

Advancement of the Modern State through Education:

Bulgarians at Robert College 1863-1912

Paulin Draganova

June 2, 2018

INTRODUCTION

In the struggle of Bulgaria preceding the independence and after, the education Bulgarian students received at Robert College influenced the future direction of Bulgaria as a nation-state. The opportunity that Robert College provided was unique and appealing to Bulgarian students because of the location of the college and the quality of its education. Konstantin Stoilov, Stefan Panaretov, Todor Ivanchov, and Ivan Bagarov exemplify the types of men that graduated Robert College and actively had the opportunity to impact Bulgaria through their careers. Robert College's qualities as a college that was American and taught curriculum that was American provided the ideas of modernity to their students. Through the use of ethnic identity to group students and the promotion of Bulgarian, the vernacular language for Bulgarian students in an academic and recognized setting, Robert College fostered nationalism that strengthened Bulgaria's political and social environment to establish an independent democratic, market-oriented, modern nation-state.

ROBERT COLLEGE'S IMPACT ON BULGARIA CAME FROM SO MANY BULGARIANS

ATTENDING THE COLLEGE

When Robert College was founded in 1863, Bulgaria was still part of the Ottoman Empire. Bulgarian students attended it before Bulgaria had gained independence from the Ottoman Empire and in the following years when the Third Bulgarian State was established. Robert College opened in Constantinople at a time when there was no quality education being offered to the Bulgarian subjects of the Ottoman Empire. Robert College provided an education that was located close to the Bulgarian provinces, and the education was at a high level, on par with American colleges at the time. For higher class Bulgarians, this was an opportune educational institution to send their children to receive a modern education.

In the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, Bulgaria gained independence from the Ottoman Empire, but it was not free of interest from Russia to rule over it. But regardless of influences from Russia, Bulgarian people sought to establish an independent state. At the Tarnovo Constitution drafting and signing in April of 1878, alumni of Robert College participated in creating the first Constitution of Bulgaria. In 1886, the Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia merged with Bulgaria. The land in that area was historically occupied by Bulgarians and was at that moment. Robert College alumni were part of the provincial government and promoted the Bulgarian identity as a national one.

The scholar, Orlin Sabev, who has done extensive research within the primary sources available at Robert College in Istanbul has documented and also noted the importance of Robert College alumni in the political development of Bulgaria as a nation-state. In the first 15 years of its operation, the College had an average of 30 Bulgarians students per year, making up a fourth of the college population (Sabev 2014, 289-93). Forty-Five Bulgarian men had graduated Robert College by the liberation of Bulgaria in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78 (Sabev 2015, 56). After 500 years under Ottoman rule, the Bulgaria people were eager and determined to establish an independent state. Four graduates were part of the drafting and signing of the Tarnovo Constitution in 1878, the first constitution of Bulgaria (Sabev 2015, 56). Twenty-five percent of the men in the Bulgarian parliament were Robert College alumni (Sabev 2015, 57). A total of 12 Bulgarian prime ministers were graduates of Robert College. Other graduates took political positions in the Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia, which would eventually become part of Bulgaria.

THE CAREERS OF FOUR BULGARIAN MEN AS EXAMPLES OF THE IMPACTFUL POSITIONS OF THE ROBERT COLLEGE ALUMNI

Konstantin Stoilov, Stefan Panaretov, Todor Ivanchov, and Ivan Bagarov were all alumni of Robert College that attended it throughout its first years. They went on to have careers that were active in Bulgarian society. They represent the types of Bulgarian men that returned to Bulgaria after studying at Robert College and contributed to its intellectual development; political, and economic life. Robert College's contribution to the modern independent nation-state of Bulgaria exemplifies the power of education.

Konstantin Stoilov, a student in the class of 1871, became the minister of foreign affairs, minister of finance, and then prime minister during 1887, 1894, and between 1894 and 1899. In the Robert College Catalogues, his career progress is clearly presented:

Has been (1) Member of Court of Appeal of Philippopolis, (2) President of Court of Appeal of Sophia, (3) Deputy to National and (4) to Grand Sobranjie, (5) Member of Deputation of Grand Sobranjie that presented the Crown to H.H. Prince Alexander, (6) Secretary of Prince Alexander, (7) Minister of Foreign Affairs, (8) Delegate of the Bulgarian Government to the Vienna Conference a quatre, (9) Minister of Finance, (10) Prime Minister, (11) Member of the Extraordinary Deputation sent by the Grand Sobranjie to the Great Powers in 1887, (12) Minister of Justice. Was an officer in the Servo-Bulgarian War. Studied at the Universities of Heidelberg and Leipzig. Received the Degree of A.M. from Robert College, and of L.L. D. from the University of Heidelberg. (Robert College 1884)

In a further catalogue, his death on April 5th in 1901 is marked (Robert College 1911). In addition to all these positions, Konstantin was one of the Robert College alumni present and participating in the drafting and signing of the Turnovo Constitution in April of 1878 (Sabev 2015). Konstantin was an alumni of Robert College that went on to be a politician in the

Bulgarian government and Prime Minister. He was a member of the National Bulgarian Assembly, which represented the democratic approach to governing the new modern state of Bulgaria.

