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Atlas of the Inhabited Places of the Aegean  
Graham Reid

## BOOK REVIEWS

Todor Hristov Simovski, English translation Graham Reid, Atlas of the Inhabited Places of the Aegean Macedonia, Skopje Press & Open Society Institute, Macedonia, Skopje, 1997 reviewed by James Pettifer

This atlas is an impressive work in its scale and ambition. It is not only an atlas, with over eighty pages of maps of northern Greece showing what the author claims are the original Slav place names, but also contains a lengthy dictionary of Greek and Slav place names in the region, a historical account of the main events in the region since the Balkan Wars, and an analysis of the various population movements that have taken place this century.

There are also maps of the proposed administrative divisions of this part of Greece using the Slav-language administrative divisions first proposed by IMRO in Sofia many years ago, and various other reference material. Some of this is hard to obtain in English and is likely to be very useful to the student, such as the reproduction of the text of the key 926 Greek law 'On Renaming Villages, Towns, Cities' which has underpinned all subsequent activity by Athens.

How far the atlas is a truly scholarly work is very difficult to say. Dr Simovski is certainly a very learned man, and the ex-Slav places names

given for the only region i know well enough personally to express an opinion - that of Florina/Lerin - certainly seem accurate. On the other hand, there is no information at all given on the dates of the name changes, so that villages which lost their Slav-root names in the 1950's are presented in the same way in the text as other places whose names have been Greek since Ottoman times or even before, and where there is little evidence of recent Slav speaking settlement.

The book will thus stoke prejudice on both sides, in Skopje and in Athens. Uninformed people in FYROM using the book are likely to assume that there has been substantial recent Slav-settlement and Slav language use in places which are actually monoglot Greek-speaking and have been for a very long time, while Greeks are likely to disregard the whole book as an example of Skopje irredentist propaganda.

It will also be very difficult for foreigners to use who do not read both the Greek and Cyrillic alphabets fluently, as the place names are only presented in Cyrillic and Greek. But it will certainly become the standard work in Skopje and also, probably, Bulgaria, on this subject for many years, and as such is an important book, politically, whatever view its taken of its scholarship.