

Skopje's Uneducation System and the Good Professor Čepreganov

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In defending his and his compatriots' "Macedonian" ancestry, it seems that Dr. Todor Čepreganov, Ph. D, and Director of the National History Institute at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje (todorc@yahoo.com) has been quoted as saying, "Eugene Borza (Prof Emeritus Penn State University) published many books on Alexander the Great and Antic [ancient] Macedonia, has asked, 'Why would the Macedonians invade, kill and enslave their own people?'"¹

Since Dr. Čepreganov did not understand that it was only a rhetorical question, I offer Eugene Borza's response to his own question: "ancient history is replete with examples of bona fide Greeks who fought constantly against one another."² I would love to send a copy of Borza's paper to the good professor, although one can read Borza's statement on the first page of JSTOR (second paragraph, fifth line) without a subscription.³

There is not a single historian outside the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) and its diaspora that would give a different answer. Non-FYROM Slav historians respect themselves and their degrees. As for the FYROM "historians" and their diaspora, I would suggest that they take a good look and study very carefully the WHOLE book *The Peloponnesian War* authored by Thucydides, the first and foremost scientific historian ever, and the reasons behind the authorship of this book. The title could give them a hint! It would be useful, as well, for the same "historians" to read about the Melian Dialogue in the same book (Thucydides V, 84-116) and the result of that debate. I do not want to confuse these "historians" with offering information on other battles like the Battle of Helos that took place in circa 1213 BC, 20 years before the Trojan War (1193-1183 BC). Nevertheless, the Battle of Leuktra (371 BC), the two Battles of Mantinea (418 BC and 362 BC) could give them the clue.

Regarding the part "Why ... *enslave their own people?*" I am referring the good professor to Pausanias who affirms:

I know also of the following rite which is performed here. By the sea was a city Helos, which Homer too has mentioned in his list of the Lacedaemonians: These had their home in Amyclae and in Helos the town by the seaside." It was founded

by Helius, the youngest of the sons of Perseus, and the Dorians afterwards reduced it by siege. Its inhabitants became the first slaves of the Lacedaemonian state, and were the first to be called Helots, as in fact Helots they were. The slaves afterwards acquired, although they were Dorians of Messenia, also came to be called Helots, just as the whole Greek race were called Hellenes from the region in Thessaly once called Hellas.⁴

I must note that the Macedonians never “enslaved” anyone the way the Spartans did, but it seems Dr. Čepreganov had cut class the day his professor was teaching that chapter. Nevertheless, how is it possible for someone who claims to be a professor and historian with a degree in History to read the book *The Peloponnesian War* and quote everything on ancient Macedonia and Macedonians, but miss the reasons why the author wrote the book? It is as if one reads Lev Tolstoy’s book *War and Peace* quoting various parts and not knowing that the war and peace that Tolstoy wrote about was between France and Russia!

If the good professor wants to offer a real service to himself and his compatriots, he should start working on their Slavic history, language, and heritage. Of course, if he still feels “Macedonian” he could author a scientific paper filled with scientific arguments using primary sources of the time on the imaginary amalgamation of the Slavic population of geographic Macedonia with the Greek speaking Macedonians, as Fanula Papazoglu determined on page 333 of her dissertation “Macedonian Cities during Roman Times.” Dr. Mikhail D. Petruševski was the editor of her dissertation that was written in Serbian, and the University of Skopje approved it in 1957. Perhaps professor Čepreganov would like to offer a catalogue of about 1,500 ancient Macedonian monuments and inscriptions, of course all Greek, hidden in the basements of museums in Skopje! The inscription of Oleveni would do it for starters.⁵

However, the professor was also quoted as saying:

Ernst Badian (Harvard University - History Department) explains the last battle between Macedonians and Greeks: ‘After hearing and rejoicing on the news of Alexander’s death, Greek soldiers and mercenaries saw their chance to remove themselves from Macedonian despot rule and rebelled. However, a Macedonian army under Pithon did defeat the rebels. Pithon, no doubt recognizing their immense value for the empire as a whole, persuaded them to go back to their posts, assuring them personal safety in return. Yet, contrary to his oath, seventeen thousand Greeks were cut down, after surrendering their arms, by the enraged Macedonians, and Pithon could not stop them. The patent needs of the empire and the oath of their commander were swallowed up in the explosion of what we can only regard as the men's irrational hatred for their Greek enemies.’

