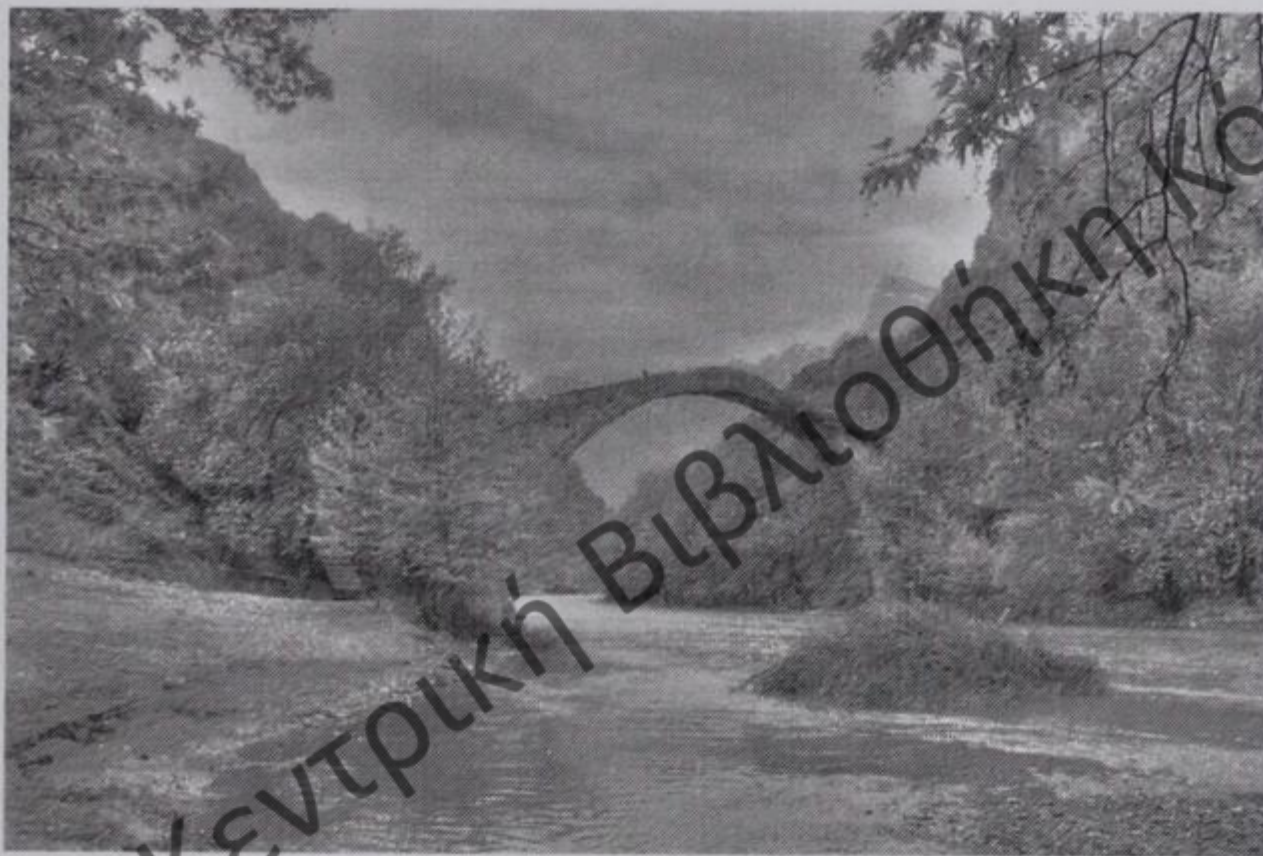


Vassilis Nitsiakos, Ioannis Manos, Georgios  
Agelopoulos, Alikí Angelidou, Vassilis Dalkavoukis  
(Eds.)

# Balkan Border Crossings

First Annual of the Konitsa Summer School



Δημόσια Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσας

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edited by

Vassilis Nitsiakos, Ioannis Manos,  
Georgios Agelopoulos, Alikì Angelidou,  
and Vassilis Dalkavoukis



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**Konitsa Summer School in  
Anthropology, Ethnography  
and Comparative Folklore of the  
Balkans**

**Konitsa, Greece, 30/7-12 /8 2006**

**V o l u m e 1**

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*Konitsa 2008*

Δημόσια Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσας



## Editorial

Over the course of the past five years, academics and students from different universities in the Balkans have established the *Border Crossings Network*. This network aims to develop cross-border co-operation in the field of Balkan studies with an emphasis on the social sciences and humanities by regularly organizing student conferences and other forms of academic exchanges.

Student co-operation is a missing element in the attempt at cross-border understanding and interethnic tolerance. So far the network has organized four conferences in different countries with a total number of participants exceeding three hundred and fifty students and staff members from all over the Balkans.

The idea of organizing a Summer School at the University of Ioannina, where one of the conferences was held, developed within this academic context and was immediately put into practice. The enthusiastic support of University authorities and the municipality of the nearby town of Konitsa gave us the courage to undertake such a task. Thus the first *Konitsa Summer School in Anthropology, Ethnography and Comparative Folklore of the Balkans* took place from July 30th to August 12th, 2006. Nearly one hundred students and more than twenty professional scholars took part in the academic, social and cultural activities.

On the academic level, nine courses were offered covering a wide range of topics - from *Anthropological Understanding of the Balkans and Ethnographic*



# Δημόσια Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσας

**What are the social relations that make a set of human groups and individuals a society?**

The question I am going to try to answer today concerns all of the social sciences at once. It is:

*What are the social relations, of whatever kind they may be - political, religious, economic, kinship, etc. - that have the capacity to bring together and to weld into an all-encompassing whole and to endow with an additional, global and shared identity a number of human groups and individuals who thereby form a "society" with borders that are known if not recognized by their neighbor societies?*

The human groups to which individuals belong can be of a great variety of natures: lineages, "houses", clans, orders, castes, classes, local or religious communities, etc.; and an individual usually belongs to several of these groups, each of which provides him or her with one or several particular, specific identities. It is to these identities that is added the global shared identity attaching to all individuals, whatever their particular identity, by the fact of belonging to the same "society", to the same Whole.

A society is generally known by a "big name" by which it designates itself. We talk about Athenians, Spartans, French, Turks, Baruya, Ouzbeks; and these names globally designate a set of human groups that exercises some form of sovereignty over a territory. Once again, the

\* Directeur d' études, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales.





form of sovereignty exercised over a territory varies with the historical and sociological context. In Ancient Greece, we will be dealing with city-states such as Athens; in New Guinea before the Europeans arrived, with tribes or chiefdoms; in Europe, with nation-states, which appeared at the end of the Middle Ages, or, as in the case of the Turkish state, resulted from the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire at the start of the twentieth century.

The question is not only central for the social sciences, it also stands at the middle of the world political and economic stage today. For everyone is presently asking themselves what is to become of specific local or national social identities, the legacy of a remote or closer past, in a world where, for the first time in the history of humankind, all states, all local societies see their economy and the conditions of their material existence, but also their political power, becoming increasingly and more fully integrated into a single system known as the world capitalist system of production and circulation of commodities. Since the collapse of the so-called socialist system, the capitalist system covers the planet earth, with the exception of a few pockets of resistance such as Cuba and North Korea. The new, global fact, then, is that all societies big and small can henceforth reproduce their material means of existence only by increasingly participating in this system.

Confronted with this global situation and, for us Europeans, with the initial consequences of the growth of the European Community, many are wondering if the



borders between the different states and the different cultures inherited from the past are not in the process of yielding to what will be tomorrow an immense swamp of evermore hybrid cultures and societies. However, these predictions notwithstanding, one has only to observe the nationalistic tensions between China and Japan, or between India and Pakistan, or the increasingly imperialistic nationalism of the United States to understand that we are not there yet and probably never will be.

In an attempt to answer the question I have just asked, I will examine, using concrete examples, some of the answers that have already been given by different thinkers at different times, certain of which have almost acquired the status of obvious "philosophical" or "scientific" facts. I will first look to see whether the family and, more broadly, *kinship relations and groups* can be the basis of a society and even of society in general. That is a very old opinion already expressed in the West in the fourth century before Christ, by Aristotle (384-322 BCE) and in the East by Confucius (551-479 BCE) in the sixth century before our era. This thesis has since been reiterated by diverse conservative religious and philosophical currents. But it has also become an anthropological "truth", even an axiom when it comes to societies without castes, orders or states, recently still known as "primitive societies" and usually defined in anthropology textbooks as "kin-based societies".

Next I will look into whether *economic relations* can engender between social groups a common basis that has



the capacity to bring them together into a whole and make them into a society. This will lead me to deconstruct two different ways such a role has been ascribed to the economic activities and the social relations that organize them: the thesis propounded by Marx and the economists who espouse his ideas, and the thesis advanced by Walras, Pareto and the liberal economists who take their inspiration from them. For Marx, the material and social relations that bind individuals and groups together in the production and redistribution of their material means of existence give rise to all the other social, political, religious and kin relations. The different modes of production - slavery, feudalism, capitalism - are the foundations upon which various sorts of superstructures (Überbau) are edified; they are attached to these foundations by laws of structural correspondence (Entsprechungsgesetze). For free-market economists, the capitalist market economy, hailed as the only fully rational economic system, is capable, providing societies are rid of all of the institutions and customs that keep the market from developing freely, of distributing the goods and services produced for the market in an optimum manner and ensuring societies of a harmonious and durable development. In short, when these purportedly obvious philosophical or scientific facts have been deconstructed, if I have shown that neither kinship relations nor economic relations are capable of explaining how a society comes about, we will be confronted with the question of what other social relations possess this capacity.



For my analysis of these problems, I am going to call on my own experience, on the facts I observed and the information I gathered while working as a field anthropologist in Papua New Guinea for a total of over seven years between 1966 and 1981. The group with whom I lived and worked, the Baruya, provides us with particularly interesting material for answering our questions.

The Baruya live in the central highlands of New Guinea. They were "discovered" in 1951 by a young Australian patrol officer named Jim Sinclair. The region came under the military and administrative control of Australia in 1960 and was declared to be "pacified" in 1965. I arrived in 1966, thus a few years after the first contacts with "White people", and I rapidly saw that this society had neither castes nor classes, only clans, kin groups that divided the tribe's territory among themselves. I thus concluded that I was dealing with a "kin-based society", with a real "primitive society", like those I had read about in books and learned about in my classes. Little by little I uncovered a whole set of facts that troubled me, for they contradicted some of the "obvious truths" I had learned from books. The first was the fact that this society, the Baruya, had not existed two centuries earlier and that it must have formed, according to my calculations, around the end of the eighteenth century in the following circumstances: Of the fifteen clans that make up the tribe, eight descend from clans that, a few centuries earlier, belonged to another tribe, the Yoyue, a few days walk from the mountains where the



of all, at no point in its existence is a Baruya clan connected by marriage to all of the other clans; it is allied with only a certain number of them, even if one adds up all of the alliances contracted over several generations, let us say between three and four, for the Baruya never try to remember further back. The reciprocal dependency ties created by kinship relations never extend, for a lineage and even less for an individual, to all other lineages and therefore to all other members of the society. So that, for the Baruya, relations of kinship, consanguinity and marriage do not engender a common basis that links all clans and all families together. Furthermore, for political and economic reasons, Baruya lineages from time to time exchange women with neighboring friendly tribes, and their kinship ties then reach beyond the borders of their society and therefore do not close it in upon itself. *Exeuna* therefore the family and kinship relations as the foundation of the Baruya society.

Let us now see whether, among the Baruya, the economic relations between individuals and lineages can engender a common social foundation that would cause them to exist as a whole, as a society distinct from the neighboring societies. Their economic relations are of several kinds. There are relations engendered by the fact that lineages and clans own a fraction of the territory so as to grow gardens and hunt. These pieces of land are owned in common by the lineages and are cultivated by the men of these lineages and their wives, either separately or in cooperation with other families, those of



certain of their affines, brothers-in-law for example, or those of friends or co-initiates of the man who cleared a new garden in his piece of forest in the first place. Before the Europeans arrived, each lineage produced the bulk of the material resources needed for its social existence. In addition, the Baruya were reputed in their region for the salt they made from the ashes of a plant, and they used this salt to barter for the stone tools, the weapons, the feather ornaments, in short means of production or destruction, but also means of social reproduction (ornaments for the initiates, the warriors, the shamans), they did not produce themselves. Alternatively, within the tribe salt circulated as a gift between members of the same lineage and between affines but did not function as a commodity, whereas between tribes it circulated not only as a commodity but as a commodity-currency.

Thus each lineage produced surpluses so as to acquire from outside the tribe whatever it did not produce itself. The Baruya economy was therefore not autarkic but was a part of a regional economy that operated as an overarching structure integrating some ten tribes, as local groups, into an exchange network that enabled each group to reproduce itself separately. Relations between *global* and *local* levels existed there as everywhere, but obviously not on the same scale as those that reign in today's "globalized" economy. In short, the social relations that allowed the Baruya to reproduce their material conditions of existence did not make each of them socially and materially dependent on all the others either. Each lineage, as we have seen, cooperated with a



few others, usually affines or neighbors, in order to produce what they consumed and what they exchanged. Economic activities created a real but limited dependence between these associated lineages but it could never extend to the whole society. To be sure, these relations would engender a common basis, but one that was narrower than their society; furthermore, as soon as it came to exchanging a surplus with the neighboring tribes, these exchanges reached outside the borders of their society. We are therefore forced to conclude that the economic relations between Baruya were no more capable than their kinship relations of binding them into an all-encompassing Whole which linked the ones to the others and caused them to exist as a society distinct from the societies around them.

*So what social relations did provide the foundations on which the Baruya formed a society? Several facts interlinked consistently are going to put us on the trail of the answer.*

First of all the fact that every three or four years all of the lineages and all of the villages spend several months producing enough food and new clothing, and collecting shells and feather ornaments in preparation for initiating their boys and young men. For they must feed and clothe the initiates and fittingly entertain the hundreds of visitors from the neighboring friendly or hostile tribes invited to attend the ceremonies and discover the number and the strength of the young warriors with



whom they will do battle tomorrow as allies or enemies. This surplus of labor and products was therefore not destined this time to reproduce the lineages and families but to reproduce the tribe as such: as a whole united in the face of the neighboring friendly or hostile tribes. In effect, all feuding and warfare is suspended during initiations.

But what do these male initiations signify?<sup>1</sup> These are special times in the life of individuals and of the tribe which, while marking their passage from childhood to adulthood, make boys into warriors or shamans capable of defending, by means of material or immaterial powers, the Baruya's territory and their lives, and make the little girls into hardworking women capable of giving their husband's lineage many strong, healthy children. In short, the initiations are a spectacular time in the workings of those social relations that in the West today we call political-religious, in other words those relations which, among the Baruya, legitimize the fact that only the men govern the society and represent it in relations with neighboring tribes, and that they have assumed a near monopoly in the relations humans entertain with nature spirits and the gods.

Political-religious relations are therefore the only relations that truly unite all Baruya men and women, whatever their lineage and village, and whatever their age. The Baruya are symbolized by the *Tsimia*, the big

<sup>1</sup> The Baruya also have female initiations which bring together, several times a year and for several days and nights, hundreds of women from all the lineages and villages in a valley. These rites are performed each time a certain number of girls have their first period.



house in which many of the rites take place, away from the women's eyes and under the protection of the Sun, considered to be the "Father" of all the Baruya, who, for the space of the ritual, draws close to human beings. The Baruya call this *Tsimia* the "body" of the tribe, and each of its posts represents a young initiate. Lastly and above all, the master of the ceremonies, the key man in the performance of the rites, belongs to the Baruya clan, the clan that gave its name to the new tribe formed after the Yoyue refugees and their accomplices, the Ndelie, had massacred part of the Andje tribe, their hosts. The Baruya clan legitimizes its dominant position by evoking the fact that the Sun himself, in the beginning, had given their ancestor Djivaamakwe the sacred objects and the secret formulas that enable them to initiate their warriors. That is why, they say, the name "Baruya" became the "big name" of the tribe, and why the masters of the initiations do not fight on the battlefield. Indeed, if the masters of the initiations were to be killed before having transmitted the sacred objects and the secret formulas to one of their descendants, the whole tribe would lose its strength and be doomed to disappear.

These facts and our analysis show that, *in the Baruya case, it is only the social relations which we in the West call political-religious relations* that have proven capable of creating ties of generalized mutual dependence between all individuals and all clans which endow them with a common shared identity: that of being Baruya, sons and daughters of the Sun. This identity is added to their own particular clan and lineage identity, and is the



primary identity by which the neighboring tribes know them. Their generalized mutual dependence is rooted in what are for us imaginary reasons, and draws its strength from the belief that the Sun had, in primordial times, presented Djivaamakwe, the Baruya clan ancestor, with the objects and formulas that give Baruya man and women their strength and their life. For the Baruya, as in most societies of yesterday and today, political power was thus associated, if not actually mingled, with religious beliefs. At the theoretical level, this leads us to acknowledge the presence of cores of (what are for outside observers) "imaginary representations" at the center of the political-religious relations that unite into a whole that makes a society a certain number of human groups and the individuals that comprise them. These cores of imaginary representations are the product of the mind, which is the only source of their existence. But they are transformed into visible, concrete realities and made effective by the implementation of symbolic practices (initiation rituals, investiture ceremonies, etc.), which testify at once to their existence and (for believers) to their truth.

But the Baruya example is interesting in terms of theory for yet another reason, because the Baruya speak the same language, have the same social organization and worship the same gods as the neighboring tribes, the Wantekia or the Youwarrounatche. This shows us that the fact that people share the same language, traditions and culture with others does not automatically make them all members of the same society. In Europe, among other



examples, this is the case of the Czech Republic and Slovakia, two countries that speak practically the same language and have a partially shared history.

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But let us come back to the analysis of political-religious relations. To say that, in the case of the Baruya, these have proven capable of making a society is still a vague statement, for it does not clearly explain why such relations have this capacity. I therefore needed to take a closer look at these relations, and this examination led me to conclude that:

*It is only when these relations establish and legitimize the sovereignty of a certain number of social groups - and therefore of the individuals that comprise them - over the same territory, the resources of which they can then exploit separately or as a group, that they have the capacity to make these groups into a society.*

A territory can be conquered by force or inherited from ancestors, who may themselves have conquered it or appropriated it without a fight if they happened to settle in a region devoid of other human groups. The territorial borders must be known if not recognized by the neighboring societies that occupy and exploit the nearby spaces. In all cases, however, a territory must always be defended by force, armed force, but also the force of the spirits and the invisible powers which the rites that accompany a war or prepare it invite to weaken or annihilate the enemy.

It is therefore not the religious relations between



humans and the gods, that is to say the beliefs and rites that involve the cooperation of the groups and individuals, that automatically have the capacity to produce societies. It is *only* when certain elements of a religion are called upon, used to establish and legitimize the sovereignty of a certain number of human groups over a territory and its resources that there is *verification of the hypothesis* that it is the so-called political-religious relations that have the capacity to make a society. An *contrario* proof of this is the incapacity of the major universal religions like Christianity, Islam and Buddhism to prevent societies or states that share a same faith from making war on each other. If we were in need of examples, European history could provide us with a great number. For instance, the Catholic religion shared by the French and the Spanish did not stop Napoleon Bonaparte from invading Spain and perpetrating massacres and acts of violence illustrated and denounced by the famous series of paintings by Goya.

That having been established, we can now draw a few theoretical conclusions from these facts and their analysis while underscoring the limits the facts in turn impose on the analysis. First of all, the relations between the political and the economic spheres are clarified, since we have seen that the social relations which establish the sovereignty of certain human groups over a territory are not of an economic nature and therefore do not directly determine the way the territory's resources will be socially and materially appropriated, controlled, exploited and redistributed before being consumed or exchanged. These



ways can differ widely according to the epoch, the nature of the territory, the resources that can be exploited using existing techniques, or whether these are arable lands, hunting grounds, large areas appropriate for nomadic herding, etc. In short, there is no direct causal link between relations of sovereignty and what Marxist economists call a "mode of production" and non-Marxists call an economic system of production of goods and services.

Our analysis also allows us to clarify the difference that exists between a "community" and a "society". It is essential not to confuse either the two concepts or the distinct social and historical realities they refer to. There is an example that will show clearly what distinguishes them. It is that of the difference between the Jews of the Diaspora and the Jews who live in Israel. The Jews living in London, New York, Paris or Amsterdam form communities within these different societies and states - Great Britain, The United States, France, Holland, etc. We could make the list even longer by mentioning the Jews of Argentina, Morocco, etc. But that would not add anything because these Jewish communities are not societies. They live side by side with other communities of Turks, Armenians, Ukrainians, etc. within the different societies which, each time, encompass them all and subject them to their laws and their constitution, giving or refusing them the same rights and duties as they do to members of the society that constitute the state's dominant group - Orthodox Greeks in Greece, Catholic Poles in Poland, etc. Alternatively, the Jews of the



Diaspora who left these countries to go and live in Israel brought about a new society in the Middle East, represented and governed by a state; and henceforth they claim as their own a territory that they have conquered by armed force and whose borders they want to see definitively recognized by the neighboring populations and states. Furthermore, that is also what the Palestinians are demanding: a territory and a state.

This also sheds some light on what it means for a society, with or without a state, to be "colonized". For this society or this state, it means immediately losing sovereignty over its territory; this sovereignty is then transferred and appropriated by the colonizing power. To be colonized means at the same time losing all autonomy as far as one's social and cultural development are concerned. Thus it was that in 1960 the Baruya suddenly lost sovereignty over their territory when an Australian patrol led by Jim Sinclair "discovered" them and immediately imposed the "white man's peace" and the laws of a colonial state of whose existence they had been unaware until that time. From that day on, the subsequent development of their society and their culture was dependent on the interventions of a colonial state power initially established by England and later administered by Australia. And their religion and their initiations were directly subjected to the criticism and the pressures of European or American missionaries from various Protestant denominations who had made the long journey to convert them to the only true religion, theirs, the one founded by Jesus of Nazareth two thousand years



ago.

In December 1975, Papua New Guinea became an independent country; but that does not mean the Baruya recovered their former sovereignty over their territory. As citizens of an independent state and an emerging nation, without having demanded or wished as much, they had of course acquired new rights and new duties, but they did not recover the right to settle their own disputes or to attack their neighbors and seize their territory. Their society has not disappeared; and its population has even grown. But from the autonomous society it had been before the Europeans arrived, it has ended up as a "local tribal group" that is part of a broader "ethnic" group, the Anga, who are listed among the hundreds of linguistic and ethnic groups living in Papua New Guinea which will now have to turn themselves into a "nation". Upon losing forever sovereignty over their mountains and their rivers, but also over their own persons, the Baruya ceased to be a society. Their tribe turned into a local "tribal community", under the power of a state, an institution totally alien to their history and to their ways of thinking and acting. Moreover, this state was created after the First World War by the fusion, under a single authority, that of Australia, of two European colonies: "British Papua" in the southern part of the island and German "Neue Guinea" in the north.

It would be easy to find, in Oceania, Africa, Asia a host of examples to show, as with the Baruya, that it is neither kinship relations nor economic relations that bind a certain number of human groups and individuals of



different origins into a Whole that makes a society. I will choose only one: the society of the Island of Tikopia, a Polynesian society that was made famous by the remarkably rich and rigorous work of the anthropologist Raymond Firth (1901-2001).

But beforehand, I would like to dispel a confusion that can arise concerning the question I am asking myself. *My question has nothing to do with the question philosophers and other specialists of general ideas are fond of asking themselves, namely, the question of the foundations of human society and social ties.* This question, in my opinion, has little meaning, for all human activities, all of the kinds of relations people produce and will produce among themselves constitute both the content and the foundations of their social existence, of their life in society. Humans are naturally social animals. They did not need a contract or any other convention to begin living in society. But humans are not content with merely living in society, they produce new forms of social existence, of society, in order to go on living.

Let us now come back to our questions and to the Tikopians. In 1928, when Firth first went into the field, the island's old political and religious organization was still nearly intact for the arrival of a missionary in 1924 had not yet had much impact. The society was divided into four non-exogamous clans, ranked according to their role in the cycle of rites that ensured the fertility of the land, the sea and the people; the Kafika clan and its chief, the *Te Ariki Kafika* ranked highest. By these rites, the clans, through the intermediary of their chiefs,



participated in what they called "the work of the gods", who granted or refused them plentiful harvests, abundant fish catches or numerous sturdy children.

However this organization did not exist a few centuries before Firth's arrival. The four clans actually descend from human groups that occupied the island at different times and came from different islands: Pukapuka, Anuta, Rotuma, etc. These groups first fought with each other before spreading out and taking their place in the political-religious hierarchy linked to the "work of the gods" under the ultimate authority of the *Te Ariki Kafika*. Why are he and his clan at the summit of this hierarchy? A myth - which one can compare to the story of how the Baruya got the sacred objects and secret formulas that made it possible to initiate their men and thus assigns each clan a role in these initiations - tells that the ancestor of the Kafika clan was an exceptional being who had given the different groups living in the island the principles and rules for organizing a shared life, a society. He was murdered by a jealous rival, but when he got to heaven, the most important of the heavenly gods breathed a "mana" into him which made him an *atua*, a god, and gave him authority over all the island's gods. This is what gave his descendants, the chiefs of the Kafika clan, primacy over the other chiefs.

With this example, we once again find ourselves before the same sociological and historical process: it is the political-religious relations that integrate human groups from different origins into a whole and ensure the reproduction of this whole. And at the heart of these



relations, we once again find cores of imaginary representations, foundation myths whose function is to legitimize the power relations and the place of the groups in the social hierarchy by attributing some with a divine origin. And these (for us) imaginary representations have been transformed into real social relations by the implementation of the symbolic practices that formed the annual cycle of fertility rites.

The Tikopia example will allow us to show and surpass the limits the Baruya example set on our analysis. With the exception of making salt money, the only division of labor among the Baruya was that between the sexes. For a man to be the representative of his clan and play an important role in initiating the warriors or shamans gave him prestige and a certain degree of authority, but nothing more. Once the ceremonies were over, the masters of the initiations reverted to doing the same as all the other Baruya. They cut down trees to clear gardens in the forest, went hunting, built their own house, etc. The only thing they did not do in this warrior society was to fight on the battlefield for fear that they would be killed and take with them the secret formulas that instilled their powers into the sacred objects, the *Kwaimatnie*, used in the initiations.

This was not the case in Tikopia. The chiefs, who were responsible for the rituals, were treated with great respect. Their person was surrounded with taboos. They cultivated their gardens, but were spared the heaviest work. But above all, they held rights on the land and it was they who gave the families permission to work it. At



harvest time, they were offered the first fruits. Furthermore, the chiefs, and the *Te Ariki Kafika* in particular, by imposing and removing taboos, exercised control over the productive activities of the whole population, opening and closing the cycle of agricultural work and fishing, which were thereby slotted into the cycle of rituals performed by the chiefs, who worked with the gods so that these activities might be successful.

Compared with the Baruya, we see here a fundamental change in the Tikopia society. It is no longer divided only into clans but also into two social groups that cut across the clans: the group comprised by the chiefs and their descendants, and the group comprised by the commoners. As Firth commented, the difference between the two groups, in terms of political and religious organization, was irreducible because it was based on the proximity of one group to and the distance of the other from divinized ancestors, whereas in the economic sphere of material wealth and subsistence, the inequalities between the two groups were a question of degree only.

Keeping to Polynesia, even more radical changes, going in the same direction, had occurred in the great "chiefdoms" of Tonga, Samoa and Tahiti, well before the Europeans arrived. In Hawaii around the sixteenth century A.D., a sort of state even grew up in the wake of the chiefdoms that had been vying for control of these islands. These societies were no longer divided, as in Tikopia, only between chiefs and their families, and commoners, they were divided, for example in Tonga,



between a sort of aristocracy including men and women, *the eiki*, and the rest of the population. In Tonga, as in Tikopia, an absolute barrier separated the noble men and women from the rest of society, for they alone possessed *mana*, the powers that testified to their proximity to the gods; and the *Tu'i Tonga*, the paramount chief of Tonga, and his sister the *Tu'i Tonga Fefine*, claimed to descend directly from the highest god in the Polynesian pantheon, Tangaloa.

Unlike the Tikopia chiefs, though, the Tongan *eiki* wielded almost absolute power over the person, the labor and the goods of the commoners who lived on their lands and belonged to their *Kainga* ("estate", "house"). But these lands and this power of life and death were always delegated to the chiefs by the *Tu'i Tonga*, the paramount chief. Each year he received from the *Kainga* heads the first fruits of their harvests or the best fishes that had been caught. This is no longer Tikopia, where the chiefs continued to take part in the various productive tasks that produced the material conditions of their social existence. In Tonga, *the eiki*, the noble men and women, do not work. They make war or assist alongside the *Tu'i Tonga* in the complex rites addressed to the gods; and they wield over all other groups political-religious powers that bring them together into a whole, which they govern and reproduce under the sovereignty of the *Tu'i Tonga*.

With the examples of Tikopia and Tonga, we can shake off the limits the Baruya example set on our analysis. In Tonga not only is there a sexual division of labor between men's work and women's work, as among the Baruya.



Tongan society is also divided between the majority of its members who produce, for themselves but also for the group of nobles, the material conditions of their social existence, and the group of nobles who do not turn a hand to any productive material labor but devote their lives to performing rites, to making war and to pursuing leisure.

Comparison of this ethnographic and historical information concerning a certain number of societies in Melanesia and Polynesia has thus brought us face to face with two fundamental changes that occurred in relations between the chiefs and their direct descendants, and the rest of the populations, changes which deeply altered the both social and material economic relations that existed between these two groups. These two changes were directly linked, although they worked in opposite directions.

We see that, by the same sociological and historical process, the chiefs and their descendants detached themselves, first partially and then completely, from performing the productive activities that ensured the material conditions of their own social existence and that of their family line. But at the same time, as they progressively detached themselves from the concrete process of labor, they attached to their own person and functions the access rights of the rest of the population to the land and to the resources of the sea, the use of their labor and the disposal of the products of that labor. Ultimately the whole material basis of the society came to be placed under the control of the nobles and at their



service, since it was henceforth oriented first and foremost toward the production of their conditions of existence and the material means of performing their social functions and fulfilling the duties of their rank. Henceforth, unlike what happened with the Baruya, the economic relations between all the groups comprising a society provide a material and social foundation that binds them all the ones to the others. Does this mean that, in these societies, it is economic relations, the mode of production and redistribution of goods and services and not political-religious relations that unite all of the social groups and make them into a society? I am going to show that this is not the case, and it is by this demonstration that I will conclude my study of what produces not society but a society.

*What then are the causes that brought about this twofold transformation and with it the appearance of new forms of social organization, dividing the society this time not only into clans and lineages but into social groups with distinct functions that give them distinct rights and duties, and a different place within a hierarchy at the top of which are one or several groups that govern and dominate the rest of society?*

In the history of European thought, depending on the period and the realities being described, various words have been used to designate these groups of men and women who occupied different positions in a hierarchy wherein the ones governed and the others were governed. In Rome and in the Middle Ages, people spoke of



separate "orders", later "estates" such as the "third estate" in France. In the eighteenth century and with the changes induced by the twin agricultural and industrial revolutions, inspired by the Physiocrate Francois Quesnay in France and Adam Smith in England, people began talking about "classes". But before that, when Europe discovered India, the talk was of "castes", groups that performed distinct and mutually exclusive tasks and were ranked according to the degree of purity or impurity these activities entailed for those who did them. Castes are not classes because they reproduce themselves by kinship relations, by the obligation to marry within one's own caste. However the words "orders", "classes", "castes" matter less than understanding the social realities they designate and are used to think.

In short, our ethnographic visit has led us to confront the question that is classic in the social sciences, that of the origin of orders and classes. Of course this question should lead to another one, which I will not attempt to answer here: that of the origin of an institution which is found precisely only in societies that are divided into orders or classes and which is the instrument whereby some of them exercise their sovereignty: the state, an institution that only a short time ago was unknown in hundreds of societies of Africa, Asia, Oceania and part of Pre-Colombian America.

Yet the answer to this question was already there, under our nose. What profoundly transformed certain societies and altered the course of their history was the appearance, in different places and at different times, of



human groups that began to devote their entire existence and time to the performance of social functions which legitimized, in the eyes of the other groups that together with them made up the society, on the one hand, their right to no longer produce their concrete conditions of existence themselves and, on the other hand, the right to control the access of the other members of the society to the very conditions of production of the material means of their own social existence and, lastly, their right to appropriate the use of the others' labor as well as part of the goods and services they produced.

What, then, are these social functions whose exercise came to legitimize the inequalities between groups and individuals unknown in tribal societies devoid of classes or a state? The answer is clear: they are religious and political functions. Religious functions entail the celebration of rites and sacrifices designed to cooperate with the gods and ancestors in the well-being of humankind. Political functions have to do with governing the society, maintaining a social order represented as grounded in the natural and cosmic order, but also with defending the sovereignty of the society over its territory against neighboring groups that would like to annihilate it or, alternatively, extending this sovereignty to neighboring groups that would then oppose such a claim with armed force. In short, political relations are always associated with the right to exercise violence inside or outside the society; and this need has sometimes given rise to groups specialized in the exercise of this violence, to warriors.



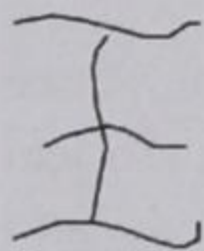
Here we find ourselves on common ground familiar to ethnologists, historians and archeologists. Need I mention the organization of Indian society in Vedic times into four overarching categories, the four *varna*, at the head of which were the *Brahmans*, specialists in sacrifices to the gods and the ancestors. Just below them were the *Kshatrya*, the warriors whose function it was to spill human blood. Alone among the warriors, the Raja, King, could both participate in certain rites performed by the *Brahmans* and take part in combat on the battlefield. Lower still were the *Vaishyas*, those who worked the land and fed all the castes. And below them were the *Shudras*, the "last of men", who were at the greatest conceivable distance from the *Brahmans*, sometimes called "gods living on earth". Between these two extremes was a multitude of castes (*jati*), each specialized in a task that endowed them with a specific degree of purity or impurity, which separated them, excluded them and ranked them with respect to the other castes.

With the caste-based Indian society, we are dealing with a society in which every social group depends, materially and socially, on castes engaged in agricultural and crafts production in order to reproduce itself. But here too, whereas economic relations create a material basis shared by all of the social groups, which was not the case of the Baruya or even in Tikopia, it was not the economic relations that engendered the caste system, it was the castes, in other words a political and religious organization of the society, that gave economic activities both their material content and their social and religious



form and dimension.

Need I accumulate more examples? mention Pharaoh, a God living among men, born from the union of two gods, Isis and Osiris, a brother and a sister, who reproduced this union by marrying his own sister. The Pharaoh, whose breath, *Kha* was believed to give life to all living beings down to the smallest gnat and each year sailed his sacred boat up the Nile to ask the river god to bring back the silt-rich waters to fertilize the peasants' fields and guarantee them bountiful harvests. Or should I convoke the Emperor of China, the *Wang*, "the Unique man" who alone was qualified to perform the rites that connect the Earth to the Sky and who had received the Heavenly mandate that authorized and obliged him to govern the earth and its inhabitants, both human and non-human. The Emperor was the pillar of China and China, the center of the Universe.



**Wang**

We will stop here. The exercise of these religious and political functions appeared in the course of history and in many societies as a much more important activity for all members of a society than those lesser activities with clearly visible results, the various activities that produce the material conditions of people's social existence:



agriculture, fishing, hunting, etc. After all, was not the "work with the gods" performed by the chiefs and priests supposed to bring prosperity to all and protect against misfortune. It is for these fundamental reasons that the commoners, who were neither priests nor powerful, felt themselves to be irrevocably indebted to those who ensured them the favors of the gods and governed them: indebted for their existence, their subsistence, the survival of their children. So deeply indebted that in turn they gave their labor, their goods, their very life to those who governed them (gifts that appear to us today as "forced labor", "tribute", in short "acts of violence") because they believed themselves incapable of ever being the equivalent of what they had received and would continue to receive if they knew their place and fulfilled their obligations. Paradox of unequal social relations between human groups, orders or classes, where it is the dominant groups who appear to give much more than what is given in turn by those they dominate in the shape of their labor, their goods and their very lives.

