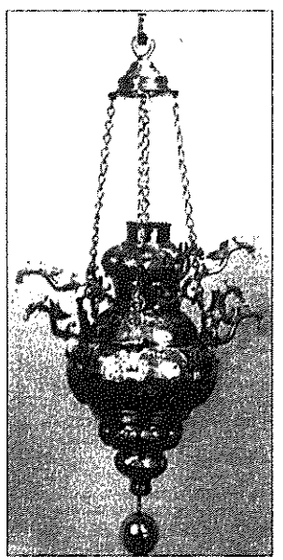


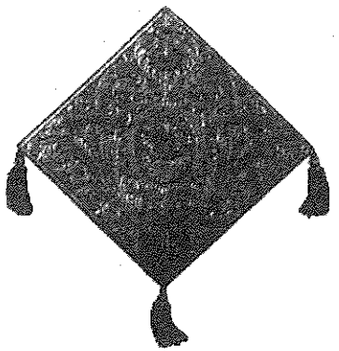
Plate 11: *Icon lamp using the applied art of the Renaissance*

official recognition of ethnic Bulgarians in the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire" (159). On display in the museum is a silk paliza, embroidered in gold, celebrating the "Christ's Raising" of 3rd April 1860 - a moment described in the guidebook as "unforgettable for all Bulgarians" (170) -when Makariopolsky rejected the supremacy of the Ottoman Patriarch by not referring to him during the ceremony at St. Stephen's Church (*plate 12*).

Compared to the Military Museum, the National Museum of History offers a radically different history of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-8. The all-Bulgarian uprising of 1876, which triggered the Russian invasion of Ottoman territory, is described in the guidebook as "the most heroic ... revolt", that "provoked a wide international response in support of the Bulgarian people". Despite repeated attempts to find a diplomatic solution, Ottoman intransigence prompted Russia to declare war, which prompted "general excitement ... among all Bulgarians" (176). The Bulgarian Vassil Levski is described as "the main organizer, leader and ideologist" of the uprising; his portrait (dating from 1895) is prominently displayed, with the text underneath describing him as "the Apostle" (*plate 13*). Other items on show include the "belongings necessary to every insurgent", including a gun, a knife, a rebel's uniform, and a hat with a lion - the symbol of Bulgarian freedom (*plate 14*).

The National Museum of History's version of the war itself indicates clearly that the Russian invasion, with Bulgarian support, paved the way for the creation of a new Bulgarian state. In 1878 Tsar Alexander II presented the Preobragenski Monastery in Sofia with a giant church bell, weighing more than 800 kg. The guidebook describes it as "a symbol of Russo-Bulgarian cultural connections during that time" (178). Such connections were obviously effective, with many Bulgarians acting "as scouts, interpreters and hospital attendants. Their participation was a natural continuation of the struggle for independence" (176-7). Several exhibits celebrate the San Stefano

Plate 12: *The raising*



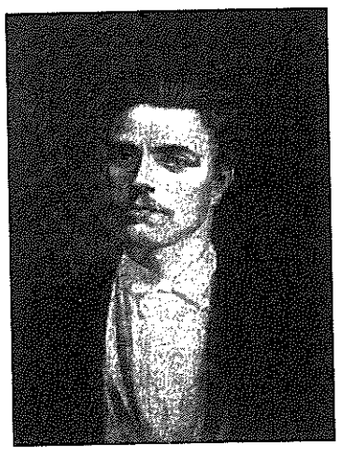


Plate 13:
Portrait of Vassil Levski

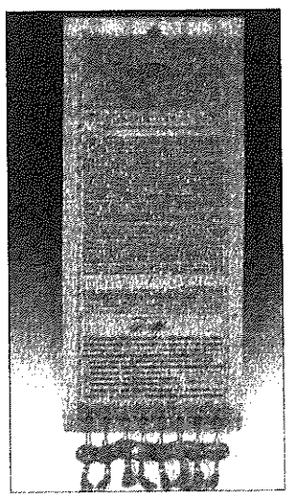


Plate 14:
Portrait of Emperor Alexander II

Plate 15:
Manifesto of King Ferdinand to the Bulgarian people proclaiming Bulgaria's independence

Peace Treaty of March 1878, which initiated Bulgaria's progress towards independence from the Ottoman Empire. An 1860 portrait of the Russian Emperor Alexander II (who signed the Treaty) hangs above glass cases containing a cross from the Russian Mausoleum in San Stefano; and a cup, presented by Emperor Nicholas II to one Bulgarian volunteer who had fought on the Russian side, on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the treaty in 1902.

