



## Summary :

A small port on the southern coast of Bulgaria, inhabited by Turks, Gagauz, Bulgarians and a substantial number of Greeks. It experienced some development as the centre of grain export mainly during the nineteenth century. In the city there existed a notable Greek community until 1906, which maintained one or two lower-class schools intermittently. One of the Greek churches, which belonged to the Greek state, survived till 1940.

## Other Names

Βαλτσίκιο, Balchick, Balcis, Балчик

## Geographical Location

Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea

## Historical Region

Dobrudja

## Administrative Dependence

Dobrich region in Bulgaria

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## 1. Human geography - History

Balchik is a port on the Black Sea and is found in north-eastern Bulgaria, in the region of South Dobrudja, 15 miles farther north than [Varna](#).

In Antiquity a Greek colony, [Dionysopolis](#), was established there, which later on became a [Genoese seaport](#) ('skala'), named 'Carbona'. During the [Ottoman period](#) Balchik was a small urban centre which was inhabited by Orthodox Christians: Bulgarians, Greeks and [Gagaouzians](#), as well as by many Muslims. It appears that the Greek presence in the city had strong roots as it was one of the few urban centres in North Bulgaria where some residents spoke Greek in the mid-19th century.<sup>1</sup>

Though there is a lack of statistical data, we know that in 1876 the province of Balchik was inhabited by 15,000 Ottomans, 5,000 Bulgarians and 1,500 Greeks. In contrast to this, according to the figures of I. Nikolaou, 6,723 Ottomans and 3,166 Christians inhabited the area.<sup>2</sup> The Muslim presence was, as everywhere else in the province, particularly important. In 1873, there were 11 mosques in operation.<sup>3</sup>

After the Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878), the retreat of the Ottomans and the establishment of the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria, the Greek population in the region of Varna, which included Balchik, remained unchanged while the Bulgarians increased owing to the resettlement of Bulgarians from northern Dobrudja. In 1903, 400 Greeks, probably Bulgarian subjects, and 43 Greek subjects resided in the city.<sup>4</sup> In 1914, the total population had reached 6,618 of which many, maybe even the majority, were Greek. In 1940 there remained only 43 families.<sup>5</sup>

In 1913, in accordance with the Treaty of Bucharest, Balchik, just as all of Northern Dobrudja, was incorporated into Romania.<sup>6</sup> The region around Balchik comprised the district of Caliacra. In 1940, the region was handed over to Bulgaria.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the fact that along the coastal region of the Black Sea the Bulgarian movement for the [autonomy of the Bulgarian Church](#) was very weak, in Balchik the conflict between the Greeks and Bulgarians was early and fierce. To be precise, in 1847, the [patriarchal](#)



[metropolitan of Varna](#) imposed the Greek language in all the churches of the city, provoking intense opposition from a part of the Bulgarian population.<sup>8</sup> The strengthening of Bulgarian nationalism in the years after 1878 and the establishment of an autonomous Bulgarian principality strained relations even more. This is illustrated by the seizing 'with the consent of the local authorities' of the Greek (patriarchal) church of the Trinity in 1882 by the Bulgarian authorities. The Greeks were therefore obliged to congregate at the church of Annunciation which was located out of the city.<sup>9</sup> This church was taken over in 1906 within the framework of the [anti-Greek persecutions](#).<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, the church of St Constantine and St Helen remained under Greek control, that is, under the control of the Greek embassy. This church was built in 1894, on property donated to the Greek state in 1890 by Panagiotis Christopoulos, who was of Greek origin. The Bulgarian government acknowledged this donation and the legal status of the church, which remained under Greek control also during the inter-war period. For many years, however, the embassy had not sent a Greek priest. On October 10th, 1940, following the new incorporation of Southern Dobrudja into Bulgaria, the church was taken over by the Bulgarian authorities.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Economy

The liberalisation of the Ottoman trade with Western Europe and the lifting of the ban on the export of grain led to the incorporating of Balchik into the European economy as it was transformed into a notable grain-[trade harbour](#), whereby the Greek merchants played a dominant role. The economic significance of the city was reliant on the copious production of grain in the hinterland, where large agricultural properties existed, which often belonged to Greek grand merchants of grain.<sup>12</sup> However, despite the fact that Balchik was one of the safest ports on the Bulgarian coast of the Black Sea,<sup>13</sup> its exports at the end of the 19th century were insignificant, especially in relation to those of Varna, while the imports were practically non-existent. Some Greek merchants, however, were active in this domain.<sup>14</sup> The city was connected with Varna but rarely anymore with another ports.