Our analysis leads me to conclude that the emergence of classes and castes was a sociological and historical process that involved *at the same time* consent and resistance on the part of those whom the formation of these new dominant social groups little by little caused to lose their former status and pushed to the "bottom" of the society and the cosmic order. Consent because sharing the same world of imaginary representations of the forces that govern the universe could foster hope for the prosperity and protection of all thanks to the ritual



activities and governance of a minority henceforth completely separated from any form of material activity. Resistance because the price to pay was, for the majority, the progressive loss of control of the very conditions of their existence and of their own persons. And when their resistance prevented any form of consent, the process of class formation ground to a halt or continued but this time through recourse to violence on the part of the dominant governing groups in order to crush the resistance. Consent and violence, then, are the two forces at work in the emergence and development of orders, castes and classes; and of the two, consent must often have outweighed violence.

In the end, I believe I have shown that, of all the social relations that exist and make up the historical content of our social existence, only the relations that we in the



West call political-religious relations have the capacity to make societies insofar as they bring together and cause to live together under a single form of sovereignty a certain number of human groups and individuals who will exploit, separately or together, the resources of the territory over which this sovereignty is exercised. Neither kinship relations nor economic relations in themselves have this capacity. But what is new today is that, with the globalization of the capitalist economic system, no society, large or small, can produce its material conditions of existence unless, every day it becomes more a part of the world capitalist system. All societies henceforth depend materially on each other to reproduce themselves. But the global conditions of reproduction of this world system are beyond the control any local society can exert over the market, however powerful the society may be. It is this confrontation between local and global, between the political and the economic, that all societies are henceforth obliged to come to terms with.



**Fixing National Subjects in 1920's  
Southern Balkans:  
Also an International Practice**

**The Manaki Brothers: Good to Think**

On a visit to Bucharest in the early months of 1905, the brothers Milto and Yannakis Manaki learned that they could buy in London a fancy machine for making moving pictures.<sup>1</sup> A "Bioscope 300" camera. Yannakis became obsessed; he saw it in his dreams, he raved about it. He took the ship to England, while Milto went home to Monastir. Later that year, they visited their natal village, Avdela, high in the Pindus mountains, located in the Ottoman vilayet of Selanik. There they filmed a scene of female peasant weavers: among them, their 117-year old grandmother-allegedly, the first film ever made in the

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<sup>1</sup>Their names are also rendered as Manakis (the most emphatically Greek spelling) and Manakia (the Vlach or Koutsovlach spelling). Manaki is more ambiguous: it is the form used by Macedonian sources, but it is not "definitively" marked as non-Greek, given that the "s" of the nominative form is sometimes dropped in English rendering of Greek nouns; it is also dropped in the Greek vocative and accusative forms. This paper was presented as the 2003 Annual Kimon A. Doukas Lecture of the Hellenic Studies Program at Columbia University. Subsequently, I presented versions of the paper to the "Balkans: Readings and Reflections" international conference in Thessaloniki, and to the universities of Sussex, Cambridge and Southern Illinois in 2004, and most recently, to the Konitsa Summer School in Anthropology, Ethnography and Comparative Folklore of the Balkans in August 2006. I am grateful to members of all of these different audiences for their penetrating questions. I am



Balkans.<sup>2</sup>

Thus opens Theo Angelopoulos' 1995 film, *Ulysses' Gaze* (*Το Βλέμμα του Οδυσσέα*). The story of the Manaki brothers inspires "A.", a Greek filmmaker (played by Harvey Keitel), to undertake an epic journey across the Balkans as Yugoslavia disintegrates. Chased out of Florina by an angry bishop and his umbrella-wielding parishioners, "A." embarks on a quest to track down the Manaki brothers' three lost and never developed film reels, reels that promise to evince "the first glance, the lost glance, the lost innocence" of the Balkans at the dawn of the new century.<sup>3</sup> This quest ends in besieged Sarajevo. "A." recognises the parallel between his own historical moment, and that of Milto and Yannakis Manaki: both he and they are witness to the decline of an empire and the birth of a new epoch of nations, with war as its midwife.

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indebted, in particular, to the stimulating critical reactions of Keith Brown, Marie Dembour, James Fairhead, Laurie Kain Hart, Yael Navaro-Yashin, Panos Panopoulos, Antigoni Papanikolaou, David Sutton and Karen Van Dyck. I also thank Ariane Cotsis for tracking down and obtaining for me a copy of Christodoulou 1997.

<sup>2</sup>According to Kostas Stamatiou, information on the Manakis brothers is included in a French source, Roger Boussinot's *L'encyclopedie du cinema* (Stamatiou in Christodoulou 1997:v).

<sup>3</sup>Although Angelopoulos has taken some artistic license, the pretext of the lost reels is based on fact. In the *Journal of Film Preservation*, Igor Stardol of the *Kinoteka na Makedonija* in Skopje reported that over the years since receiving the collection in 1976, his archive had carried out several projects to preserve the Manakis brothers films but all efforts had provided only partial solutions (Stardol 1997). In 1996-interestingly, the year following the release of *Ulysses' Gaze* - UNESCO and the Republic of Macedonia Ministry of Culture provided funds for the restoration project to be restarted. Stardol notes that the Manaki brothers collection held in the Skopje archives



The Manaki brothers appointed themselves chroniclers of the transition from empire to nation-state. *"They were always on the move,"* recounts "A.", as he, and his mysterious female companion ride the train from Skopje to Bucharest.

*"They recorded everything: landscapes, weddings, local customs, political changes, village fairs, revolutions, battles, official celebrations, sultans, kings, prime ministers, bishops, rebels. All the ambiguities, the contrasts, the conflicts..."*

Given the violence of this era, when national struggles and economic change ripped apart complex local interdependencies and common institutions, decimating living landscapes and causing death and displacement for millions of people, I am struck by the sense of excitement conveyed by their images. There is an excitement about new possibilities, and not merely regret at the passing of a way of life. The Manaki brothers celebrated the arrival of railroads, of new technologies of production, of new media technologies. They themselves were passionate

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included "20 cans (30 m) with unidentified original nitrate film footage...[which] has never been exposed under any treatment, so that it is not known if this material was filmed at all, and if it was, whether it was developed or not" (1997: 28). The Skopje film centre lacked the technical facilities to develop the films safely and correctly. Moreover, the chemical composition of the film required extra precautions when transporting the reels. So, in a real-life, if definitely more upbeat, echo of the film's epic journey, Skopje film center staff, including Stardelov, transported the film reels under police escort to the Hungarian Film Laboratories in Budapest for processing.



filmmakers, and made their living as proprietors of a cinema in the cosmopolitan town of Monastir, now Bitola. They celebrated the arrival of "modern" ideals of citizenship, of liberty, equality, fraternity. All of these seemed to promise redemption.

The transformations which the Manaki brothers record in their films and photographs also transformed them. Their very subjectivities were marked by struggles throughout their lifetime between older identifications and the demands of new ones -- whether embraced, or pressed upon them. Born in the 1880s as Ottoman subjects, they were the sons of a bourgeois, multilingual Vlach family. Like many in the Vlach community, the Manakia family seems to have identified with Hellenism. However, by the 1860s, long before their birth, the boys' father, Dimitrios, had become attracted to the Romanian national movement; in 1905, the Greek intelligence service identified the boys' father, Dimitrios, as "one of the rather fanatical Romanisers" of the town (Christodoulou 1997:33).<sup>4</sup> As a young teacher in the early years of the new century, Yannakis also became involved in the Romanian national movement which emerged in Avdela. Miltos, on the other hand, was photographed in 1903 with an IMRO band, and there is

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<sup>4</sup>Stamatiou claims that there is "abundant evidence on the family's Hellenocentric attitude" and that an ancestor, Anastasis Michaloglou Manakis, had fought at Missolonghi (i.e. during the Greek Revolution) (Stamatiou in Christodoulou 1997:vi). Christodoulou adds, later, that this ancestor, after leaving Metsovo to settle in Constantinople for business, became a member of the Filiki Etairia, or "Society of Friends", a secret Greek revolutionary organisation founded in Odessa in 1814 which aimed to liberate Greeks from Ottoman rule (Christodoulou 1997:23).



some evidence that he fought against the Ottomans in pursuit of a "Macedonia for Macedonians", that is, for all the nationalities and religious groups that inhabited Macedonia. Both brothers allegedly supported "Balkan Federation". For years, they lived peripatetically between Avdela, Yannina, Monastir/Bitola, Phillipoupolis/Plovdiv, Bucharest, and London. But ultimately, national borders rigidified and separated them for good. Yannakis died in Salonika in 1954 a Greek citizen, while his brother Miltos died in Monastir (now Bitola) a Yugoslav citizen. Since their deaths, their films have been rediscovered. On websites, blogs and email lists, partisans of one side or another have struggled to define these "first photographers of the Balkans" as "Greek" or "Romanian", "Yugoslav" or "Macedonian", or with defiant anti-nationalism, simply as "Balkan citizens". None of these appellations, of course, captures the tangled skein of local, national and civic affiliations that enmeshed them throughout their lives.

The Manaki brothers are, as Levi-Strauss would say, "good to think": And for many reasons. To start: they exemplify the multiple affiliations and identifications which Ottoman subjectivity often implied. Through them, we can discern the traces of a pre-national, situationist logic of categories that were not mutually exclusive, where a man could be Greek when he traded, Albanian when he married, and Muslim when he prayed (to paraphrase Vereni 1996), without this raising a sense of contradiction for the actors involved—even if it did so for nationalists.<sup>5</sup> Their stories also reveal the pressures



upon such persons to submit to increasingly exclusive and totalising national categories and rigid borders, to make choices, sometimes a number of times throughout their lives, which would fix their lives and fates to a single nation and a single state.

Their resurrection in the present is no less telling. The competing claims about their 'real' identities alert us to our own passionate investments, at the end of the twentieth century, in narratives of difference, whether national or cosmopolitan. With the disintegration of Yugoslavia and re-emergence of the Macedonian Question in the 1990s, Balkan aficionados witnessed a modest explosion of books, blogs and email list claims and counter-claims about the brothers' true nationality.<sup>6</sup> Yet for the film-maker Angelopoulos, whose films incessantly return to the theme of borders, the Manaki brothers and their work evoke the era before national borders, commonalities across borders, but also the forbidden and longed-for multiplicities that borders put out of reach. For the Yugoslav photographers who

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<sup>5</sup>This is not to imply that enduring identifications were absent under the Ottoman system. Religion was the primary identification: the Ottomans institutionalised communities of faith through the *millet* system, granting religious leaders powers over certain social and cultural matters. Some have argued that the *millet* should be understood as a proto-national unity. While I agree that some eventually evolved in this way, this was a result of multiple contingencies and often surprising resistences (see Kitromilides 1989 on the fact that some members of Orthodox hierarchy had to be dragged, kicking and screaming, into the Hellenization of the Orthodox church by Greek nationalists).

<sup>6</sup>To give a flavour of the conflicting claims, witness the following: The English version of the handsome "coffee-table" style book, including many of the



gathered in the Manaki brothers' home city of Bitola (Monastir) at the 1979 festival, "The Days of Milton Manaki Film Camera", by contrast, the focus was on Milton's technical contribution to cinematography. To this day, a striking indifference to questions of nation - which could hardly be anything but a political statement - characterises the festival's website, which never

brothers' photographs, published on the occasion of Thessaloniki's designation as 1997 Cultural Capital of Europe, is entitled, *The Manakis Brothers: The Greek Pioneers of the Balkanic Cinema*; it includes a statement made in 1990 by the Greek Ambassador G. Eleftheriadis asserting that "Miltiadis Manakis...was a Greek by origin and in consciousness-he even held a Greek passport" (Christodoulou 1997:2). Although writing in Greek, Exarchos (1991) stresses their "Vlach" origins. A Macedonian website rather ambiguously asserts that "the Manaki brothers, by having captured the Macedonian economic and cultural life, unintentionally rose to become promoters of the Macedonian identity", <http://www.cybermacedonia.com/manaki.html>. On an Aroman website, The Society Farsarotul, it is commented that "the Manakia brothers (Jannaki 1878-1960, and Miltiadi, 1882-1964) are the subject of an ongoing Balkan comedy: Greeks claim them as Greeks, while Macedonians claim them as Macedonians" <http://www.farsarotul.org>. By contrast, a list participant on soc.culture.greek with a Istanbulli Greek surname identified them around 1995 as "Balkan Citizens": <http://www.oswego.edu/baloglou/misc/manakia.html>. Similarly, the official website of the Manaki Brothers Film Festival, still going strong, completely passes over the issue of their nationality: see "By Way of Introduction...to ICFF 'Manaki Brothers': <http://www.manaki.com.mk>. According to the film archivist, Igor Stardelov (1997: 30), the Republic of Macedonia government considers the film archives of the Manaki brothers as "a national cultural heritage (cultural monument)". Perhaps not surprisingly, Wikipedia has an entry on the "Manakis brothers": [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manakis\\_brothers](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Manakis_brothers).



identifies the brothers in national terms.

For Angelopoulos, though, the Manaki brothers are more than "pioneers of Balkan cinema" to be remembered and honoured. There is desire in this identification expressed through the character "A": a powerful drive -stronger than self-preservation, with "A." crossing battle lines, risking shelling and sniper fire to track down the lost reels - to see the Balkans *through their eyes*, as if that "first gaze" will reveal the secret of the Balkans' tragic heart. Even as he shows war's destruction, Angelopoulos appeals to our multiculturalist fantasies: who can forget the scene of the Sarajevo youth orchestra, using the cover of fog defiantly to make music together in the ruins of their city? In retrospect, it is a painful reminder of how much we in the West, for our own reasons, wanted and needed Sarajevo to survive.

While I can hardly claim innocence of such desires, my aim is different. Beyond signalling the complexities of Ottoman subjectivities and the subjective force of nationalisms, the Manaki brothers are "good to think" in another way as well. The Manaki brothers help me to enter imaginatively into a particular subject position - that of the organic intellectual from the Balkan periphery. Such a person (normally a man) was frequently educated in Paris or Vienna or Warsaw, saw himself as "European" and identified with Europe and the European ideals of liberty, fraternity, equality, the Rights of Nations and the Rights of Man. This is the position of many who submitted petitions, or letters of complaint, to the League of Nations in the 1920's.



Sharing a subject position of comfortable means, education, the opportunity to travel, and a certain cosmopolitan experience, these men did not, for all that, see the world alike. If the Manaki brothers (at least as portrayed by Angelopoulos) seem to have revelled in the contrasts, contradictions and ambiguities of their times, these petitioners deployed a language of clarity, certainty and moral righteousness.

### **Difference as International Practice**

So far, for the case of Macedonia and elsewhere, questions of difference and the production of national subjects/subjectivities have been examined primarily within the framework of the nation-state (cf. Foster 1991). Scholars have looked either at nation-building, almost always in a "one-at-a-time fashion" (e.g., Brown 2003; Handler 1988; Karakasidou 1997; Wilson 1976; Weber 1976), or -sometimes in the same text- at local practices through which people resist, contest or complicate the homogenizing efforts of the nation-state (e.g., Brown 2003; Das and Poole 2000; Fuller and Benei 2001; Karakasidou 1997; Li 2005). By contrast, in the past few years I have been trying to think about the ways that defining difference and constructing national subjects is also an international practice. This requires a long-term historical perspective, as well as a critical approach to the moment of nation-state formation.

When the Paris Peace Conference redrew the map of Europe after World War I, many states -including former



enemy states, expanded states and "new states", but never including the Great Powers- were obliged to sign "minority treaties" offering full political and civil rights, and certain special rights, to "persons belonging to racial, linguistic and religious minorities".<sup>7</sup> The League of Nations, a new international body created at the same time by the Versailles diplomats and statesmen, was charged to "guarantee" these treaties through procedures of "supervision", which were later designed and carried out by the Minority Section of the League's Secretariat. My current research investigates this experiment in international supervision. The post WWI period is, I believe, a crucial moment for setting the parameters of: a) how we think today about "minorities" (as discrete, "natural" and ultimately, "racial" communities), b) what we think they are entitled to (i.e., rights) and, particularly after the 1980s, c) how they should be managed (i.e., internationally).

The aim of my larger project is to reframe understanding of the processes of creating national subjects-majorities and minorities-in the southern Balkan region, by considering encounters that occurred within and practices that emanated from, this

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<sup>7</sup>States with minority agreements in 1924 were: Albania, Austria, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Finland (in respect of the Aaland Islands), Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Turkey, Yugoslavia and Germany (in respect to Upper Silesia). The large literature on the minorities treaties and their supervision by the League of Nations includes Bagley 1950, Claude 1955; Cowan 2003; Fink 1995; Herman 1996; Mair 1928; Macartney 1934; Mazower 1997.



international institution.<sup>8</sup> This is also a genealogical exercise in Foucault's sense (1984): my project involves tracing out the gradual and contentious realisation of concepts and categories - race, kin, nation, nationality, majority and minority - within the post - war world order, as new relations between states and subjects, between states and the international community, and between international community and subjects, were being forged.

My angle on this vast question is to focus on contests around populations whose "nationality" was uncertain, unsettled or ambiguous. In particular, I am looking at the Macedonian Slavs, who lived in the vaguely defined region of Macedonia, composed by the Ottoman vilayets of Selanik, Uskub and Monastir. In a series of territorial revisions not fully resolved until 1923, Macedonia was divided between three nation-states: Bulgaria, Greece and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (after 1929, "Yugoslavia"). The Slavic-speakers from

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<sup>8</sup>I am currently writing a book, provisionally entitled *Letters for Macedonia to the League of Nation*, which examines petitions submitted to the League's Secretary General that both protest mistreatment of the so-called "Bulgarian minorities" in Greece and Yugoslavia and demand an autonomous Macedonia; I consider equally how the petitions were read and responded to by states, international civil servants, compatriots at home and abroad, adversaries and wider publics. Arguing that this case represents a conjuncture between an ongoing political insurgency inspired by widespread notions of national self-determination and the birth of an unprecedented "experiment" in international organisation, I situate the Macedonian case within two key genealogies: first, of the wider history of claims for rights and second, of supranational involvement in questions of "difference" within nation-states. Other aspects of this project are developed in Cowan 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2008a and 2008b.



Macedonia generally called themselves "Bulgarians" or "Bulgaro-Macedonians"; from the League's point of view, they counted as a minority in Greece and Yugoslavia, and were protected by the treaties those states had signed. Dossiers concerning their situation were filed in the League Secretariat under the rubric of "*les minorites bulgares*", "*personnes de race bulgares*" or "*personnes d'origine bulgares*".

However, the states concerned defined these people in quite different ways. For the Bulgarian state, they were definitely "Bulgarians" by blood and speech. For the Yugoslav state, they were definitely *not* "Bulgarians"; their race and language revealed them to be "Southern Serbs". What's more, representatives of the Yugoslav state claimed, those waging a guerrilla campaign against the Yugoslav authorities, ostensibly in pursuit of Bulgarian national rights, were not "oppressed minorities" but "terrorists". The Greek State's position was somewhat more ambiguous, and shifted over the decade of the 1920's. It tended to use terms such as "Bulgarophones" or "Bulgarophone Greeks" or, with less specificity, "Slavophones" or "Slavophone Greeks", thus acknowledging linguistic otherness but stressing religious Greekness (via their Patriarchist Orthodox affiliation) and Greek national consciousness. During the brief harmony of the Politis-Kalfoff Protocol, and for the purposes of a reciprocal and voluntary emigration agreement between Greece and Bulgaria, such persons could opt to declare themselves "Bulgarian by nationality". In 1929, in conversation with a League



official, Venizelos admitted to three categories of "Slavophones": those who identified as "Bulgarians", those who spoke Bulgarian "but were fanatically Greek in patriotic sentiment", and those who had no national identity at all and just wished to be left alone.

In addition to these three state views, many "Bulgarian" refugees from Greece or Yugoslavia, now living in Bulgaria or northern Europe, claimed themselves not merely an oppressed minority, but an unfulfilled nation, and used the minority petition procedure to ask the League's support in the creation of an autonomous Macedonia. These irresolvable disagreements guaranteed that efforts to protect minorities always produced interminable debates. Were the persons involved "really" minorities? If so, what kind? Did their alleged mistreatment have anything to do with their being a minority, or not? And finally, were they acting as "loyal" minorities or as "disloyal" insurgents?

Drawing on bureaucratic records of the Minorities Section housed in the League of Nations Archives in Geneva, as well as other sources, I am attempting to reconstruct the micropractices of power through which national subjects, as well as such subject positions (what Rogers Brubaker [1996] would call "categories of practices") as "Sovereign States", "International Man" and "Concerned World Citizens", were actively and dialectically produced, through practices of recognising, refusal to recognise at all, and refusal to recognise on the speaker's own terms. I am tracing out human and paper encounters between international civil servants,



representatives of states and individuals speaking *as or on behalf of minorities*. I am attending to the social, cultural and linguistic codes, as much as the legal and political understandings, that shaped and constrained the encounters, and especially, that determined how, and even whether, a putative minority "voice" could be heard (Cowan 2003).

A major site where this encounter occurred was the minority petition procedure. In a petition, a group or individual made claims alleging a state's infraction of its minority treaty; it made truth claims about people, states and situations, to which international bureaucrats and states then responded. I have read several hundred petitions, well over a hundred of these concerning the Bulgarian minorities. The petition procedure raises compelling and complex methodological and interpretive questions, especially around the matter of "reading" minority petitions. It raises questions about *how we as scholars could or should read them* (as documentary evidence? As rhetorical objects?). There are also crucial questions about how they were "read" by bureaucrats, states, compatriots, adversaries and wider publics.

### **Supervision and Subjectification**

Like other scholars working on the consequences of modernity, my approach draws broadly on Max Weber's work on bureaucracy and rationalisation (Gerth and Mills 1946) and on Michel Foucault's arguments about



modern regimes of power/knowledge and subjectification (inter alia 1979, 1980, 1991). In addition, I have been influenced by recent research on colonialisms, some of which develops Foucaultian lines of argument (see, especially, Cooper and Stoler 1997; Stoler 1995; 2002). Bernard Cohn's (1987) important empirical work in British colonial archives substantiated the significant role of colonial administrations in "creating" new population units ("tribes") as part and parcel of practices of counting and classification that are undertaken for purposes of control. Subsequent work has extended these insights in other colonial contexts (e.g., Appadurai 1993; Comaroff and Comaroff 1992; Thomas 1994), as well as in relation to states (e.g., Corrigan and Sayer 1985), European minority groups (e.g., Urla 1993) and twentieth century societies more broadly (e.g., Cadiot 2000; Hacking 1999; Scott 1999). The literature on colonialism administration and population categorisation is particularly evocative, in that colonial rule frequently involved forms of -virtually always asymmetrical - cooperation with more localised, "native" administrations. However, *international* "supervision" as such really becomes elaborated as a mode of governance in the context of the League of Nations (see Cowan 2007a; 2007b; Giddens 1985).

How was the League of Nations, as an international institution, involved in the production of national and minority subjectivities? The arrangements devised to implement the Convention on Reciprocal and Voluntary Emigration, signed by Greece and Bulgaria and attached



to the Treaty of Neuilly in 1919, allow us to trace how members of the "international community" -both international functionaries and concerned world citizens selected by the League- collaborated with state agents in the project of national subject-making.<sup>9</sup> The Greco-Bulgarian Mixed Commission (in French, La Commission greco-bulgare de l'Intermigration or La Commission Mixte) exemplified a novel form of governance, one of several "experiments" in international administration created in the immediate aftermath of the War (see Monnet 1978). In this case, one Greek and one Bulgarian member worked with two so-called "neutral members" appointed by the League Council - the President always being a "neutral". Nominally autonomous, the Greco-Bulgarian Mixed Commission (which itself oversaw a number of national and local sub-commissions) carried out legislative, administrative and judiciary functions. In the words of Stephen Ladas, author of the definitive work on this

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<sup>9</sup>Although it was eventually confirmed as a bilateral agreement between Greece and Bulgaria, the British diplomat Harold Nicolson passed along a copy of the draft treaty and discussed its implications with Eric Colban, Director of the Minority Section, in November 1919. Among other things, they discussed the nature of the voting powers of the three members (as it was initially proposed) of the Mixed Commission that were to be appointed by the Council, according to Article 9 of the Convention, and the need to ensure that those three members were "agreeable to Greece", in order to facilitate the Commission's work. Like the minorities treaties, the League of Nations was obliged to "guarantee" (through supervision) this agreement. See R1631, 41/2095/2095.



exchange, the Commission acted as "an intermediary agency between the governments and the emigrants, [seeing] that the latter should receive no pecuniary damage by reason of their emigration" (Ladas 1932: 51).

Key figures in this arrangement were the neutral members: in principle, private citizens without ties of loyalty to either of the principle parties to the agreement, yet normally well connected to political circles. The original neutral members appointed by the League Council on 20 September 1920 were both military officers: Colonel Corfe, a New Zealander, and Major Marcel de Roover, a Belgian. Significantly, there is some ambiguity regarding the nature of their status within and relationship to the League. Ladas points out that the League Council saw its responsibility to extend only to the appointment of the two neutral members, after which they were to "act under the control and the responsibility of the High Contracting Powers, viz., Greece and Bulgaria" (Ladas 1932: 54). As Ladas peevishly observes, the two neutral members "took upon themselves, quite unwarrantedly, the title of 'delegates of the League of Nations,' and considered themselves entitled to report to the Secretary General on the work of the Commission" (Ladas 1932: 54-55). And indeed, there is no doubt that these two individuals liaised frequently between the Mixed Commission and the League. The files document an active interaction involving copious correspondence and regular visits of the neutral members to Geneva, and sometimes of League personnel to Sofia and Athens.



The Mixed Commission was accorded "practically unlimited powers, so far as the execution of the Convention was concerned" (Ladas 1932: 56). Although there were contending interpretations regarding the appropriate balance of power among the four members, and the degree to which the neutral members were subject to the authority of the Bulgarian and Greek governments, in practice, the neutral members held the power of decision, in part because the President, always a neutral, had the right to cast the deciding vote in case of a tie.

The authority of the neutral members was even further extended, albeit briefly, when a protocol submitted jointly on 29 September 1924 by the Greek representative, Mr Politis, and the Bulgarian representative, Mr. Kalhoff, and immediately adopted by the League, proposed that Corfe and de Roover be appointed as special representatives of the League "to assist the two governments in their efforts to achieve the protection of minorities" by acting as "an advisory body for Greek and Bulgarian minority questions" (Ladas 1932: 110-111). The protocol gave them powers to "undertake an inquiry on the spot into the needs of persons belonging to the minorities, especially in the matter of education and religious worship", on the basis of which they were to submit reports to each government "on the measures to be taken" (Ladas 1932: 111). Facing considerable pressure from the Serbian government, unhappy at the Greek government's official recognition, through the Protocol, of the minority as Bulgarian, the



Greek National Assembly unanimously rejected the Protocol on 3 February 1925 (see Michailidis 1995). Greek parliamentarians justified the rejection on the grounds that it was "at variance with the Treaty of Minorities" by instituting a procedure that interfered with the internal affairs of the state and that it would exacerbate friction and conflict (Ladas 1932: 112). Though short-lived, the Protocol nonetheless somewhat surprisingly demonstrates the willingness of states to collaborate in international supervision.

Thus, the Mixed Commission constituted a decision-making body, devised at international level, in which internationally selected neutral members worked alongside two national representatives to carry out a bilateral agreement between two states, under the active supervision of the League. Through mechanisms that I will reveal in due course, the League of Nations collaborated in state-directed processes of deambiguation and fixing of individuals' nationality, both in the "racial" and in the "political" sense. My case example reveals the difficulty of their task and the ways that at least some of the intended beneficiaries of their bureaucratic unscramblings could be less enthusiastic about their purificatory goals.

### "The Situation in Macedonia"

The instability which had characterized this region since the late 19th century was by no means settled by the 1920's when League responsibilities commenced. As



boundaries were redrawn, and new states set up administrative structures among populations they often regarded with suspicion as actually or potentially irredentist, minority issues became a flashpoint in diplomatic relations between Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. The Convention for Reciprocal and Voluntary Emigration between Greece and Bulgaria, which had been agreed at the Treaty of Neuilly in 1919, and came into effect in 1920, had envisaged an orderly, voluntary transfer of minority populations as a "solution" to the minority problem. Yet few "Bulgarians" in Greece seemed inclined to emigrate (see Finney 1995, 1997; Ladas 1932). However, in summer 1922 the Greek military continued its campaign into the Anatolian interior; it was driven back by the Turkish army, and the Christian inhabitants were exposed to "reprisals by Turkish irregulars and the victorious Turkish army, following the atrocities committed earlier by the advancing Greek army" (Hirschon 2004: 5). Many of the more than one million refugees were directed to Greek Macedonia (see Kontogiorgi 2006).

With the new influx of refugees the situation for the settled "Bulgarian minorities" in the Greek part of Macedonia<sup>10</sup> worsened dramatically, as pressure on land,

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<sup>10</sup>Refugees were settled primarily in Central and Eastern (Greek) Macedonia, where more land was available due to previous depopulation as a result of the military operations of the Balkan Wars and the Great War, as well as the compulsory departure of the Muslim inhabitants--and of better quality. Western Macedonia, populated by compact "Bulgarian" and Vlach communities and with poor soil, had a lower influx of refugees. See Ladas 1932:101-123, and *passim*, Kontogiorgi 2006.



housing and employment, and conflict between different kin/ethnic groups for scarce resources, frequently eventuated in violence and forced expropriation of the latter's properties, often supported or condoned by local officials (Karakasidou 1997; Kontogiorgi 2006; Ladas 1932; League of Nations 1926). In early 1923, when the possibility of war with Turkey loomed, the displacement process was exacerbated when the Greek military forcibly deported to Thessaly and the islands, "for security reasons", 1500-2000 "Bulgarian" families living along the railway line from Gumuljina/Komotini to Dedeagach/Alexandropoulis (Ladas 1932: 105). "Bulgarian" inhabitants living along the Maritsa/Evros line and from villages in the districts of Drama, Serres and Demi-Hissar/Sidirokastro were also deported<sup>11</sup> (Kontogiorgi 2006: 206). "Bulgarians" who, until 1923, had expressed no intention of emigrating were frightened by the deportations, with many escaping to Bulgaria in order to avoid it. Those deported, when returned to their homes in autumn 1923, frequently found their houses and lands occupied by the new refugees; they were thus forced to become refugees themselves. With the constant movement of persons in and out of such areas, and the duress of encounters between groups, it is doubtful how

<sup>11</sup> According to Kontogiorgi, the "Bulgarians" were seen as "potential collaborators in the event of war". She notes that bands led by Turkish officers who had crossed the border and who had attempted to foment an insurrection among the Muslim inhabitants and the establishment of a provisional [Turkish] government, had done so "with the tolerance and even the cooperation of the Slavophone inhabitants of western Thrace" (Kontogiorgi 2006: 206 and fn 42).



much normal life -education, cultural life- could be carried out. But even in the more stable (from a migrational perspective) regions in both Greek and Serbian Macedonia, Bulgarian minorities were not able to enjoy the rights to schooling in the mother tongue and other rights which the Treaties guaranteed them; to the contrary, they faced indifference at best. Under suspicion as disloyal, often simply because of their language, many faced more punitive forms of repression.

The League's obligations, dictated by the League Covenant, to "guarantee" the Minorities Treaties, and their role in setting up and administratively supporting the Mixed Commission which would oversee the Greco-Bulgarian emigration scheme, resulted in the collection of much diverse material on Macedonia. As signalled in the title of this section, many bureaucratic files classified under the general rubric of *les minorites bulgares* were entitled simply "The Situation in Macedonia". The extraordinary vigour of Bulgarian organisational activity further ensured that Macedonia became a major concern for the Minorities Section staff. From the moment the petition procedure was established in 1920, but intensifying during periods of crisis between Greece, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, petitions poured in from Bulgarian organisations of every sort (refugee associations and their confederations, women's societies, peace societies, choral societies, religious brotherhoods) and from across the world (local "Bulgarian", "Bulgaromacedonian" or "Macedonian" brotherhoods or clubs, university student societies, in USA, Canada and



northern Europe).<sup>12</sup> The Bulgarian associations also were effective in mobilizing "sister" international organisations to reiterate support for their positions or, at least, their concerns<sup>13</sup>.

### Counting, Classifying and Unmixing Populations

While the League of Nations did not itself initiate projects of counting and classification of populations, it sometimes requested them from states. For instance, most minority treaties were worded in such a way that state obligations toward minorities, such as establishing

<sup>12</sup> The "Macedonian Political Organisation" (later renamed as the "Macedonian Patriotic Organisation") was established in 1922 in Fort Wayne, Indiana. It very quickly set up local chapters in, especially, the midwest states of Indiana, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and Pennsylvania, but also more widely in the US and Canada, and indeed, it came to constitute a "League of Macedonian Patriotic Associations in the USA and Canada". These local associations authored letters, petitions and telegrams to the League of Nations, sometimes in coordination with each other. As expressed in its constitution (Article 2 [17]) the MPO's objectives included: "to work for the establishment of Macedonia as an independent republic, with its own geographical and economic boundaries, which would most earnestly safeguard the democratic, social and economic rights and freedoms and duties and privileges of all its citizens". (*Macedonian Tribune*, Vol. 70, No. 3253, September 18, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> A communique from "Women's International League for Peace and Freedom", International Office, Geneva, was sent to League of Nations on 2nd January 1925, responding to a request from the Union of Bulgarian Women, an affiliated member of the WILPF, "to intercede with the League and elsewhere wherever possible" in ameliorating the situation for the Bulgarian refugees. The WILPF sent a covering letter from themselves to the Director of the Minority Section, Mr. Eric Colban, and attached the Bulgarian women's petition. The WILPF covering letter describes the Bulgarian petition as providing "*si exactement ses faits dont elle se plaint et parle d'une manière tellement impartiale et pacifique*" (providing so



primary schools "in the mother tongue", were contingent on the existence of sizable communities; thus, when the issue was disputed, the League might seek such statistics to ascertain whether "a considerable number" of persons belonging to a minority inhabited a particular region. Moreover, apart from the minority treaties signed in 1919, the League supervised two agreements whose objectives were quite different. The first was the bilateral convention attached the 1919 Treaty of Neuilly, outlined in the previous section. The second was the Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations and Protocol, signed at Lausanne in January 1923. The second convention followed the Greek military's ill-fated incursion into central Turkey in summer 1922 and the reprisals of the Turkish army and its irregulars against, and the resulting flight of, Turkey's own Orthodox Christian inhabitants. Thus, while the Neuilly convention was explicitly conceived as a *voluntary* emigration scheme -even if, as refugees began to crowd into both northern Greece and Bulgaria (particularly with the dramatic influx into Greece of summer and autumn 1922) the settled "minorities" felt increasingly forced to depart- the Lausanne Convention

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*precisely the facts of which it complains and speaking in a manner so impartial and peaceful*). After receiving confirmation of receipt of their letter, the WILPF followed up with another correspondance. Several weeks later, on 10th February 1925, the "International Women's Suffrage Alliance" also submitted to the League a copy of the Bulgarian women's petition with their own covering letter, this time expressing support for the Bulgarian women's desires for peace and justice, but wanting to insist also on their own political neutrality (Box R1660, file 41/41548/11974).



involved a *compulsory* "exchange" of Orthodox Christians of Turkish territories to Greece, and Muslims of Greek territories to Turkey.<sup>14</sup> Crudely but not inaccurately stated, the bilateral agreements of Neuilly and Lausanne both aimed to get rid of the minority problem by "unmixing" populations and getting rid of minorities, albeit as humanely as possible, through state-supervised population transfers.<sup>15</sup>

While the Lausanne Convention formalised a transfer that had already occurred by force, with respect to the Christian populations, the Greek and Turkish governments still had to arrange for the transfers of the remaining Christians from Turkey, and the Muslims from Greece. Summarising the complex unfolding of the Greek - Turkish exchange (see Hirschon 2003; Kontogiorgi 2006; Ladas 1932; League of Nations 1926) is beyond the scope of this paper, but it is important to note that that exchange incorporated some of the core principles as the Greco-Bulgarian emigration, notably the promise that those departing would eventually receive compensation for property left behind.<sup>16</sup> Returning to the prototypical Greco-Bulgarian Convention, therefore, this

<sup>14</sup> It should be noted that not all Muslims were forced to migrate from Greece, nor all Orthodox Christians from Turkey. The Muslims of the Greek region of Western Thrace were exempted, as were the Orthodox Christians of Istanbul. There is an enormous literature on the Greek-Turkish compulsory exchange of populations, of variable quality. An excellent, recently published appraisal that includes the voices of Turkish, Greek, British, South African and American scholars is Hirschon 2003.