Stefan Panaretov was a classmate of Konstantin Stoilov. He was an academic who was part of the class of 1871, actually became a professor of Bulgarian language and literature at Robert College for many years. In the beginning of his career documented in the catalogues, he “was sent by the Bulgarian Government in 1880 as a Special Envoy to England” (Robert College 1884). It was also noted that he “received the Degree of A. M. from Robert College [and] the Bulgarian Decoration of St. Alexander” (Robert College 1911). Between 1914 and 1925, he was the Bulgarian Minister to United States. He was one of the men who took part in the commemoration of Washburn’s death. In the New York Times, he wrote a letter to the editor. In it, he discussed the passing of George Washburn, the president of Robert College and the attitude of the Bulgarian alumni towards Dr. Washburn:

Bulgarian newspapers, recently received, contain very sympathetic and appreciative notices of the death of Dr. George Washburn, ex-President of Robert College who died on Feb. 15 in Boston. Along with the recognition of the noble personal qualities which distinguished the deceased, these notices express the deep gratitude of the Bulgarian people for the signal services he rendered to Bulgaria in her hour of distress in 1876, and the sorrow felt at the loss of one of the best friends Bulgaria has ever had. In the National Assembly one of the Deputies, a graduate of Robert College and former pupil of Dr. Washburn, in a stirring speech passed in review the active part “this great-souled American” topic in bringing about the political emancipation of Bulgaria by laying bare before the public opinion of Europe, especially of England, the massacres in Bulgaria in

1876. At the end of the speech the whole Assembly, in token of respect to the dead, rose to its feet, while the eyes of many were filled with tears. The Bulgarian press announces that steps will be taken to commemorate the name of this great benefactor of the Bulgarians in a tangible and permanent manner. Stefan Panaretoff. Bulgarian Minister. New York, March 30, 1915. (Panaretoff 1915)

Robert College contributed so significantly in the formation Bulgaria's modern state that after the passing of George Washburn, who had been president of the college during those decades, one of the Robert College alumni in the Bulgarian National Assembly gave a speech commemorating him. The year preceding this letter published, the New York Times announced the nomination of Stephan Panaretov "as Bulgarian Minister to the United States" ("New Bulgar" 1914). His association with Robert College as "a long time professor" was used as a descriptive positive trait for his qualification to the "Government at Washington" ("New Bulgar Envoy" 1914).

What these articles in the New York Times do not reveal about his time at Robert College, was that while a professor, Stefan Panaretov had also been a patriot who had been active in supporting the Bulgarian revolution. In Keith Greenwood's book, *Robert College: The American Founders*, a whole section is devoted to the communication between George Washburn, Cyrus Hamlin, Christopher Robert, and Albert Long on the moral issues arising the positions Stefan Panaretov was taking as a professor at Robert College in relation to the college and the Turkish government. Albert Long, a colleague of Stefan Panaretov, had been a "missionary to the Bulgarians for twelve years prior to appointment to the faculty of Robert College" left him with a reputation "as a friend of the Bulgarians" and another reason Bulgarian students were drawn to the college. Dr. Long and George Washburn shared an understanding for

the patriotism that had awakened in the Bulgarian students through education. As Dr. Washburn says in his own words:

...a number of young Bulgarian men had come to Robert College to satisfy their newly awakened desire for education and soon a majority of our students were Bulgarian, many of them moved by a spirit of patriotism, a desire to supply a want of educated men in their country. Dr. Long, was already an enthusiastic friend of the nation with great faith in their future. It was only natural that I should come to share his hopes and wish to do what I could for the elevation of this promising people.” (Greenwood 2003, 193).

From these writings, it is clear that patriotism and education were elements of the education at Robert College that were not only acknowledged but also fostered in the students. Washburn and Long both saw that the Bulgarian students were eager to learn from them with the intent to return to Bulgaria and serve the country in the political, social, and governmental aspects.

The “want of educated men” is a particular phrase that stands out to me because it presents the question of what an educated man was and how their education in Robert College was significant in a way of “educating” the Bulgarian men in ways that the Greek and Russian schools could not. For this, the actions of Stefan Panaretov while at Robert College become significantly important. Stefan Panaretov taught the Bulgarian literature and language curriculum, which provided a specific source of national identity for the Bulgarian students since they had the opportunity to keep and develop their Bulgarian in addition to English, the main language in which education was provided. For students that attended the college for four years, being immersed in only English, without courses in their native language, would have shaped their identity and cultural understanding in a way that attempted to erase their cultural knowledge and social place in their own communities back home. The Anglo-Saxon education would have

presented values in an English-only environment which would appear to convert students into an American mold and disregard their life outside of the college, but that was not the case.