During the inter-war years, Balchick developed not so much as a trade centre but as a tourist one. Other small town-ports of Dobrudja had developed similarly (e.g. [Mangalia](#)). The palace of the Romanian queen, Maria, made the city widely known. After World War II, the verdant botanical garden of the old palace comprised the main tourist attraction.

## 3. Education - Societies

There is little information available regarding education in Balchick. We know, however, that in 1854 a Greek school that used the [monitorial system](#) was founded.<sup>15</sup>

Nevertheless, it appears that education was organised systematically after 1870, and, just as in the whole Ottoman Empire, it was connected with the activities of various [educational associations](#). To be precise, in 1878, two monitorial, (probably mixed) schools were operating. The local community lacked the necessary resources to ensure the functioning of two schools. For this reason, the Educational Association of Varna ('*Filomousos Sillogos Varnas*'), at that time one of the most active Greek associations in the region, established a school in the 'upper neighbourhood' of the city and provided one half of the teacher's salary, in addition to providing gratis the books to poor students in the 'lower neighbourhood'.<sup>16</sup> It must be noted that at the end of 1872 or the beginning of 1873 there had been established in Balchick the 'Vizoni' Association which, although it had undertaken the maintenance of the monitorial school and of the Greek church, it probably had been inactive even by the end of 1873.<sup>17</sup> During the same period, a secondary school for Muslims was functioning, just as some lower Turkish schools.<sup>18</sup>

After the establishment of the autonomous Bulgarian Principality the educational institutions of the Greek communities operated under conditions not rarely difficult, due to the interventions of the state. However, in Balchick the problems of the Greek school were of economic nature. For this reason the [board of schools](#) (ephoreia) of the community asked in 1903 for assistance from the Greek state.<sup>19</sup> In all probability the school of Balchick close down together with the other Greek schools in Bulgaria. However, during the inter-war period a Greek primary school functioned in the neighbouring city of Pazartzik (today's Dobrich).<sup>20</sup>



1. Ιστορικό Αρχείο Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών, f. 78/1, 1876, Υποπροξενείον της Ελλάδος εν Βάρνη, προς Υπουργείον Εξωτερικών, n. 23, 26 February 1876.
2. Ιστορικό Αρχείο Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών, f. 78/1, 1876, Υποπροξενείον της Ελλάδος εν Βάρνη, προς Υπουργείον Εξωτερικών, n. 23, 26 February 1876.
3. Şimşir, Bilâl N., *The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985)* (London 1988), p. 15.
4. Κοτζαγεώργη, Ξ.,-Καζαμιάς, Γ. Α., «Οι Έλληνες της Βουλγαρίας σε αριθμούς, 1879-1934», in the Κοτζαγεώργη, Ξ. (ed.), *Οι Έλληνες της Βουλγαρίας. Ένα ιστορικό τμήμα του περιφερειακού ελληνισμού* (Θεσσαλονίκη 1999), pp. 148-151, 225.
5. *Anuarul Statistic al României pe anul 1914-1915* (Bucureşti 1919), p. 18; Ιστορικό Αρχείο Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών, f. 116/3, 1948; Προξενείο της Ελλάδος εν Βάρνη [Ιω. Πετρίδης], 774/A.5, 18 October, 1940, προς Υπουργείον Εξωτερικών/Πρεσβείαν Σόφιας.
6. With the Treaty of Bucharest (28/10 August 1913) the Second Balkan War between Bulgaria and the rest of the Balkan states (mainly Greece and Serbia and secondly Romania and the Ottoman Empire, which intervened later) was ended. Among the terms of the treaty was also the handing over of southern Dobrudja to Romania. The region was incorporated into Romania not for ethnological reasons but because of its strategic location. See about the Treaty in general in the essays of the volume: *Η συνθήκη του Βουκουρεστίου και η Ελλάδα. Συμπόσιο: 75 χρόνια από την απελευθέρωση της Μακεδονίας* (Θεσσαλονίκη 1990).
7. See Hitchens, K., *Rumania, 1866-1947* (Oxford 1996), pp. 153, 448.
8. Tonev, V., "From the past of Bulgarian-Greek relations on the Western Black Sea coast", *Balkan Studies* 25/2 (1984), p. 568.
9. Anonymous, «Ειδήσεις», *Εκκλησιαστική Αλήθεια* 3 (1881-1882), p. 710. On March 25, 1883, the Greek church of the Annunciation was temporarily occupied; Anonymous, «Βουλγαρικά τερατουργήματα», *Εκκλησιαστική Αλήθεια* 4 (1882-1883), p. 412.
10. Anonymous, «Διωγμός Ορθοδόξων εν Βουλγαρία και Αν. Ρωμυλία», *Εκκλησιαστική Αλήθεια* 33 (1909), pp. 116-118. On the expulsions see Σφέτας, Σ., «Οι ανθελληνικοί διωγμοί στην Ανατολική Ρωμυλία κατά το έτος 1906 στα πλαίσια της βουλγαρικής κρατικής πολιτικής», *Βαλκανικά Σύμμεικτα* 5-6 (1993-1994), pp. 77-91.
11. Ιστορικό Αρχείο Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών, f. 116/3, 1948; Προξενείον της Ελλάδος εν Βάρνη [Ιω. Πετρίδης], 774/A.5, 18 October 1940, προς Υπουργείον Εξωτερικών/Πρεσβείαν Σόφιας.
12. Crampton, R. J., *Bulgaria 1878-1918. A history* (New York 1983), p. 350.
13. Foreign Office Annual Series, 20, Report on British Trade abroad for the year 1872-1873, p. 700.
14. Foreign Office Annual Series. 1886, 1, Report on the Trade of Varna for the year 1885 (London 1886), p. 3. Παρασκευόπουλος, Γ. Π., *Η Μεγάλη Ελλάς* (Αθήνα 1898), p. 416.
15. Κοτζαγεώργη-Ζυμάρη, Ξ., *Η Ελληνική εκπαίδευση στη Βουλγαρία (1800-1914), Η ιστορία, οι δομές και ο ρόλος της* (Θεσσαλονίκη 1997), p. 58.
16. Κοτζαγεώργη-Ζυμάρη, Ξ., *Η Ελληνική εκπαίδευση στη Βουλγαρία (1800-1914), Η ιστορία, οι δομές και ο ρόλος της* (Θεσσαλονίκη 1997), pp. 58-59. *Συνέδριον των ελληνικών συλλόγων. Πρακτικά της πρώτης αυτού συνόδου συγκροτηθείσης εν Αθήναις εν έτει 1879* (Αθήνα 1879), p. 224. About the Educational Association of Varna see Κοτζαγεώργη, Ξ., «Σωματειακή οργάνωση-κοινωνικός βίος-πολιτισμός (μέσα 19ου αι.-αρχές 20ού)», in Κοτζαγεώργη, Ξ. (ed), *Οι Έλληνες της Βουλγαρίας. Ένα ιστορικό τμήμα του περιφερειακού ελληνισμού* (Θεσσαλονίκη 1999), pp. 398-400.
17. Κοτζαγεώργη, Ξ., «Σωματειακή οργάνωση-κοινωνικός βίος-πολιτισμός (μέσα 19ου αι.-αρχές 20ού)», in the Κοτζαγεώργη, Ξ. (ed), *Οι Έλληνες της Βουλγαρίας. Ένα ιστορικό τμήμα του περιφερειακού ελληνισμού* (Θεσσαλονίκη 1999), p. 404. 'Vizoni' (Βιζόνη) was the name of the neighbouring city of Kavarna in antiquity.