<sup>15</sup> The British statesman, Lord Curzon, used the phrase, "unmixing peoples", to describe the Lausanne exchange.

<sup>16</sup> This promise was never fulfilled; but that could not have been foreseen at the time.



Convention allowed those of "Bulgarian nationality" ("nationality" in the "racial" sense) living in Greece to opt to emigrate to Bulgaria and become Bulgarian nationals or subjects ("nationality" in the political sense), and *vice versa*.<sup>17</sup> Such persons would, in turn, give up their houses and lands and receive compensation by the government. Through the ingenious -if ultimately unwieldy- system of "mixed commissions" to oversee emigration and property compensation, League personnel sought to make population transfers systematic, orderly, peaceful and economically feasible.

Admittedly, this scheme of voluntary emigration was exceptional. It contravened the general spirit of minorities treaties, which aimed to keep minorities in place and reasonably contented, hoping that if they were treated well, "national minorities" would learn to become loyal citizens of the state in which they were an "alien

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<sup>17</sup> Other population exchanges had been proposed and agreed but only partially carried out in this decade: Ladas (1932: 18-23) notes the Turkish-Bulgarian convention of 1913, which legalised an already accomplished "exchange" at the Adrianople border, as well as the fairly advanced in terms of planning, but ultimately "stillborn" Greek-Turkish agreement of 1914. Eleftherios Venizelos, similarly, presented in a memorandum to King Constantine in January 1915 the idea of a reciprocal emigration between Greece and Bulgaria. Ladas interprets Venizelos' proposal of 1915 as aimed "to achieve definitively a 'racial adjustment' which would permit at last the establishment of a true Balkan Confederation" (Ladas 1932: 29). At the 38th meeting (28 July 1919) of the Committee on New States at the Paris Peace Conference, however, Venizelos submitted a proposal for "facilitating emigration between Bulgaria and Greece of Patriarchist Greeks resident in Bulgaria and Exarchist Bulgarians resident in Greece", thus emphasising religion - or more precisely, affiliation to one or another of the "national" churches - as the criterion of nationality (see notes by Paul Mantoux on



population" (Finney 1995, 1997). Within a few years of their establishment, though, it was evident that the treaties, both as pertained to the Macedonian region and elsewhere, were doomed to disappoint both states and minorities. States, whose hopes were impossibly raised by ostensible international support for the *nationality principle*, resented this emphasis on minorities. Minorities, for their part, dreamed of an impartial international arbiter of justice. Some minorities - among them, Germans, Hungarians and Bulgarian "Macedonians" - looked to the League as potentially sympathetic to their efforts to revise "unjust" borders. But they, too, found little willingness within the League to alter the *status quo ante*.

In the face of this general sense by Balkan states and minorities that minority treaties were bound to fail, representatives of the League of Nations (Northern European, North American, Antipodean), who served as commissioners, or who advised in the process, supported the voluntary emigration between Greece and Bulgaria. Their reports adopted a language of origins, racial kinship, "akin-ness" and of minorities who "belonged to a country", a language that was relatively suppressed in other minority supervision contexts (where the so-called "kin-state" was denied any formal recognition or legitimate role in its minority brethren's affairs). These

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meetings of the Committee on New States, Box R1616, S336, Doc 846). Ultimately, the 1919 Convention leaves the criteria for determining nationality relatively open.



international representatives seemed ultimately to believe in the "reality" of racial nationality (as opposed to the merely "formal" or legal bond between minority and host state); at any rate, they repeatedly expressed "disappointment" with the small numbers of applications for emigration submitted. In fact, the numbers were so small that between 1920 and 1926, the deadline was extended five times (Ladas 1932: 90-94). For their part, members of the "Bulgarian" minority showed little inclination to uproot and "join kin" across the border, and would do so mostly if forced out by fear and violence. Individuals were reluctant to make firm decisions about emigrating. When they did, they sometimes provided only partial and often misleading information about themselves and their properties. Like canny peasants everywhere, they tended to be suspicious of state authorities and loath to show their hand.

Under guidance of the League, the commissioners designed bureaucratic procedures through which applications for emigration were made, adjudicated and sometimes reconsidered. There were separate forms for the two quite different cases (in terms of treaty jurisdiction) of *residents*: those of Bulgarian "racial" nationality who were currently living in Greek territory and who wished to emigrate to Bulgaria and become Bulgarian nationals, on the one hand, and on the other hand, those who had *already* settled in Bulgaria as *emigres* or *refugees* and wanted to formalise that affiliation. The same held for the parallel situations of those of Greek "racial" nationality, either living in or



originally from Bulgarian territories, wishing to become Greek nationals.<sup>18</sup> In order to take advantage of the emigration, the applicant needed an official document confirming his political belonging and his racial nationality.<sup>19</sup> Thus, along with his *Declaration of Intention to Emigrate*, the applicant had to provide a certificate, authorised by a local official, verifying his membership (and hence, his family's membership) in the Bulgarian or Greek minority.<sup>20</sup> These forms were required if he wished to complete a *Request for Liquidation of Goods*. Finally, we should note that in the eyes of the

<sup>18</sup> Annexe No. 1 of a letter sent by the Greco-Bulgarian Mixed Commission to the League on 30 August 1922, entitled "Reglement sur L'Emigration Reciproque et Volontaire des Minorités Greques et Bulgares", contains roneoed typewritten copies of the various bureaucratic forms, apparently in draft form. They include the *DECLARATION D'EMIGRATION d'un Candidat Emigrant*, *DECLARATION D'EMIGRATION d'un Réfugié ou Emigré*, *CERTIFICAT de MEMBRE de MINORITE ETHNIQUE pour CANDIDATS - EMIGRANTS*, *CERTIFICAT de MEMBRE de MINORITE ETHNIQUE pour EMIGRÉS ET REFUGIÉS*, and *DEMANDE en LIQUIDATION (I) d'un Emigré* (upper and lower - case as in original). Box R1636, 41/23216/2095. The League files that I consulted did not contain specimens of the finalised bureaucratic forms.

<sup>19</sup> In the draft French version of the form, the form-filler is asked to indicate, first, the subjection of the applicant, and second, to fill in the blanks: that "\_\_\_ appartient ethniquement a la nationalité \_\_\_". The phrasing is interesting. "Subjection" to a state or a monarch normally implies lesser rights than "citizenship"; curiously, the term is used not only for those who are subjects of the Ottoman Empire, but also of the Bulgarian state. The Foucaultian theoretical conception of subjection would seem particularly congruent with this political status of "subjection". The adverbial form, ethniquement, could be translated as "ethnically" and it clearly refers to what in other contexts (and in the substantive form) is named, in French, as "rac" ("*minorités de race*", "*de race bulgare*", etc.).

<sup>20</sup> A male head-of-household's application was considered to include his wife and any children under 18 years of age. This included cases of women who



Commission, the formal act of filing a declaration to emigrate constituted "a solemn and irrevocable act" expressing the applicant's "definitive decision" to migrate (Ladas 1932: 96). These bureaucratic procedures of "verification" thus served to solidify and fix, by making them part of official documentary records, what were often contextually variable and manipulable identities.

Such bureaucratic procedures, moreover, began to attach individuals to categories of majority and minority. This marked a significant shift from the rather vague, collective way that categories were used within the minority treaties. In theoretical terms, one could see this as part of the historically situated process of turning *persons into individuals*: that is, "individuals" in the modern sense, as opposed to "persons" in a pre-modern sense. I draw here on the classic distinction, implicit and at some moments, explicit in work by Marcel Mauss,

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had acquired the citizenship of their husband upon marriage, as nationality law across Europe dictated at this time. However, the Mixed Commission also allowed women who would have been able to claim under the Convention but for their change of nationality by marriage. Such women were given the right to claim the advantages of the Convention for their own property, and this right was also recognised in favour of their heirs in the descending line" (Ladas 1932: 77). Ladas identifies this as "clearly opposed to the text of the Convention". The issue of married women's nationality was taken up by internationalist women's groups as early as 1905; it became a more urgent issue after the outbreak of the First World War when "some women found themselves enemy nationals in the land of their birth, while women born in enemy territory enjoyed full citizenship rights" (Rupp 1997: 146). Attempts by some states after the war to address this inequality ironically rendered some women stateless! Internationalist women's organisations continued to lobby for gender equality in nationality issues, notably at the Hague Conference on Codification of International Law in 1930, but without success until 1933, with the Montevideo Treaty.



Peter Berger and Michel Foucault, and explored evocatively in the Balkan context by Vereni (1996), between a *pre-modern subject* and a *modern subject*.<sup>21</sup> In this conceptualisation, prior to the historical emergence of the "individual", public identity rested on status and role (the Latin *persona[m]* borrowed from the Etruscan *phersu*, "mask"; Vereni 1996: 6). There was little interest in the interiority of the subject, not yet conceived as the site of true and authentic being. With societal transformations associated with modernity - in Vereni's view, with the emergence of "the modern idea of nations" - persons were induced, instructed, persuaded to become "individuals" (from the Latin *individuum*, made up from *in* - negation and *dividere* "divide", hence "that which cannot be divided"; Vereni 1976: 6). Whereas the "truth" of the *person* is in the "mask" or "face" presented to the public (hence, the importance of reputation, a socially ascribed quality), the "truth" of the *individual* lies "inside".

What the nation-state preferred was a modern subject who was the same from inside to outside, who was

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This treaty included a Convention on the Nationality of Women permitting women to retain their natal citizenship after marriage to a man of different citizenship.

<sup>21</sup> In fact, Vereni's article (which I read in draft before its publication) was extremely helpful for my formulation of the general argument of the present paper



*consistent* in her "national" characteristics and practices (she "was" Bulgarian because she "spoke" Bulgarian, she "did" Bulgarian things, she was Bulgarian "through and through") and who was *stable* (she "was" and "did" Bulgarian, *all the time and in all contexts*). The critical issue was not simply whether this nationality was a matter of blood or choice. What mattered was that the national affiliation be "once-and-for-all", irrevocable, whether acquired by descent, or freely chosen at a moment of decision.

Formal *Declarations of Intent to Emigrate* were read, I suggest, as "evidence" of the national "truth" of the human beings who *submitted* them (and who *submitted* to them). Local representatives of the state confirmed this "truth" by providing the minority certificate. By means of this bureaucratic procedure, frequently a desperate last resort for the applicant, an international authority collaborated in returning the national subject "home", to the territory of his or her true nation.

### **"Three Passports or None at All!": Problem Cases**

Although the procedure agreed between Greece and Bulgaria appeared fairly straightforward, we must not forget the political and material turmoil the region had suffered and its effects on processes of governance. Not only was state power still insecure, but subjects remained undisciplined; they evaded inscription or became "over-inscribed". I discern considerable exasperation in the tone of the New Zealander, Colonel Corfe, the "neutral



member" of the Greco-Bulgarian Mixed Commission, as he explains in private memorandum in September 1923 to his friend and fellow country-man, Sir James Allen, the High Commissioner for New Zealand in London, the difficult conditions under which his commission attempted to carry out its duties:

The political history of the regions covered by the Emigration Convention made the recognition and definition of the legal status of many of the would-be migrants, especially with regard to the ownership of their property and the determination of their national identity, extremely complicated. Apart from the endless migrations and informal abandon and seizure of properties that have taken place... it is no uncommon thing to find candidates for emigration who have served successively in the Turkish, Bulgarian and Greek armies, speak at least two of the languages equally fluently, and possess three passports or none at all.<sup>22</sup>

Colonel Corfe and his fellow commissioners daily faced the disorderliness of persons whose legal nationality was indeterminate. Not only was the person *without* a passport a problem.<sup>23</sup> This was an era where "dual nationality" was thought just as tragic as "statelessness":

<sup>22</sup> The memorandum was passed from Sir James Allen to Commandant de Roover, the second of the two neutral members of the Greco-Bulgarian Mixed Commission and Colonel Corfe's colleague, in early September 1923. A copy of the memorandum, plus comments from members of the Minorities and other League Sections, are found in Box 1632, 41/30827/2095.

<sup>23</sup> An insightful recent treatment of the passport phenomenon is Torpey 2000.



both legal statuses violated the assumption that a person belonged to one, and only one, state (Arendt 1968 [1951]; Malkki 1992; Molony 1934). And when a person "*speaks at least two languages equally fluently and possesses three passports, or none at all*", the commissioners were without evidence for the "real" nationality.

What could be done in such cases? The Mixed Commission decided that "whenever a doubt should subsist in the Commission or its agents as to whether a person was akin by race, religion or language to the people of a country, this doubt should be resolved in favor of the person in question". The Commission thought that "objective criteria" were "theoretically preferable", but "extremely difficult to apply" (Ladas 1932: 77). Let's look at just one contested application that the Mixed Commission examined in August 1926:

Thodor Nicoloff, of a village in Bulgaria, claimed to belong to the Greek minority because he had a "Greek consciousness" and wanted to live in Greece. The Bulgarian member of the Mixed Commission opposed this, saying the man was "of Bulgarian nationality by blood and language". The Greek member, however, supported the application, saying that Nicoloff had married in the Greek Patriarchal Orthodox church, and baptised his children there. "This", he said, "was the best proof" that he had ceased to have a Bulgarian consciousness, and that he belonged to the Greek minority. Since the Commission believed that "a doubt existed", Nicoloff was allowed to emigrate (Ladas 1934:



78).<sup>24</sup>

Another case from the League files shows, nonetheless, that this sort of individual voluntarism about "real" nationality relied on prior inscription within state population records<sup>25</sup>. One "Jean Mittas" submitted a petition to the League in March 1925, citing Article 12 of the Convention and complaining that his application for property compensation had been turned down by the Mixed Commission. In a note to Minorities Section Director Eric Colban, the Section official, Helmer Rosting, described Mittas as "probably a Greek who left Bulgaria before the Convention came into force". He pointed out, first, that as this pertained to the Convention on Reciprocal and Voluntary Emigration, it was not, strictly speaking, a "minorities" matter. Rather, it fell under the jurisdiction of the Mixed Commission. Colban instructed Rosting to contact the commissioners; an undated letter to Rosting in the file signed by Colonel Corfe and Marcel de Roover summarises their interpretation of the case. They confirmed that:

- a) Mr Mittas was, by origin, from Ottoman territory which subsequently came under Greek sovereignty; and
- b) that he had left Turkey in 1900 and arrived, as an Ottoman subject, in Bulgaria.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> According to Ladas, this case is addressed in item 5 of the Minutes of the 279th Meeting of the Mixed Commission, 10 August, 1926.

<sup>25</sup> Box R1633, 41/42650/2095.

<sup>26</sup> Specifically, "il est arrivé avec la sujétion ottomane", "he arrived as an Ottoman subject". The memorandum continues, using the same term, "subjection", for his status in Bulgaria. "il a eu la sujétion bulgare".



At that point, he had two options open to him:

- a) if he were of a "foreign race" he would require a formal procedure to become a Bulgarian subject.
- b) if he were "of Bulgarian race", he would be able to become a Bulgarian subject without special formalities - as it were, "automatically". (In fact, somehow he became inscribed in the population registry as belonging to the Bulgarian race, and he accepted this situation, never undertaking the formalities for becoming a subject that were required of the person of "foreign race".)

Corfe and de Roover expressed Mr. Mittas' dilemma as follows:

*"If he is of the Bulgarian race, he was a Bulgarian subject, but did not belong to the Greek minority. Therefore, he has no right to take advantage of the Convention."*

*"If he is of the Greek race, he had never been a Bulgarian subject. Therefore, he has no right to take advantage of the Convention."*

They admitted that "in successor States to the Ottoman Empire, a certain confusion reigned in the matter of *sujetio*", and if evidence could be produced that "the good faith of a person had been surprised by that fact", he could appeal to the Greek government to put the matter to the Permanent Court of International Justice. But they did not think this was the case here! Therefore, while acknowledging that the claimant had a right of appeal on



this "purely juridical point", and that, on the basis that the law contravened his rights, he might be able to persuade one of the High Powers (viz. Greece) to submit the case to the Permanent Court of International Justice for its interpretation, they did not think such a move necessarily boded success. After all, there was nothing to prevent Bulgaria from making a parallel request.

### **Identities for Unstable Presents and Uncertain Futures**

The formal, even if perfunctory, bureaucratic procedures which the voluntary emigration scheme entailed submission, evaluation, adjudication- drew local subjects into the machinery of international supervision. Such procedures contributed to an ongoing state process of untangling the multiple threads of affiliation and identification. International agents tried to ensure a single strand of "racial nationality" and where possible, they tried to fix this to the proper, corresponding (again, single) political nationality; they struggled to regularise people who had "three passports or none at all".

These efforts, nonetheless, could succeed only partially. Despite the faith of the worthy members of the Greco-Bulgarian mixed commission in the "reality" of racial nationality, the practices of implementing it could only serve to undermine its self evident nature. In the minutes of regular commission meetings, the commissioners record the cases of applicants strategically accepting, or rejecting, the "return to their kin", petitioning to



withdraw declarations to emigrate when conditions changed (thus, reneging on solemn affirmations to "resume" their "true" citizenship) or asking to return "home" to the countries from which they had emigrated and where they were, supposedly, "aliens". Largely illiterate peasants who cared little for politics, who had seen regimes come and go, their experience of war and upheaval made them suspicious of state certainties. Having to manoeuvre and move between many different groups and often having to bribe or cajole the authorities of more than one state, they were reluctant to tie themselves down to a single-stranded identity. In the highly unstable and uncertain post - imperial moment, one was better off having more than one passport, more than one identity claim, up one's sleeve.

A few years ago, at the height of the Yugoslav conflict, a University of Sussex colleague - a Bosnian Moslem economist from Sarajevo - spoke to me about the predicaments of identity that she faced. It wasn't so much *the past* which was determining how she and her compatriots were thinking about identity, she confessed; *the future* was much more important. The question that needed to be figured out was: "What are the implications of the identity I choose *now* for my future?" Or: "What do I want to become?" (Not: "what has history made me to be?") In a way, we are brought back full circle to the Manakia brothers. Born as subjects of a disintegrating Ottoman empire, their citizenships, certainly, and possibly too their national identifications, shifted over their lifetime. Their purview was always larger than



nation-state frontiers. They sought in their photographs and films to capture a world in flux, and through them, to bear witness to the violent yet promising transition into modernity. But they found themselves separated from each other, and their lives fragmented by the newly solidified state and national boundaries that were part and parcel of this transition. While they would have recognised the struggle, after their deaths, by opposing national camps to define who they, Miltos and Yannakis Manakia, or Manakis, *really* were, they themselves leave little trace of firm national subjectivities. At most, we see bourgeois European organic intellectuals, their gaze directed outward, toward a world, a way of being, in tumult. Their persons, like their photographic and cinematic corpus, bear witness to the fragility and fluidity of national identifications, even as they trace the compulsions of nation-states, with the collaboration of international bureaucrats, to classify and fix persons according to neat national categories.

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Δημόσια Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσας



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**Ambiguities of Identification and Alterity from the  
Perspective of Popular Culture: A Few Examples  
from former Yugoslavia**

*Mit Totalitarismus  
Und mit Demokratie  
Wir tanzen mit Faschismus  
und roter Anarchie.*

*Laibach, Tanz mit Laibach*

Popular culture forms seemingly endless unpredictable creative flows of images, experience and "culturalized" commodities in its production and reproduction. If we are willing to listen what authors, actors and players have to say, we can get a very usable material about that complex whole which part this production is.

It is very important to explain basic and simple facts. In scholarship, as well as in science, we are dealing with concepts. They are not given and eternal. We create them, we construct them, and we use them. Furthermore, when necessary, we deny them, deconstruct them, and we

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reject them. Before they become incorporated into scholarly discourse, they usually - if not being invented and designed completely anew - emerge in daily use, in public discourse, or in art and literature. Reflected notions are very usable, because they do not denote anything specific or particular. They denote classes of phenomena, not just arbitrary particular phenomenon.

Popular culture, and especially popular music, is an important and fruitful domain of present-day societies. Popular culture is not just trivial culture, and popular music is never "just music". It is a very important part of the whole contemporary life. Therefore, it can rather easily and efficiently expose otherwise hidden processes of performativity, spatialisation, embodiment and identification. Popular music does not only mediate between the global and the local, but may be considered as an efficient operator in transferring and translating ideas and experiences of different generations and groupings within the regional range.

In this paper I will use some examples from popular culture, and especially popular music, to conceptualise the Balkans - or, more precisely, in my case, former Yugoslavia - from a specific perspective. In order to understand processes that make these conceptualisations possible, it is reasonable to start from the bottom of the daily life (Hirschberg and Hirschberg 2002). Popular music examples might give us some ideas about ways how present-day societies invent and reproduce their myths. Anthropologists/ethnologists had mostly studied so-called primitive and exotic societies. Ethnographers have



been recording ongoing practices, facts, ideas and living memories of people who were considered (and made) essentially different, living in completely other times and distant places (see Fabian 1983). But even if we take "ethnography at home" as a feasible remedy against exoticism, taking into consideration that fieldwork science constitutes "its authority, constructs and reconstructs coherent cultural others and interpreting selves" (Clifford 1988: 112), we can easily identify (or produce) new exotica on the margins of our societies.

This is the reason why "home ethnographers" have been choosing specific locations as sites of their fieldwork research, e.g. peasant households and villages or workers' neighbourhoods. Only very recently things have changed (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Despite the fact that epistemological orientation of social sciences turned from realism to constructivism (if not before, it happened after publication of the famous Luckmann and Berger's volume in 1966; I use Slovene translation from 1988), creativity became an issue of discussion a couple of years ago (Liep 2001).

The main characteristics of popular culture are endless ongoing unpredictable processes and flows of creativity, production, reproduction (recycling, "covering") and re-creation of images, experiences and "culturalized" commodities. If we are able to decipher what authors, actors and players are communicating to audiences, we can grab a very usable material in order to understand "that complex whole" of diverse dispersed and even suppressed present-day commonalities. As a scholar from



former Yugoslavia, in a way (former) insider, I will discuss a few examples that would deal with perception of the Balkans in Slovenia, its construction, reconstruction and deconstruction in popular culture and popular music.

### **Under the Enchantment of Identification**

The starting point of my analysis will be identification. This is the term with many meanings. On the basic ground it denotes equality:  $a=a$ . To identify means as well to recognize, to give a name, to refer to by name or some other identifying characteristic property; to consider (oneself) as similar to somebody else; to discover, key, key out, distinguish, describe, name; to consider to be equal or the same, i.e. to establish the identity of someone or something. In that regard identification is a precondition of identity, and identity is a result of identification. Consequently, identification is a generative principle, involving - or enunciating - human agency. It can not be only singular: any particular identification is the outcome of many possible, eligible and available, sometimes even plural, options.

The starting point of my analysis will be Lacan's very early and under-elaborated observation of basic identification principle via mirror stage (see Miller 1983; Lacan 1977). Its imaginary result is a production of the Other. This "othering", production or creation of the Other, is not the same as emergence of "alterity" (cf. Rapport and Overing 2000). Alterity is a result of this process of "othering". Although being essentially



symbolic, it is not exactly the same process as mutual recognition or social construction processes in symbolic interactionism (cf. Barth 1969, Schutz 1977, Mead 1997) or liberal-democratic apology (Fukuyama 1992). Interactive cultural dynamics begins with presuppositions that "the Other" should be exactly what one believes he/she/it is. The notion of "the Other" is essential in creation and preservation of one's own world. More precisely: imagined distinctions are exactly what later become shared.

In employment of identification as an active principle of making commonalities possible, we are facing a new understanding of the society, especially in consideration of enacting and playing of social roles. Processual understanding of identification is provoking epistemological shift towards active generative principles. Such active principles where human agency comes to the fore are for example embodiment and spatialisation (see Muišic 2006). It is thus very important to understand embodiment (on the phenomenological understanding of the term see Csordas 1990) as a process, not (only) as a final result - accomplished shape of a human body and its corporeality. Similarly, living in space is not just a given fact, and space is not just "here/there". It is a process of spatialization which shapes and produces spatiality (van Loon 2002: 90). Spatial practices are integral part in production of space - together with spatial representations and representations of space (Lefebvre 1991)- and place. In Bourdieu's social theory habitus itself, as a result of structured practices, is



not as important as practices that constitute it (see Bourdieu 1977). Identity is not made from an idea. It is a result of living practice, performance in a status (Barth 1969: 28).

Within such a theoretical framework of processuality, I shall discuss the Balkans through some chosen examples of popular music. Music is a perfect media to strengthen social ties or to achieve self-confidence. It is especially usable for empowerment stigmatised or marginalised groups and is as well of great importance for minorities, migrants and diasporas.

As much as a human being is a symbolic creature, he or she is an active producer of alterity. Even if people are excited about particular kinds of music - or any other cultural production - they, as fans, easily Orientalise their celebrities. They perceive stars as being ultimate Others - the term "star" itself denotes celebrities as creatures from other worlds (see an excellent study of fandom in Hills 2002). But their genuine creativity is not just given. The main sources of creativity in popular music are the Others. And because the Other - and only the Other! - is capable of *jouissance* (enjoyment), the horrible Other is indefensibly seductive with music appeal.

It is not difficult to trace such Orientalist attitude in blues, jazz, rock and rap: only black (and poor) musicians can play authentic blues, jazz, rock or rap. Adjudging of superiority is the same way racist as ascriptions of inferiority.



## **Alterity and Agency: Balkane, Balkane, Balkane moj! (My Dear Balkans; Azra)**

Within European perspective, the Balkan itself might be considered as the Other of/in Europe (on that point see, e.g., Todorova 1997, Goldsworthy 1998, Jezernik 2004). Processes of its "othering" were based on principles of subjectivisation and differentiation. The final result, "alterity" of the Balkans and its peoples, is a product of active agency. It is very important to follow lines of active principles in understanding of such processes: just like Orientalisation is a process of making "the Oriental", and exotisation is a process of making the "exotic other", processes of active invention of the Balkans create the "Balkanic other".

Let me start with a very simple question: what is the Balkans? After centuries of different and misleading proposals for the name of the area, German geographer August Zeune gave the name the Balkan Peninsula to this area at the beginning of the 19th century. If one would try to find its description in various encyclopaedias or Internet sites, one would realise that it is far from being clear what it actually is. "Pure" geography would always be mixed with political divisions, inclusions and exclusions. Therefore, in some cases, Slovenia is included, in some cases not. The same happens with Greece and Romania. There are a very few cases when even Moldavia would be included (I am referring here to the unpublished work by students Petra Stefanovic and Petra Škodlar *The Basic Guide to the Balkans for the*



Seminar in Ethnology of the Balkans in 1998-1999, under my supervision).

In some other cases, especially in media and folk representations, the Balkans (i.e. the Orient) can start in Trieste, in Vienna or even in Munich (see, e.g., Gingrich 1998). In any case, the Balkans is considered as exotic and primitive place and is more an idea than reality:

"The notion of the Balkans equally belongs to history and imagination; it is not even necessary bad or good, even if it is used in political rhetoric as notorious stereotype or beautiful metaphor" (Rihtman-Auguštin 1997: 35).

Essential part of its imaginary geography is imagination of the Balkans as the "the crossroad" or "contact zone".

While Slovenes and Croats don't consider themselves of being a part of the Balkans, the former Yugoslavia was without any doubt considered as a Balkan country. Perhaps this self-identification is the reason why Slovenes and Croats make a very simple equation between former Yugoslavia and the Balkans when describing music and culture from other republics of former Yugoslavia. Balkan parties became a synonym for Yugo pop parties and Balkan rock is a term used for Yugoslav rock. Notions of corruption, hatred, blood revenge, wars and poverty are usually attached to the Balkans, but Balkan music (in its various forms) is still very attractive. Is this a paradox? The most well-known and appreciated examples of "the Balkan" (i.e. Yugoslav)



popular culture openly deal with violence and "primitivism", e.g., Emir Kusturica's films and Goran Bregovic's music. Why are they so attractive for international audience?

The answer lies in economy of desire, in the fact that the civilised people "lost" their ability to enjoy. The whole career of Goran Bregovic stands on the premise that "primitive" Balkan shepherds and "losers" unrestrainedly enjoy. He was the founder of the most attractive and successful Yugoslav rock band Bijelo dugme. The group from Sarajevo was tremendously successful in the mid-1970s when they released their first records. One of their first mega-hits was *Tako ti je mala moja, kad ljubi Bosanac* (It is so, my dear, when the Bosnian is in love). His recent ethno-pop "wedding orchestras" -with authentic Roma musicians- are successful continuation of the same pattern.

In music we can find many confirmations that the Other enjoys (or Others enjoy). Since ancient Greek times (e.g., Plato) we can read discussions how music may be considered as a threat of the society, but at a same time as well a tool of education and the means of social tuning or as an accepted way of sharing a common joyful experience. Aspects of "othering" are usually covered in the spurious notion of authenticity, especially when the "true thing" is lost: "Folk culture becomes a subject of mysticism and representative identification exactly in the moment when it ceases to be reality" (Gellner 1991: 243).

Many music experts and fans would believe that only



the black people can play -or sing- proper blues, jazz, reggae or rap, only the Gypsies can play true "gipsy music", only the Jews can play proper klezmer, only peasants can play folk music, and only educated people can play decent classical music. This is the way how common mind essentialise the position of the Other who is the only capable of direct, non-mediated enjoyment. Civilised people can't do it anymore.

But if civilised people only occasionally act in the way as "the Others" supposedly do, they might get back - at least for a while - the lost (or stolen) enjoyment. This is why, following Michel Maffesoli, modernity is not the epoch of rationalism and individualism, but exactly the opposite.

"Neo-tribes", the modern emotional communities, subcultures, scenes or even tribes, as manifested in "collective feeling of shared *puissance*, this mystical sensibility that assures continuity" (Maffesoli 1996: 24), offer a provisional solution. So-called Balkan parties serve this aim very well. First "Balkan parties" were organised even before the dissolution of former Yugoslavia. These parties were events where Yugoslav rock (and later ethno-pop) music was played for the younger audience who ecstatically enjoyed the specific "Balkanic" sensation. At Balkan parties young people from Slovenia could express their sentiments in the specific "Balkanic" way - "typical Balkan" sentiments are supposed to express hot temper and pathos (Ceglar 1999: 79) - but also its "leisurable, riotous culture" (Stankovic 1999: 47). That means, they could scream, yell, dance,



have fun, and skip from one sentiment to another, drink, without taking care on etiquette.

They, basically, consummated their own notions of "being a Balkanite". They danced kolo, a round dance which is not present in Slovenia, and also fulfilled imagination by dancing improvised belly-dance, which is another association of the Balkans, enforced with Orientalism.

An individual participates in a social activity which transcends his/her own knowledge of it. As much as a human being is a symbolic creature, he or she is an active producer of alterity. Polysemous symbolism of the Balkans is permanently contested and negotiated, both in practice and in discourse.

### **Ongoing Mythisation and Ironisation: Eternal Symbolic Struggles**

Following Lacan's analyses (e.g., Lacan 1996, Žižek 1997), civilised European Subject is shaped, i.e. split, by desire, and Desire is always Desire of the Other. If we can, symbolically, although faking, express or subjugate unbridled passions of the Other, we follow the appeal of the Subject: don't make any concession about your Desire. Create the Other!

Social construction of reality (Luckmann and Berger 1988) is based on permanent mythification practices in daily life, public communication, political life and artist production. There are only some tools available to resist mythical mind. From the 20th century art we have



Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt* (alienation effect), a very powerful tool in dealing with the symbolic order. Its basic idea is to provoke the best results in theatre plays with literal and excessive use of a given meaning, of putting together something that should not be put together, in order to engender reactions among people with extremely provocative acts. George Lukacs "partisanship" as a stance of being in opposition and waiting for a chance to intervene while studying the classics might become well suited for underground artists who can not gain popularity, but can still intervene in public from time to time with a provoking project or an act.

Even in the times of seemingly unproblematic post-modern cohabitation of different cultural systems, streams and flows there are still many cultural conflicts going on. Symbolic sphere is a site of permanent symbolic struggles and negotiations. Slovenian industrial rock group Laibach is a perfect example of a group that emerged in times of seemingly everlasting socialism and responded to its dominant ideology with use of radical symbolic expression, mixing various kinds of totalitarian artistic and political forms. With excessive use of totalitarian symbolism, it, basically, re-created totalitarian regime within the organizational structure of the band itself and within the cultural groups *Neue Slovenische Kunst*, *Irwin*, *Novi kolektivizem* and various theatre groups (see Monroe 2005). Basically, the group successfully (and cathartically) staged the aesthetics of totalitarianism with all its horrors and fascinations. Laibach proved well both Brechtian ideas of alienation



principle and Benjamin's observations about modern (fascist) aesthetics in politics (Benjamin 1968).

One of the last examples of such popular music partisanship in the resistant "third space" (Bhabha 1994) was an act by the group CZD (Center za dehumanizacijo - Centre for Dehumanisation) about which I wrote quite extensively (e.g., Muršič 1995). At the end of their live studio show at national television in February 2005, the legendary Slovene punk rock group CZD unintentionally staged and expressed a brilliant story of post-socialism. Socially aware and continually critical toward social injustice, the group is for more than 20 years engaged in self-standing artist production. The group expressed its dissatisfaction with achievements of transition with a combination of their older songs from socialist times and some new songs of post-socialist "transition". These acapella songs were sung in punk rock manner. The first song in the last session of their performance spoke about blood (*Kri* - Blood). Then followed the song of "dunghills" *Kupi gnoja* (another pun: Heaps of Shit, Dunghills or Purchase Crap) and the song about being broke (*Nimam dnara* - I'm Broke). Finally, they sang the only song in English, *Express Yourself* - with mouth shut. Nobody could have expressed it better!

Symbolic struggles were initially essential part of Slovene alternative music scene, but it gradually vanished after the last post-socialist provocation of the industrial-noise rock group Strelnikoff (on the huge public affair see Muršič 2000). In past few years, only a couple of advertisers are willing to provoke Slovenian



public. Worth mentioning is a response to sending of Slovenian troops to Iraq in early 2006 with use of traditional masque *Kurent* lost in the Iraqi desert. Slovenes have finally become subjects of world history! However, to be a subject means both to be submerged and to have an agency. There is no solution for the dialectics of a master and a servant (Hegel) without bloodshed. But after a tragedy the farce follows.

### **Final remarks: Subaltern voices are becoming louder**

Conclusion of post-socialist transition brought to the fore different versions of most common of the common parts of popular culture: turbo-folk. Turbo-folk scene was an inescapable phenomenon of transition in Serbia with its specific survival of some excessive ideological foundations: it was life of socialism after its death. The turbo-folk model of mass entertainment later spread around post-socialist countries in the Balkans. Typically, turbo-folk became popular in the times of deeper social crisis or only after transition period was more or less over. It happened in Slovenia as well. The New Years Eve programs at Slovene national and commercial TV stations on 31 December 2006 announced shows with Slovene "folk-entertainment" (ethno-pop) stars. Following Plato's observations that novelties in music endanger the whole order within society, destructed "laws" in music are announcing the fall of political "laws" (Plato 1976: 424d - 424e). Does rise of turbo-folk



announce dramatic changes?