When Stefan Panaretov was “the adjunct professor of Bulgarian” in 1876, he went to London “armed with letters of introduction from Washburn to influential members of Parliament. His task was to lobby for Bulgaria in whatever fashion seemed possible” (Greenwood 2003, 205). The active role that Panaretov took in advocating for Bulgaria’s case against Ottoman rules represented the democratic, government aware, and politically able graduates that Robert College was creating in the college. Without the knowledge or understanding of how western government systems worked and their intricacies, Panaretov would not have been able to successfully enter and operate in the international politics taking place in London.

These actions were so impactful in the political world, that they had consequences for the college’s image in the eyes of the Turkish government. Cyrus Hamlin, one of the founders, felt that this type of political activism put the college in a bias position, and he urged that Panaretov be dismissed. In a letter, Hamlin wrote:

We are and must be a neutral power. No cry of humanity, no shriek of despair can reach the college as such. There is always a legitimate freedom outside that. Anyone who feels called to may resign and throw himself into this seething cauldron of blood and passion and politics in the name of humanity, religious freedom, or any other name but that college was founded for no such purpose. It will be humiliating to have one of its professors held under guard as a traitor or to save him I do not believe form being apprehended as a traitor to his government...I do not believe Mr. Panaretoff should be supported at all. He is a patriotic man and has a full and noble right to sacrifice himself

for his country but no right to sacrifice the college to save himself. (Greenwood 2003, 206).

It is clear that Hamlin's idea of the college as one of its founders was different from what the college was becoming. That is important in consideration to the writings of Hamlin and his statements made in regard to the college.

Under President Washburn, Robert College was a place that although in theory may have been neutral politically, was truly functioning as a place of education for Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire. And the education that students were receiving just through the structure of the college and the examples set by the leaders at the college were those of individual actions as work in the goal of democracy and independence for the Bulgarians, and other minorities such as the Armenians.

Dr. Washburn was not shy of advocating when the atrocities of 1876 were occurring in Bulgaria, and his decisions as president of the college, set it on its course that would end up actually making the impact that was so huge for Bulgaria as a country and its independence. Contrary to Hamlin's writing, Robert College was not a neutral education institution. Just by being an American college in the Ottoman empire, the place was radical with the services and education it was able to provide and who it provided it too. Educating the minorities of the Ottoman Empire and conveying the idea of human rights and individual power of action for social change were the unique ideas of democracy which were not being taught to Bulgarian students in Greek, Russian, and surely not Turkish schools to which there was access.

Todor Ivanchov, of the class of 1875, continued his studies in Montpellier, France in medicine and science after graduating from Robert College. He became a teacher and then a principal. He was also an editor at several emerging Bulgarian newspapers, director of the

statistical bureau of Bulgaria, and prime minister between 1899-1901. In the Robert College Catalogues, it is clear that Robert College values the achievements of their alumni, and that these achievements are significant by the updated documentation. In the Catalogue of 1884, Todor Ivanchov's career is traced as:

Sophia, Director of Statistical Bureau. Has been (1) Teacher, (2) Director of the State Gymnasium at Kustendil, (3) Chief of Section in Ministry of Public Instruction, (4) Minister of Public Instruction, (5) Deputy to Ordinary and Great National Assemblies. Studied Medicine and Natural Sciences at Montpellier, France. (Robert College 1884)

In the Catalogue of 1911, the following positions are added: “(6) Deputy of the Bureau of Statistics, (7) Prime Minister of Bulgaria” (Robert College 1911). It is significant to note the high places of the positions Todor Ivanchov achieved. Just like Konstantin Stoilov, he holds the position of Prime Minister of Bulgaria. Later on, he also was an advisor to another prime minister, and during this time, an article in the New York Times notes the intense connection that Bulgaria's government maintains with the United States (“Bulgaria Unwilling” 1917). The course of career choices Ivanchov made exhibit an attitude of someone who is contributing to Bulgarian society in a modern way, interacting with a government system and participating in the reproduction of it and a strong cultural system through education that supports the Bulgarian state.

Ivan Bagarov, class of 1903, went to university in Leipsic, Germany (Robert College 1911). After that he became a merchant. As a merchant, Ivan Bagarov's business was one of the first to process rose oil with an international business perspective in mind. The area of Plovdiv, called at that time Philippopolis, was in the terrorist of Eastern Rumelia that had been gained as a part of Bulgaria. As a businessman, Bagarov had returned from Robert College and worked on

economically developing this region of Bulgaria. In present day Bulgarian rose oil company websites, his company “Hristo Bagarov” is cited as developing the area of Sopot where it was located and rose oil exports are still the main economic enterprise (Bulgarskoto Rozovo Maslo 2018).