18. Şimşir, Bilâl N., *The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985)* (London 1988), p. 15.
19. Κοτζαγεώργη-Ζυμάρη, Ξ., *Η Ελληνική εκπαίδευση στη Βουλγαρία (1800-1914). Η ιστορία, οι δομές και ο ρόλος της* (Θεσσαλονίκη 1997), p. 76.
20. Ιστορικό Αρχείο Υπουργείου Εξωτερικών, f. 116/3, 1948; Consulat Royal de Grèce à Costantza (Νεγρεπόντης), 2146, 16 September 1940, προς Πρεσβεία Βουκουρεστίου.

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	<b>Crampton Richard</b> , <i>Bulgaria 1878-1918. A History</i> , New York 1983
	<b>Şimşir Bilâl</b> , <i>The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985)</i> , London 1988

## Webliography :

	Balchik Palace
<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balchik_Palace">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balchik_Palace</a>	

## Glossary :

	<b>board of schools</b>
The board of schools (ephoreia) consisted of members either elected by the community or nominated by a commission. They were authorized to supervise the proper functioning of the educational institutions.	
	<b>Bulgarian issue</b>
The Bulgarian struggle for ecclesiastical autonomy. Since the 1850's the Bulgarians claimed the establishment of an autonomous church (exarchate) which would retain typical relationship with the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The latter opposed to this movement as its role had been undermined. After long lasting negotiations and the failure of any attempt for reconciliation, an Ottoman firman promulgated in 1870 established the Bulgarian exarchate, although the Patriarchate declared the Exarchate schismatic. Naturally, the main character of the struggle of the Bulgarians for ecclesiastical independence was not religious. It was bounded to the Bulgarian nationalism emerged at that time and had clear political dimension (Bulgarian political independence).	
	<b>monitorial system</b>
Teaching method developed by Joseph Lancaster, under which the older students (in Greek: "protoscholoi") taught the smaller children some skill or activity.	

## Sources

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