In past few years Slovene ethno-pop adopted elements from Serbian turbo-folk. This is the way how nowadays "the subaltern" speak. At my opinion, Slovenia adopted not only Serbian turbo-folk, but its former exclusivist and racist politics. The other side of above-mentioned fascination with Roma music and musicians (Serbian folk festival with brass bands in Guca has become a must for Slovene audience) is publicly expressed racial hatred towards Roma people in Dolenjska region where in October 2006 the Strojan family was expelled from their home by their co-villagers in Ambrus. This happens when the mob get voice. Their shrieking is yet another story to be told. The back side of fascination with the Roma artistic authenticity is deep racial distrust, if not hatred, because they have stolen the most precious valuable from "the whites": (unbridled) enjoyment.

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**Middle Eastern womanhood: Subaltern subjects or postmodern "oriental" citizens?**

Moslem women's practices and experiences are the product of power relationships in a social, gendered milieu, as well as, the result of an unequal position of societies - a consequence of the binary opposition between the East and the West (Ahmed 1992; Ahmed 1991: 58-73; Hatem 1986: 251-273; Kandiyoti 1991: 23-42). In this context, a number of alternative categories of womanhood can be observed as practices of "citizenship". These are adopted, proposed, rejected as a reaction to the colonial encounter, and to Western hegemonic categories, taxonomies and principals. Gender practices in the Middle East seem to constitute a local category of - let's name it - "oriental-Moslem womanhood". This hints at the existence of a subaltern version of womanhood formed in opposition to both Western and male hegemony.<sup>1</sup> A contemporary anthropological analysis, examines such "oriental" womanhood, on the one hand, by developing an understanding of, the socio-historical

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<sup>1</sup> This hypothesis is based on the problématique of Postcolonial Studies. See in particular the texts of Eduard Said, Homi Bhaba and Gayati Spivac (Moore-Gilbert 1997).



In the East, on the other hand, there are women who utilize these arguments adapting them to "Islamic models" (adopting hidjab with the use of different styles of veils, using the rhetoric of modesty, reinterpreting the Qur'an through a female perspective, etc). While western feminism typically portrays these women as reproducing hegemonies through these resistance practices (Delaney 1995: 177-199), the women themselves claim that through these practices, they achieve recognition and inner peace of mind (Ask and Tjomsland 1998). How can we therefore characterize and categorize social subjects as subjected, since they themselves do not experience their condition as such? What criteria for presenting this matter can an anthropologist who wishes to be reflexive use?

Let's take as an example Fatva El Guindi's study (1999). It revolves around an inner perspective. The author not only deconstructs stereotypes and self-evident notions concerning the "veil", she also challenges western analytical tools and categories. In order to deconstruct, for instance, western discrimination of public and private spaces, she accepts this discrimination and elaborates on the Arabic notion of privacy between genders through a language based analysis. This presents an alternative understanding of the public and private spheres and of the attitude of social subjects such as women. She shows that, through the act of veiling, these subjects are able to transfer their "privacy" to non-familial and non-intimate places. Even though this



context, which has produced it and on other, through both local and reflexive hermeneutics<sup>2</sup>. Ethnographic data from different Middle East countries, in addition to, systematic self-experienced fieldwork in the Balkans<sup>3</sup> and Oman<sup>4</sup>, are presented in this paper in order to describe and understand these experiences of womanhood - experiences where women express themselves as subaltern subjects promoting alternative citizenship and experiences, a l'orientale.

### **From "harem" to "veil"**

Whereas the "harem" has primarily been the place where orientalist discourse has been produced since colonial times, the "veil" has always been -and still is- the tip of the orientalist spear. Discourses we encounter in both journalistic and political contexts (from democratic points of view on human rights to feminist points of view), exhibit the hegemonic ways of imposing western observers' stereotypes of, and for, the social subjects of the East (such as the stereotype of women's subjection )<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> I am referring, on the one hand, to the analysis of local meaning through informants' experiences and, on the other, to the reflexive attitude of ethnographers towards their analytical categories and scientific tools (Geertz 1973; Fisher and Abedi 1990; Clifford and Marcus 1986).

<sup>3</sup> I am referring to my long-term fieldwork in the mountain of Greek Thrace which are inhabited by a slavophone Moslem people ( Tsibiridou 2000).

<sup>4</sup> I first conducted fieldwork in Oman formally in 2004. In order to understand these issues, previous ethnographic experiences concerning the place are used systematically (Wikan 1982).

<sup>5</sup> For an extended analysis of the issue see Abu-Lughod 1989: 267-306.



which Moslem women in rural and urban surroundings experience womanhood. In both cases, we would find female practices and experiences "paradoxical" if we assumed a stereotypical view of Islam - especially given the prevailing androcentric ideology. In the case of the marginal minority of Slavophone Muslims in Thrace, local claims and representations of female subordination to men seemed to be refuted by daily practices. These practices were motivated by the bond of mother - daughter - a bond that seemed to persevere despite virilocal kinship patterns.<sup>6</sup> In this social context a woman could, for instance, leave her husband and children -without asking permission- many times during the day in order to visit her mother. This paradox seems to be consistent with a kind of minority-marginal manhood. This derives, on the one hand, from the generalized subordination of men to the elites of other dominant groups in the area (Turkish and Greek speaking people) and, on the other, from the subordination of men to the power of elderly women-who not only control, but virtually monitor relationships between men and women inside Pomak villages. In the case of the Bedouin fishermen of Ras Al Had in the Sultanate of Oman, things are different, since male hegemony is the dominant, undisputable idiom. On first acquaintance, I considered a number of the practices I encountered among Omani women to be the habitus of subjection- practices such as the habit of fully covering

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<sup>6</sup> Installation of the bride to the groom's house after marriage.



anthropologist let the issue lie as an "aporia" (in Derrida's terms), her study offers inspiration in the search for new analytic paths and the formation of an alternative *problématique* about issues such as: female resistance, submission, inequality and hegemony experienced by second class social subjects - namely women.

The above *problématique* does not exclusively concern Moslem women of the Middle East. It is also relevant to other Moslem or non Moslem women in Europe, the Balkans, the Far East, China, Japan, etc., where patriarchal negotiations are still in progress (Kandiyoti 1991). Therein, patriarchal organization, the absence of "the social state" and the presence of autocratic ruling seem to be the factors leading to the submission and permanent re-submissions (during the colonial and post colonial eras - Joseph and Slyomovics 2001) of the weakest social subjects - minorities and women.

### **Negotiating hegemony**

Do submitted, social subjects experience inequality, hegemony, and power practices in the same way, we, women living in the West do? How do socially submitted subjects express, subvert, or surpass the fact of their multiple and regenerated subjection? These questions occupied me during my fieldwork research - which I conducted initially with Slavophone Muslims in Greek Thrace, the so-called Pomaks, and subsequently continued to occupy me during my latest project in Oman. The latter included an investigation of ways in



explained that there is freedom, but, there are also disputes over faith - even in out-of-marriage relationships. Their responses were really revealing: *"Well, what sort of 'freedom' is this when you can't sleep with whoever you want?"* Such discourses, accompanied by mine and other's ethnographic remarks about the primacy of individual privacy in the Omani society (Wikan 1982 and 1984: 635-652), as well as, ethnographic experiences of these women that show them to be, in many cases, neither intimidated nor oppressed -experiences that show them to be women who are cheerful and, let me say, "live well in their skin"- these dispute over-deterministic interpretations about power/subjection and its unique form of reaction as "resistance".

Depending on the social context, the reaction to power policies can be subversive i.e. can be successful in enduring and undermining male hegemony. Such questions are addressed, in Saba Mahmood's study "Feminist Theory, Embodiment, and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival". There, Mahmood suggests using the analytical tool of "agency" not as synonymous to "resistance" - as is the case of the feminist political discourse - but, as potential action in historically located special relations of subjection (Mahmood 2001: 202-236). Agency is signified by social subjects themselves as a condition: "happiness", "purity", "wisdom", "perfection", "immortality". Mahmood's approach is grounded in Butler's insight that gender is the outcome of power



one's face, the warning knock of the guardian at the door meaning that men are approaching. However, the educated women of the village, as well as, Bedouin women of marginal communities showed both self-constraint, and self-esteem with regards to their female image. These subjection practices were experienced and justified by women themselves, either, as acts of "protection" from a vulgar male "who burns like the sun", or, as acts of special "respect" men must declare to the female persona by asking permission to present themselves.

In none of the above or other cases is the act of wearing the "veil", experienced as "imprisonment" or "exclusion"- of the female body (or part of it)- from something external<sup>7</sup> which is worth the trouble, and, of which women must be deprived. On the contrary, the exposure of the female body (permitted by western standards) in men's territory is believed to be an insult, first and foremost, to a woman's privacy. In fact, these subjects' connotation of "freedom" is quite enlightening. "Freedom" is perceived by Omani women not as self-determination based on "free" will, but rather, in terms of "losing control" over impulses. Trying to answer some of their questions regarding premarital sex in my country, I

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<sup>7</sup> In contrast to feminist views of the 1970s, which used western analytical tools and value codes focusing on the significance of the individualized behavior, of sexuality, etc. See for instance in Mernissi 2003 [1975]. The critique of such views mainly concerns the missionary character of the feminist movement (saving the Other's woman), without, however, criticizing the ways in which feminism has produced dominant ideologies of Modern Capitalism, using and forcing Western women to undergo new forms of subjection (Ahmed 1992).



state of the social self's construction is actually revealed. Thus, I would argue that, the emancipation aims of each feminism movement should be redefined in the light of the historically and culturally located notions of "freedom and liberation" and motivated by the particular desires, inspirations and negotiations of the social subjects themselves.<sup>9</sup>

The subversive and alternative character of Moslem womanhood is typically depicted in citizenship negotiations and practices. Citizenship negotiations and practices comprise a particular field of research interest today. The interest in matters of political and civil rights derives from the need to analyze the social relationships dominated by the power policies of the local elites. These elites negotiate their status with globalized power and hegemony forms, which are of concern to and come into contact with specific places (such as, in particular the Middle-East) for specific geopolitical reasons (e.g. control of the area) (Joseph and Slyomovics 2001; Abu-Lughod 1989; Abu-Lughod 1998; Asad 1973). In the frame of late capitalism and given the dominance of a-political thought, the reactions of any kind of subaltern social subjects are clothed in religion with a view to overcoming both old and new social dead-ends, as well as, overcoming any kind of intra- and intercultural pressure and injustice (Kepel 1991). This seems to be the case of both, Islamic

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<sup>9</sup> I explicitly refer to this issue in the reader regarding Moslem women of the East (Tsibiridou 2006).



relationships and is constructed via a repeated performance of actions, rules, habits, etc. In this sense, the agency of social subjects suffering inequality in a lot of cases, comprises in the possibility of undermining heterosexual rules rather than resisting them. Through these insights, we can attempt to interpret female Islamistic practices not only as 'resistance' practices, but also as practices aimed at expanding one's ability to "endure, suffer and tolerate". By studying how shame and modesty practices endure, we are able to fully understand the symbolic procedures through which the spirit and body of women's disciplined self is constructed. The search, therefore, for any emancipation of these women, requires a historically architectural knowledge of this self and the techniques of its construction. In her study, Saba Mahmood expresses surprise at the fact that very little notice has been taken, so far, of the discourses of "shame and modesty" of women in the Middle East.<sup>8</sup> This fact is counter-relevant to the frequency with which these are used on a daily basis by both Islamist and non-Islamist women. Saba Mahmood claims that by paying attention to the ways in which such idiomatic discourses are experienced by social subjects (in Foucault's terms), the

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<sup>8</sup> Mahmood has probably forgotten the extended discussion in the past about the issue of "modesty" triggered by the publication in *American Anthropologist* of R. Antoun's article (1968: 671-697). See also the discussion between Abu Zahra and Antoun. It would be also interesting to examine the significance, which this hegemonic and scientific discourse about modesty acquires when it is adopted by new Islamist women today. Something relevant seems to have happened to the issue of "honour", adopted by male social subjects after their encounter with colonial power (Wikan 1984).



claiming a post in it with a view to improving the conditions of women's "Islamic" reality, constitute some sort of "regression", "resistance" or "progress" with regards to female emancipation and citizenship rights? Such cases are manifestations of limited range in the availability of non-subversive, but undermining movements (Abu-Lughod 1998: 243-269). Not only in the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia (in the context of extreme fundamentalisms), but in more civic states (Egypt, Syria), women resort to Islam in order to claim social and civic rights (which they cannot otherwise claim for in the general frame of the patriarchal family and the autocratic state) (Al-Mughni 1997: 207).

The predominance of religion over the social life of the globalized Moslem community has nowadays become a trope to such a degree that communities, in which traditionally women have had political and social rights, adopt practices that seem to lead to further degrading of the female gender: Indonesia is a typical example of a victim of such globalized attitudes. There, women are losing their civic rights under the pretence and the predominance of a fundamental religious vision brought about by the media as well as by oil emigrants coming back from Saudi Arabia. It is a fact that participation in anti-colonial struggles has contributed to women's emancipation.

This was certainly the case in Indonesia. However, nowadays, in late capitalism, it seems that women in Indonesia have become victims of globalization in the form of the "arabization" and the "westernization" of their



fundamentalism and Islamic feminism (Moghissi 1999; Taboada Leonetti 2004). In the name of the later, Islamist women through "Islamic adoption", fight for female rights within autocratic states and criticize both male, and western hegemony.

Fatemeh Amini, an Iranian religious divorcee and founder of the first religious school for women in 1972 (who nowadays runs the religious Fatameh Zahra school in Teheran) pursues her fight for female civil rights by means of Islamic theology (of which, she claims, women have been deprived just because, so far, there have only been male ulama ):

*"According to Koran, men and women are equal (...). Society needs equally female doctors and engineers as well as Mojtahed women (specialists in religious jurisprudence). Yet, women wishing to acquire this office face a number of obstacles. If there were no such obstacles, we could have specialist women in Islamic legislation, capable of finding solutions to women's problems as well as social problems. We have 250 female students studying at High School and University at the same time. Our lectures last four years and include, apart from theology courses, courses on public health, sociology and environmental studies. Our aim is to promote young women's creativity and enhance their self-confidence" (Kian-Thiebaut 1999: 107).*

In this case, does resorting to religious legislation, and



of the local Egyptian economy to the global capitalist economy) are very similar to that of other subordinate social subjects' subjection policies. By studying "resistance" practices of Bedouin women in Egypt during two different periods of time (during the 1970's and the 1980s) the author attempts to show the ways in which power is adjusted and imposed through new forms on social subjects in changing historical contexts. The ethnographic example given by Abu-Lughod is that of young Bedouin women who become trapped in their husband's hegemony in their pursuit of escaping the power policies of elderly relatives. This new subjection, is executed via the promotion -by the Egyptian state and the media- of an ideal image of romantic love and of the petit bourgeois family model. Therein the policies of adopting a new lifestyle within wider society are negotiated through the management of women's sexuality leading to a situation where control over women is even stricter. Young women's isolation in the neighborhoods of big cities - where alienation prevails - leads them to new resistance practices towards both male and elder hegemony practices. Thus in the frame of patriarchal negotiations, while aiming at achieving some sort of autonomy/self-determination, women are adopting the new Islamic attitude. By resorting to Islamic attire, they are, on the one hand, allowed to escape

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of the dominant as well as resistance or compliance on the part of the dominated. She adopts Foucault's views on the "sneaky ways in which power is imposed and softly carries away the subordinate, who are sometimes aware and other times are not aloud to speak; in any case we are not aloud to speak as ultimate judges about 'a false awareness'".



culture. In this context, in 1991, a new type of "veil" was introduced in Indonesian schools - according to Indonesian press, following the example of France at that time. Lately, by the adoption of the stereotypical and homogenized image of Islam, which identifies the veil with the Arab world, they are proceeding towards the practice of female circumcision (considered to be an Islamic custom). Thus, in some parts of the country, the pursuit of declaring oneself a new "Islamic persona", has led to the performance of this so-called "religious baptism" - female circumcision. In Indonesia (which has the largest Moslem population in the world) - today more than ever - although women enjoy political rights and some ultimately rise to political office, they remain a vulnerable group whose rights are threatened by the ills of globalization. In all likelihood, the route of the female issue in Indonesia will determine the fortune of the other Moslem women worldwide. We must take that into serious consideration (Feillard 1999: 56-57).

### **The regeneration of the power**

Through her penetrating anthropological analysis, Lila Abu-Lughod<sup>10</sup> insinuates that Bedouin women's subjection policies (in the context of her particular ethnographic case and in the context of the submission

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<sup>10</sup> Anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod examines the power mechanisms and the ways in which this power is hegemonically imposed on women, by focusing on the issue of managing their sexuality. The anthropologist uses the idiom of "resistance" as an analytical tool in order not only to pinpoint the different forms of it as forms of resisting power, but also to understand the complexity and the mutation the latter acquires due to hegemony practices, on the part



analytical tool for explaining the experiences of such subordinated subjects/bodies who in the context of constantly changing hegemonic policies and practices: incorporate, resist, submit or subvert power policies through embodied practices. In the light of today's late modernity and capitalism, a traditional anthropological approach seems inadequate for the deconstruction of these bio-power policies. I would argue we, as anthropologists, must include in our approaches the multiple means of communication, technology and knowledge transmission (cinema, television, internet, phone, writing, etc.) which create new ethnoscares (Appadurai 1991: 191-210) of power and counter-power hegemonic practices of different people and places. Feminist studies, cultural studies, post-colonial studies, as well as cultural critique (which originate from within anthropology) recommend not only critique and reflexivity on the issue, but also alternative ways of representing reality through the promotion of local activist's voices giving an arena to display the imagination of subordinate/subjected/subaltern social subjects.

Comprehension and alternative approaches may, therefore, be achieved through combining anthropological approaches with art, literature, and cultural studies. The field of art is an outlet for native imagination (Appadurai 2000: 1-19), which anthropology should take into account, not only, in order to enrich its comprehension, but also to express an alternative to scientific discourse in through cultural



elderly women and other relatives' control and, on the other, they have access to autonomy while exposing themselves to public / non-familiar places without risking criticism.

The reformation of power practices seems to lead to new ways of subjection through practices of resistance. This continuing subjection can be attributed to the stable cultural acceptance of generally negative stigmatizing, and the depreciation of the female sex per se.

The multiple reactions that constitute female experiences (see resistance, submission, subversion, etc) do not appear to refute power and hegemony relationships of men over women. Research has exhibited ideology and ethics, which support domination relationships and serve the interests of authority in changing political-historical contexts, invest in the discourse about "gender modesty" with a view to exercising control on, and promoting self-control in social subjects (Abu-Lughod 1994: 159-172). Ethnographic data has also revealed that the body, and particularly the female body in Muslim societies of the Middle East (in the period from the colonial encounter to today's late modernity), has suffered a lot, and has undergone constant and adjusting hetero- and self-controls (Brenner 1996; 1-25, Ahmed 1992).

### **Alternative approaches**

Bio-power (Foucault 2004) seems then an appropriate



etc.).<sup>11</sup> By making use of indigenous skeptical categories we might avoid reproducing local stereotypical determinisms on areas such as religion and society. We will also probably reduce the impact of the western style scientific authority on analytical categories.

Such approaches give a chance to ordinary social subjects, considered subaltern, not only to express their experiences, but also to create alternative discourses, à l' Oriental, regarding their civil and political rights. In this way women's practices can be conceived and understood not only as "resistance to subjection", but also as "serenity and self-esteem" achievements, or as subversion and protest strategies (MacLeod 1991; Brenner 1996). The field remains open to discussion.

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<sup>11</sup> A typical example is the case of the "spring of the Iranian cinema" (Key 1999).



critique (reflexivity during ethnographic fieldwork and writing, dialogical principles between the ethnographer and his/her informants should replace totalizing scientific narratives; alternative and particular understanding through empathy, living experience, interpretation should substitute objective description of the cultural meaning and practices etc. (Marcus and Fischer 1986).

To conclude, I would like to note the paths, which such alternative understanding of Moslem Oriental womanhood today may follow. We:

- must avoid determinism by adopting reflexivity and by promoting the use of native analytical categories. In each case, we have to situate the issue in the particular socio-historical context.
- can use cultural critique not as a critique "ex cathedra's", but, as one deriving from juxtaposing, contrasting and comparing multiple ethnographic studies, or multiple ethnographic voices (Fisher and Abedi 1990) in order to produce a well rounded understanding.
- can be open to other critical approaches from the field of humanities (see literature, poetry, cultural studies, cinema etc.).
- can restore a dialogue with special local voices which express the skepticism and "imagination" of subaltern social subjects (such as local authors, artists and activists, who adopt a skeptical and reflexive attitude towards their society - see feminists, comic, fringe literature and graffiti authors, cinema producers,



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and more voluminous and important in its contribution to the theoretical debates of the discipline.

As Hermine De Soto & Nora Dudwick (2000) observe, post-socialist societies undergo rapid and profound transformations, a sort of generalized crisis. More specifically, socioeconomic transformations have constituted a subject that has attracted the attention of social scientists since the first years of post-socialism. Concerning South Eastern Europe, and especially countries like Bulgaria, Romania and to a lesser extent Albania, agricultural reforms entered the front stage of anthropological interest (Hann 1994, Hann and the Property Relations Group 2003).<sup>3</sup>

But not only postsocialist societies are in crisis nowadays. Studies of them are taking place in an era when scientific thought in general, and anthropology more specifically, suffer profound criticism (through post-modernism, post-colonial studies, cultural critique, feminist theories, etc). My paper deals with the following question: whether or not, and in which ways the study of the so-called transitional economies in South Eastern Europe can contribute to the renewal of anthropological theory in general, and economic anthropology more

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<sup>3</sup> The paradox is that at this very moment when anthropology was questioning its theoretical orientations and its methodological artillery, becoming more reflexive and turning toward new fields of research such as cities, networks, or "multi-sited ethnography", in most cases, the (western) anthropologists who have done fieldwork in post-communist societies, myself included, have remained faithful to "community study" approaches, exploring the ongoing transformations through the ethnographic study of a village and focusing on property and land restitution reforms. See on this question T. Wolfe (2000).



**Aliki Angelidou**

**Returning to Cooperation: Production,  
Consumption and Identities in Post-socialist  
Rural Bulgaria**

**Introduction**

The end of socialism and the multiple transformations that followed in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union opened new fields of research to anthropology. Of course the ethnographic interest in this area is not that recent, as several social scientists have been doing fieldwork in the region since the interwar period (Halpern & Kideckel 1983). But we can say that Eastern European societies have remained relatively closed to anthropological investigation during the last fifty years due to political divisions related to the Cold War, as well as for reasons specific to the discipline.<sup>1</sup> Only in the last decade have Eastern European societies<sup>2</sup> been "rediscovered" by anthropologists (Kurti 1996) and today we observe the anthropological literature of the region, previously rather hectic and peripheral, becoming more

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<sup>1</sup> It is only since the 1980's that anthropology, returning "back home", has made Europe a systematic field of investigation. Until then, as K. Verdery argues, Europe in general and socialist Romania more specifically, "was not a place a budding anthropologist would choose" for his fieldwork (1996: 5).

<sup>2</sup> In the case of former Yugoslavia, inter-ethnic conflicts made nationalism and ethnicity major fields of study.



transformations promoted by official institutions (international organizations, the state, political parties), anthropological approaches study these changes "from below", from the point of view of the people who do not make the decisions about these transformations but who experience the transition in their everyday life. Anthropology has shown that social transformations are not simply imposed on people as they influence the ongoing changes through the way they view, accept, react to or resist social transformations. What's more, data from investigations of post-socialist societies support the questioning of current economic theories through the analysis of the ethnocentrism of notions such as "production", "property", "privatization" (Hann 2005, Verdery 2003, Verdery & Humphrey 2004) and "free market" (Chevalier 2001, Mandel & Humphrey 2002) as examined in the context of different socio-economic and political systems.

In order to make these ideas more plausible, let us turn to my ethnographic example. In Bulgaria, like in all ex-socialist countries, rural reforms have been some of the first steps in the dissolution of the socialist economy. The restitution of private property, the development of a free market and the establishment of family farming have been promoted by all governments as the sole possible economic model to be pursued. Rural reform was organized around two main axes: first, the dissolution of the socialist collective farms, the so-called TKZS<sup>4</sup> and

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<sup>4</sup> "Trudovo Kooperativno Zemedelsko Stopanstvo", literally labour-cooperative farms.



specifically. In order to answer this question I will use ethnographic data from the ongoing transformations observed in a rural cooperative in a Bulgarian village called Vrabevo.

### **Economic anthropology and social transformations in South Eastern Europe**

As K. Hart and C. Hann note, "economic anthropology has flourished in the last quarter century as a post-modern critique of capitalist civilization" (2006: 21). But the authors also remark that "today many would question the existence or need of an intellectual community of anthropologists addressing the 'economy', a term of some ambiguity in itself" and call for "a renewal of anthropologists' engagement with economy" (2006: 2), one that results in a "meaningful expression so that a notion such as 'the world economy' is not just ethnocentric" (2006: 6).

The question that follows is how the ethnographic data from post-socialist societies contributes to the renewal of economic anthropology? The fall of the Berlin wall may be said to have brought "the market economy" back to the front stage. But anthropology allows the shift from ideological and abstract debates to the study of concrete economic practices, those considered more as "cultural" rather than as "natural" events. In contrast to the numerous studies about transition written by economists or political scientists in the last fifteen years which emphasize the legal and institutional aspects of the



by restructured commercial cooperatives, which in many villages compete with the new private commercial sector.

The villagers' persistence in forming cooperative modes of production cannot but intrigue the anthropologist, for whom it is clear that such developments cannot be fully understood through strictly economic analyses. Notions of "collectivization" and "de-collectivization" do not simply imply processes of change of the economic system in rural areas but also changes in social organization, politics, or ideology. In order to study the social transformations observed in post-socialist Bulgaria, I focus on these new cooperative forms and suggest that they are not merely issues of economic significance.

As C. Humprey (1995) has shown, soviet collective farms used to be for their members, but also for rural households and for the village as a whole, a central and multifunctional point of reference. They controlled not only a large number of productive activities in the villages but also many of the various social, political and ideological operations of the socialist system. They highlighted as their main objective the "collective" satisfaction of the needs of the individuals and of the village. In Bulgaria, under actual conditions of economic shortage, the new cooperatives came to fill not only the economic but also the social and cultural gaps that had been created in the villages after the abolition of the TKZS. The "social" and in some cases "total" character of the institution (following the Maussian maxim "fait social total"), is one of the basic incentives for the villagers to maintain the new cooperatives, especially in



second, the restitution of property and land use rights to their initial (before 1944) owners<sup>5</sup>. In all ex-socialist countries during these reforms, a question arose: who had the right to take the land? Was it the initial owners, even if they did not live in the countryside any more and were unwilling to take on an agricultural occupation? Was it the employees of the agricultural collectives who had been working this land for the last forty years, even though they did not have any previous rights to it? Or was it the new (potential) businessmen who were interested in developing new entrepreneurial agricultural production?

The Bulgarian government opted for the first solution giving as Kaneff (1998b) observes, priority to kinship criteria rather than to a rational entrepreneurial vision of agriculture development. Since then a paradox has been noticed. Although post-socialist governments promoted the model of domestic household agriculture, in many cases the landowners have chosen to maintain or recreate collective forms of organization of the agricultural production. The new cooperatives that have been created are a variety of "hybrid" forms, between the previous socialist-type farms and new private cooperatives, which fight to survive in the highly competitive economic environment. In many cases consumption as well as production is currently managed

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<sup>5</sup> We should note here that in some countries, like Bulgaria, Hungary or Czechoslovakia, farmers never lost their property rights to their land. What they had lost was the right of use. In other countries, like the USSR, the land had been nationalized and peasants lost any kind of rights to their land.



defined themselves as "communists" and considered their village to be a "communist" one. All of this seems strange since the majority of Bulgarian villages have voted for the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), heir of the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) since 1989, and are often considered by politicians and the public in general as being "pro-socialist". What, then, makes Vrabeveni and their neighbors consider Vrabevo a "real" communist village, a communist village par excellence?

Situated at the foot of the Stara Planina or Balkan<sup>6</sup> mountain chain, the physical border between southern and northern Bulgaria, Vrabevo is a compact settlement of around 900 inhabitants. Even before collectivization, Vrabevo used to be one of the biggest and richest villages in the region. Although rather mountainous, it has a lot of arable land. It is also the only village in the region with a high school dating back to 1944. It was in this high school that an elite cadre of the communist party had been educated during the first decades of socialism. Members of this cadre quickly came to occupy high-ranking positions in the party and government hierarchy. These high officials have always supported their village by promoting the local collective farm and important infrastructure works (a specialized high school for handicapped children from all over northern Bulgaria,

<sup>6</sup> The first term is the official Slavic name of the mountain chain. The second is of Ottoman origin and is the one that local people use in their everyday conversations. For an overview of the uses and abuses of the term "balkan" and its derivatives, see Todorova 1997.



villages which continue to characterize themselves as "communist".

Based on ethnographic data collected in such a village in central Bulgaria between 1996 and 2002, I attempt here to connect the insistence of Bulgarian landowners in preserving the collective forms of production and work together with the material and symbolic importance they have for the survival of individuals, rural households and the village community, especially in the first years of the so-called transition. I also try to show the importance of the cooperative modes of production in defining and redefining individual and collective identities in the actual context of instability and crisis.

### **Vrabevo: a "real" communist village**

A few days before my departure for fieldwork in Vrabevo, on a hot summer morning in July, I was sitting in the courtyard of the University of Sofia talking with some Bulgarian scholars and students. When I mentioned Vrabevo someone commented: "*Oh, they are all 'red' (tserveni) there, 'real communists' (istinski komunisti), 'tuff communists' (tvûrdi komunisti). Nothing has changed in this village since 1989*".

These comments struck me instantly because I was interested in observing transformations and was now told that I had chosen a village where no changes have been made since 1989. Later, while visiting other villages and small towns in the area, I often heard such comments about Vrabevo- that it is a "red" village. Vrabeveni also



today to be agriculture and stockbreeding as well as light industry. This is the reason why Vrabevo is among the few villages in the region from which younger people have not fled. Many still work and make their families there. The majority of the inhabitants continue to vote for the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP) and use for their own benefit the political networks they had created with high-ranking officials during socialism.

It should be noted here that not all villages in Bulgaria present a similar image, nor have they in the past. We can go so far as to say that Vrabevo is an extreme example of acceptance of the socialist system, if not of adaptation to it. But I believe that this is what makes it an interesting case study. In settings like Vrabevo we can observe the interrelation and collaboration between local society and centralized power. What's more, the study of such a village allows us to explore the practices and representations that arise from the moment that this "collaboration", to use S. Sampson's terminology (1990), moves from a stage of mutual aid and profit to that of ideology and identity. I consider the case of Vrabevo, without being in any case entirely representative, may help us better understand the ongoing transformations in post-socialist rural Bulgaria and the reactions Bulgarian villagers have exert on them.

### **From *Vzaimopomosht* to *Zora*: the dynamics of an institution**

Among the two production cooperatives created in



big industrial plants etc). Agriculture and stockbreeding continued to be the basic economic resources throughout the socialist period. At the same time, the industrial units built during the last decades of socialism prompted a rural exodus and transformed the village into a pole of attraction and a place for the settlement of workers from the surrounding areas. Thus, Vrabevo continued to flourish during the socialist period and became a model for the surrounding villages.

In an attempt to maintain this privileged condition after the fall of the communist regime and avoid what happened to other Bulgarian villages, these powerful local authorities, with the support of the villagers, achieved an atypical dissolution of the TKZS.<sup>7</sup> In practice they kept all the TKZS capital—land, buildings, animals, machinery, money. On the basis of this united capital they rapidly proceeded in 1992 to establish a new agricultural cooperative, *Zora* (Aurora), with the participation of 1240 household-members. At this stage, a minority of sixty-two households decided to split from the new cooperative in order to create a second cooperative, called *Sdruzhenie* (Union). Only four families preferred to start family farming with the land and livestock they were given through the dissolution. The main economic activities of the population continue

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<sup>7</sup> The incident of the 12th of April 1992, when the women of Vrabevo created a human chain at the entrance of the village in order to prevent the members of the "Liquidation Council" to enter the village and start liquidating the TKZS, is now legendary.



right to their properties and to use their land and received part of the production in the form of goods (*renta*). They continued to cultivate a variety of goods for their individual subsistence. "Mutual aid", "solidarity" and the improvement of the general conditions of life in the village were praised as the primary values between the cooperative's members. This is the reason for the re-naming of the first TKZS to *Vzaimopomosht*, (mutual assistance).

Today *Zora* is a "hybrid" form of cooperative organization. Officially it is a private cooperative in which the owners of capital, in the form of land and money, have decided on its common exploitation. But in practice, the cooperative's direction must combine a new "capitalist spirit" with already known socialist practices and habits. On the one hand, *Zora* must manage the cooperative like a business, which aims at making a profit and must survive international competition without relying on the state for subsidies and other forms of support. On the other hand, *Zora's* direction has to meet the needs of the cooperative members who perceive it not as an enterprise, but as an instrument for survival in a difficult, transitional period similar to the *Vzaimopomosht* of the 1947-1950 period.

To my question, why did Vrabeveni choose to cooperate with each other again after the dissolution of the old TKZS, Angel, an 80-year old pensioner and member of *Zora* replied:

*"We had no other choice. Most of the villagers are old*



Vrabevo after 1989, the one that maintained a structure similar to that of the old TKZS assembled the majority of villagers. In fact, *Zora* was organized on the basis of the first socialist cooperative that had been established in the village right after the Second World War and which combined positive economic and social results for the rural population with relative autonomy from the central power.<sup>8</sup> This first socialist cooperative was created in Vrabevo in November 1947. Although all initiatives for its establishment and the promotion of the cooperative ideal were begun by the local leaders of the communist party, villagers were not directly obliged to participate in this collective form of production and work until 1950. A massive accession to the TKZS started as late as 1950, after systematic pressure was put on the villagers at a local and national level. Seven years later all the arable land of the village was collectivized. Violence was even inflicted upon the villagers who resisted.

Until the early 1950s, the landowners and the landless peasants entered the cooperative, at least officially, by their own will. Many were unwilling to entrust their land to the cooperative. However, after the systematic pressure to do so, exerted either by relatives who had already enrolled or active members of the BCP, they decided to join the cooperative. The cooperative members decided together on the exploitation of the land and worked collectively. They still had individual

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<sup>8</sup> For an analysis of the evolution of the collectivization process in rural Bulgaria, see Meurs, Kouzhouharova and Stoyanova 1999.



the dissolution of the TKZS was their subsistence since they used to receive various agricultural products from the TKZS. The new cooperative seemed a logical solution, as it could continue to provide the villagers with various agricultural goods. As Stoino, a member of the *Zora* administrative board pointed out "*people want renta, because money loses its value from one day to the other and ... it can't be eaten*". The initial aim of *Zora* during the first years of its establishment has been to cover the needs of the local population in basic food products (wheat, corn, oil), in livestock food and *rakiya* (brandy). In this spirit *Zora*, in collaboration with the commercial cooperative of the village, has created a bakery that provides its members with bread at low prices. This emphasis on barter may be effective at present but it also restrains the further monetarization of the local economy as well as the development of an entrepreneurial spirit in *Zora*<sup>10</sup>. These dilemmas trouble the cooperative's administration, which is constantly deliberating between the short-term interests of *Zora*'s members and the long-term entrepreneurial plans that it tries to develop.

The second main productive activity led by *Zora*, on the part of the cooperative's administration as opposed to its members, is the production of special fruits (prunes, cherries, berries and morellos) for exportation, as well as

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<sup>10</sup> For the inflation of bartering practices in post-socialist Bulgaria see also Cellarius 2000.



and cannot work the land. And our young people prefer 'clean' and 'less tiring' jobs in the factories or in the services. No one living in a town seeks to come back to occupy himself with agriculture. And the land is so little, so parceled ... who is going to amuse himself with 20 or 30 decares,<sup>9</sup> without tools, without money, without anything?"