Having been educated at Robert College, Ivan Bagarov had the understanding of international business and motivated to seek business relations with the United States. Ivan Bagarov was one of the first businessmen to open a company and export rose oil to the United States. The English and French language skills that Robert College developed in its students enabled them to enter the international economic trade. In 1914, Bagarov visited the United States on business. In a New York Times interview, he described the rose oil exports he had established:

I export from 1,500 to 2,000 pounds of essential oil for perfumes annually, and when I mention that it takes almost a ton and a half of roses to make a pound of oil, you may gather that that means the consumption of a lot of flowers. To make five grams of oil requires thirty pounds of roses, or 174 pounds to make an ounce. This oil sells for about \$180 a pound over here. (“Bulgarian Queen” 1914)

Bagarov established connections and developed positive relationships with American businesses for export of rose oil which had not existed previously. For Bulgaria, he created and successfully ran a business that employed thousands in the area of Plovdiv that had been a part of the province of Eastern Rumelia on the edge of the Ottoman Empire not twenty years before.

In addition to his English skills in the United States, Bagarov utilized his French skills in France. In his business with France, Bagarov’s company “Hristo Bagarov” build one of the first steam processing facilities for rose oil in Bulgaria. While at Robert College, Ivan Bagarov had

also take courses on business which taught the American approach to business. Although rose oil had been produced without steam technology for centuries in Bulgaria, the new demand for larger quantities of the rose oil and consistent quality required Bagarov to seek out new ways of producing it. Studying at Robert College, Bagarov had been educated on the possibilities of new technology and understood the benefits of it in the business process of rose oil.

Through activity in business which contributed to Bulgaria's expansion economy or political positions in the government and society, the four men, as many other Bulgarian alumni of Robert College, contributed to the establishment of Bulgarian as a modern nation-state.

AS AN AMERICAN COLLEGE, ROBERT COLLEGE CONTRASTED THE OTTOMAN IDEAS AND SOCIAL IDENTITIES FOR BULGARIAN SUBJECTS

Robert College alumni that returned to Bulgaria changed the national views in Bulgaria's society. This was a major part of the state independence. The modernization of Bulgarian society included a change in attitude towards Anglo-Saxon intellectual and political ideas (Mishkova 2008). Bulgaria's openness towards Western Europe was not a natural occurrence. Even before full Bulgarian independence, the value of freedom as national sovereignty was introduced through missionary schools. Robert College has been identified a place of educating Bulgarian citizens in politics, diplomacy, and administration (Mishkova 2008). Western ideas of nationalism were introduced to Bulgarian leaders and influenced their decisions on the revolution and formation of the Bulgarian state.

The economic and cultural trends in Bulgarian society have been discussed in social theory. The changes in Bulgarian society were often documented by missionaries who worked in Bulgaria and saw the changes throughout their years of work. Bulgaria became more open to

missionary schools from America and often send students to study in Western European countries for their higher education (Mishkova 2008).

Women also had increased access to education. This shaped a group in Bulgarian society of intellectuals that viewed themselves as elite (Mishkova 2008). The ways in which Robert College aimed to educate students was focused on instilling in the students the importance of education. “The ‘discovery’ of awakened and prospective Bulgarians, which can be drawn to study at Robert College, appears as if it transforms into the mission of first importance with political incline and in a competitive environment” (Sabev 2015).

To understand the uniqueness of the education at Robert College for Bulgarian students between 1863 and 1912, it is important to consider the historical setting of the provinces in the Ottoman Empire. In the Ottoman Empire, subjects were not identified predominantly by their ethnicity, but by their affiliation to a church. In his historical book on the formation of ethnic identities in the Balkans, which includes the areas of Bulgaria, Mazower’s findings support this idea:

Indifference to nationalist categories among the Sultan’s Christian subjects reflected their sense of belonging to a community defined by religion, where the linguistic difference between Greek and Bulgarian mattered less than their shared belief in Orthodoxy... The linguistic, racial and religious diversity of the peoples inhabiting southeastern Europe dates back to the Slav invasions, if not earlier. Politically, however, this counted for little until recently. Neither the Byzantine nor the Ottoman empires were ethnically based polities (Mazower 2000, 39-40).

Since Bulgarians attended Orthodox mass in Greek, they often identified as Greek, meaning Greek Orthodox. Their lack of affiliation with their ethnic identity was a precedent that did not have any anticipated division.