At last Bulgarian culture had the chance to make the kind of intellectual progress characteristic of western Europe in the post-Enlightenment period. A manifesto written by King Ferdinand, and dated 22nd September 1908 (when Bulgaria finally obtained full independence), makes this point clear: "Having always been peace-loving, today my people are longing for cultural and economic progress; nothing should impede Bulgaria in this way ... That is the people's desire, that is the people's will" (*plate 15*).

Clearly museum education in the National Museum of History promotes a single national identity at the expense of any competing identities. The same is also true of the İstanbul Military Museum; but perhaps we need to consider the consequences of such approaches in both countries. Kemal Atatürk once said that "all obstacles in the way of ... development [of a national culture] must be removed. All superstitions and misconceptions must be forever banned" (quoted in Sonyel, 1989: 110). The Museum of National History's rhetoric clearly perpetuates the kind of "superstitions and misconceptions" which have led to repeated acts of discrimination against the Turkish minority in the post-independence era. Bilal N. Şimşir has described in detail the era of "terror and darkness" in the 1930s, when newspapers, schools and social clubs were closed, and many intellectuals were forced to emigrate (165). In an excess of nationalistic zeal, the Bulgarian government of the 1980s attempted to force Turkish families to replace their Muslim names with Bulgarian equivalents, and

imposed stiff penalties on anyone speaking Turkish in public places. Dimitur Stojanov, the minister of foreign affairs, unequivocally expressed the rationale behind this policy: "All our countrymen who reverted to their Bulgarian names are Bulgarians .... There are no Turks in Bulgaria" (Radio Free Europe Report, 1985: 5). Despite some attempts to restore civil and political rights to the Turkish minority, since the collapse of the communist government in 1989, relations between Bulgarians and Turks are far from harmonious. A survey on inter-ethnic relations carried out by a sociological collective in June 1992 found a high level of prejudice among Bulgarians towards Turks and other minorities. For instance, 51.1% of Bulgarians considered the Turkish minority a real danger to national security, 83.8% thought Turks were religious fanatics, while 36.5% thought that more should be done for Turks to return to their own country (Eminov, 1997: 22). On a state visit to Bulgaria, the Turkish President Ahmet Necdet Sezer recently received a delegation of Turks, who described some of the difficulties they continue to experience ("Notes", 2001: 15).

However, it is unlikely whether the National Museum of History would describe their educational policy as specifically anti-Turkish. Tony Bennett has recently proposed two different models for a museum - one concentrating on its educative role and its responsibility in relation to the public, the other focusing on reciprocal interaction between the museum and the different communities, which constitute its public. The first model is characteristic of museums of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: museums functioned as instruments of government, collecting and repackaging objects and presenting as part of an overall programme of reform which aimed to imbue people with specific civic attributes. Although the second model can be employed in the service of government policy, its purpose is no longer to implement reform, but rather to promote respect for, and tolerance of cultural diversity (210-13). The first model may be perceived as outdated by critics in Europe, Australia or the United States (Clifford, 1997); in the Bulgarian context, however, I would suggest that it is still of unquestioned importance. In recent histories of the country, accessible on the Internet, there has been a concern to demonstrate how far the nation has progressed since the collapse of communist rule in 1989. One site notes that "two presidential elections have been held since the fall of the communist dictatorship ... each followed by peaceful and orderly change" (www.worldrover.com/bulgaria_history.htm)).