It becomes clear that the majority of the actual owners have neither the interest nor the resources to start an entrepreneurial exploitation of land. Zora on the other hand, preserved the machinery and has invested in new technology, has a relatively specialized staff and has bigger credit possibilities than individual households. This is the reason why the cooperative is considered to be the sole economic organization capable of dealing with the situation. Zora also ensures an income through the provision of some of the goods produced, appreciated most notably by the elder people of the village, as the state pensions are not sufficient for covering their needs in food, heating and medical care. "We have been working all our lives for the state and now this one has abandoned us. Thank god we kept the cooperative (*kooperatsiyata*)!" comments Marin, another pensioner.

Under the current circumstances, even for young people, the main objective is survival, not enrichment. For most villagers, the main problem that appeared after

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<sup>9</sup> A decare is equal to 1/10 of a hectare.



Everybody could become a member of *Zora*, participating with even a small amount of money<sup>11</sup>. What happened in practice is that all the landless villagers entered the cooperative either with a minimal amount of land given to them by the community or with only money most likely received after the liquidation of the TKZS in accordance with their former participation. This structure permitted almost all villagers to have access to the agricultural products of the cooperative, even though they were not landowners. This choice in the structure of *Zora* means that it was not organized as an enterprise seeking to maximize the profit for the landowners. Its main objective was to redistribute the products of the land in a way that could be profitable for the totality of its membership. It was an indirect way to obliterate the economic differences that could have appeared between households due to the restitution of property rights and the private exploitation of the land. But *Zora*, as well as *Sdruzhenie*, was created on the basis of provisional property titles during the process of restitution of land, which in some cases took up to ten years to be completed. After that, and due to new legislative measures voted in by the right wing party, the Union of Democratic Forces (UDF), no landless villagers could participate any longer in any form of cooperative agricultural production, despite protests from most Vrabeveni to the implementation of these measures.

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<sup>11</sup> The minimal participation fee was of 5.000 leva (25 euros) in 1998.



the production of milk for the multinational enterprise DANONE. These activities bring important amounts of money to the cooperative. The development of a closed circle of production for the exploitation of cattle-breeding products (a cheese-dairy and meat factory) was the long-term goal initially promoted by the cooperative's administration. They had planned that the cooperative not only cover the basic nutrition needs of the local population, but also transform into a productive unit, under local control, assuring work and prosperity for the whole village. This aim was facilitated by the fact that, after the dissolution of the TKZS, *Zora* owned the buildings and the machinery of the old industrial units in the village. This material base had been used during the first years of *Zora* in order to launch some new small-scale manufacturers using private capital. But these efforts did not succeed and the factories soon closed. Since its creation the cooperative has been balancing between the goal of profit, like any capitalist enterprise, and a survival strategy in the context of the dissolution of the post-communist economy. The goal of profit, for the most part, has not yet been achieved.

Another characteristic of the new cooperative, at least in the first years after its establishment, was the secondary importance given by its members and by its leadership to land. Although nowadays all *Zora's* members participate in the cooperative with their land, ownership of land was, until recently (1999), not a prerequisite for participation in the cooperative.



offers its members, its employees, as well as the whole village following the model of the old TKZS, which also provided multiple social services. For example, in collaboration with its private partners and the village mayor, it finances the visits of three doctors once a month from the nearby town of Trojan who offer their services, mostly to the elderly who cannot afford to travel to the clinic in Trojan. *Zora* also provides cheap food to the village nursery and the special service (*patronazh*) for the preparation and distribution of cooked dishes to the elderly. The cooperative also financially supports the football team and the folk dancing group, in which the majority of the younger villagers participate. Also, in collaboration with the local authorities, *Zora* finances and organizes several feasts which assemble all the villagers (the Christmas feast in the village center, Easter feast in the village stadium, feast of the patron saint Michael in the church courtyard, and the feast of the prunes in the orchards).

Nevertheless, important tensions and controversies also exist in the cooperative. The most important is that between the members and the administration. Today the cooperative officials are aware that, in contrast to the socialist period, the members of *Zora* exercise real rights over their land. Consensus between members and the administration is crucial: "*we live in a democratic world and if the decisions are not democratic there will be reactions*", commented Stefan, an agronomist of the cooperative in a session of the administration board. This need for consensus creates several dilemmas for the



In all cases, by maintaining part of the goods produced and promoting the priority of the collective, as opposed to individual and family profit, *Zora* has become the most powerful economic institution in the village in the first decade of the transition. On the other hand, due to its structure and organizational principles, the cooperative has maintained the "paternalistic" character typical to socialist collective farms (Verdery 1996). As Radka, my landlord and an active member of *Zora*, pointed out: "*the cooperative is so famous to people because it gives them a lot*". This means that the villagers' interest continues to concentrate on not the property but the use of land<sup>12</sup>. Consequently the new landowners do not consider the cooperative as an entrepreneurial activity in which they invest their newly acquired capital, but more as a substitute to the paternalistic state which retreated after the fall of socialism: the cooperative disengages them from the responsibilities to the land while it "takes care" of them, providing material insurance and a social balance within the local community. At the same time this paternalistic character of the cooperative diminishes the interest and the participation of its members in its development as an alternative production model of the agricultural economy.

The paternalistic character of the cooperative is emphasized by the various social benefits that *Zora* still

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<sup>12</sup> This is in contrast to what happened in other countries, like Hungary, where C. Hann notes a shift in the villagers' interest in production to property after decollectivization (1993).



household production<sup>13</sup>. For this reason, an informal, complementary relationship had been developed between the private households and the collective farms. And although, at an ideological level, importance was given to the TKZSs, in practice the family household remained an important unit of the socialist economy. This led to a relation of "conflicting complementarity", to use G. Creed's expression (1998), between cooperatives and rural households.

Beyond their importance in the national economy, family households have also played an important role in the internal organization of the TKZS. The basic constituent units of each socialist cooperative were not the individual persons but the households. To return to Vrabevo, the first cooperative had been presented by the BCP as a local initiative and organized on the basis of the existing productive units- the rural households. Every household constituted a unit of *Vzaimopomosht* and was represented in the cooperative by one of its members, usually the "head" (the oldest male in the family) who participated in the cooperative with the goods of the entire family, in the form of land, animals and tools. Also, the renta was calculated on the basis of the household. There has been an effort by the socialist government to "combine" new economic policies with forms of organization and production familiar to the peasants in order to achieve change without major conflict. This

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<sup>13</sup> For a discussion of the role of kinship relations in socialist economies see Smollett 1989.



administration concerning the future orientation of the cooperative. More and more disagreements have been observed in recent years between the members and the leadership of *Zora*. The members blame the administration for protecting its personal interests and those of its employees. They also complain about the choices made by the administration which needs to make more of an effort to balance member profit and the entrepreneurial character of the cooperative. This tension leads some of the younger and more educated members to turn to private economic activities and members of the administration to exploit *Zora* for individual gain by using the cooperative's machinery in their private plots for example.

### **Agricultural cooperatives and rural households: a relation of "conflicting complementarity"**

As *Zora* tries to gloss over its internal contradictions, also contradictory is its relation to another important rural production unit: the family household. Actual relationships have their origin in the socialist period in this case as well. Although all socialist states sought to adapt the collective farms to the unique economic factors of the countryside- through the taking over of all the productive activities of the family households and the monetarization and individualization of the production- this aim has never been fully realized in Bulgaria. In most cases, cooperatives and collective farms did not succeed in meeting the production needs formerly met by



It becomes clear that the rural household continues to represent for the villagers an entity with important social and economic functions. The question then is why the households of Vrabevo, instead of choosing to start a family enterprise, preferred to create "an enterprise of families" like *Zora*? As in the socialist period, agricultural households and the cooperative share the productive activities in the village, the only difference being that an inverse relation of interdependence now exists. After dissolution, households typically recovered their tenure rights to land and the family-based agricultural economy was promoted as the sole model of economic development. For political and ideological reasons, the liberal post-socialist governments present the relations between cooperative and private family production as incompatible. And with a series of legislative measures they made the functioning of production cooperatives more difficult. In practice however, family households depend directly for their survival upon the new cooperatives.

Today the rural household faces a difficult socioeconomic situation that fosters cooperation between its members and the combination of various incomes from different economic activities. Members of the family household also work together to exploit part of the land which they do not concede to the cooperative in order to cultivate their own goods for personal use, mainly fruits and vegetables. However, the land exploitation is impossible without the assistance of *Zora*. The families rent machines from *Zora* as they cannot afford to



practice led to a supplementary contradiction: in spite of the gradual individualization of the agricultural production through the cooperative system, the family household preserved its practical and symbolic importance among the rural population.

The paradox is that the post-socialist cooperatives have been organized around the same family principles. After the dissolution of the TKZS, according to legislation since 1991, land had been restituted to its initial owners, many of whom were no longer living. Their daughters and sons have been considered the legal heirs. This meant that many women acquired land for the first time in their lives<sup>14</sup>. However, the family household continued to participate in the new cooperative as a unit and to be represented in the cooperative by a single, usually male, member. Most of the women have consented to the inclusion of all family goods in one account. Of course there have been some cases of disagreement within families around this matter and in two cases women enrolled in *Zora* as individual members<sup>15</sup>. But all the women I spoke with regarding this arrangement reacted to my questions with surprise: "*Since we are a family what else should we do?*", asked 50-year old Milka.

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<sup>14</sup> Before collectivization in the early 1950s, following a patrilineal system of devolution brides used to move to live with their husband's family and presented to their husband or father-in-law some form of property.

<sup>15</sup> The first woman entered with her own land whilst the second with money her husband's family provided her with, as he did not wish to participate in the cooperative.



*Zora* do not coincide with the short-term interests of the households and, for the moment, prevail over these interests. This new relation of "conflicting complementarity" keeps the cooperative in an unstable position and demands the continuing negotiation between *Zora* and the households.

### **Implications of the cooperative in family and household organization**

The family household is still represented vis-à-vis the cooperative as a compact and solidary unit which seeks to ensure its material and symbolic continuity. However, *Zora* is an arena of numerous antagonisms involving various gender and age groups that have recently appeared within families. In the first years after the restitution of land, many quarrels and disputes occurred among relatives, especially between younger and older members of the family, concerning issues connected with land. According to many scholars, such antagonisms and tensions have multiplied in all post-socialist societies (Verdery 1993, Kaneff 1998b). Nevertheless, a number of these quarrels have been attenuated under the organizational scheme of *Zora*.

Since the socialist period young people are much less dependent on their parents since most of them have a salaried job in the secondary or tertiary sector. Thus they have not been directly affected by the fact that decollectivization has in general excluded them from the distribution of land. At the same time, in the case of *Zora*



purchase their own machinery. They are also supplied with seeds and fertilizers by the cooperative which they can buy at lower prices.

On the other hand, the rural household constitutes a unit in which various revenues are concentrated: revenues in cash from paid work (salaries and pensions) as well as revenues in the form of renta from the new cooperative. The reorganization of *Zora* and the creation of new jobs contributed to the avoidance of the mass unemployment now so common in other Bulgarian villages. In Vrabevo there has not been a significant exodus of the population and young people tend to stay in the village, keeping the family household together. But for the moment, salaries and pensions are very low and are not sufficient to cover the needs of its members. Without combined family and cooperative production, their survival would be impossible.

As a consequence private property is currently a necessary but insufficient aspect of the material and symbolic reproduction of the family. Reproduction is assured through the participation of the family household in a wider economic organization. But the fact that the new cooperative has been created by the family households in order to assure them work possibilities and revenues and to continue to cover part of their production needs entails an implicit antagonism between the two institutions, an antinomy in their relation. On the one hand, the cooperative, with its production activities, acts as a balance to the power of the families. On the other hand, the long-term objectives and plans of



the village, leading to the splitting of households and the transmission of the familial property to younger nuclear families. It is interesting to note here that, following a rule of patrilineality, it was usually women -mothers- who would give part of their land to their children in order to participate in *Zora* whilst fathers entered the cooperative with their own land.

In all cases, the land given to the children from their parents, with the sole intention that it be used to enter the cooperative, never exceeded five decares. After 1999, with the new legislation and the acquisition of the official property titles, some parents permanently gave the land to their children. Others took it back and entered the cooperative separately, each spouse with his or her own land. In any case, it has been, and still is, impossible for any young person who wants to start a family agricultural business to do so in Vrabevo. This is perhaps the reason that younger people are more and more critical towards the cooperative and show little interest in participating in it<sup>18</sup>. Their experience in the cooperative is as employees rather than as owners. The new legislation as well as the overall structure of the cooperative makes younger people more dependent on elders who have access to the economic and political power of the village.

The cooperative is a site of still other tensions due to the parceling of land since the new legislation of 1991. With the restitution of land to its initial owners and their

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<sup>18</sup> It is noteworthy that in the administrative board of *Zora* no member is less than 55 years old.



the participation to the cooperative does favor the younger generation in the transmission of goods. In the first years of the transition many parents who had married children decided to concede to them a small part of their land so that the children could participate as a separate household in *Zora*. Until the 1950s, when peasants lost their rights to transmit their land to their children, the practice of such *in vivo* devolution had become very rare in the village. Many sons had to wait for the death of their fathers in order to split and share their fathers' property.

Nowadays, families adopt the *in vivo* devolution in order to obtain some goods from the cooperative, which are scarce. Every household-member of *Zora* has a right to 200 acres<sup>16</sup> of arable land in a well-irrigated place near the village belonging to the cooperative. These pieces of land are used as gardens cultivated by the families in order to satisfy their own needs for fruits and vegetables or the needs of their children or other relatives who live in towns in other parts of Bulgaria. Every household also has the right to produce or receive from the cooperative 75 liters of *rakiya* yearly<sup>17</sup>. By splitting into two or three households, families multiply the quantity of this highly demanded drink as well as the valuable arable land. As a consequence there has been a change in social practices. The *in vivo* devolution has appeared for the first time in

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<sup>16</sup> One acre is 1/10 of a decare.

<sup>17</sup> *Rakiya*, in addition to its everyday use, has a highly symbolic value since it is consumed during all kind of festivities and ceremonies of the local community.



Above all, those most favored by the new cooperative are the elder Vrabeveni. Although the vast majority are unable to work their land, they achieve, through collective exploitation, something much more important than their simple subsistence. They maintain the power in the village, if not also in their own households. Through their active support of the cooperative and the collaboration with the political authorities of Vrabevo, they control the village through the decisions they are looked to make. In contrast to the general tendencies that are observed in post-socialist countries, where the state retreated and turned against the socially weaker members of the society (such as women, the elderly and ethnic or other minorities)<sup>22</sup>, in the case of Vrabevo, due to the cooperative, these factions of the population maintained a relatively favored place that they had acquired during socialism.

### **The consumer cooperative and consumption practices as a field of new antagonisms**

#### *The consumer and credit cooperative*

Today production is not a unique activity organized on a

<sup>22</sup> For the ethnic divisions created by post-socialist land restitution see Kaneff 1998b.

<sup>23</sup> Village cooperatives have a long tradition in Bulgaria, beginning in the first part of the 20th century, and used to be the symbol of local organization and development in the countryside. These first cooperative forms served as a base for the implementation of the soviet-style collectivization in the Bulgarian rural sector after World War II. By that time they had been forced to change their structure radically. They discontinued their credit activities and specialized in commercial goals and in the confection of food products.



heirs, women and men alike, the already divided land has been further parceled out<sup>19</sup>. So even if, officially, the structure of *Zora* favored the division of land, in practice the land remained united. That allows for a mechanized exploitation and supposedly diminishes the quarrels between relatives and villagers.

At the same time, *Zora* is more enthusiastically supported by some villagers who get important advantages from it. The women are one social category that has been favored by the existence of the cooperative. The female population of the village has jobs outside the household, mostly in manufacturing, the service industry and the shops in the village. As the cooperative and its affiliated industries were maintained, women were not affected by massive unemployment, as was the case in many other post-socialist countries<sup>20</sup>. At the same time they have less work in family fields since the cooperative covers a big part of this work, and enjoy more free time to spend with their children and in the village public affairs<sup>21</sup>. Thanks to *Zora*, women are able to combine an independent position with the unity and cohesion of their families, combination that is threatened in many other villages by the massive emigration of women to West European countries.

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<sup>19</sup> For the parceling of land in pre and post-socialist Bulgaria, see Creed 1998 and Kaneff 1998a.

<sup>20</sup> For the consequences suffered by women after the collapse of the socialist economy and the welfare state in all ex-socialist countries see De Soto & Panzig 1995, Verdery 1996, Pine 1998, 2002, Gal and Kligman 2000.

<sup>21</sup> This is the reason why very few women, especially among the younger generation, are ready to support their husbands in private agricultural enterprises.



predecessor, the socialist consumer cooperative, had in the past. The cooperative also buys medical plants from the villagers that it sells to the "Central Union of Cooperatives" (*Tsentralen Kooperativen Suiuz*). It processes the milk it buys from the family households on a daily basis and sells it to a dairy farm in the neighboring village of Apriltsi. Through all of these activities, *Vzaimopomosht* has become one of the principal commercial actors in the village.

As mentioned above, together with *Zora*, *Vzaimopomosht* created a bakery. During socialism, the commercial cooperative provided the villagers with bread imported from nearby towns. Meanwhile, it possessed a factory that produced and exported sweets, cakes and the traditional *bozha* drink to all the villages of the region. In the first years after socialism, the plans were to enlarge its productive activities and export bread and cakes in the region again. However, this goal has not been realized. It should be mentioned that these productive activities are of primary importance to the cooperative's director who privileges the productive over the commercial role of the cooperative and sees the cooperative's future as part of the industrial sector. So as paradoxical as it may seem, in the case of *Vzaimopomosht*, as is the case with *Zora*, priority is given to industrial development, which is seen to better secure jobs and prosperity for the villagers in the long term.

Finally, the PK functions like a local bank, offering low-rate loans and relatively high interests. This bank activity is restricted to the cooperative's members. Credit is often



collective basis in Vrabevo. As in other villages in Bulgaria, the village "commercial cooperative society" (*potrebitelna kooperatsiya* - PK), which existed during socialism was reformed in 1991. It is considered to be the direct heir of the initial village cooperative founded in 1907 and was given the name of this first cooperative, *Vzaimopomosht*<sup>23</sup>. In 2002 *Vzaimopomosht* fused with *Zora* and the new cooperative is now a large enterprise that controls an important part of the production, commercial and credit activities in the village.

*Vzaimopomosht* numbered 485 members before its fusion with *Zora*. Since the fall of socialism, neither its direction nor its employees has changed. The new cooperative has three main areas of activity. It owns and manages the eight cooperative shops in the village which provide food products and other basic commodities, such as utensils, clothes, tools and light machinery. *Vzaimopomosht* also owns the village restaurant, cafe and sweetshop which it rents to private entrepreneurs. The cooperative also owns the village distillery (*kazan*) where all villagers can make their *rakiya*<sup>24</sup>. Through these services the PK continues to function as its

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<sup>24</sup> The possession of alembics (distillery apparatuses) for private production of *rakiya* is prohibited although many illegal distilleries exist in village warehouses.



imports products that do not bring a big profit and which the private shops have no interest in supplying. At the same time, in order to avoid intermediates and to keep the prices low, the director contacts the different enterprises themselves in order to buy the products, continuing to use socialist commercial networks. Like *Zora*, the PK also sponsors, together with other village enterprises, the feasts and other local sports and cultural events.

*Vzaimopomosht* has charged itself with maintaining the continuity of the village cooperative ethic, which began in the early 20th century, as well as with helping the poorest villagers by providing cheap products and credit. This vision is widely shared by the villagers, especially the older ones. Mostly they appreciate that the cooperative defends a social and "moral" vision and has not only profit-oriented intentions.

At the same time, competition today pushes the cooperative to change much of the perspective it inherited from the socialist period. During the first years of the transition, private shops were more expensive and more furnished than the cooperative ones. Today, private stores have three advantages compared to *Vzaimopomosht* - they sell at lower prices, pay more attention to their clients and offer a wider variety of articles. During the socialist period, shops followed the production rhythm of the factories and were open few hours per day. Nowadays, it is not production that dictates the hours of consumption. Private shops are open all day, as well as on weekends. *Vzaimopomosht's*



not sought for professional endeavors but to help members cope with financial difficulties they may have begun to face in the past few years, such as those related to health problems, for example. These are short-term loans for consumption and not for investments or entrepreneurial projects. With such a multitude of roles and activities, the consumer cooperative complements, in a way, *Zora's* activities and plays a major role in the village economy.

### *Role and significances of the new cooperative*

Among all the activities of *Vzaimopomosht*, those that have the largest impact in the village economy are commercial. *Vzaimopomosht* operates like a "regulator" of the local market. "We are the ones who make the prices in the village. The private shops try to sell even some *stotinki* (centimes) cheaper than the cooperative" explains *Iuofka*, *Vzaimopomosht's* president. She argues that by preventing the private merchants from "abusing" people for profit, *Vzaimopomosht* functions like a "protection net" (*proteksiona mreza*), especially for the most vulnerable villagers, such as pensioners, who face financial difficulties and cannot travel to the big cities to shop.

According to the director of *Vzaimopomosht*, the essential role that the commercial cooperatives will have to play in the future is to facilitate concurrence between the different commercial actors found in small localities in Bulgaria. Under this principle, *Vzaimo pomosht*



*Vzaimopomosht* is accused of having too many employees, which contributes to its dysfunction. So the cooperative of consumption faces the same contradictions as the agricultural cooperative. It also balances divergent interests, which make it vulnerable and at the same time indispensable for a great number of villagers, endangering its further operation.

### *Consuming practices as a field of antagonisms in the village*

As with production, various conflicts and antagonisms between different categories of social actors also arise through consumption. The ideological and political polarization of the village population becomes manifest through consumption practices. As it can be seen in the case of other postsocialist countries (Humphrey 2002), it is interesting to see how consumption practices reflect new social identities in Bulgaria. In Vrabevo, elderly people, the majority of whom support the BSP, approve of the organizational principles of *Vzaimopomosht*. They despise the initial motivation of profit-oriented shops and often attribute to private merchants a number of negative characteristics, such as "foxy" (*hitri*), "dirty" (literally as well as figuratively) (*mrûsni*), "bad landlords" (*loshi domakini*) and "people one cannot trust" (*nechestni*). The same negative characteristics are often attributed to the supporters of the UDF, the principal political opponent of the BSP at the time of my fieldwork. In many cases, the first villagers to become private



direction has been obliged to change the hours of its stores in spite of the will of its employees who were used to working less. It also tries to modernize its stocks and offer better quality and variety of goods in order to attract its clientele, preoccupations which were of minor importance during socialism.

Villagers also complain that *Vzaimopomosht* is not capable of dealing with the new consumer needs of the population (products coming from abroad, different brands, general interest in variety, etc.) as private shops are. For the moment, *Vzaimopomosht* has great difficulty keeping up with the dynamism of private shops and consequently loses business, especially from its younger clients. Older people complain that *Vzaimopomosht* has become too expensive for them and they cannot afford to buy from it, although they remain ideologically committed to the cooperative. They find themselves torn between their ideals and the reality of their poor pensions.

*"If the private shops sell cheaper it is because they have the biggest margins: they can declare less stock and pay less in taxes, this is illegal competition with the PK which cannot cheat like they do"*

remarks Stefan, a 67-year old pensioner.

Older persons insist that the cooperative could sell at lower prices but it prefers to make profits for its members, which contradicts its social character and its role as protector of the interests of the entire village. Like Zora,



older generations. They approve the fact that the PK still collaborates with Bulgarian enterprises whilst they criticize the private shops that sell mostly imported products.

But it is in the field of consumption that younger villagers express, in a much more deliberate way than in the field of production, their reaction to and dissociation from the socialist past. They are much more open to all the new imported products and feel frustrated because they usually do not have the money to buy them:

*"During socialism, we had money but shops were empty, there was nothing to buy. Today, they are full but we have no money to buy anything. The result is the same!"* complains 34 years old Stanimit.

Young people also appreciate the variety of products offered nowadays and the possibility to make choices:

*"Before, in every house of the village one would enter all was the same, the same furniture, the same casseroles, the same plates and glasses ... I'm glad it is not the case any more"* comments Ivanka, a 29 year old woman.

Younger people also have a different attitude towards the work and expense that goes into production and for this reason are more attracted to the ready-made products. They believe that production is becoming more and more expensive and not worth it:



merchants were part of this political opposition. They are also accused of "cheating", of seeking easy gains and of being people who lack morality in their professional as well as in their private lives. This political rivalry was very intense during the first years of the new village market, when older people systematically avoided private shops. It has since diminished somewhat.

There exists yet another kind of antagonism, one between younger and older villagers, a cleavage which is expressed by the different practices and representations associated with consumption. Not only because of their low income, but also because of ideological reasons related to communism, older villagers are hostile towards consumption practices and avoid shopping as much as possible. They prefer to cultivate their gardens even though many agricultural products can be found in the market. They justify this preference for domestic production by pointing out their low incomes but also by arguing that the quality of the products that are sold in the market is very bad. Many older villagers also point out, in a negative manner, the fact that most products in the shops are imported. They feel that foreign stocks are "invading" the Bulgarian market and for this reason do not buy foreign products. They argue that the same products can be produced in Bulgaria: "*We used to have our own pastry factory in the village. After the regime changed we started importing cakes and our industry has collapsed!*" states Mara, a 67 year old pensioner. The idea of local and national self-sufficiency, part of the official socialist discourse, still influences the preferences of the



practices and the mentalities of the production sector, younger villagers adopt a new lifestyle vis-à-vis their consumption practices. And if the local production is still in the hands of cooperative firms, trade is expanding in rapid ways due to private initiatives. It is one of the few ways that younger villagers can negotiate their emancipation from the models imposed by their elders today and begin to introduce a stable, private commercial sector which might transform the profile of the village in an accelerated way.

### **Cooperatives and power: the political dimensions of an economic institution**

The implications of the existence of cooperative forms of production and commerce have not only economic but political dimensions as well. Let us return again to Zóra. Its administration board consists primarily of older people who are also active members of the local branch of the socialist party. These are the people who, due to the high level of education they received from the high school of Vravevo, often left the village in the early 1950s in order to join the army and other services of the new regime. After their pension, most of them returned to the village or commuted between an apartment in Sofia and Vravevo. Other "militants" of the party had remained in the village and occupied important economic, political and cultural offices. During the socialist period, the powerful local leadership could easily mobilize villagers



*"it is not worth it to make a cake at home" explains Sûbka, a young woman. "It is cheaper to buy it in the pastry-shop. If you count the ingredients, the effort and the time spent to make it, it is better to buy it ready-made".*

Younger villagers prefer imported commodities, believing that in most cases western products are of better quality, have a longer life and have a better aesthetic. This explains why alternative modes of commerce in Bulgarian villages have spread in recent years, such as second-hand clothes shops (*vtora upotreba*) and second-hand cars coming from Western Europe. As villagers cannot afford to buy new western products they turn to these options, acquiring the prestige such products imply with their modest finances. In contrast, according to older people, such luxury items and expenses are indicative of "superficiality" and the lack of ideals and values.

In the same spirit of reaction to and differing from their parents, the younger villagers identify the cooperative's café with communism and prefer other newly created private places for entertainment. Moreover, because it is impossible for young people to start their own agricultural businesses, some among them attempt to engage in small commerce in the village, usually with the aid of their parents. The commercial sector has become the sole possible domain for the younger villagers to develop a private initiative. Unable to affect the



its obligations and the direct control of economic activities in the rural sector, rural reform has been the object of many political conflicts between the newly formed parties in Bulgaria. As Creed notes, according to the members of the UDF<sup>26</sup>, the BSP continues to have important support in the countryside because it continues to control the economic life of the villages through the cooperatives. By destroying the agricultural productive farms, UDF tried to undermine the economic bases of its political opponent (Creed 1995). Ironically even the supporters of the UDF, after the restitution of property rights to land, retreated from the "red" cooperatives in order to create other forms of cooperative organization of production. During the first years of transition it was very common for Bulgarian villages to have at least two cooperatives, the "communist" and the "bleu" one<sup>27</sup>.

In Vrabevo, *Sdruzhenie* was the second production cooperative founded. It was created in reaction to Zora by the villagers who wanted to continue to work their land collectively but in a way that "*has nothing to do with the old TKZS*", as Hristo first president of *Sdruzhenie* explains. Its members were mostly the heirs of the richest families in the village and supporters of the UDF. In many cases their fathers resisted the collectivization, were named by local communist authorities "*kulatsi*" or

<sup>26</sup> The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) stayed in power between 1991 and 1992 as well as between 1997 and 2001, when it voted in measures against the agricultural cooperatives.

<sup>27</sup> See also the analysis by D. Kaneff of the cleavages expressed through the creation of different cooperatives after 1990 in another Bulgarian village, Talpa (1996a).



and present their own interests as if they were popular "initiatives" (*initsiativi*) to high-ranking officials in Sofia. These high-ranking officials, who often had kinship affiliations with Vrabeveni and were attached to their native village, would see to satisfying local demands. In such ways these members of the local and national elite played a major role in the development of the village over the last 30 years<sup>25</sup>.

After the end of socialism, taking advantage of the withdrawal of the state from many local issues, local authorities tried through the creation of the cooperative to strengthen their local "authority", as their political opponents call it, or their local "autonomy", as they themselves call it. This goal entailed the return to a situation well known in the area in the early 1950s, when communist power had not yet been consolidated and local political and economic authorities enjoyed great autonomy (Meurs, Kouzouharova and Stoyanova 1999). Undeniably, local autonomy has been strengthened during the last fifteen years. Nevertheless, it has been followed by two new fields of controversies related to the question of cooperatives.

First, although the state is undoubtedly retreating from

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<sup>25</sup> For similar relations of interdependence between villagers and urban state officials in socialist Bulgaria see Kaneff 1996b.

<sup>26</sup> The Union of Democratic Forces (UDF) stayed in power between 1991 and 1992 as well as between 1997 and 2001, when it voted in measures against the agricultural cooperatives.

<sup>27</sup> See also the analysis by D. Kaneff of the cleavages expressed through the creation of different cooperatives after 1990 in another Bulgarian village, Talpa (1996a).



two different models of agricultural production and development in the village. What separates their members are political and ideological differences. Indicative of the economic instability of the moment was the fact that *Sdruzhenie* did not survive under the competitive environment of the post-socialist era. In 1999 it was dissolved and most of its members entered Zora, which at the same moment changed its status to conform to the new legislation voted in by UDF. From that moment Zora has become a cooperative of production where only landowners can participate.

The antagonism on the local level between the two main political parties during the first years of transition has been expressed in another way as well. Today, the local political leadership can no longer search for support in the central administration where there are no more political allies, as was the case during socialism. The state now manages not only public finances but also the funds and external aid given to Bulgaria by various foreign donors, essentially the programs of the EU and other international organizations. Communities like Vrabevo are systematically excluded from these funds, because of their political identity. The local authorities are now looking for advice and partnerships and promote wider networks of economic collaboration with partners sharing the same political ideas.

If Zora succeeded in finding capital in order to start industrial production during the first years after socialism, this was due to the personal relations (*vrûzki*) between members of the local authorities and big entrepreneurs,



"enemies of the people" and their goods were confiscated from the TKZS in 1957. Some of them left the village whilst others started working at the TKZS. Hristo for example, the initiator of *Sdruzhenie*, is the son of one of the village's richest peasants. Hristo founded the UDF branch in the village in the early 1990s as well.

Most of *Sdruzhenie's* members possess more land and more animals than the members of Zóra. They would often emphasize the fact that they are now owners of the land and must make a profit from it, focusing on "property" rather than "production" as the main value for them. But in practice they also consider that "*nowadays, it is impossible to work on private the land*" as Petúr, a member of *Sdruzhenie*, says. The "bleu" cooperative was also organized on the basis of the family household. Its unique activity was the collective work of the land for producing cereals (wheat and corn) and forage for the animals. For the cultivation of the fields all household-members leased in common machines from the local branch of the national MTS (Machines and Tractors Station), whilst the members of the household, with the help of other relatives, did the harvesting. Each family kept the part of the production which was necessary for its subsistence and sold the rest to the market with the help of *Sdruzhenie* for a supplementary income. "*The gain is not important but our purpose is to help each other*", Hristo comments.

It becomes clear that the two cooperatives do not differ that much in the nature of their activities nor in their relationship to rural households. They do not represent



but "remained a symbol of the village itself" (Creed 1995: 32).

This is the case in Vrabevo where pre-socialist *Vzaimopomosht* as well as contemporary Zóra are viewed by the villagers as a local institution, as the institution par excellence of the village. They both express and materialize a series of values such as "mutual help" (*vzaimopomosht*), "solidarity" (*solidarnost*), "equality" (*ravenstvo*), "unity" (*edinstvo*) and promote the collective vis-à-vis individual interest, values through which the local individual and collective identities has been formed. Although Vrabeveni consider these values as essentially "communist", we cannot consider them as simply that. They express a communal and cooperative practice which has been characteristic of the Bulgarian rural world since the beginning of the 20th century (Creed 1998, Lampe 1986) and which later became part of the official ideology of the socialist state in order to support its program of collectivization of the countryside according to the soviet model.

In addition, in cases like Vrabevo, the cooperative represents for everyone the "success" of the village and the prestige of its inhabitants "*Vrabevo was distinguished due to its TKZS before, it is still distinguished due to Zora today*" notes bai-Boris, one of the initiators of Zora. As already mentioned, Vrabevo has been a relatively wealthy "model village" (*obraztsovo selo*) for the last forty years. Its cooperative has been one of the main sources of this success as well as the material expression of the values that are related to this success. Also, the



all previously members of the communist nomenclature. It is interesting to mention here that the businessmen who came to invest in Vrabevo had been high officials of the socialist regime. They were involved in important international relations and had access to capital due to key positions in state services they had held during the socialist period, positions which entailed commercial relations with countries within and outside the COMECON pact. These new entrepreneurs search to support villages like Vrabevo which share their political views. It becomes obvious though that beyond their socio-economic role, new cooperatives form an integral part of the political antagonisms that have occurred since the restoration of a parliamentary democracy and multiparty system in post-socialist Bulgaria.

### **Local cooperatives and identity**

If the cooperative model continues to be considered by many Vrabeveni as the most suitable and effective mode of agricultural production, this has not only to do with practical reasons. During the socialist period, and in contrast with the official discourse and program, rural cooperatives contributed to the formation of local identity and the maintenance of the unity of the local community. G. Creed notes that, in the case of Bulgaria, cooperatives preserved for the members of the rural community a meaning different than that given by the official power and were "never completely conceptualized by villagers as a local arm of the state agricultural system"



their labor and capital, as it has ensured for them the best balance between the dangers and the profits resulting from the opening of the market economy.

But if such collective modes of work and production have maintained their socio-economic and ideological importance, this importance is challenged anew as the dynamics of transition lead to new models and representations. The post-socialist cooperatives are still complex and fragile, combining the interests of multiple social groups and balancing between different economic models. Although they found solutions to the everyday problems of the villagers, they will have to prove their viability in the years to come, once the socio-economic situation becomes stable and the Bulgarian economy fully enters the global economy. In Vrabevo for example, another production enterprise, a private pharmaceutical industry, has begun to take the leading economic role in the village over the past few years. Employing a large number of the villagers, working with European standards and producing for export, this new productive unit challenges the role of the local cooperatives and redefines the representations and practices of the villagers.

In any case, the anthropological approach underlines the role of local actors in contemporary transformations, those who do not just passively receive decisions "from above". On the contrary, they are acting subjects who participate in the configuration of the actual transformations through the way they conceive of, accept, reject or resist such transformations. If, finally, Vrabeveni accepted the communist ideal of collective



cooperative, emphasizing the mutual goals and the common responsibilities, translated the individual interest and success to a collective one and became in this way the point of intersection between individual and collective identities. Now that economic collapse and demographic crisis are accompanied by an intensive ideological contest, much more is at stake in the work of the cooperative than the economic prosperity of the village and its inhabitants. Through the cooperative Vrabevo presents itself as a powerful and compact entity, today as in the past, assuring the continuity of the individual and collective identities.