When the Russian scholar Yuri Venelin visited Bulgarian in 1830 to collect materials for his pioneering historical and ethnographical studies of the Bulgarian people, he was scarcely clear what it meant to call oneself Bulgarian. “Even forty years ago,” wrote an observer in 1900, “the name Bulgarian was almost unknown and every educated person coming from the country called himself Greek as a matter of course (Mazower 2000, 92). Yuri Venelin addressed the question of ethnic Bulgarian identity as late as the 1860s, as being underdeveloped as a means of uniting people. This shows how Bulgarian ethnic identity was not a prevalent means of association between people before the 1860s. It was how Robert College taught that shaped the Bulgarian ethnic identity as a major one for the Bulgarian students in the Ottoman Empire.

Although not a missionary school, one of the important things Robert College did for the support of Bulgarian national identity was to provide the Bible in the languages that students spoke in vernacular. For Bulgarian students, reading and studying in Bulgarian promoted the identity as recognizable and also created a community for them. This shift of printing in those languages and studying at a prestige secondary education institution in the language legitimized and supported its growth. Literacy in the ethnic languages was a major part of the education at the missionary schools in the Ottoman Empire, including Robert College by name.

In a document focusing on the historical interactions between the Ottoman government and the American presence in the empire, the interactions between the Ottoman government and the missionary schools reveals the significance of using ethnic languages in print. “According to

the new legal regulation, all published materials, either printed in the Ottoman Empire or imported from foreign countries, were subject to the prior control and permission of the Sublime Porte for their distribution. Morris, who visited Ali Pasha several times on behalf of the American missionaries, was told that the Sublime Porte was not against any religious material such as the Bible that was freely published and distributed. However all Christian propaganda against Muslims would not be tolerated...When the Bulgarian revolt erupted in the Spring of 1875, more restrictions were enforced. According to a new regulation, all publications were subjected to the approval of the Ministry of Public Instruction before their printing. Moreover, a sentence of identification was to be placed in the front page of the publication indicating its character, such as Ottoman Official Attitudes scientific, religious, or literary...Despite the strict limitations, the missionaries continued their publication activities with or without permission of the Porte. This attitude only increased the disputes with the Porte” (Cagri 2000, 334).

Providing a high-quality education to Bulgarian students in their own language was a major part of national development. Robert College provided to the Bulgarian men a type of education that as seen in other examples of schools, promoted the modern Bulgarian nation-state through its existence as an opportunity of education. With a focus on the Bulgarian nation-building as a consequence of American cultural-transfer, Reeves-Ellington also explores the impact of the American ideas which were being transferred through Robert College’s curriculum and system to the Bulgarian students. Missionary schools often were providing the highest quality education in Bulgarian for women graduates that could enrich and contribute to the development of the nation. The success of the school in modernizing Bulgarian society was through its education of women (Reeves-Ellington 2004).

For students from Bulgaria, an education at Robert College quickly became a symbol of elite status and pro-Western politics. Because the educational institutions in the Bulgarian region of the Ottoman Empire were underdeveloped, students often studied in Greek or Russian schools. Robert College's proximity to the region and teaching of students in ethnic languages that would later develop into national languages appealed to Bulgarian students, and their education at the college led many to influential positions in society. Robert College played a specific role in shaping Bulgarian students from the elite that ended up being part of and incorporating western through ideas into their political and intellectual careers. Before Bulgaria gained independence, the Bulgarian nationalist movement was part of a revival of remembrance of Bulgarian cultural past. Robert College alumni were part of the intellectuals that contributed to the identification and clarification of that identity. (Neuburger 2011)

In 1884, a New York Times article on the influence of Robert College on Bulgarian students describes that "both in Philippopolis and in Sophia there are already many young men who have received their education at the college, and who are now occupying posts of importance in their respective countries. The fact is important in itself, but it becomes doubly so when we reflect that this is the first occasion on which as newly formed European State has borrowed its ideas, or any of them, directly from Anglo-Saxon sources. Hitherto young men and coming politicians of the nations who were compelled to seek their education outside their own country have as a rule turned their steps to Paris, Berlin, and Vienna, and in the great universities of those cities have learned much that was of profit to themselves and likely to be of service to their fellow-countrymen. But in none of these capitals—not even in Paris—have they come in contact with what may be called the purely Anglo-Saxon, as opposed to the Continental, method of looking at political questions" ("Influence of The Robert College" 1884). This differentiation

that is made between the attitude towards “the governing classes to the governed” is identified as “English or American” in contrast to “French or German politics” (“Influence of The Robert College” 1884).

Robert College played a major role as a vessel for Western cultural values. Intellectuals who had accepted and internalized the Western national ideas argued against accepting the cultural values. In the years leading up to the formation of the Bulgarian nation, there was a pushback from Bulgarian citizens on religious reform (Reeves-Ellington 2004). One example was the consumption of alcohol and tobacco. The moral attitude had generally been that there is no issue with the consumption of alcohol and tobacco (Neuburger 2011). With Robert College, values of Western societies were transferred. Self-control and moral uprightness were major qualities that were presented as the way young men were being shaped at Robert College.