The type of language used by the National Museum of History in their guidebook and the explanatory texts can hardly be described as post-colonial, which according to Bill Ashcroft is hybrid in form, produced out of the "interaction between imperial culture and a complex of indigenous cultural practices", and "resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates" (Ashcroft et.al., 1995: 1-2). The museum rejects the notion of hybridity in an attempt to suggest how Ottoman rule engendered a new spirit of nationalism amongst the Bulgarian people, whether directly (through rebellion) or indirectly (through a renewed emphasis on artistic creation). Local indigenous cultures survived intact, despite all attempts to dilute them with so-called "foreign" (in this case Ottoman) influences. Several statements could be challenged on the grounds of historical accuracy: the Ottoman historian Halil İnalcık observes that, especially during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire thrived, as a result of rapidly expanding trade with Europe. Constantinople became one of the main business centres of the region, with satellite trade centres springing up all around the Balkans, for example in Plovdiv, and Sofia (İnalcık, 140-50). Yet the museum is not concerned with historical accuracy; its main purpose is to invoke a binary opposition between themselves and the colonial other - in this case, a non-Christian nation, whose status as a part of "Europe" is perpetually debated - as part of a discursive strategy for enlisting objects displayed in the museum in the service of Bulgarian government policy, aimed at promoting national unity.

Throughout this paper, I have tried to suggest that the model of museum education proposed by Bekir Onur is fundamentally antithetical to the interests of both the Military Museum and the National Museum of History. Both are more concerned with promoting the values of their respective national cultures, based on civic attributes. In the case of the Military Museum, these might be defined as companionship, self-discipline, organization and loyalty to the national flag. The Bulgarian museum promotes industry and individual enterprise, especially if it is undertaken in the service of the state. The Military Museum focuses on the achievements of ordinary soldiers in battle; the National Museum of History recognizes the contribution of prominent individuals to the winning of such battles.

Clearly there are inherent difficulties involved in adopting a "democratic" stance towards museum education, based on respect for cultural difference and accessibility to different socio-economic and ethnic groups. In celebrating the differences of Bulgarian identity from that of the Ottoman colonizer, the National Museum of History's discourses - whether verbal or visual - discriminate against the Turkish minority. Far from eliminating or negotiating difference, this strategy only serves to reinforce it. Yet one cannot see how any alternative policies could be introduced in a country that seeks to create new models of Bulgarian-ness after centuries of imperialist rule.

The situation is slightly different in the Turkish context. Chris Rumford has suggested that conceptions of national identity are currently located "in a contradictory position between homogeneity and heterogeneity; between the decline of the official Turkey and the return of the repressed" (Rumford, 2000: 143). The Military Museum certainly expresses the views of "the official Turkey", in its representation of the people - in this case, ordinary soldiers - as not "repressed", but making a significant contribution to national stability. If the museum were to promote heterogeneity over homogeneity, its status - and its funding - as a provider for the common good might be called into question.

In the Turkish and Bulgarian contexts, the concept of national identity as represented in the two museums is overwhelmingly based on soil and/or roots, which have had to be defended against foreign invaders. For any so-called "enlightened" policy of museum education to be implemented, curators must first address certain issues posed over a decade ago by the Indian critic S. P. Mohanty:

> *How do we negotiate between my history and yours? How would it be possible for us to recover our commonality, not ... our shared human attributes ... but, more significantly, the imbrication of our various pasts and presents, the ineluctable relationships of shared and contested meanings, values and natural resources? (13)*

This can only be done if curators are prepared to re-consider the relationship between the museum, the funding institutions, and the visitors. Questions need to be answered, such as what is the function of a museum in contemporary culture? Are the two models proposed by Tony Bennett, of a museum as an instrument of government promoting civic attributes, or a museum promoting cultural diversity, valid in the Turkish and Bulgarian contexts? Can the museum create displays that prompt radical new approaches to the question of national, regional or ethnic identity? To answer these questions, curators need to re-consider the relationship between themselves and their funding institutions - especially at the present moment, when (in the Turkish context at least) confidence in the state as the universal provider of finance and/or cultural and intellectual leadership appears to have been significantly eroded. Can alternative methods of funding be found from the private sector to implement a new educational policy, especially for institutions - such as the Military Museum - that concentrate on national history? Only then can answers be provided to Onur's questions, which might ultimately lead to a significant increase in visitor numbers, and thereby guarantee the museums' continued existence.

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