### **Conclusions**

The example of Vrabevo shows that rural decollectivization in Bulgaria has not been a voluntary process approved by villagers but a procedure imposed by post-socialist governments in their effort to eliminate any economic forms related to the socialist system of production and social affairs. During the first years of the transition, under conditions of great uncertainty, local actors, most of them disconnected from land, have responded, opting for a cooperative mode of production. This preference for the cooperatives shows the necessity for an intermediary solution, however impermanent, at this particular moment of opening to the free market- a time which implies more freedom and more opportunities but also more risks. Rural people have considered cooperatives as the most rational solution for exploiting



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organization of production in the past, it is because they had succeeded in aligning it with their own practices and values. And if today they support their village cooperative and the cooperative ideal in general, this is because, through *Zora*, they try to cope with the new economic, political and ideological conditions, adapting them to local needs and values. These hybrid responses of the villagers demonstrate their effort to appropriate the new developments but also to assure continuity, through change, in their way of living, thinking and defining themselves during a period of great uncertainty and destabilization.

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**Identity, religion and democracy. The Pomak case**

One of the main objectives of this work is to analyze the fundamental trends in the present-day identity of the Bulgarian Muslims or Pomaks<sup>1</sup>, which took shape in the years following 1989 (during what has been referred to as the democratic period of the country's development). This community is considered a religious minority in Bulgaria. The name "Pomaks" is one of the numerous appellations and self-appellations of the group, which became public in the second half of the 19-th century during the Bulgarian National Revival Period" (Georgieva 1998: 286). The Pomaks are an Islamized local mountainous population, living in compact villages in the Rhodope Mountains and speaking one of the most archaic and beautiful Bulgarian dialects. Local variants of the same dialect are used by the Pomaks in Albania, Macedonia and Greece. Linguists have not only proved this fact; but it is also realized by the Pomaks themselves: "*Bulgarian is our mother tongue*"<sup>2</sup>; "*We speak a bit Rum (Greek), a bit Turkish and all the rest is Bulgarian*"<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup>The name "Pomaks" is used in the paper because of the fact that it had already achieved public character and it is more familiar to the international anthropological community. In Bulgaria these people are considered Bulgarians professing Islam and that is why they are referred to as Bulgarian Muslims.

<sup>2</sup>Informant Bedria Tolia, 22 years old, village of Goliamo Ostreni, Eastern Albania. Recorded by Goran Blagoev, September 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Informant F.A. (a woman who preferred to be anonymous), about 55 years old, town of Xanti, August 2001.



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not been the lifestyle Islam, traditional for the country, but the canonic Islam of the Arabic countries.

A salient feature of the identity of this Islamic community in the Balkans, is that it is not based *a priori* on the ethnic principle - a fact not acknowledged by the five Balkan states (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Greece, Turkey and Albania) where Pomaks are now living (Konstantinov 1993: 68). Each one of them following an unwritten rule takes an interest solely in its own minority and not in the Pomaks living beyond its frontiers. The Pomak communities in these countries do not have their own self-awareness of being a part of a common integral whole, despite the existing awareness of a community and a certain kinship of the populations on both sides of the Bulgarian - Greek frontier. This has been linked with the well-known Muslim postulate, according to which "There are no nationalities in the realm of Islam". In this sense, the Pomaks are no exception to the rest of the ethnic groups professing Islam, which in the specific formulation of their identity, first of all emphasizes their confessional affiliation, and only after that their national affiliation (Blagoev 1992: 87).

For a number of historical, political and ideological causes, the community of Pomaks in Bulgaria is characterized by great differentiation (Karagiannis 1997), while the concept of "Pomak identity" is fairly relative and full of heterogeneous contents. The policy of the national Bulgarian state after 1912, which is characterized by a series of forceful renamings and forceful relocations, has been the key catalyst of the



According to the famous Carnegie Endowment book published in 1914, the Pomaks are "Bulgarian mountainous population Islamized by the Turks centuries ago". A number of studies have been devoted to the problem of the Islamization of the Pomaks in Bulgaria in 16th - 19th centuries. Initially, it was believed that they were forced into Islamization, but gradually this thesis was partially or fully rejected and the belief became established of their changing their faith voluntarily, mostly because of economic reasons (Zhelyzkova 1990). The change of faith lent negative connotations to the name "Pomak", attributing a historic "guilt" to the members of the group. The pejorative meaning of the appellation is evident in a number of folk etymologies: according to Bulgarian Christians, it is a derivative of "*povlyakal se*" ("dragging") after the foreign faith, while according to the members of the community, "Pomak" means someone who had been "*pomachen*" ("tortured") to change his faith. In this way they have been trying to excuse themselves and "their own historical betrayal". Due to all of all these reasons, the appellation "Pomak" is fairly often assumed to be scornful. As a result, a great part of the representatives of the group do not accept to be called "Pomaks" by people who do not belong to their community, although they themselves describe their songs, customs, etc as Pomak.

This wavering of the group appellation presupposes a search for a new representative identity and a new ethnonyme. Some of the members of the group have found this new identity in religion. Moreover, this has



given to them during their renaming and choose such names for their children. Although in most cases, these names are used only outside the confines of the local community, i.e. they are out-group names, according to the classification of Konstantinov and Alhaug. Great portions of these people resettle in towns and cities, where they manage to keep a kind of dual identity. They maintain their contacts with their relatives in the villages and go there to celebrate religious holidays and observe certain norms of behavior, whereas in the towns they present themselves by their Bulgarian names and adopt quite a different model of behavior, even often trying to conceal their origins (Georgieva 1998: 302).

Some of them adopt Christianity to finally reaffirm their integration with Bulgarians. It is not accidental that the beginning of such conversions has been associated with the early years of transition to democracy; as this would have been inconceivable in the totalitarian period. During that time a great number of Bulgarians not baptized under communism also adopted the holy baptism. Anthropologists note a kind of boom of baptisms and church weddings during the period. Unlike the Bulgarian Christians, the Pomaks adopt baptism in groups rather than personally (most often a score of young families from one village adopt baptism). The new converts need that newly established community to more successfully withstand their positions in their traditional environment. Very frequently the conversion is disapproved of by the parents and the elderly as a whole and is considered to be defection from the righteous faith.



changes in the group's identity. This policy has generally contributed to the enhanced traditional differentiation of the Pomaks whereby they are set apart from both the Bulgarian Christians and the Turks. Traditionally, the community has been assumed to be a buffer between the basic ethnic group - the Bulgarians, and the greatest Muslim minority in the country - the Turks. What the group lacks are those indisputable markers like language, faith, and names, which could provide the objective prerequisites for the formation of its identity. For all these reasons, the study of the processes taking place in the formation and the changes in the identity of this group have been of special interest to anthropologists. The *sui generis* inferiority complex, engendered by the topic of "betrayal", the violence perpetrated on the part of the state, the marginalization of the group and the traditionally rural lifestyle (which it has preserved unlike the majority of Bulgarians who settled in towns and cities in the period following collectivization in agriculture) determine the emergence of compensatory mechanisms, specific for the community and related to the building of the group's own historical memory of origin and religious affiliation.

To date there are a few basic trends in the representative identity of the Pomaks in Bulgaria. The overwhelming majority of them strive to become integrated with the Bulgarians along the lines of common language and common traditional culture, which is apparent despite the powerful impact of Islam. These people officially keep their Bulgarian names that were



earlier; which includes Bulgarian Christians murdered by the Turks because they opposed Islamization. Nun Hristina makes use of a mythological personage, widely popular to this day: the maiden who jumped off the rocks not to betray her faith to the Turks. Hristina sets a date to honor this particular maiden like the other Christian saints; although this personage has not been officially canonized by the church nor has been at least the object of popular pilgrimage. The attitude to Nun Hristina on the part of the most extreme representatives of the Pomak community does not differ in any way from the general attitude to the new converts; at times there is particularly strong rejection as she is often declared to be a Gypsy rather than a Pomak and stories are often told about her being a woman of frivolous behavior in the past. In this case, what is particularly indicative is the use of two traditional markers of rejection: her alleged affiliation to the group of the lowest social status, viz. the Gypsies, and the accusations of vice.

Great portions of the Pomaks identify themselves as "Bulgarian Muslims"; these are mostly representatives of the local intellectuals in the villages in the Eastern and the Central Rhodope Mountains. As far as they go, the intermediate identity of the group as a buffer between Bulgarians and Turks is no problem, while the Pomak community is construed as a combination of a Bulgarian ethnic and Muslim religious identity (Georgieva 1998: 305). Another, smaller part of the Pomaks keeps the old historical model of integration with the Turks. Within the Ottoman Empire, where those of the right faith had



In these circles the neophytes are considered marginals and the adoption of Christianity is interpreted as pursuit of self-seeking goals rather than as an act of faith. Generally, however, like in the case of the names, the adoption of baptism is most often formal to one extent or another: in most of the villages of this kind no churches have been built yet, and where there are such churches they remain empty. Moreover, few of the converts - citizens of big cities - practice the new religion and a negligible percentage (close to zero) are ordained. These are people striving to get positions of leadership in the newly converted community.

In order to bolster the faith of the people, they make efforts to build new cult centers, lending mythological interpretation to some historical facts. For instance, a unique finding of a bishop's burial with gold-thread attire, dated to the 13th-14th centuries and unearthed in the region of Kardjali, was swiftly declared to be a tomb of Evtimi of Tarnovo, the last Bulgarian Patriarch in the Middle Ages. Similar is also the case with Sister Hristina from the region of Smolyan: a middle-aged woman who adopted Christianity in the mid 1990s, although before that she had been thought to be a zealous Muslim. Today the Christian population in the Central Rhodope Mountains considers her a prophetess. On her own initiative she wears a nun's attire and claims to be a nun, without having taken the veil. Owing to her great prestige, she is trying to finally revive Christianity in the above-mentioned region, creating a religious cult to the so-called "martyrs of the faith" that had not existed



The Turkish trend in the group's identity has been reviving along two lines: along the line of a common past with the Turks owing to the affiliation to one and the same state - the Ottoman Empire, in which the two communities enjoyed certain privileged status because of their Islamic faith. On the basis of this historical memory the mythological cliché develops that being Osmanli, the Pomaks spoke the Turkish language and then forgot it. An elderly woman from the Rhodopes, who had attended a Turkish school prior to 1912, used to say:

*"My mother and my father spoke Turkish and I knew it. But when we mixed up with the Bulgarians, we learned Bulgarian, too, because this language seemed to us easier and we forgot the Turkish".*

The common religion is the second prerequisite for the emergence of this trend in the identity. "As long as we are circumcised", the Pomak men say, "this means that we are Turks". And in some Pomak villages in North Bulgaria, where religious life is not so intensive, the Turks have been assumed to be a standard in the faith: "The Turks are more righteous than we are". It is precisely the identification of the ethnic with the religious affiliation that is the basic motivation that made some of the Pomaks self-define themselves as Turks during the 1992 Census. They did this because they had no other options of expressing their identity as Muslims.

The overlapping of the identity with its religious component alone builds the fourth basic and shortest in



priority regardless of their ethnic origin, the Pomaks were considered "Osmanli" - an appellation attributed to the Turks and to all the other nationalities of the Islam confession. After the establishment of the new Bulgarian state in 1878 and after the gradual disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, whereby ever-new regions, inhabited by Pomaks, became part of Bulgaria, the appellation "Osmanli" gradually disappeared.

After the democratic changes in Bulgaria, some of the Pomaks, inhabiting the highest parts of the mountain returned to that trend in the representative Pomak identity. Contributing to this to a certain extent, has also been the formation in the beginning of the 90-es of a party of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, which has been trying to attract the country's Pomak population<sup>4</sup>. During the first census taken of the population after 1989, a fairly big part of the Pomak defined themselves as being Turks, although they do not speak the Turkish language and have never enjoyed close relations with the Turks. The explanation of the people themselves is the following: *"We were registered as Turks, because there was no column for Pomaks"*.

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<sup>4</sup>In the end of XX c. as the process of democratization became stronger quite a few Pomaks vote for this Turkish party. For example in a village with 2500 inhabitants who defined themselves as being Turks in the census of 1992 the democratic party "Union of Democratic Forces" was always the winner in the elections in the last twelve years. A part of the Pomaks vote also for the former communist party - Bulgarian Socialist Party. In the beginning of the 90s an attempt was made by a person named Kamen Burov from the village of Zultusha, region of Kardjali, for the formation of a Pomak party but it failed because the population did not accept the idea.



as the return to religion for the Eastern Orthodox Christians is mostly associated with the personal freedom and the personal choice, for the confessional minorities in Bulgaria this is an expression of group self-identification and self-expression (Elchinova 1999: 8). In this particular case of the Pomak, the powerful reversal to religion secures that new group identity to the community, which it badly needs. New mythological history is created, which rehabilitates the members of the group in their own eyes, saves them from the historical guilt traditionally given to them and most of all inspires them with a sense of self-importance. The main thesis of this quasi history claims that the Pomaks had adopted Islam much earlier (some time between the 9th and the 12th century) than the actual infiltration of the religion in the Balkans at the end of the 14th century; i.e. they are much older Muslims than the Turks as they had adopted the faith of Mohammad not after, but ages prior to the Ottoman invasion in the Balkans.

The Bulgarian history taught at school is also the object of historical creation of myths. One of the most curious versions of the sacred history of the community associates its emergence with the 52 Proto-Bulgarian families, massacred by King Boris I during the conversion of the Bulgarians to Christianity in 866. The historically proven violence exerted over that part of the aristocracy, which did not adopt the Christian faith, gives an occasion to the Pomaks to believe that in fact the king had not managed to massacre all who had remained insubordinate, and a part of them found refuge in the Rhodope Mountains and



emergence trend in the representative identity of the group. This model is well known in the Balkans: in the former Yugoslavia it was adopted by the Bosnian Muslims. In the case of the Pomaks, this model emancipates them as an independent community, best serving their attempts of differentiation both from the Bulgarians and from the Turks. *"We are Muslims and this is enough for us"* (Georgieva 1998: 300). A characteristic feature of this model used by them is their resorting to religion (moreover not to the Islam traditional for the region, but to its classical forms, typical of the Arab states) as a compensatory mechanism, so necessary for the building of the community's independent identity. Due to the fact that this trend has been the least studied, we will dwell on it in greater detail.

In the 1990s, religion became one of the symbols of change of Bulgarian society, conceived as a transition from totalitarianism to democracy, from planned to market economy, from the Balkans to Europe, or, in other words, from the periphery to the centre (Elchinova 1999: 6). After its fierce rejection in the communist period, in the 1990s religion was not only rehabilitated, but was also imbued with new meanings and senses getting the halo of certain prestige and even fashion. The principle gained grounds according to which *"If you are a real democrat, this means that you are a believer"*, and the other way round. The *sui generis* "return" of religion is also interpreted as a return to tradition, insofar as the faith is mostly construed as tradition by generations of Bulgarians born and living under totalitarianism. Insofar



Thracians and Slavs, from where the Bulgarian mother tongue came for the community. All these versions of the sacred history are a way of opposing the shock in confrontation with history, typical for the community. They emphasize the great importance of Islam as a main element in the formation of the Pomak identity. Religion proves so much to determine the ethnicity of the group, that attempts are being made by one of the oldest ethnonyms of the group, by which the surrounding Christian population call pejoratively the Pomaks "Ahryani"<sup>6</sup>, i.e. infidels, to be interpreted by the religious symbolism. According to some religiously enlightened Pomaks, the "Ahryani": ethnonym should be received not from its negative aspect, because an "Ahryanin" is a person who has fully dedicated himself to the idea of "ahireta", i.e. the netherworld. In other words the "ahryani" are extremely truthful Muslims, insofar the main Islamic postulate also prescribes that man's life be dedicated more to the thought of the netherland than to the needs of life on this earth. Of course this is a religious interpretation of the ethnonym "ahryani" and, as every mythological cliché, is no real reflection of the state of matters.

The fourth trend in the identity that emerged in the early 1990s - the time of complete rehabilitation of religion as a whole in Bulgarian society. Within the

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<sup>6</sup>The name "Ahryani" was mentioned for the first time in an Ottoman register from 1431.



later adopted Islam. The last claim also has real historical justification: it is known to science that in the years around the conversion to Christianity, Muslim missionaries offered to the ruler that the Bulgarians adopt Islam, but their efforts failed. The thesis of the adoption of Islam before the Ottoman Turks came to the Balkans presupposes its direct adoption from the Arabs. According to one of the versions, the envoys of Allah, the so-called "peigambers" had brought the faith of Mohammad in these lands and therefore the Pomaks were the carriers of the purest forms of the religion, the so-called "peigamber Islam", i.e. the faith of the prophets<sup>5</sup>. In the mid-1990s, parallel to the growth of religious education, the thesis of the peigambers was gradually ousted by a more logical interpretation according to which Islam had been brought by Arab missionaries or Arab merchants (Lozanova 1998: 453). Particularly intriguing is the version, according to which the Pomaks are descendants of prisoners of war from Asia Minor, who had been resettled in the Balkans by the Byzantine authorities. They had married local women -

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<sup>5</sup>"When the Turks patted on the Balkan Peninsula" they said "we found the Pomaks Muslims. We have adopted Islam from the envoys of Mohammad: he has sent them when he was creating Islam. No one accepted them and they went to the Russians. And Russia kissed the book (the Koran), put it on its head and said 'Get in'. But Mohammad told them 'Look out for this country is powerful as a bear - it will overpower us, too, but afterwards it will itself disintegrate'. And this is what happened - don't people now refer to the former Soviet Union... Then the envoys of Mohammad came here." - Informant Ahmed Aliev, 65 years old, recorded by G. Blagoev, 1993.



impact of the Turks who had introduced a great number of their customs in the religious system: honoring of the tyurbe and teke<sup>7</sup>, the making of amulets and the organizing of Mevlid<sup>8</sup>: *"This does not exist in Islam and now we are waging struggle to abolish this thing here"*. The representatives of the above-mentioned circle openly object some specificities of the Islamic lifestyle, traditional for the region, which is a specific mix-up of canonic and pre-Islamic beliefs as well as behavioral stereotypes determined by it. One of them even dared to renounce in public the curative muska<sup>9</sup> widely used by the Hodjas and containing texts from the Koran, and in this way provoked the wrath of the clerics and openly called on them to make some magic injuring him so that they could prove him wrong.

The way of life that the members of the above-mentioned group adopt and impose on the local

<sup>7</sup>Tyrbe - a tomb of a Muslim saint around which a teke is built, i.e. the dwelling of the community of Dervishes. The worship of such cult places is characteristic of Shiite Islam, but under the influence of different orders of Dervishes it is also encountered in the traditional culture of Sunites in Turkey and in the Balkans.

<sup>8</sup>Mevlid - literally "mevlyudu-sherif" - a holiday honoring the birthday of Prophet Mohammed, accompanied with readings of his life. As a religious custom it is practiced also on other occasions - hatim (annual exam on reading of the Koran), inauguration of a new home or a mosque, burial or commemorative service, etc. The religiously enlightened Pomaks renounce "mevlid" as being a "bida", i.e. a novel introduction, not being a fruit of classical Islamic culture, but written during the Ottoman period.

<sup>9</sup>Muska - a traditional Muslim amulet, most often a small folded piece of paper, written on which in Arabic are prayers or incantations.



frameworks of the country, the greatest "upholders" of religion during that period were naturally the representatives of the older generation, who still remembered the time prior to 1944 and who had always held their faith in their lives even in the period of the harsh totalitarian bans. In the case of the Pomaks, however, the situation is different: the most zealous adherents of classical Islam are young people aged between 30 and 35 years, i.e. the most active generation, who are most powerfully confronted with the task of creating and withstanding the new Pomak identity. In one of the Pomak villages studied, these people make a circle of their own, which sets the norms of behavior for all the remaining members of the group and they openly dispute with those who do not accept them. Since in the Pomak conceptions the Arabs are the bearers of true Islam, such as the Prophet had created it, they naturally impose models of behavior and ways of life characteristic of the Arab states.

The closeness of the Arab world, which gains ground by way of classical Islam, presupposes an overcoming of some intermediate identity; on the other hand the absence of a direct contact with the Arabs (despite the periodical rounds of missionaries in the Rhodopes) averts the inevitable disappointments resulting from direct communication. According to the more religiously enlightened young Pomaks, the traditional Islam professed by the community has been modified under the



different than his elder brother, to whom the ban was already valid. Under the impact of classical Islam some new elements are also introduced unknown so far in the tradition of the community: in the most zealous families, the women adopt the Arabic way of covering their hair and on holidays put on a long dress resembling that of the Arabic women instead of their traditional clothes; no perfumery articles could be used containing alcohol and fragrances without alcohol produced in the Arabic world are preferred; besides the common toothbrushes, special brushes of wooden fiber are used, resembling the brush used by the Prophet.

The following of classical Islam is particularly evident also in the new Islamic names, not typical for the community, which are given to the children born in the 1990s. Besides the Bulgarian and the so-called compromise or ambivalent names (having the ring of both Bulgarian folk names and of Muslim names), as well as the great number of western names, which also produce the desired compromise, some Turkish and a great number of Arabic names are typical for the community. They substitute the so-called "genuine Muslim names", i.e. the names of the prophets and the 99 names of Allah like Abdullah, Brahim, Myumyun, etc., which can already be found only in the old registers and which are still used by the Bulgarian Turks. According to the tradition characteristic of the community, in talking the Muslim names are substituted by "Bulgarian-sounding" diminutive



community differs quite a lot both from the lifestyle of their fathers and from their own lifestyle prior to the changes. What is indicative, however, is the motivation that reveals particularly eloquently what enormous attention is assigned to observing the Islamic norms. In the past these people went on pilgrimages to the tekes of Osman Baba in Haskovo and of Enihan Baba in the region of Smolyan, while now they renounce that pilgrimage as a delusion, because according to classical Islam Allah alone is worthy of worship and not the holy man buried in the teke. Some 5-6 years ago they used to drink alcohol and even keep photos of similar gatherings of men, and today they have fully rejected drinking<sup>10</sup> and even often have quarrels with their aged parents, who take the liberty of drinking a glass or two. Some of the leaders of the group had had a fairly "violent life" during the communist period; for instance a current zealous teacher in Islamic religion used to be a DJ, while today he renounces that profession as immoral, and eroding the mainstays of the family. These people and their families pray most zealously five times a day; they observe fasts and all the norms of behavior set by the Koran; both old and young women keep their hair covered in the presence of a strange man; boys aged above 12 cannot wear shorts: a seven-year old boy did not obey the order of his mother to put on shorts in 40 degrees heat saying "*It is a sin for me.*" What was also of importance in that case was the fact that the young boy wanted to be no

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<sup>10</sup>The traditional "cheverme" or barbecued lamb, eaten in the open air, is particularly interesting. The men taking part in it drink only fruit juices.



the Koran - the "hatim", which turns into a holiday for the entire community. The small children often learn first the Arabic alphabet in order to be able to mechanically learn by heart various passages of the Koran, without being able to translate them. They learn the Bulgarian alphabet only when they go to school. They are very diligent studying the foundations of their religion, and some of them even reach a state of fatalism, which is not typical for their age. Particularly indicative in this respect is the answer of a 16-year old girl, asked about her dreams:

*"I do not dream much, because Hazreti Ali, one of the righteous caliphs, says, that dreams are like a snake, and the snake has a soft touch, but its kiss is deadly. That is why I do not dream, I only address dyuvi (prayers), happen what may... I fully leave myself to fate".*

Generally, however, the study of the Koran is successfully combined with lay education: children find no contradiction between the need to know the foundations of their faith and their school obligations, "because Allah says that we must have knowledge in all spheres, were it the Koran, biology or chemistry". Education, no matter whether lay or religious and often a combination of the two, is one of the means via which the young Muslims find their place in the increasingly more global world. For some of them their



names: Vahdi is called Dichka, etc.

Despite of the fact that a great number of the Arabic names are not religious in meaning, they are an expression of the rejection of traditional Islam by young people. Particularly indicative is the case with the 2-year-old son of a teacher of the Koran in one of the villages studied, who has been named Mohammed. At variance with the mass practice, in that religious family the name of the Prophet has not been substituted by the traditional diminutive when addressing the child. Every time we pronounced the name with a "wrong", i.e. non-Arabic stress on the third syllable, we were politely corrected that the name is pronounced as in Arabic - Mohammed with a clearly expressed stress on the second syllable. The trend of largely ignoring the old peigamber names, which are being replaced by Arabic and western ones, provokes disagreement of the elderly people: *"Confused world - confused names. Appearing here are such that had not been known earlier."* As a whole, the elderly people are not always inclined to adopt the new norms of behavior, imposed by the younger. This is the cause of frequent family and kinship conflicts.

Unlike the elderly, who find it hard to give up their customs and habits, the children and youth adopt the Islamic norms of life with particular ease and willingness. They are trained to read the Koran in extracurricular studies and pass the annual exam on



questions asked by the men that have gathered there, while women visit them at home to make their queries. It is precisely the family of the student in Saudi Arabia that was one among the first in the village to manage to make the pilgrimage to Mecca after the advent of democracy, whereby they have ultimately reaffirmed their position of leadership in the community.

For another, also quite numerous part of the young Pomaks, the lay education and the scientific and technological progress associated with it but tied up with the faith, is also a way of finding their place in the world. A young math teacher from a borderline Rhodope village imparted that he was trying to give knowledge on informatics to a greater number of children, because that would enable them to freely communicate with the country and the world:

*"The fact that I am living on the border and am a Muslim does not hamper me, if I have access to the Internet, to get in touch with whoever I want and if I make a computer product, to send it on the net to some company in a big city, without traveling that far!"*

For quite a few of the members of the group, the future is associated with the globalization of the world and the disappearance of frontiers; with opportunities of earning one's living without any injury to one's



future is closely intertwined with their faith and this gives rise to the striving to receive education in Islamic countries. In the same way as Western Europe and America are desired places to get higher education for a great number of Bulgarian Christians, the Arab world proves to be a center of attraction for the young members of the Pomak community, because *"the heart of Islam is there"*. To some of them even the education in theology received there, is more desirable than any other higher education received in Bulgaria. No doubt the fact that the few who manage to go there have secured upkeep by the Arabic country, plays a major role in motivation, whereas a higher education in Bulgaria is beyond the means of most Pomaks, among whom the unemployment rate is the highest. On the whole, however, the direct access to "the pure Islam" of the Arab countries turns into a source of prestige. For instance one of the members of the group managed to secure for himself training in theology in Saudi Arabia, another one - in Jordan, whereby their prestige within the confines of the village has sharply grown. Since they are among the very few, who apart from reading the Koran can also understand it, during their holidays they practically take up the functions of the spiritual leaders of the local community: young people address to them all the questions associated with the faith, rather than to the few imams of the village. Every week before or after the Friday prayer in the mosque they answer



and as greater believers than even the Turks. The combination of sacral history, according to which the Pomaks are the earliest Muslims on the Peninsula, i.e. they are a people chosen by Allah, with the excessive striving for orthopraxis, fairly uncharacteristic for young people in Bulgaria as a whole, target at overcoming the marginal status of the community and its "rehabilitation" both in its own eyes and in the eyes of the ethnic groups around. The search for a certain access to the Arab world and the following of the religious models set by that world, is an attempt, notwithstanding the absence of real spatial and cultural closeness, on the part of the community to distance itself from the religious model of the Bulgarian Turks and to preserve the Pomak identity from waning. In this way, in a situation when all other elements of identity prove insecure or insufficient, religion turns into a mainstay of the Pomak identity.

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Muslim identity. Particularly topical is the prospect of the opening of new ways between Bulgaria and Greece, which is construed as an opportunity of directly getting into Europe: the border is considered to be an unnatural barrier, harassing communications among people:

*"The fact that we are Muslims does not stand in our way of remaining what we are: religion is something that everyone has in his heart. But we are people like all the other people, too, regardless of which side of the border we live, moreover as this border is not a natural watershed separating people"*

Revealed in such a view is the idea of commonness of the Pomaks on both sides of the frontier and a setting off of the compensatory mechanism, whereby from a borderline population and periphery, this community will turn into a center of a new region without frontiers. Islam, however, is interpreted as the only possibility of keeping one's identity in view of the ever-increasing globalization, which transforms the world into a big village.

Hence the striving for religious orthopraxis, which is extreme at times, and which is connected with the classical Islamic practices and norms. The return to "the true Islam", proclaimed by the young leaders of the community, is determined by their powerful desire to stand out and prove themselves as true Muslims



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Δημόσια Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόλλυτσης



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their number, they belonged to "a community" in the sense that they did enjoy participation in common institutions such as the Jewish primary school, the two synagogues and the old people's home. They also had a museum and a gathering centre -the community's administrative centre- which functioned as a place for meetings, communal meals and celebrations as well.

This article is an analysis of the ways in which food was used by Thessalonikian Jews as a means to state their presence, to highlight or hide their distinctiveness, to differentiate themselves from other non-Jewish Thessalonikians and to construct their multiple identities. It is argued that in this complex process of investing their lives with meanings, cooking, eating and talking about Sephardic-Jewish cuisine played a significant role. Preparing, eating and talking about food were often used by this group as an expression of being and belonging, as channels to stress their cultural distinctiveness and as repositories of food memories and nostalgia connecting them with a distinct, meaningful - and often desired- past.

What is to be found in the first part of this paper is an analysis of the Hellenization processes that took place in Macedonia, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries. My main point is that modern Jewish identities do not exist in a historical and political vacuum. The second part of this paper is concerned with the connections between eating, remembering and building the community and therefore what is being assessed is the



Vasiliki Kravva\*

**The Taste of Belonging:  
An ethnographic approach to the study of  
commensality and collectivity**

*"Well the Jews in Thessaloniki had in the past some kind of power because they were thousands. Nowadays there are only a few families left. But you know we still cook. The only thing we have left is our food."*  
(Interview extract)

The woman I interviewed<sup>1</sup> was Jewish and lived in Thessaloniki, the most important port in Northern Greece. She was eighty-five years old and was born and raised in the city before the Second World War. She had in this sense actually lived in a Jewish Thessaloniki, as before the War, of the population of about 200.000 almost 70.000 were Jews. The War decimated the Thessalonikian Jewry; less than 2,000 people came back from the concentration camps, a loss of 96% of the city's Jewish population. At the time of my research (October 1998-January 2000), there were just under 1.000 Jews in this city with a total population of 1 million. Despite

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<sup>1</sup> My fieldwork among Thessalonikian Jews lasted from October 1998 until January 2000. All interviews were conducted in Greek and translated by the ethnographer.



Cowan (2000) noted, identity is produced through the interplay of social dynamics such as "difference". Ethnicity is thus not only constructed but it is also shown to be rather fluid and salient and the differences that are considered to be "real" might be so because they are conceived as such. National identities are highly contested and often challenged or rejected. The term "inflections", as used by Cowan to describe national identity, is indicative of the various relations involved, including that of power. Macedonia is an area of contested and often conflicting discourses of belonging and as such it continues to be the locus of real and imagined identities and aspirations.

Anthropological studies concerning populations in the area of Macedonia by scholars such as Karakasidou (1993, 1997), Agelopoulos (1997), Cowan (1997, 2000), Verenis (2000) and Danforth (1995, 2000) have pointed to some interesting aspects in the construction of national identities.<sup>2</sup> For example, Cowan's book *Macedonia: The Politics of Identity and Difference* (2000) argued that individuals are not always passive recipients of a national program imposed by state apparatuses like education and religion but on the

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<sup>2</sup>Emic voices heard in a book that is recently published in Greek entitled "Identities in Macedonia" are much more sceptical on naming the distinct groups in the area as "ethnic" or "ethnicities" (Veremis, 1997, Gounaris 1997). According to the authors it is a methodological mistake to call the distinct groups living in Macedonia ethnic or ethnicities because such terms are recent historical constructions that do not correspond to previous historical periods. In particular, they disagree with some foreign publications, namely Karakasidou 1993 and Danforth 1995.



centrality of seemingly unimportant, trivial activities such as eating in the construction of everyday politics and identifications. The third part of my analysis aims to deconstruct identity and focuses on the multiple ways through which the Jewish people in Thessaloniki highlight or hide aspects of their complex identities. In the last section, which deals with Jewish culinary distinctiveness, what is emphasized is the role of food in the process of identity negotiation. It is argued that food, cooking and eating are managed by Thessalonikian Jews as expressions of belonging to a distinct community, as strategies of constructing their cultural boundaries. The role of memory is essential in the formulation of multiple identities and therefore not to be dismissed from the last part of my analysis. The article concludes that all rhetoric employed by the Jews in this Greek city can be seen as survival strategies and function to create flexible livelihoods in a non-Jewish city.

### **Hellenization processes in Macedonia and the Jews of Thessaloniki**

National identity is a long-term process often related and informed by personal life experiences that take place over the lifetime of individuals. There is nothing "natural" or "given" in ethnic ascription, which is often subjected to other kinds of everyday processes like interpretation, negotiation and selection. In certain cases, ethnic identity seems to be a matter of personal political choices that are themselves influenced by lifetime incidents. As



remained numerically a significant part of the overall city population for most of the Ottoman period in Thessaloniki.

With the undermining of Ottoman authority in Macedonia during the nineteenth century and the eviction of the Turks during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the neighbouring newly born nation-states, namely Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia, strengthened their efforts to incorporate Macedonia into their territories. Balkan nationalisms, the processes that have shaped the history of the region in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries until today, were mainly the outcome of such conflicting claims. Anderson (1991 [1983]) traced the emergence of national ideologies to the development of print capitalism. Wealthy proponents of the middle-class, mainly the intellectuals, were able to systematise and centralise knowledge and along with other national mechanisms like language, the museum, the census and the map, the national body of history was formulated. He used the example of Greece and the "regeneration" of the Greek nation-state from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, a historical, linguistic and ethnic "regeneration" that was mainly fabricated during the nineteenth century by middle-class intellectual Diaspora of Greek origin.

Similarly, Kitromilides (1989) searched for continuities between the European Enlightenment and the development of Greek and other Balkan nationalisms. Thus language, geography, history, education and religion (including the institution of the Church) became nationalised and in turn served as channels for the



contrary should be approached as active creators, sometimes shaping or even questioning their own national belonging. This literature drew upon everyday levels of belonging and highlighted the fact that private aspects of life, including family values, can become loci for the promotion of certain national aspirations. This shift from official, public processes to more everyday and intimate dimensions suggested that the imposition of national identities is rarely harmonious; it consists of tensions, fractions, shifts and negotiations.

The history of the Jews in Thessaloniki was strongly affected by the double processes of Hellenisation and Christianisation of the city. Thessaloniki's Jews are mainly descendants of Spanish Jews, who were expelled from their country of origin from the 15th century onwards and settled in Ottoman Thessaloniki. The city during the Ottoman era actually remained a multicultural, multi-ethnic place in the sense that all ethnic (or rather religious) groups living in it (Christians, Jews and Armenians) were afforded some kind of religious autonomy as long as they paid the Sultan's taxes. This is known in historiography (Clogg 1992, Roudometof 1998) as the millet system. Within the Ottoman administration, secular and religious autonomy was given to the Patriarch over all the Empire's Orthodox subjects, the *Millet-i Rum* or "Roman Millet". As traders, merchants, businessmen and professionals, the Greeks had emerged as a powerful economic and intellectual group throughout the Empire by the end of the eighteenth century. Thus, the Jewish population



diplomatic relationships not only for the Balkan nation-states but also for the whole of Europe.