Many Robert College alumni continued the education of values to other citizens when they returned to Bulgaria. When they became teachers, instructors, or principals, their methods resembled those of Robert College. The origins of cultural norms are questioned and a cultural change appears in the exploration of its religious implication and gendered bias in appropriate consumptions (Neuburger 2011). The ability of Robert College to educate young men who returned to Bulgaria, enabled their ideas to reach beyond the elite, affecting the attitudes accepted in mainstream Bulgarian society.

In 1919, Konstantin Stefanov published the book “The Bulgarians and Anglo-Saxondom,” which described events and historical dates that are connected to the awakening of the Bulgarians in their national unity and fight for independence from Ottoman rule. In the book, Stefanov cites a quote by Theodore Roosevelt: “Americans have just cause to feel proud that Robert College gave to many of the leading Bulgarian citizens their education, so that it has

played a peculiar part in the making of the Bulgarian nation” (Stefanov 1919). Stefanov also writes that the recognition of “the natural and ethnical area of the Bulgarians” by Anglo-Saxon academics was a contribution to the motivation of Bulgarians to unite nationally (Stefanov 1919, 19). The increased number of educated Bulgarians is one factor that is considered assistance in the awakening of Bulgarians.

When describing the political thought of alumni of Robert College in their careers, it is important to note that the Western influence was clearly transmitted not only through political ideas, but also cultural values and attitudes. In the 1940s, C. E. Black reflected on these ideas, and although limited partially by the historical perspective of the time, the ideas presented about the cultural transfer are valid. Robert College was a place of educational content including moral lessons on restraint. The increased consumption of the substances during this period of social change in the public created a response from both religious and secular campaigns that promoted restraint of use and used gender as a major point in their arguments. The Bulgarian society is an example of the influence of Western thought on culture and the attitude in which it was being spread, as a progressive and positive ideology (Black 1943).

The ideas illuminated the thought of Bulgarian society. If the western ideas of figures such as Rousseau, Mazzini and Bakunin, Gladstone and Bagehot were not taught to Bulgarians, the fight against the Turkish rule over Bulgaria would have had an outcome without an independent state of Bulgaria (Black 1943). The other main proposal for Bulgaria’s future was a shift in local governance, but the idea of establishment of an independent government and state for Bulgaria came out of the Western political ideas of liberal and radical change (Black 1943). Robert College’s presence as an American college in Istanbul and the knowledge created and

connected to the American values and modernity was both a basic and crucial part of its ability to impact the Bulgarian students so significantly.

LANGUAGE WAS AN AUTHENTIC WAY OF CREATING NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION THAT DID NOT EXIST FOR BULGARIANS

In the 19th century, the rise of nationalism is cited by scholars as different from previous examples of nationalism throughout the world. “The type of nationalism which emerged towards the end of the nineteenth century had no fundamental similarity to state-patriotism, even when it attached itself to it. Its basic loyalty was, paradoxically, not to ‘the country’, but only to its particular version of that country: to an ideological construct” (Hobsbawm 1992, 93).

The Bulgarian nation-state was shaped by this creation of a specific national identity. The shaping of national identity of the peoples in the Ottoman Empire has been discussed by many scholars. Historically, “the growing significance of ‘the national questions’ in the forty years preceding 1914...within the old multinational empires of Austro-Hungary and Turkey” was documented and is agreed upon (Hobsbawm 1992, 104). When shifting from identifying through religion in the Ottoman Empire, it is through the ethnic nationalism that the identity was created.

Part of the theory behind nationalism in the 19th century is connected to imagined traditions, which came out from ethnic customs but developed into vague and general markers of identity. Since the industrial revolution, three types of traditions have been at the center of scholar discourse: “a) those establishing or symbolizing social cohesion or the membership of groups, real or artificial communities, b) those establishing or legitimizing institutions, status or relations of authority, and c) those whose main purpose was socialization, the inculcation of beliefs, value systems and conventions of behavior. While traditions of types b) and c) were certainly devised (as in those symbolizing submission to authority in British India), it may be

tentatively suggested that type a) was prevalent, the other functions being regarded as implicit in or flowing from a sense of identification with a ‘community’ and/or the institutions representing, expressing or symbolizing it such as a ‘nation’” (Hobsbawn 1993, 9).

There was no Bulgarian state in the 19th century, and there had not been for 500 years under the Ottoman rule. The identity criteria that emerged for Bulgarian nationalism was not that of birthplace or life within spatial boundaries. The boundaries of Bulgaria were a major dispute when the nation-state formed and continue to be relative to this day.