Since the good professor has no scientific argument on his own, I would like to respond to Dr. Badian's argument, but why do I have the feeling that the good professor of Skopje was not interested in Badian's whole statement. I have no doubt that Badian

has read Polybius V, 108, 3, 7, 8 where he says that a few Macedonian cities had revolted against Philip, who eventually re-captured them.

Here is the text,

3. He therefore set forth at once with his army to recover as soon as possible the revolted cities, ... 7. as he was convinced that this was the only way by which he could recover his principality of Pharos. 8. Philip, then, advancing with his army recovered the cities I mentioned, took Creonium and Gerus in the Dassaretis, Enchelanae, Cerax, Sation, and Boei in the region of Lake Lychnis, Bantia in the district of the Caloecini and Orgyssus in that of the Pisantini.⁶

As the professor can see, not only “Greek” cities, as he put it, revolted against the Macedonian kings, but also Macedonian cities against their own king.

For the sake of the reputation of Skopje's Academy of Sciences and Arts and all its members, one only hopes that Dr. Todor Ćepreganov is neither a member nor a representative of the academic view of his country. For if he was a member and a representative of the academic view of his country, the education in the Republic of Skopje has reached rock bottom in scientific thought and arguments equal to the level of the sixth graders those books were intended for (indeed yes, the capital of a country can name the whole country, i.e. Mexico, Panama, Rome, Byzantium to name a few). If in the end the professor's scientific findings convince historians of his part Slavic and part Greek Macedonian ancestry, then we might have something to talk about. Until then, I have news for the professor: he is a **Slav!!!**

There is reciprocity in all fair and balanced scientific arguments. The FYROM Slavs cannot demand from the Greeks to prove scientifically that the ancient Macedonians were Greeks and simultaneously demand from the world to take their word that they are “the Macedonians” through an amalgamation that never existed. Why should anyone take the word of the Slavs for their unproven “Macedonian” ancestry, but not the word of the ancient Macedonian kings that they were Greeks?

Whether the ancient Macedonians were Greeks or not is an unprofitable historical question. The Athenians were Pelasgians according to Herodotus, but the dear professor has not spent a minute trying to argue scientifically whether the ancient Athenians were Greeks or not. Since however, he insists that he is "Macedonian" and connects himself to the ancient Macedonian culture, I would recommend that instead of concentrating in de-Hellenizing the ancient Macedonians, the professor should try to connect his Slavic ancestry to the Greek Macedonians; scientifically, of course!

I wish him Good Luck in his efforts; ***he definitely needs it!***

Notes:

¹ <http://macedoniaonline.eu/content/view/3584/49/>

² Eugene N. Borza, "Athenians, Macedonians, and the Origins of the Macedonian Royal House," *Hesperia Supplements* (American School of Classical Studies at Athens), 1982.

³ [http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=1064-1173\(1982\)19%3C7%3AAMATOO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-J](http://www.jstor.org/sici?sici=1064-1173(1982)19%3C7%3AAMATOO%3E2.0.CO%3B2-J)

⁴ Homer Iliad 2.584; Pausanias III, 2.7; Pausanias III, 20.6

⁵ Fanula Papazoglu, *Central Balkan Tribes in Pre-Roman Times* (Amsterdam, Hakkert, 1978), 556. The plaque found at the town of Oleveni near Bitola is written in Greek.

⁶ http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Polybius/5*.html