Thessaloniki after the end of the Balkan Wars in 1913 became Greek and the process of Hellenisation of the city had begun. This process was reflected in measures such as the abolishment of the Saturday holiday in 1924 and its replacement by Sunday and the compulsory introduction of the Greek language in primary education. The picture changed radically with the Asia Minor disaster in 1922 and the arrival of 10.000 refugees from Asia Minor. Thessaloniki was not only a Greek city but became a Greek city in which Orthodox Christianity prevailed. The city did not have the infrastructure needed in order to accommodate this massive wave of refugees. Unemployment and urban deprivation were the conditions the newcomers had to cope with, conditions that often led to tensions and discrimination against groups such as the Jews, the most numerous non-Christian population. In 1931, anti-Semitic riots, known as the Campbell-riots, took place. Yet the Jewish population remained numerous and prosperous. The deportation of approximately 70.000 Thessalonikian Jews to the concentration camps during the Second World War led to the complete destruction of the city's Jewry. Only 2.000 came back and many of them were killed during the Civil War (1945-1949).



promotion and perpetuation of national identities. In the case of Greece, the Macedonian mosaic of linguistic and religious groups consisted mainly of Orthodox, Greek-speaking Greeks but also groups using other local vernaculars: Jewish Greeks speaking Ladino and Greek, Muslims speaking Turkish and Greek, Muslim-Jews<sup>3</sup> speaking Turkish, Macedonians speaking Slavo-Macedonian, Vlachs speaking a Latin-derived vernacular known as *Vlachika* and many others that were gradually undergoing the processes of nationalisation and homogenisation. Within this complex ethnological picture, "The Macedonian question in the second half of the nineteenth century essentially involved the conflicts generated by the frantic attempts of the new national states to incorporate local ethnic groups into the 'imagined communities' they represented in order to lay claim to the territories these groups inhabited" (Kitromilides 1989: 169). Kitromilides in his analysis of Balkan nationalisms drew on the work of Anderson (1991) concerning the process of nationalist constructions in Europe and his concept of "imagined communities" that all nations inspire; the concept actually referred to the similarities between the abstract idea of the nation and the ideas of brotherhood or kinship. For the scholar, the "Macedonian Question" gradually emerged as a problem in national, political and

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<sup>3</sup>During the eighteenth century 300 Thessalonikian Jewish families converted to Islam whilst practising Judaism at the same time. These Muslim-Jews were named *Donme* and were exchanged after the Asia Minor "disaster" in 1923 with Christians from that area.



hidden messages, apolitical on the surface, but deeply ideologically loaded and politicised. There is a strong relationship of complementarity between food and nation since the malleable and modular nature of national identity is often in accordance with the flexibility and ubiquity of food and eating patterns. Thus, diet and eating habits could well be used as expressions of national identity (Murcott 1995). The process of creating a national cuisine is most relevant to the production and reproduction of ethnic identities and nationalist ideologies. What has been noted is that "gastro-nationalism" is an important resource for identity making (James 1997: 73). To show clearly the intrinsic links between food and the sense of belonging to a "bounded" and "homogeneous" nation, I will discuss some ethnographic cases, which deal with the national dimensions of food choices in different parts of the globe.

Zubaida (1994) analysed the promotion of a static ethnic identity in relation to the nationalist, communal and global dimensions in Middle Eastern food cultures. The author suggested that nation-states are increasingly interested in "maintaining", "creating" and sometimes "inventing" a static national culture and culinary tradition. He also underlined the role of cookbooks and broadcasts in creating a sense of the homogeneity of any national cuisine but he did not view the people who live in a nation-state formation as passive recipients of the imposition of demands for static national characteristics. On the contrary, the process of ethnicisation is a bilateral process: the "nationalistic project" constructs national



## **Eating, remembering and building the community**

The fact that food functions as a marker of both sameness and difference is a key concept of recent anthropological approaches on food. The acts of preparing, serving and sharing food enhance sociality and strengthen the experience of a group's boundaries. Food is a code, a language that communicates complex social messages, such as belonging to an ethnic group. Yet the realisation that our food is "ethnic" comes from contact with other culinary worlds; cuisine, like ethnicities, is not fixed but a contextual process constantly shaped by human interdependencies. Ethnic cuisine becomes a successful vehicle for crossing ethnic boundaries and at the same time serves as a reaffirmation of a group's cultural and historic distinctiveness. Cooking and eating are effective ways to reinforce, re-construct and revive ethnic communities. What we call "ethnic cuisine" is not only perpetuated on the basis of already existing tastes but most interestingly it is the outcome of a reconstruction and stands as a symbol of common descent (Van Den Berghe 1984). As such, it strengthens and perpetuates social bonds. Food is one of the main arenas where "ethnic revivals" are realised, mainly because food tastes are easily acquired and transmitted in contrast with other social phenomena like language or ideology.

Hence, national identity and eating habits are both modular and flexible, permitting the attachment of powerful feelings and sentiments; they both convey



to a family or being a member of Neapolitan society. Thus, "eating" becomes synonymous with "being" through the enactment of sentiments and memories and as such it has the power to permit participation in a selected, treasured past. She suggested that food constructs and marks history. However, the picture is not always a harmonious one. An ethnographic example from another Italian city, Florence (Counihan 1998) indicates that women in contemporary Italy are caught between two powerful discourses: being proper housewives, nurturers of family life and bearers of traditionality and on the other hand, being full-time wage labour workers. This double role is held responsible for a female identity crisis and challenge to traditional femininity, as Florentine women are responding to changes in society and economy.

In particular, the role of memory, the management of the past and the act of cooking and eating as sensory experiences have been extensively discussed by scholars such as Seremetakis (1994), Lupton (1996) and Sutton (2001). Attention has been given to the emotions associated with eating which strongly affect personal likes and dislikes. Food preferences or avoidances are shaped and marked through recollections from childhood attached to certain food items. Yet such recollections are rarely a matter simply of individual experiences but rather a symbiosis of individual experiences with shared cultural experiences, values and events.

In the case of Thessalonikian Jews, the sense of belonging to a distinct community was partly achieved



cuisine but in turn global expectations perpetuate the process of nationalisation. "Countries and nations are expected to have things national, including a cuisine" (Zubaida 1994: 44).

The contemporary Indian situation can be summarised by the term "gastro-politics" involved in creating and maintaining several localised and ethicised versions of identities (Appadurai 1981). A process of "fabrication" of a national cuisine in the Indian case has been identified, in which the role of contemporary cookbooks is central. This process is also evident in other societies, which have complex regional cuisines and have recently achieved nationhood. The creation of a national cuisine in contemporary India is a process that does not exist in isolation; it should be compared with similar post-colonial situations in other countries. This process involves not only regional and ethnic specialisation but at the same time the creation of intersecting national cuisines.

In an ethnographic study in Naples, Italy (Goddard 1996) it was noted that preparing, serving and eating food enhanced family bonds and sustains feelings of belonging to a Neapolitan community. Emotional attachments are perpetuated through the power of food to evoke memories, in this case of family and community. The family was the main locus where such experiences were realised and motherhood the basic channel for their transmission. Food and eating were sensory channels for the transmission of sentiments, memories and wishes, for example being a person with particular values, belonging



result of provisional belonging to multiple communities. The notion of "community" is subject to deconstruction as well. It has been aptly noted that: "Culture becomes a multicoloured, free-floating mosaic, its pieces constantly in flux, its boundaries infinitely porous" (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996: 3).

Thessalonikian Jews were not the victims or the representatives of their living conditions but more the agents, those who constructed - often via selection - their multiple and frequently contrasting subjectivities. According to this view there is no univocal and essentialist notion of identity; rather there are plural identities, plural selves, which are dependent on the situation. The Jews in Thessaloniki mobilised those aspects of their complex and shifting belonging to achieve flexible livelihoods. By the same token, there was no "community" in the sense that my informants expressed viable subjectivities and identifications of the self as a result of their belonging to multiple communities. Thus, Jewishness was perceived in many different ways. For them the term "Jewish" encompassed memories, past and present experiences, current preoccupations and future fears.

It is important to underline that Jewishness was understood in a variety of ways by the different generations: War survivors, the middle aged and young people. It is important to note that the term "generation" is not an empty category; on the contrary it encloses dynamics of the past, positioning towards present conditions and often emotional reactions due to a



through the celebrations that took place at the community's institutions such as the primary school, the synagogue and the old people's home. In my experience, food sharing -especially on ritual occasions- proved an effective channel for the reworking of Jewishness and Jewish belonging. Of course, I am not claiming that all discourses revealed the same degree of belonging. On the contrary, there was a great deal of differentiation mainly based on age; the first and the second generations of Thessalonikian Jews expressed a strong association with their Sephardic past, whereas the third generation was quite reluctant to make such associations explicit. For them "not being different" was a statement that was often employed in order to express their ambiguous sense of belonging. By tasting food, the Jews of the city tasted, transmitted and selectively evoked their pasts: their Spanishness, their Jewishness, and their attachment to Thessaloniki.

### **Deconstructing identity: Being Sephardic, Jewish, Greek and Thessalonikian**

It is important keep in mind that "identity" is not an empty category that exists in a vacuum. On the contrary, it is a matrix of flexible identifications found in processes sometimes harmonious and sometimes plagued by divisions and conflict. Furthermore, identity is always affected by historical and economic conditions and socio-political expectations. Therefore, we can talk about multiple subjectivities and identifications of the self as a



even create differences that could distinguish him from others. For him, Jewishness was to be understood by contrast with non-Jewishness and Jewish identity was perceived through the process of sharpening and in certain cases creating differences with other non-Jews:

*"I remember when I was a child and went to school, I was learning Hebrew. At that time, Jewishness for me was no more than a game and a leisure pursuit. I felt Greek and Jewish. I have had this feeling since I was very young. As I grew older, I tried to elaborate my differences much more. Everyone was smoking, so I decided not to smoke, the others studied classics whereas I decided to study modern literature instead of the classics. I always had the feeling that my identity was special".*

For most people, Jewishness was highly personalised and influenced by family memories and childhood. Yet for the majority of older and middle-aged people, "being Jewish" often remained private, something kept in the domestic sphere and the realm of the family. For Linda and other Holocaust survivors, Jewishness was encapsulated in highly treasured domestic items<sup>5</sup> like photos of parents

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<sup>5</sup>Lovell (1998) argues that domestic objects can be "objects of mnemonic desire". She notes that "These objects very much serve as mediating elements in the recreation of (the memory of) place, and act as surrogates for a memory-time-space which can never be fully recovered, yet which is also precisely recreated through the use and display of the objects themselves" (Ibid, 1988: 16). Thus objects, especially personal belongings, carry life-histories, life-cycles and personal trajectories.



traumatic situation. There was a general consensus among older and middle-aged Thessalonikian Jewry that they were not religious and thus they attended the synagogue rarely. However, their constant reference to "authenticity" revealed a certain need to belong and to feel Jewish.

Suzette, a camp survivor, admitted that she never went to the synagogue and did not consider herself a religious person. According to her all religions are good because all of them "preach nice things". Suzette believed that you have to carry religion and faith inside of you. Her religious behaviour was characterised by a process of religious adaptation to meet individual needs and experiences. For example, *Yom Kippur*<sup>4</sup> apart from being the most important High Holy Day in the Jewish calendar, was the only occasion when she came to terms with her Jewishness:

*"Nowadays I practice the Kippur, the day of Forgiveness, in memory of all those people that died during the War. On this day I concentrate much more. This is because after the War I never found the time to devote properly to my lost family"*.

The situation was more or less similar with people in their forties and fifties. Albertos, a man in his forties, claimed that his feeling of being Jewish had changed over the years with a conscious effort to maintain and

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<sup>4</sup>The Day of Atonement, a major fast in the Jewish calendar.



paramount values and in our discussions they avoided any association with Jewish identity.

Thessalonikian Jews proved to be very keen to provide me with different interpretations of the meaning and the usefulness of practising kosher. Interestingly enough, they used the kosher diet rather selectively and even idiosyncratically. In fact, most of them preferred to buy kosher meat from the kosher butcher's shop in Thessaloniki and avoided eating pork or mixing meat with dairy products<sup>9</sup> at least when cooking or eating at home. Yet it must be noted that the kosher diet is part and parcel of a religious Jewish lifestyle. Some of my informants, especially people in their thirties and forties, tried to keep some of the dietary rules prescribed by Judaism. For example, they avoided eating rice, bread or pasta during *Pessah*. Some middle-aged people were even consciously trying to reintroduce a kosher diet into their lives, although they all admitted that kosher products were far more expensive than non-kosher foodstuffs. However, when eating out in restaurants<sup>10</sup> they used to order dishes that were compatible with kosher laws like for example *pasticcio* without mincemeat. Their request often annoyed and confused the waitresses.

<sup>9</sup>Avoiding eating dairy products with meat is a basic Jewish dietary prohibition.

<sup>10</sup>Eating outside the domestic context is gaining increasing popularity in the "modern" era and it is considered a component of contemporary urban life and the pleasures associated with it. But eating in a restaurant is not a thing in itself. Harbottle (1997) argues that the restaurant should not be treated as a static environment but as a social process involved in change.





and children. The ritual of showing the photographs of their family was an almost indispensable part of my regular visits.

For others, their identity was enclosed in the memories from the War, about which they had written and published in the last few years. Sharing their experiences and giving me their memoirs were effective ways to express their Jewishness. On several occasions I was given magazines like *La Lettre Sepharade*,<sup>6</sup> *Los Muestrros*<sup>7</sup> and *Chronika*.<sup>8</sup> Most homes I visited had something that reminded the visitor of the Jewish identity of its members. In most cases, people kept *menorah*, the seven-branched candlesticks, either in "open" and "public" areas like the living room or in more "private" rooms like the bedroom.

However, among the younger people there was no single acceptance and identification with Jewishness. Although most of them had attended the primary school, they were very reluctant to identify themselves with anything "Jewish", especially those in their mid-twenties. Thus, some remarked that they were "fed up" with discussions of Jewishness and others said that they did not believe in bounded ethnic identities. For them "Europeanism" and "globalised identities" were the

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<sup>6</sup>In English it means "The Sephardic Letter".

<sup>7</sup>In English it means "Our Own". Both *La Lettre Sepharade* and *Los Muestrros* are written in Ladino.

<sup>8</sup>This is published in Greek by the Central Greek-Jewish council that is based in Athens every two months. Literally it means "Chronicles".



stood for something not distant, but rather familiar and privatised. Memories of Spanish ancestry formulated a common point of reference, a starting point for differentiation from the rest of the population of Thessaloniki. Remembering this specific past was not only a way to denote distinctiveness but also a source of communal pride. References to Spanish ancestry were discursively tied to the multi-ethnic past of Thessaloniki where many famous Rabbis, scientists, scholars and local rulers were born. This strong affiliation with Spanish civilisation of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries covered many aspects of life and various cultural products, including language, music and cuisine. Mary, a working woman in her late thirties, said to me:

*"Spanish music feels closer to us and the same applies to the Spanish language. These are familiar sounds we all recall from our childhood and family life".*

Δημόσια Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσας



In contemporary Thessaloniki, kosher was a very sensitive issue, especially for the younger generation. The schoolteachers talked about the Judaic dietary rules at school and tried to persuade children to choose a kosher diet but they avoided exerting much pressure on them. In discussions, they argued that the influences on the children's diet were so many and so complex that they did not expect them to keep kosher strictly. According to Barbara, who was a schoolteacher, keeping kosher had become much easier because of the European Union and the opening of the supermarket; it was now possible to find a number of kosher products including sweets, ice cream and chocolate. The teachers at the primary school suggested children prefer these products.

Yet even for the teachers themselves, a strictly kosher diet was not feasible and it often generated humorous and even self-sarcastic comments. I remember that I once went to a cafeteria together with Barbara and some of her friends who were Orthodox Christians. I was surprised that although they had been close friends for more than fifteen years, they knew nothing about kosher or the fact that Barbara used to buy meat from a kosher butcher's shop. When Miltiadis asked Barbara if she kept these dietary laws she replied: *"I am eating toast with bacon and cheese. What do you think?"* and everyone laughed.

Thessalonikian Jews claimed to be Sephardic Jews and descendants of the Spanish Jewry that had settled in the area from the end of the fifteenth century onwards. During my fieldwork, I witnessed people's tendency to make associations with their Spanish past. This past



"This cultural element was the only property that Spanish Jews took with them when they left their homeland."

A common expression was *Los Muestrós*, which means "our own", used even by people who could not speak Ladino properly. This expression was employed in order to stress that language was a shared point of reference for them. Leon, a middle-aged man, commented:

"We avoid using terms that the rest of the Jews impose on us. You see, even in Judaism there is some kind of internal racism. We are Sephardic. Our language derives from Spanish. This is the only thing that we managed to rescue when they kicked us out of Spain. Modern Spanish is not far away from us. We used to say *Los Muestrós*. We don't want any Ashkenazi additions to our language. For example we say *catcher* (a Ladino word) not *kosher*".

Of course, there was no univocal acceptance of the Sephardic identity. The age factor was decisive. Notably, there was a strong dividing line between the young generation and middle-aged people as well as the older generation.<sup>14</sup> Among the people I talked to, especially

<sup>14</sup>People over fifty-seven were born during or before the Second World War. I believe that the Holocaust has marked their lives in a direct way and has divided time and memories quite sharply between life in pre-War Thessaloniki and life after their return from the concentration camps.



According to my informants, the Sephardic identity was the supreme expression of Judaism, the most liberal expression of Jewishness and what is more, the Sephardic were the most cultivated people. On the other hand, the Ashkenazi, the Jews from central Europe were thought to be vulgar and backward. On numerous occasions, people made comments about the uniqueness and the "superiority" of the Sephardic. The rest of the Jews had to "bow" - as they vividly put it to me - in front of the Sephardic who constitute the "elite of Judaism".<sup>11</sup> This perception was even more persistent as far as language was concerned. This is *Judaeo-Espagnol* and the local version of it, Ladino, a vernacular derived from ancient Spanish<sup>12</sup> and subsequently influenced by several languages that were used in the area.<sup>13</sup> It was commonplace among people over thirty-five that:

<sup>11</sup>Thessaloniki's Jews repeatedly argued that: "*the Sephardic are the elite of Judaism*". During my fieldwork, I also had the opportunity to talk to some Thessalonikian Jews who lived in Israel. According to them: "*In Israel, Sephardic Jews are considered backward and are looked down upon by Ashkenazi Jews who are considered the more civilised people*".

<sup>12</sup>Ladino is a version of the ancient Castilian dialect and has many similarities but also many differences from modern Spanish (Filippis 1997, Molho 1994, 1998). Spanish-speaking friends, whenever I gave them a poem in Ladino to translate, always found unknown words.

<sup>13</sup>According to Molho (1998), the Jews brought from Spain their language, a version of ancient Spanish. This language was subsequently influenced by Turkish, Italian, Greek and Balkan languages and created the local version of Spanish-Hebrew or *djudezmo*, which is widely known as Ladino. The scholars agree that initially Ladino had nothing to do with the Hebrew language but the population of the Ottoman Empire recognised Ladino as the language of the Jewish people in Thessaloniki. Thus, they used to call it *yahudidje*, which means in Turkish "Jewish language".



and that Jewishness for him was only a matter of religious identification. He added that being a Greek-Jew does not mean that he or his family "lack" some aspect of Greekness:

*"I am Jewish only as far as my religious identity is concerned. But every other aspect of my identity is purely Greek. I am a Greek citizen, my passport is Greek, my children will complete their military obligations towards this country, I work as a civil servant and I pay taxes. You know I fully realise my identity when I happen to be abroad. I realise then that I am absolutely Greek".*

Many old people that I interviewed had sent their children to study and live in Israel. This was the case for Caroline, who had spent three years in a concentration camp during the War. For her, Israel was not only a place of security but represented the "proper" place in which the Jewish people should live. Despite the fact that she talked so positively about the state of Israel she refused to leave Thessaloniki and go there after the War. No evident reasons for this decision could be found in her words apart from a strong emotional attachment to the city of Thessaloniki:

*"My son, who lives in Israel, fought in the Six-Day War.<sup>15</sup> I was so worried for him. I told him to come back*

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<sup>15</sup>In 1967, Israel became involved in a war with Egypt and its Arab allies. The Israelis captured the walled Old City of Jerusalem which had been in the



those who belonged to the first and the second generation, there was a noticeable consensus about what constituted their past. They were aware of the exact period and the historical reasons for their expulsion from Spain. Young people were aware of the Sephardic past, but they avoided -at least in public- any direct identification with it and as such they refused cultural distinctiveness. They insisted that they were "the same" as other Thessalonikian Greeks they just had a "different religion".

Rosa who was also a Holocaust survivor explained to me that for her, "feeling Thessalonikian" was more important than any other identity. She could have chosen to live in Israel but instead after the War she returned to her native city, which was her "home". Above all, she felt she belonged to Thessaloniki and her past and present were tied to this city:

*"After the War, many things kept me here. Now I know that I could not live anywhere else. I feel so attached to Thessaloniki and I think that I would suffer very much by leaving here. These are not just personal feelings. All the Jews who were born here love Thessaloniki. I feel that this is my home. I feel that every change that happens in this city also happens in my home. Thessaloniki is to spiti mou (in English: my home). It was the right decision to return to Thessaloniki".*

Jacob objected strongly to the term "double identity". He explained that he fully experienced his loyalty to Greece



It is difficult to define "authenticity", the term used to describe most culinary worlds. On the surface authenticity entails several other notions like "being old", "being original", "being uncontaminated" and thus "real" and "pure". Yet the more concepts we employ in order to explain claims to authenticity, the more complex the issue becomes. Questions like why and when authenticity is claimed remind us that "being authentic" is not a natural fact or a given description, but a conscious construction and a deliberate identification used by individuals. By this token, it becomes increasingly difficult to define the criteria that identify something as food in this case- as authentic because there is a constant process of authenticating. Bakalaki (2000) argued that in relation to food, these criteria multiply and change sometimes with unpredictable outcomes. People are active controllers of such discourses because they tend to search for and cherish authenticity. Thus, "authentic" food is in a process of constant redefinition without having fixed and prescribed boundaries.

The issue of authenticity could be linked to the question regarding the construction of identity. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) explored the connections between culture, power and the centrality of place and asserted that identity is often involved in the process of authentication. This process could be described as an endeavour to legitimatise and justify social choices. If we take into account the double forces of legitimisation and



and work with his father. I remember he looked at me and said: 'Mother how can you say such a thing after all you went through?' He was right. Even now when I think about that incident I blush. I raised my children with the idea that when they grow up they must go and live there together with other Jews. I go there almost twice a year. I care for that country a lot. I am interested in its news and development. It is the country of the Jews. They should all live there. But of course you will ask me why I am living here. Well many reasons have kept me in Thessaloniki".

Thessalonikian Jews did not perceive Jewishness as a homogeneous umbrella that lacked differentiation. "Being Jewish" evoked some kind of sympathy and commonality but yet different interpretations of "other Jews" resulted in different versions of Judaism. Israeli Jews were considered very strict and Orthodox Jews were thought to be "obsessed" with Judaism. For Sara, Israeli Jews were different, even their eating habits were different: "*They have humus and falafel whereas we don't even know these dishes. We certainly eat differently.*"

### **The voices of Thessaloniki's Jews: Culinary differences as cultural distinctiveness**

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hands of Jordan before the war: "The man who led Israel to victory over Egypt and its Arab allies, defence Minister Moshe Dayan, told the soldiers, 'We have returned to the holiest of our holy places never to depart from it again.'" (Chronicle of the World 1996: 1062).



and moreover, food is always the starting point for discussions about "a past", which is always treated with a kind of nostalgia. For my informants this process of incorporation and embodiment was "consumed" actually and symbolically through food.<sup>16</sup>

The relationship between food and memory according to Lupton (1996) should be treated as symbiotic, as food has the power to create a desired and highly treasured past and food memories also shape our present tastes and preferences. This strong association between food and memory was a topic that often emerged while I was in the field. "Good" and "authentic" food was only the food that mother had prepared as in the case of Nelli, aged 75, who still provided her two sons with her home-made food, although they had their own families and non-Jewish housewives. Nelli's explanation was that people never stop loving the tastes they were brought up with. Her non-Jewish daughters-in-law would certainly not appreciate Sephardic food because they were not familiar with it. There is a strong connection between taste and childhood and remembering tastes is often a recollection of a harmonious past. Thus tastiness becomes

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<sup>16</sup>Seremetakis in her book *The Senses Still*, an exploration of perceptions and memories as material culture in modernity argues: "Commensality here *is not* just the social organisation of food and drink consumption and the rules that enforce social institutions at the level of consumption. Nor can it be reduced to the food-related senses of taste and odour. *Commensality can be defined as the exchange of sensory memories and emotions and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling.* Historical consciousness and other forms of social knowledge are created and then replicated in time and space through commensal ethics and exchange" (Seremetakis 1994: 37, emphasis in the original).



authentication it becomes easier to explain why specific cultural differences are sometimes considered important in the creation of identities and others are less so.

An analysis of cuisine should enable the deconstruction and the critical re-reading of discourses on originality and authenticity. Interestingly enough, Thessaloniki's Jews did not employ discourses of authenticity and originality in relation to their cuisine. Thus, they performed cooking so as to enable "silent" comparisons. By employing discourses of authenticity in relation to cooking, Thessalonikian Jews managed and manipulated in various ways the discourse of cultural distinctiveness. I was often offered the opportunity to taste this difference:

*"This is the way our mothers and grandmothers used to cook. Our cuisine has been influenced by theirs. You know most dishes seem the same as yours, but they are not. I don't know why but they taste different.."*

The Jews in Thessaloniki attributed great importance to the issue of authenticity. The regular references to this quality of their cuisine strengthened their discourse of cultural origins. They constantly employed their Sephardic past to describe their cultural presence and food was seen as an important part of their cultural make-up. For most of my informants their Spanish past was still alive, viewed as an experienced, incorporated and shared past; food often functioned as a means to participate and experience this sharing. As Seremetakis (1994) notes, every journey (real or imaginative) is marked by its taste



Spanish origins were invested with such cultural importance that some Jewish people in Thessaloniki attributed Spanishness to certain food items even where no equivalent word can be found in the Spanish language. One of my informants explained: "*Haminados eggs are named like that by the term hamin, which means oven in Spanish*". But another, Albertos, strongly objected to this explanation. For him *hamin* is not Spanish but a Hebrew word and it doesn't mean oven but it is used to describe the food that is cooked on a Friday night and metaphorically means "warmth" and "embers". Sephardic identity was justified through certain dishes but depended much on personal interpretations; Spanish associations were highly treasured and yet they were subject to individual translation and thus negotiation.

There were repeated attempts to define Otherness, so that Jewish cuisine often stood in contrast to Christian cuisine. In fact, Sephardic cuisine often employed to stress this dividing line. Although I was given different interpretations of the historical factors that influenced Sephardic cuisine there was a noticeable consensus - especially among the first and the second generations - on separating Greek from Jewish cuisine. As Sara explained to me:

*"In general Jewish food is different from Greek cuisine. You have too much heavy food and you fry it a lot. Of course, this can be explained historically. Our ancestors were poor and always persecuted so that they had to move quite often. Our diet mainly consists of vegetables*



synonymous with familiarity and childhood (Kravva 2001).

Sutton's (2001) work is quite stimulating because food is not seen as a store of memories but food and memories are found in a dialectical symbiosis. There is a lack of the embodied apprenticeship of cooking and eating, however they should both be treated as "embodied practices". Drawing from his fieldwork on the Greek island of Kalymnos, Sutton concludes on the connections between cooking, eating and belonging: "*In telling me to use the transitory and repetitive act of eating as a medium for the more enduring act of remembering, they were, in fact, telling me to act like a Kalymnian*" (2001: 2, emphasis in the original). Thus, memories are not passive, stored images but found in a constant process of past and present interaction.

The process of authenticating was not a given but an active strategy in which individuals were contributors and controllers. The fact that most dishes echoed Spanish names was the ultimate proof of this cultural and historical association. I recall phrases like:

*"Sfougatico is of Spanish origin".*

Or

*"Maronchinos is a sweet dish we prepare and this is definitely a Spanish word".*

Or

*"In Greek you call this sweet loukoumades and in Ladino we call them boumouelos".*



Jewish cooking. While I was in the field, I went to a coffee shop with Andreas, a Christian friend who was very interested in Jewish cuisine, and Nicki the director of the old people's home. Our discussion centred on the topic of Jewish cuisine. Andreas said that the other day some friends had gathered and cooked the Jewish bean soup and he remarked, "*We added some tomato juice as the cookbook recommends*". Nicki remarked quite surprised:

*"But why? We never put tomato in this soup. Some recipes in this book are not exact. I have noticed it with other recipes as well. For example sometimes it suggests many eggs. No, I never cook this way"*.

It is indicative that in her words she made use of both "We" and "I", as if the way she cooks is representative of what Jewish cuisine is, or as if Jewish cuisine was something fixed and strictly prescribed. A fixed culinary order was employed by her and other informants. For James (1997) the belief in a fixed, static and prescribed culinary world sustains and promotes fixed cultural identities. Therefore the thought of a culinary order becomes a powerful statement of being and belonging.

Apart from the different techniques of Sephardic cuisine and the different repertoire of recipes, the use of different ingredients in cooking is what made dishes different. Thessalonikian Jews translated difference in terms of tastier, lighter and healthier cuisine. Thus, my



*and bread".*

Defining Otherness and drawing a dividing line between Jewish and Christian cooking was a topic I came across a number of times. Most housewives were keen to emphasize the differences between the two cuisines and stressed that although most ingredients were the same, Sephardic culinary culture involved different "techniques". Linda, who lived with her husband, had associated the reunion of the family with cooking Sephardic dishes. Her daughters and grandchildren were not living in the same house. Although she initially argued that she cooked only on the occasion of a family reunion I realised -after a number of visits- that preparing and consuming Sephardic dishes was an everyday reality for her and her husband. After several visits, she invited me to her kitchen:

*"I am preparing our bean soup. Here, taste some. You know our bean soup differs from yours. We fry the beans with fresh onions until they become brown. See? It must be served thick".*

Linda's husband added to our discussions afterwards:

*"I have never tasted your bean soup but my wife is much more flexible. She can eat it"*

The distinction "Us" versus "Them" frequently arose, especially when Jewish cooking was compared to non-



have been shaped to a great extent by the concept of healthy eating. Thus, the concept becomes a political issue and the information concerning healthy food enacts political influence and power.<sup>17</sup>

The discourse of "healthy eating" is a powerful political tool not only for the reason described above. In the case of the Jewish people in Thessaloniki, the rhetoric of "healthy eating" was evolved in order to serve desired political ends. Jewish cuisine was considered to be healthier than non-Jewish, Greek in general.<sup>18</sup> Susan asserted that:

*"You have too much heavy food and you fry it a lot. Our cuisine is much lighter. Our ancestors' diet consisted mainly of bread and vegetables, quite light and simple things".*

Even the use of *matzah* to make pies, fried balls or sauces was thought to make the food "tastier" and "lighter" and thus, different. However, the preparation of some dishes

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<sup>17</sup>Reilly and Miller (1997) discuss the central role of the media in the emergence of food as a social issue. However they argue that it is "important to go beyond media-centric explanations and understand that the way in which the media operates is a product of complex interactions between the media, the social institutions on which they report and the public" (1997: 249).

<sup>18</sup>The major food classification scheme that emerged from interviews with adolescent women in Toronto divided foodstuffs in two categories: "junk food" and "healthy food". Each category was vested with symbolic meanings. Hence "junk food" was associated with weight gain, friends, independence and guilt whereas "healthy food" was associated with weight loss, parents and being at home (Chapman and Maclean 1993).



informants drew my attention to the frequent use of unleavened bread (*matzah*) in their cooking. *Matzah* is mainly associated with the Passover and it is purchased during those days from the community centre. As explained:

*"In the past, friends or relatives who went to Israel returned here laden down with food items. There was no way of finding matzah here. But nowadays, we buy it from the community centre."*

The unleavened bread was the basic ingredient for most Sephardic dishes associated with the celebration of Pessah. According to Ruth:

*"We use matzah as the basic ingredient in many of our dishes. We use it instead of bread or filo pastry in order to prepare fried balls, pies, and sauces, almost everything. So the dishes become tastier"*.

A number of authors have stressed the fact that there is an increasing preoccupation with the health effects of the modern high-fat and high-sugar diet (Lupton 1996, Bradby 1997, Caplan 1997). Some of them consider the agenda of food information and view it as a powerful political medium through which food producers often construct notions of "healthy eating" in order to maximize their profit. Keane (1997) notes that commercial considerations, in particular advertising,



Greek cuisine as opposed to other non-Greek cuisines. The fact that the Jews had lived in Greece for hundreds of years provided the justification for the local adaptation of their cuisine:

*"All these are Greek dishes. There is no 100% Jewish cuisine. You know we have been living here for more than 400 years".*

The dynamic processes of negotiation and synthesis were even more evident among younger Thessalonikian Jews. In particular, families with younger members seemed to follow willingly some Christian festivities and the customs that accompany them. Dinah explained the situation as follows:

*"I could say that along with the Jewish festive days I also celebrate some Christian festive days and the same applies especially to the younger members of my family. And during Easter we eat mageiritsa, the Christian Easter soup (laugh). We like it. You know it's inevitable".*

The following incident illustrates this quite clearly. Maria, a young Christian woman, when asked about a Jewish friend, answered:

*"She is Jewish but not like the others, she is modern. Lilly follows our customs. For example during the*



with *matzah* still involved unhealthy culinary practices like, for example, frying with olive oil. The point I want to make is that Thessalonikian Jews employed the notion of healthy eating, most of the time idiosyncratically in order to point to the distinct and more positive qualities of their own cooking.

The issue of proximity between Sephardic and Greek cuisine or more correctly between Sephardic and Thessalonikian cuisine was a recurrent theme in most food discussions I had with middle aged and older people. In these discussions the boundaries between Greek, Thessalonikian and Sephardic cooking was constantly shifted and negotiated. Sephardic dishes were considered Thessalonikian dishes at the same time and were seen as part and parcel of the history of the city. When I asked Rosa to briefly describe the origins of Sephardic dishes she replied: "*These dishes are taken from the cuisine of Thessaloniki*". Her friend Rene added that:

*"The culture of Thessaloniki has been strongly influenced by Jewish culture. You can't study Sephardic cuisine if you don't study Thessalonikian and Mediterranean cuisine"*.

In some cases, people treated Sephardic cuisine as an integral part of Greek cuisine. Some of their comments were conscious or unconscious efforts to stress the "Greekness" of several of the ingredients they used. Linda once commented: "*Our olive oil is the best in the world*". In her words, the term "Our" referred to Greece and



"Isaac: *As far as cooking is concerned I don't think that Sephardic cuisine exists anymore and of course there is no such thing as Jewish identity.*

Isaac's mother: *What about the prassokeptedes that I cook for you? You do like them...*

Isaac: *Okay, probably there is something left. But as far as the younger generation is concerned things have changed. For example I am a vegetarian<sup>20</sup>".*

His mother explained to me when he left:

*"I am sure that my son won't create a Jewish family. I can't say the same about my other son. I mean that Isaac will not seek to marry a Jewish woman and bring up his children according to the Jewish principles. I try not to press him. He is a very free spirit. I think inevitably, as time goes by our identity will be lost".*

For some younger people the emphasis on the cultural distinctiveness of Thessalonikian Jews was a sign of stagnation, backwardness and incompatibility with modern life. Thus, they emphasised that life in

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<sup>20</sup>Vegetarianism is an important issue related to food choices and general lifestyle. According to Lupton (1996), the vegetarian philosophy is based on major objections to meat; its consumption is unhealthy, unnecessary and immoral. Abstinence from it also enhances spirituality and purity. In this case, I believe that vegetarianism has another dimension: rebellion against parental culture and therefore refusal to consume "the same" food as parents do.



*Christian Easter she eats our mageiritsa".*

Young people often express their resistance and their resentment of parental culture through their bodies. Refusing to eat what the parents provide or eating the "wrong" food could be seen as an embodied rebellion (Lupton 1996). This was the case for the younger generation of the city's Jews. Most young people I talked to emphasised the fact that their diet nowadays was not restricted by any rules and that fast-food, the food that they preferred, could be easily found and consumed.<sup>19</sup> In their attitude, I witnessed a strong emphasis on sameness: Thessalonikian Jews were not thought as different from other Thessalonikians and the food they consumed was beyond doubt the same. Lucille, a young woman commented:

*"We eat ready-made food and go to fast-food places. For example, we eat at McDonalds. Things are the same now. We all eat the same".*

Isaac, an educated man in his mid twenties was one of them, "a very free and open minded spirit" as his mother commented. Isaac, his mother and I had a very illuminating discussion regarding the "modern" shift in food preferences and the youth's perceptions of Sephardic cuisine.

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<sup>19</sup>As Watson (1997) argues there are no clear-cut boundaries between the local and the global but they are constantly in processes of adaptation, antagonism and translation.