Although mass literacy had not been a focus in the Ottoman Empire, externally, the idea had formed that writings in the vernacular languages was crucial to traditions. “The lexicographic revolution in Europe, however, crated, and gradually spread, the conviction that languages (in Europe at least) were, so to speak, the personal property of quite specific groups, imagined as communities, were entitled to their autonomous place in a fraternity of equals.” (Anderson 1992, 84)

In the first half of the 19th century, a major breakthrough that would be one of the seeds of national identity was the formation of literary languages in the region. “In the period 1800-1850, as the result of pioneering works by native scholars, three distinct literary languages were formed in the northern Balkans: Slovene, Serbo-Croat, and Bulgarian. If, in the 1830s, ‘Bulgarians’ had been widely through to be of the same nation as the Serbs and Croats, and had in fact shared in the Illyrian Movement, a separate Bulgarian national state was to come into existence by 1878” (Anderson 1992, 73-74). The identity of Bulgarian nationalism that formed was also connected to language.

The literary Bulgarian, “based on the West Bulgarian idiom” did not have a means of spreading through social structures without the element of mass literacy in the Ottoman Empire

(Hobsbawm 1992, 54). Further, any sophisticated education that was in place was set up in Russian and Greek at the relative institutions which were available for students from the regions where Bulgarians resided.

Yet, Bulgarian nationalism connected to language was developed by the late part of the 19th century. “The idea that the various nationalities living on this territory should be distinguished by their language, was the last of many to strike the states of Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and the Sublime Porte” (Hobsbawm 1992, 107). The increase of education in Bulgarian was one of the ways in which the language formed as part of Bulgarian nationalism. Greek and Russian schools taught in their respective languages, but some missionary schools, like Robert College, that entered the Ottoman Empire taught multiple languages, including special courses with the ethnic language.

THE ROBERT COLLEGE ENVIRONMENT AND CURRICULUM SHAPED BULGARIAN STUDENTS INTO HAVING A STRONG NATIONAL IDENTITY

The Bulgarians who entered Robert College did not identify themselves by their ethnicity where they were coming from. When they went to study in Constantinople, their experience at Robert College was tied around their ethnic identity. “The fourth college year, 1866-67, opened with a large increase of students. The whole number registered during the year was 96, of whom 19 were Armenians, 13 Bulgarians and 18 Greeks...Dr. Hamlin's sympathies were deeply stirred during the year by the long and serious illness of two of the students, one of whom, a very promising Bulgarian, died, and the other, a German, was disabled, so that he was a cripple for life, although he finally recovered so far as to graduate in 1869” (Washburn 1909, 21). This experience shaped the students' relation to being Bulgarian and their interactions with other students who already had national identities as their background.

The languages which they spoke was one of the main distinctions between students. This dictated their ethnic identity. “Every missionary station, and every school and college, has not only elevated its Christian students and the few Turks who attended these schools, but it has shown to all the value of education and made them more or less familiar with the progress of Christian civilization. The influence of education on the Bulgarians made a profound impression upon the Turks, even upon the Sultan himself” (Washburn 1909, xxx).

The use of the languages is clearly documented in Robert College’s curriculum, exercises, and examinations. “The first "Commencement Exercises" of the College were held at the close of the public oral examination of the various classes, which in former years had attracted considerable attention. This year the audience was as large as could be accommodated, and all were enthusiastic over the orations of the two graduates and the speaking of other students in Turkish, Armenian, Bulgarian and French. The diplomas given were unique, long sheets of parchment, on which the conferring of the degrees was written, in fancy penmanship, in four languages — English, French, Turkish and Armenian or Bulgarian. I believe that similar diplomas were given in 1869” (Washburn 1909, 26). Robert College provided official documents to students in their own languages.

Further, the way Robert College treated the student identities were as national ones. The ways they addressed students and the idea of independent nation-states was openly promoted by Robert College. “Most of the boarder at this time were Bulgarians, and for twenty years the great majority of the graduates were of this nationality. During the previous decade the Bulgarians had awakened from the sleep of centuries. They had thrown off the yoke of the Greek Patriarch of Constantinople and began to dream of escaping from that of the Turk. It was a nation of peasants, held in ignorance by a double bondage. When they began to seek for enlightenment

their attention was first directed to Robert College by Dr. Long, then an American missionary in Bulgaria and later a professor in the College...[The education connections being] an important part in founding a new state in Europe” (Washburn 1909, 39).

In the Robert College catalogues, the subjects and textbooks of the college were documented. The students learned English, Latin, and French. Literature courses were offered both in Bulgarian and in English. For most subjects, lectures and textbooks were in English. As freshmen, they read Shakespeare. In history, they studied feudalism, the rise of the free cities, the centralized monarchies, and revolutions in England and France. The sciences focused on empirical inquiry. Philosophy presented perspectives of government and history with a focus on the initiative, free subjectivity of individuals. When studying law, and all other subjects, the lectures focused on historical and scientific subjects. These courses and the social life and student councils which were part of the environment of Robert College shaped the young men to be able to enter politics and create government with a perspective towards democracy, and a modern nation-state. (Robert College 1911)

CONCLUSION

From the beginning, Robert College was aimed at providing a high-quality education to its students that would prepare them to enter society as responsible individuals whose careers will contribute to shaping modern society. Since its foundation, Robert College’s curriculum and environment have been transmitting American ideas of economic, political, and social life. When it opened in 1863, Robert College stood out from other educational institutions in the Ottoman Empire and surrounding regions because it promoted modernity through the idea of the nation-state and industrialization.

