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Stanislava Stoytcheva

Bulgarian Catholics in Macedonia (1879–1912): An Attempt for Statistical and Demographic Overview

(Abstract)

After the Congress of Berlin (1878) which divided the Bulgarian lands, the bulk of the Bulgarian Catholics remained within the Ottoman Empire – mostly in Macedonia and less in Eastern Thrace. Using interdisciplinary methodology, the study traces the geographical distribution, size and demographic indicators of the Bulgarian Catholics (respectively Uniates) in Macedonia in the period 1879-1912, which has not been a subject of specialized scientific research so far. For this purpose it analyzes the above mentioned parameters according to official statistics of the Ottoman Empire, data of the Bulgarian Exarchate, Catholic data (such as the mission of the Lazarites, etc.), and Greek and Bulgarian official sources. It presents the differences in the national statistics about the number of Bulgarian Uniates and the attempts to manipulate the data by the Greek and Turkish side with the aim to demonstrate their “real” nationality. Last but not least it traces statistically the waves of ebb and flow of the Uniate movement in the 19th-20th centuries. As a result, the conclusion is made that although the registered outflow from the union in the late 19th – early 20th c., on the eve of the First Balkan War (1912) is observed strengthening and certain extension of the positions of Catholicism among the Bulgarians in Macedonia. This is confirmed both by the data from Catholic sources, and those of the Bulgarian Exarchate for 1911–1912.