In Bulgaria, alumni from Robert College played such an influential role in uniting Bulgarians in Ottoman provinces under a national identity and in establishing a democratic government system for Bulgaria as an independent state after its independence from the Ottoman Empire. Four alumni which exemplify the way ideas of modernity which Robert College taught in Istanbul influenced Bulgaria's development were Konstantin Stoilov, Stefan Panaretov, Todor Ivanchov, and Ivan Bagarov. Through the careers that these men pursued and the positions of power they held, the four Bulgarian Robert College alumni exemplified how Robert College's education of Bulgarian students impacted Bulgaria's modern government, political presence, and economic role and supported its existence as a nation-state.

References

- Anderson, Benedict R. O'G. (1992). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Black, C. E. (1943). The Influence of Western Political Thought in Bulgaria, 1850-1885. *The American Historical Review*. 48(3): 507-520.
- “Bulgaria Unwilling to Break with Us.” (1917). *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Jun 28, 3.
<http://ezproxy.depaul.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.depaul.edu/docview/98056517?accountid=10477>
- “Bulgarian Queen May Yet Visit Us.” (1914). *New York Times (1857-1922)*, May 31, 12.
<http://ezproxy.depaul.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.depaul.edu/docview/97615604?accountid=10477>.
- "Bulgarskoto Rozovo Maslo: Proizvodstvo I Turgovia S Rozobo Maslo v Bulgaria." (Bulgarian Rose Oil: Production and Trade with Rose Oil in Bulgaria) (2018). Nai Dobroto Ot Bulgaria. <https://www.thebestofbulgaria.bg/bg/useful-more/proizvodstvo-i-tyrgoviya-na-rozovo-maslo-v-bylgariya>.
- Cagri, Erhan. (2000). "Ottoman Official Attitudes Towards American Missionaries." *Milletleraras*.
- Greenwood, Keith M. (2003). *Robert College: The American Founders*. Istanbul: Bogazici University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1992). *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*. Cambridge [England]: Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. J., and T. O. Ranger. (1993). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

“Influence of The Robert College on The Bulgarians.” (1884). *New York Times (1857-1922)*,

Apr 06, 12. <http://ezproxy.depaul.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.depaul.edu/docview/94253862?accountid=10477>.

Mazower, Mark. (2000). *The Balkans: A Short History*. New York: Modern Library.

Mishkova, D. (2008). Symbolic Geographies and Visions of Identity: A Balkan perspective. *European Journal of Social Theory*. 11(2): 237-256.

Neuburger, M. (2011). The Kruchma, the Kafene, and the Orient Express: Tobacco, Alcohol, and the Gender of Sacred and Secular Restraint in Bulgaria, 1856-1939. *Aspasia*. 5(1): 70-91.

“New Bulgar Envoy in Washington.” (1914). *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Sep 13, 4.

<http://ezproxy.depaul.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.depaul.edu/docview/97480671?accountid=10477>

Panaretoff, Stephan. (1915). “Dr. George Washburn and Bulgaria.” *New York Times (1857-1922)*, Apr 01, 14. <http://ezproxy.depaul.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.depaul.edu/docview/97722691?accountid=10477>

Reeves-Ellington, B. (2004). A Vision of Mount Holyoke in the Ottoman Balkans: American Cultural Transfer, Bulgarian Nation-Building and Women's Educational Reform, 1858-1870. *Gender & History*. 16(1): 146-71.

Robert College. (1884). *Catalogue of the Officers, Graduates and Students of Robert College, Constantinople 1883-84*. Constantinople: Robert College.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015075967177;view=1up;seq=3>

Robert College. (1911). *Catalogue 1910-1911*. Constantinople: Robert College.

<https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015075967011;view=1up;seq=5>

Sabev, Orlin. (2014). *Spiritus Roberti: Shaping New Minds and Robert College in Late Ottoman Society (1863-1923)*. Istanbul: Bogazici Universitesi Yayinevi.

Sabev, Orlin. (2015). *Robert Kolez i Bulgarite. (Robert College and the Bulgarians)* Sofia: Iztok-Zapat.

Stefanov, Konstantin. (1919). *The Bulgarians and Anglo-Saxondom*. Berne: P. Haupt.

Washburn, George. (1909). *Fifty Years in Constantinople and Recollections of Robert College*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.