Other young people held a more positive attitude towards Jewish celebrations and rituals. For Sutton (2001), the senses of taste and smell are embodied in and the power of food memories derives from what he calls synaesthesia, which is the intersecting of different sensory experiences. As far as Kalymnos is concerned, this concept is central in order to understand food practices; Synaesthesia makes the experience of "returning to the whole" possible. The "return to the whole" used by Fernandez in contexts of religious revitalisation is used by Sutton in the context of Kalymnian migration. Thus, islanders who live away from their native land, mainly in America, experience a physical and symbolic return to their home country through experiences with food. It is as if ethnic boundaries are transported along with travelling food.

For example, Andreas a man in his late twenties was studying in Paris. His grandmother argued that the celebration of *Pessah* was a strong attraction for him:

*"Whenever he phones me he asks me if I intend to celebrate Pessah. I keep this tradition and he seems to enjoy it very much. Whenever Andreas comes I cook for him a pie made with matzah and meat with peas. You know just to remind him of our Pessah".*

Although Andreas' food preferences probably had nothing to do with the food prepared for *Pessah*, he nevertheless consumed it as a sign of family reunion. Food for him became a metaphor of return physically and symbolically among his own people.



contemporary Thessaloniki was freer and so were their food habits. Nevertheless, a significant number of them participated in Jewish celebrations and ate at least some of the "traditional" dishes that the women in their families had prepared. Isaac's mother explained to me that what had changed is not the actual food but the contexts in which these foods are consumed:

*"I prepare keftikes and freeze them. So, whenever my sons feel hungry they can find something to eat. You know they love having them for breakfast".*

The tension between the eating preferences of the older and the younger Thessalonikian Jews showed a noticeable degree of differentiation. The reaction of the younger people in relation to the food attitudes of the older and the middle-aged generation varied considerably. I remember once when I visited Sara's home and she was desperately trying to find the booklet that the community centre sends on the occasion of important Jewish celebrations. On the last page one could find many "authentic" Sephardic recipes. Sara apologized:

*"I am sorry but I can't find it anywhere. You know I hide it somewhere because when I cook I look at the recipes of this booklet. But my children laugh at me. They think I am too obsessed. I don't think I'll find it. I have hidden it for good".*



contrary, there was a great deal of differentiation mainly based on age: the first and the second generations of Thessalonikian Jews expressed a strong association with their Sephardic past whereas the third generation was quite reluctant to make such associations explicit. For them, "not being different" was a statement that was often employed in order to express their ambiguous belonging. And yet by tasting food, the Jews of the city tasted, transmitted and selectively evoked their past, created flexible livelihoods in the present.

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## Conclusions

The Jews in Thessaloniki used food and eating as repositories of being and belonging. Through the act of commensality, a whole rhetoric of cultural distinctiveness was constructed and perpetuated. Food was invested with powerful past and present identifications and by this token, the Jews who live in this Greek city in Macedonia created a sense of commonality and collectivity. Food enacted memories and nostalgic recollections of a lost world. As such, it stored and constructed membership of a distinct group. The Jews of Thessaloniki ate food and talked about it while at the same time they perpetuated or, at times, rejected discourses of cultural distinctiveness and highlighted their Jewishness, Thessalonikianess, Sephardicness and Greekness according to the situation they found themselves in. Thus, identities whether Jewish, Sephardic, Thessalonikian, Greek or all of them together shifted and were subjected to translation, negotiation and transformation.

In the case of Thessalonikian Jews, the sense of belonging to a distinct community was partly achieved through the celebrations that took place at the community's institutions like the primary school, the synagogue and the old people's home. In my experience, food sharing -especially on ritual occasions- proved an effective channel for the reworking of Jewishness and Jewish belonging. Of course, I am not claiming that all discourses revealed the same degree of belonging. On the



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summer vacations in their native land.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fact that such images are constitutive of the perception of immigration in Greek society, the increasing number<sup>3</sup> of studies of immigration in Greece have, by in large, ignored the border as a research locale. A comprehensive review of the literature remains beyond the scope of this paper, however it is noteworthy that in a recent volume (Papataxiarchis 2006) subtitled "The production of cultural difference in today's Greece", in which immigration is seen as a cornerstone of the ongoing (re)definition of identities (ibid: 40-50), borderlands are dealt with either as sites of age old cultural multiplicity brought to the national surface by recent political developments (ibid: 28 and also Agelopoulos and Tsibiridou in the same volume) or, as far as migration is concerned, simply as the entry points of immigrants into Greece.

In a sense borders and new migration are seen as diverging research subjects, defined by different temporalities. The former pertains to questions of national culture creation, a long historical process

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<sup>2</sup>The image of borders in the Greek press deserves a treatment of its own. Here we adduce two exemplary pieces, one accompanying a news bulletin on a drug raid of Greek police: "Northern Greece is engulfed by a cluster of imported (Ξενοφρονο) crime, as the borders are 'passages' of illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons, illegal immigrants, women (sic), cars, even bootleg cds." (*Ta Nea*, 28/7/1997); and an excerpt of an interview with K. Papoulias, current president of Greece and, for many years, its minister for external affairs: "Now television screens are full of burglaries, murders, criminality of the Albanian mafia, bloody events of hostage-taking, and the constant sending back of illegal immigrants through Kakavia [border passage]" (*Kathimerini*, 6/4/2000).

<sup>3</sup>For a comprehensive bibliography of studies on recent immigration in Greece access <http://www.migrantsingreece.org>.



**Migration and National Borders.  
Albanian migrants to Greece: A local case.<sup>1</sup>**

**Introduction**

"[a border is] not a spatial fact with sociological effects but a sociological fact which forms space" (G. Simmel 1908: 623, quoted in Berdahl 1999: 4).

Beginning in 1991, the border between Greece and Albania captured the collective imagination in Greece, being transformed, almost overnight, from a backwater of the nation's heroic past to a liminal landscape dominated by danger and lawlessness. In the last decade, national news of this specific border, as it has been projected in the mass media, has consisted of images of mountainous terrain continuously crossed by groups of people dressed in rags, police buses carrying people arrested as illegal immigrants to the custom stations in order to be deported, news bulletins on drug-trafficking and, more recently, images of long queues of cars on the Albanian side containing people waiting patiently to cross the border to Greece, those returning from Christmas or

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## **Borders and the division of social space: the view from anthropology**

Anthropology's main contribution to the study of national borders has been to make clear their symbolic nature. Symbols of power (Donnan and Wilson 1999:1) define at once territorial limits, one of the cornerstones of nation-states, as well as sociocultural space, creating an inside and outside which makes the simple crossing of them an identity transformation "from a citizen into a foreigner" (Berdahl 1999: 4). This anthropological insight hardly comes as a surprise, as it relates to the study of the relations of power between and among nations and states, something long emphasized by anthropologists; it points to the importance of studying cultural boundaries and their maintenance in order to better understand the dynamics of identity formation. One needs only to mention E.E. Evans-Prichard's classic study of the Nuer (1940) in which he showed clearly that due to the segmentary structure of group identity, it was always defined in relation, if not in opposition to other groups.

However, what was implicit in the work of Evans-Prichard became explicit in Fredrik Barth's investigation of ethnic boundaries, which signaled a paradigm shift in anthropology. Barth observed that "boundaries persist despite the flow of personnel across them" (Barth 1969: 9), insisting that the focus of investigation should shift to "the ethnic boundaries that define the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses" (op. cit. p.: 15). Despite the importance of Barth's contribution, his analytic



associated with the creation of the nation-state, while the latter is related to the social conditions of late modernity. It is then no surprise that borders enter the analysis of migration through a critique of the public imagery mentioned at the beginning of this article, as the reified symbolic edge of the nation.<sup>4</sup> It is our view that migration at borderlands deserves our attention for two reasons. Firstly it constitutes a different kind of migration. The difference consists, as we intend to show, both in the strategies of individuals and families but also in the ways that issues of identity construction and negotiation are dealt with. The second reason is that an interesting inversion of the conceived ontology of borders and immigrants can be observed. Borderlines become less stable and immigrants less mobile. Our focus here is on a small part of the Greek-Albanian borderland, defined geographically by two border towns - Konitsa, in Greece and Leskovik, in Albania. By presenting a series of different encounters with the specific borders, we intend to point to the different ways that the new migratory experience (which obviously includes both migrants and locals) is conceived, reworked and articulated.

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<sup>4</sup>This approach is central in an article, which combines migration and the border in its title (Papailias 2003) describing the creation of a "migration hero" after the hijacking of a public bus in Greece by an Albanian immigrant.



guided by research projects that chose to study boundaries on actual national or territorial borders. Peter Sahlins' study of the Spanish-French border (1989) has been quite important in pointing out the historical interplay of local and extra-local factors in the creation of national borders, challenging the notion that the nation-state was constructed from the center outwards. During the 1990s Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson advanced the study at and of national borders (1994, 1998, 1999), insisting on the importance of localized, particularistic and territorially focused notion of borders.

They point out that:

"Anthropology of borders simultaneously explores the cultural permeability of the borders, the adaptability of border people in their attempts ideologically to construct political divides, and the rigidity of some states in their effort to control the cultural fields that transcend their borders. Anthropologists thus study the social and economic forces which demand that a variety of political and cultural boundaries be constructed and crossed in the everyday life of people" (1998: 8)

This theoretical position, clearly grounded in empirical studies of border zones, is critically positioned against a more general surge of interest in boundaries within anthropology that attempts to conceptualize borderlands as paradigmatic of post-modern fragmentation and



perspective was criticized for not paying enough attention to those mechanisms that construct or sustain boundaries, the very role that "cultural stuff" plays in making boundaries visible and effective (Mewett 1986: 73).

These mechanisms were exactly the focus in a series of studies of British communities (Cohen 1982, 1986) that stressed the importance of everyday practices in producing and maintaining boundaries, which, in turn, enable people to express a sense of distinctiveness and common identity. As P. Mewett points out

"The territorial boundary is a secondary thing, however: it provides the physical symbol differentiating one natural unit from another, but its construction occurs in socio-cultural space" (ibid: 83).

Symbolic in nature, boundaries then, from the moment they are created, function not only to reinforce but also to create difference, enhancing social classification and ordering. While offering another component in the understanding of boundaries, these studies, by overemphasizing the devices used locally to reproduce and maintain boundaries, overlook the degree to which identities and borders are externally defined, articulated within larger social, political and economic processes.

Such a theoretical shift was advanced quite recently<sup>5</sup>,

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<sup>5</sup>Although an extensive review of the literature is not the aim of this paper and we intend to focus on studies published during the last two decades, we cannot avoid mentioning here the groundbreaking work of Cole and Wolf (1974) in the Italian Tyrol, in which they focused on the persistence of a cultural frontier long after the political borders of the state and empire had ceased to exist.



and services; they are sites of surveillance, control, regulation, and inspection; and they are places of secrecy fear and danger" (Berdahl 1999: 8).

In our view, the everyday life of border areas is defined to a great extent by the following contradiction: practices with meanings dependent on the existence of a borderline also compromise the border as an apparatus devised to produce difference (cf. Wilson and Donnan 2005: 11-13). And such practices carry not only a spatial load but a temporal one as well. We do not mean here simply that every national border has a past in which it was defined, fought over, enforced or undermined, but rather that this past is conceived and made meaningful in the present by individuals or collectivities (cf. Hirsch and Stewart 2003).

One of the principal aims of our study then is to explore the multiplicity of meanings invested in border zones in the specific locale defined by the Greek-Albanian border. It is quite important to stress here that this borderline was transformed almost overnight from an almost completely impermeable "wall", the crossing of which could be, and for some has been, fatal, to an incredibly porous one that became the entry point of the hundreds of thousand Albanian immigrants in Greece. Thus, a brief review of the transformations of this specific border in the last century and the concrete effects they have had on local populations is needed in order to contextualize present developments.



hybridization of social space. In this latter view, the borderland becomes more a metaphor than a physical space<sup>6</sup> and a privileged ground for a theoretical reworking of the concept of culture. It is then not the anthropological gaze that shifts to actual borders but borders that become ubiquitous in social life:

"More than we care to think, our everyday lives are crisscrossed by border zones, pockets and eruptions of all kinds. Social borders frequently become salient around such lines as sexual orientation, gender, class, race, ethnicity, nationality, age, politics, dress, food, or taste." (Rosaldo 1989: 207-208)

On the one hand, this approach offers an interesting conceptualization of the fluidity and contextual nature of social identities. On the other however, it neglects the specificity of actual borders and the material conditions that define them. As Daphne Berdahl points out:

"[Borders] are contested and negotiated in culturally specific ways by individuals and the state; they are resources for both legal and illegal exchanges of goods

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In a programmatic text Gupta and Ferguson suggest that: "The borderlands are just such a place of incommensurable contradictions. The term does not indicate a fixed topographical site between two fixed locales (nations, societies, cultures), but an interstitial zone of displacement and deterritorialization that shapes the identity of the hybridized subject. Rather than dismissing them as insignificant, as marginal zones, thin slivers of land between stable places, we want to contend that the notion of borderlands is a more adequate conceptualization of the 'normal' locale of the postmodern subject." (Gupta and Ferguson 1992: 18).



imposition of related borders came the intensification of the process of nationalization/homogenization of all social groups into one of two national categories -Greek or Albanian. However, in the years between 1913, the initial drawing of the borderline, and 1945, when the border became a cold war divide as well, perhaps contradictory attitudes towards the border seem to have co-existed. On the one hand, for example, in the 1910s and early 1920s, the municipal archives of Konitsa, Greece, show a relatively significant number of people that moved from Albanian border communities to Greek ones, a few kilometres south (cf. De Rapper 2005: 184), "choosing" one citizenship status over the other; others followed the opposite route as their religious identity (Muslim) could not be accommodated within Greek national culture.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand however, border communities on both sides retained their trans-border connections, undermining local state power. Kin and commercial networks remained in place, effectively retaining, to a certain degree, the unity of the area. Even the territoriality of the state was challenged locally, as people continued to cultivate properties that were on the other side of border, living in villages that enjoyed literally a transnational status.

However, the sealing of the border in 1945 put an end to all of this. Border control by the two states became

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<sup>7</sup>As always in times of rumble decisions and strategies are highly contextual. Thus others chose to remain to their communities at the cost of being excluded from the dominant national identities. The few Muslim families that remained in Konitsa are a case in point.



## **No border, open border, closed border, border open again, or not?**

The initial drawing of the Greek-Albanian border was not an easy task. Reconciling the borders of the two nation-states with the ethnic and cultural communities present in this border region was a formidable project. In the end, the arbitrary character of the border line not only created "islands of alterity" on both sides, but it also made it quite difficult to assign the novel national labels to the ethnic groups living in the area in general. Two simply and ideally opposed national identities -the Greek and the Albanian- were to correspond to the officially recognized groups of the area. Intermediate categories, alien ethnic groups, and ambiguous identities could not be accommodated in this new project as it was defined by nationalism. National identities are supposed to be eternal, stable, monolithic, internally homogeneous and externally differentiated from others, especially neighboring identities or those that share component parts. As it is well known, in the Ottoman past the main criterion for distinguishing the population of the empire was religion, according to the millet system (cf. L. K. Hart 1999: 198-220, Th. Veremis et al. 1995). With the onset of the era of nationalism in the Balkans, after the dissolution of the Ottoman system, ethnic groups contained in the wider category of the millet were not so easily transformed into national identities.

With the advent of nation-states in the Balkans and the



migrants in the region of Konitsa, we have to take into consideration the historical background of translocal relations in combination with the contemporary economic, social and demographic conditions prevailing in the area. Probably the most crucial consideration is the demographic, concerning the aging Greek population, their decreased economic production, and the disintegration of social structures of local communities in general. In fact, substantial productive activities can be found only in the town of Konitsa, the agricultural villages situated in the Konitsa plateau, and in a few mountain pastoral communities. Construction activities related to the 1996 earthquake are an important part of the local economy as well, supported by substantial state funding for the rebuilding of destroyed houses, as is limited tourist development funded by European and national projects.

By and large, the region suffers from a huge demographic gap characterized by an aging population and its lack of reproduction. As early as the 1950s, studies (Mendras 1961) have pointed out a "demographic paradox": Local communities relied not on their own resources for their reproduction but on the diaspora of their members who used to return home after retirement. The relationship between the compatriots of the diaspora and their native village gradually acquired great importance, especially after 1980, when the tendency to return to native villages became widespread, resulting in the increasingly common phenomenon of "double residence". This fact by itself creates the conditions for



extremely rigid and communities caught in-between were equally marginalized, regardless of what transgressive social practices they engaged in. Communities, which had for centuries shared intimate relations, such as Konitsa with Leskovik, Plikati with Rahovë, and Depalitsa with Vlahopsiloterë were torn apart and isolated from one another. Kin groups, even families were separated. Extensive economic exchanges were put to an end. Cultural relations were interrupted. Mobile professional groups such as masons and shepherds could not cross the border any more, were forced to abandon their traditional routes, and remained confined within what became their national space. All of this was to bring serious consequences to the future of the whole region.

One dramatic result of this arbitrary and dramatic way of dividing the area has been the recent collapse of the border immediately following the fall of the Hoxha regime in Albania. The violent re-opening of the channels of communication through the violation of the national border reestablished, in a strange manner, the lost historic unity of the area. The border, which for half a century remained a potent symbol of isolationist and nationalist ideologies appears now as tragic, even strange - merely a random line guarded by Greek border patrols. In a single day people, livestock and goods cross the border, move from one village to the next, from one national territory to the other, creating literally a transnational space where only a translocal one existed before.

In order to appreciate the presence of the Albanian



Macedonia and Thesprotia each autumn. It is in this, in many regards, new social field created by the conjunction of grand narratives and the continual undermining of them by individuals and groups, that we now turn our focus.

## **Border or Borders**

### *Consuming the border*

The village of Molyvdoskepasti lies on the very edge of the Greek-Albanian border. One of the village churches stands right next to the military pyramids that mark the borderline. Until the opening of the official customs station at the bridge of Mertziani over the river Sarantaporos, the footpath starting at the edge of the church connecting the village with the first village on the Albanian side of the border, Vlahopsiloterë's, was the main border passage in the area controlled by the army. In Molyvdoskepastos (Depalitsa), at that time, people of various age-groups would get off the bus from Konitsa and cross the border at the edge of the village on foot in order to arrive at nearby villages in Albania. Despite the opening of the official border passage, the connection between the two villages continues to mirror the unofficial route. Vlahopsiloterë's few young men depend on Molyvdoskepastos for work. It also provides them with

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<sup>8</sup>Army frontier posts were positioned in several border villages in the area and until 1998, when the border police was founded, army personnel were mainly responsible for illegal migration. Most of these posts were abandoned at that point.



new housing needs and for a general revitalization process, since more and more people living in urban centers repair their old houses or build new ones spending their weekends and holidays in their villages of origin.

The above process seems to be quite crucial in understanding the so-called "pull factors" for Albanian immigration in this area. That is to say that immigrants fill specific gaps in the local economy and society, becoming at the same time cheap labor as well as an incentive for local people (permanent residents of the area or not) to "invest" in their native villages, (re)constructing houses, tending to deserted fields, or even deciding to start small business and employ Albanian migrants.

Thus Albanian immigrants enter a depopulated mountainous area, which, with the exception of the town of Konitsa and a few adjacent villages, lacks the human resources needed to sustain and reproduce local communities. Productive activities are concentrated mainly in the town of Konitsa, which, apart from the service and agricultural sector, relies primarily on tourism. In the mountain villages there is little productive activity except for a few small gardens for personal consumption and the breeding of a small number goats or sheep. Traditional crafts that used to be the dominant activity in the past have largely disappeared. With regard to transhumant pastoralism, there are still two Vlach communities whose decreasing populations continue to migrate to the plains of Thessaly,



becoming the Albanian river Vjosa which reaches the Adriatic. However the borderline does not correspond to any of these "natural" boundaries. This fact is not visible from the square.

As it happens, this specific point is one of the main attractions of the village (pic. 1). Visitors walking through the village, passing bilingual signs (in Greek and Albanian) posted amidst much litter, might have the borderline pointed out to them, depending on their status, by either a soldier from the frontier post<sup>8</sup>, a friend (if the visitor is hosted by a villager), or (in the case of a more formal visit) by a representative of the community.

As one would expect, the narrative of the border depends heavily on the narrator, on what he represents.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the soldier's narration coincides with a typical military theme and refers strictly to the geographical dimension of the border, guiding the visitor's gaze towards the borderline, from the horizon to the immediate border next to the church. The view is organized into numbered zones -rivers, mountain peaks and ravines are carefully divided between Greece and Albania. It is an attempt to impose the image of a map (a military map in this case) onto the landscape. During such a narration, visitors are

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<sup>8</sup>Army frontier posts were positioned in several border villages in the area and until 1998, when the border police was founded, army personnel were mainly responsible for illegal migration. Most of these posts were abandoned at that point.

<sup>9</sup>In all cases that we observed the narrator was a man.





*Pic 1: Signs at the entrance of the village indicating to the visitor the places of interest in Molyvdoskepasti*

a more secure postal address.

In front of the church is a stone-paved square on which stands a monument in honor of Greek soldiers who died during the Greek-Italian war (1940) as well as an army watch-post that overlooks the border area. From that point one can see the new bridge with the Albanian and Greek customs buildings, on opposite sides of the borderline, as well as much of the surrounding area. The Sarantaporos river, flowing from the northeast and the Aoos river, flowing from the south, meet at the border,



In a personal comment made to the ethnographer later that day, the Greek journalist said that *"it is important to show them [the foreigners] our history, our beauties and not our problems"*. Thus, the border can be exhibited (and consumed) but often only as part of the master narrative of a glorified national history.

What is important to point out here is the almost unanimous amazement expressed by visitors at the relative invisibility of the border. Despite the guidance offered by such narrators, it seems impossible to grasp the exact points where Greece stops and Albania begins. Preconceived ideas of the border as a line that perhaps doesn't create but at least affirms difference in this context seem obsolete. In light of this, more observant visitors try to reconcile such visual data with any former understandings of the borderline in order to re-produce some sense of difference. They may refer to a clearer image of the border from the past, deserted bunkers on the Albanian side, or to present socio-economic difference by pointing at the colours of the fields on the two side of the border (mostly green on the Greek side, mostly yellowish on the Albanian). The latter observation is interpreted as a sign of vitality in Greece and conversely a sign of poverty and abandonment in Albania. In this case, reality is reinterpreted to fit preconceived ideas. As a matter of fact, the colour difference of the fields is due to different kinds of agricultural production. On the Albanian side there are mainly wheat fields, aimed to cover domestic and local need for flour; on the Greek side the fields are mainly



constantly reminded that picture taking is prohibited. Questions concerning the rationale of such prohibition are usually answered by remarks on the lack of rationality in army directives. In one case a soldier commented sarcastically that it is "... *perhaps the photons (sic) of the cameras that are considered to be an invasion to the other country*".

A narration by a community representative (perhaps a retired teacher) might also guide the visitor's eye towards the borderline, but it offers a more localized version, with specific details on the features of the landscape together with local place-names. In addition, it is accompanied by a parallel historical narrative, which places the border, and inevitably the village, within the national narrative. The main focus is the Italian invasion in 1940, and a detailed account of the events that took place in the area in view. Such an engagement with history and the assumed local knowledge of the narrator prepares the ground for various types of questions from visitors. For example, during a visit made by a group of foreign and Greek tour operators and travel journalists, organized by the ministry of tourism in order to promote tourist activity in the area, a Greek journalist in his sixties provoked the narrator to give an even more detailed and heroic account of the Greek-Italian war, insisting on moving the focus of interest further north into Albanian soil. At the same time he tried to censor any reference to the present conditions of Albanian immigration. He responded to a question posed by an informed English journalist by saying that these things are "*not important*".



this time to the Greek side, at Agia Varvara. The initial move from Radat followed the general migratory wave from Albania to Greece, which had begun in the 1990s. Also typical was the family strategy. The husband, Leonardo migrated to and settled in Megara first, while his wife, Bona remained with his parents in Radat before joining him. The return however, a movement against the tide, begs questions. In conversation with the ethnographer, Leonardo felt that he needed to make it clear that his return did not signify failure in economic or social terms. On the contrary, he proudly insisted that he was the first from his village to settle there and that many more soon followed, attracted by his presence and success there. This discourse surrounding success and failure, quite common among migrants (see Nitsiakos 2003), is part of an attempt vis-à-vis migration-as-performance to distinguish oneself from the "rest". The immigrants, the Albanians, become persons in such a manner.

The decision then to return "almost" home was made, according to Leonardo, in consideration of his mother's health. However, as the specifics of their return became more clear, the roles that economic issues, network support, general concerns about the future well-being of the family, and the complex dialectic between desires and responsibilities -between future projects and present/past conditions- all rose in importance. For example, an acquaintance of Leonardo's, a man born in Agia Varvara who had emigrated to Athens in the 1970s, made the return possible to begin with. He was (is) the president of



sewn with clover. Local wheat production has been abandoned, as it has recently become economically inexpedient. In fact local villages in Greece have been gradually deserted by the younger population as they continue to move to Greek urban centres.

### ***What Border?***

Agia Varvara, also very close to the borderline, but further to the northeast from Molyvdoskepasti, is another interesting case study. Inhabited mainly by elderly residents, the village follows the general pattern of most mountainous communities of the area. Heavily depopulated due to emigration in the post-war decades (until the 1970s), its population rises sharply during the summer months, mainly in August, when people that were born in the village and left return to spend vacation time with parents and grandparents. The majority of these older residents in turn, also move to the cities during the winter months. Very few residents remain all year long and only some of their younger relatives, those living in the nearby city of Ioannina, visit the village on weekends.

However, despite the lack of people, the coffee shop of the village situated at the central square remains open all year. It is run by a couple that settled in the village with their two daughters (ages 7 and 9) in 2004. The path that led this family there began in the early 1990s at the neighboring village of Radat, in Albania, where the husband was born. From there they moved to Megara (a town outside of Athens) only to return to the borderland,



move to Greek urban centres or on their way back to Albania.

The new circulation of people, as is usually the case, was accompanied by the circulation of goods. Meat from slaughtered animals, herbal tea, and hunting dogs, for example, followed the same route from Radat (or other neighbouring villages) to be sold or offered as gifts in Agia Varvara and beyond. Electrical appliances and building materials bought in Konitsa or in Ioannina were transferred to Radat. While examining the political economy of these exchanges is beyond the scope of the present paper, one cannot avoid wondering about the implied structural inequalities (cf. Kearney 2004: 131-156).

This network functions then as if the borderline does not exist. People and goods move along footpaths, crossing deserted army frontier posts, on horses and mules. As long as the network remains contained within the specific geographical space defined by the two villages, the border guards on both sides turn a blind eye. The dividing line then becomes "*a somewhere there*" in the landscape and is transposed onto the past: "*there used to be the wire (το σύρμα)*", or "*then [when the border was closed] we could not set our eyes on Greece, people went to prison for this*".

However, this lack of a stable referent is not condoned by everybody in Agia Varvara. Relations between the elderly inhabitants and the newcomers are mixed. On the one hand, their very survival in the village is dependent upon the work of the immigrants. On the other, or rather because of this fact, older residents feel threatened, not



the association ("αδελφότητα"- "brotherhood") of the village in Athens and saw in Leonardo (an employee in his furniture factory in Athens) a solution to a major problem of the community -that it had become more and more difficult to get a local to run the village's coffee shop for more than a couple of months during the summer and a few weekends during the rest of the year<sup>10</sup>.

One cannot avoid thinking that this is simply classic patronage relations, symbolically reaffirmed with the christening of the couple's two daughters, one of the two taking the name of her godmother. However, what is more important for our analysis here is the effect that the settling of the couple in Agia Varvara had on the village of Radat. Of course the everyday migration from Radat to the Greek village was practiced before Leonardo and Bona returned from Megara. Their presence however provided a new reference and case in point that such former patterns lacked. By leaving the coffee shop (especially during the low season) in the hands of his wife, Leonardo took on the role of caretaker in the village, doing minor repairs in houses and gardens. He eventually became a small contractor, in Agia Varvara as well as in neighbouring villages. This gave him the opportunity to employ members of his kin group from Radat who now commute daily to work and return at night to their village. Furthermore, Agia Varvara became an intermediate station for relatives of the couple coming from further away in Albania, either on their way to

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<sup>10</sup>For the social role of the coffee shop in village life see for e.g. Papataxiarchis 1992: 209-250.



experience is the negation of a single concept of the border. The border is plural, defined each time contextually.

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able to control them:

*"they have all learned the language (Greek) and we communicate fine, but I do not understand any Albanian, and how do I know if they do not curse at me (laughing)?"*

This comment, in response to the ethnographer's curiosity regarding the immigrants' condition, was made in public, in the presence of Leonardo and his co-workers. On another occasion, during a public discussion concerning the construction of an outdoor grill, masons patronized older residents who insisted on offering their opinions as to how the work should be done with nods of agreement. The workers ignored all such suggestions in the end. Once again for the older inhabitants of Agia Varvara it is in the past where they can seek moral superiority and the order that has been shaken in the present. As a local woman commented

*"Before the war my father was a merchant in Leskovik, he had a shop there, it was like that, he did not go there to steal or to murder".*

### **Conclusion**

In this paper we have focused on the experience of a specific border, the one between Greece and Albania, in the area lying roughly between the towns of Konitsa and Leskovik. In our view, the main characteristic of this



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one of my Greek informants, Vasiliki<sup>2</sup>. After the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, Epirus was divided into two parts, the Albanian (northern) and Greek (southern). As Sarah F. Green writes, the term Northern Epirots is used to identify people from Southern Albania who are considered to be Greek (Green 2005: 12), i.e. those who have Greek surnames and are Orthodox Christian (Ibid.: 58-59).

The main purpose of my work was to examine the lives of different ethnic and religious groups living together in an ethnically mixed environment. In the region where I conducted my research, Muslims live only on the Albanian side of the border. I realized that only two days of fieldwork would not be effective and would merely highlight problems for further analysis. Moreover, because of the language barrier (I do not speak Greek and have just started to learn Albanian), I had to rely on help of my Greek and Albanian-speaking colleagues. Nevertheless, simply being there provided me with a lot to reflect upon - about methodology in anthropology (fieldwork as well as interpretation) and about the subject matter (coexistence in mixed societies or in border areas).

I have focused on two main issues, language and religion, because they seem to be the most important facets of national or ethnic identity. I consider both self-identification and the identification by others. These identities can be easily seen in the landscape: in the form of temples and cemeteries or graffiti and street-names.

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<sup>2</sup>The real names of my informants have been changed.



**Two languages, two religions and two nations:  
Notes and reflections from the field.**

The Greek-Albanian borderland is inhabited by ethnically mixed populations (various combinations of Albanians, Greeks, Vlachs<sup>1</sup> etc.) as well as by more homogenous communities (as in the case of predominantly Greek villages located in Albania). I have focused mainly on the town of Leskovik in Albania and its suburbs, attending and observing religious ceremonies (the Christian Orthodox ritual of the Transfiguration of Christ, in particular).

Leskovik is a small town with approximately 3.000 inhabitants located close to the Greek border in the region of Epirus. Although Leskovik today seems to be an almost completely Albanian town, one can observe very close relations with Greece. It is important to mention here the Greeks' attitude to this region. In Greek nationalist discourse, Southern Albania is called Northern Epirus and, in this way, considered a Greek territory. This kind of irredentist explanation was used by

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<sup>1</sup>Vlachs are Latinized people living in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe. In Greece, Βλάχοι (Vlahi) live primarily in Northern Greece (the Pindus Mountains, Meglan, the region of Lake Prespa, and around the mountains of Olympus and Vermion). The Vlach language belongs to the branch of Eastern Romance languages.



national identity in 19th century, language was the only recognizable element unifying inhabitants of the Albanian territory of the Ottoman Empire. There were followers of three faiths- Catholics, Orthodox Christians, and Muslims (Bektashi as well as Sunni). As Victor Friedman writes,

"The Ottoman *millet* system worked especially to the disadvantages of the Albanians. The Orthodox were subject to Hellenization, the Moslems were considered 'Turks' and were therefore denied linguistic rights" (Friedman 1986: 294).

In 1878, the League of Prizren was formed in order to promote Albanian nationalism and to defend Albanian territorial integrity. An important part of the program was also the promotion of the Albanian language. Notable was the problem in choosing an alphabet, since each choice had religious implications; Arabic implied Islam, Greek Orthodox and Latin Catholic. The third option was supported by Bektashis. Other Muslims preferred Arabic. But Bektashi temples were centers of the Albanian national movement, housing illegal Albanian schools and distributing publications in the Albanian language (Lubonja 2005: 145). In 1908 an Albanian Alphabet Congress was held in Bitola (formerly Monastir) and a Latin alphabet was decided upon. Also at issue was the question of dialect and a literary standard, the choice between Tosk (spoken in southern Albania) or Gheg (in northern Albania as well as Western



Nevertheless, in border areas one can often observe the blurring of sharp lines between nations and the mutual influences of cultures upon each other. As far as language is concerned, the main focus was on the visibility of bilingualism (e.g. Greek inscriptions in Albania or Albanian in Greece and bilingual schools) as well as active usage of two languages by citizens in formal and informal situations. Religion (Orthodox Christian and Muslim) was similarly analyzed. I looked for reciprocal influences of the two religions upon each other, if one respects the other and how "orthodox" these religions are.

The method for collecting data used in this work involved interviews<sup>3</sup> with Albanians and Greeks in Albania as well as observation and participant observation. All the data were documented with photos of towns and villages as well as of religious ceremonies in Leskovik's suburbs. Conversations were recorded. Special attention has also been paid to field notes and a diary due to the language barrier. I tried to document everything in the cultural landscape that I felt to be pertinent or relevant.

### **Language and religion in Albanian national identity**

At the beginning of the process of creating an Albanian

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<sup>3</sup>The terminology of H. Russell Bernard for these kinds of interviews is "semi-structured" or "unstructured" (Bernard 2005: 211-212).



an Albanian owner of one café I met. While interest in Albanian popular culture (going to Tirana to the university, to shop or for entertainment, etc.) has increased in recent years, Greek culture, in general has become particularly fashionable of late in fact. As I intend to show, the willingness to speak Greek is rather high as a result. There is one private school where students can learn conversational Greek and other foreign languages. However, the Greek language is not taught in the public school.

### Religion

Islamicization in the Balkans was a very complicated and multi-stage process. The main reason for conversion was economic. Muslims in the Ottoman Empire enjoyed some political privileges and were exempt from the high tributes paid to Ottoman authorities. However "bi-confession", an official conversion in tandem with the continued practice of the former religion, was common. For this reason, many had two names, such as Hasan-Bogdan or Mustafa-Nikola, who baptized children and then circumcised them (Matkovski 1971: 164). Because of these mixed practices, a kind of syncretic religion developed, that which involved non-Islamic elements such as cults of saints, the crucifix, excursions to churches and monasteries, the keeping of icons in homes, and the observation of both Christian and Islamic festivities.

This syncretism of religion is typical for Bektashi



Macedonia and Kosovo). Under King Zog (1925-1939), some efforts to accept Gheg as the national standard were made, but ultimately standardization followed after World War II and was based on the Tosk dialect<sup>4</sup>(Friedman 1986: 295).

It is not entirely evident that Leskovik is a mixed Greek and Albanian town. There are no public signs with names of streets or institutions in Greek. As mentioned above, Leskovik is a small town and has only a handful of public institutions, such as the municipality, a school, and a few companies. Any public information displayed on or near these buildings is written in Albanian only. Nor are there any Greek national symbols such as a flag or monument of any kind. The one and very visible monument located in the main square in front of the school is devoted to the Albanian national hero, Jani Vreto, a leading figure in the Albanian nationalist movement during 19<sup>th</sup> century. Nevertheless, numerous residents of Leskovik can speak Greek. Most learn this language in Greece. Due to the poverty and high unemployment in Albania, a lot of people from Leskovik work in Greece, and not only near the border area but in large Greek cities as well. For example, I met a group of men in a café who used to work illegally in Athens and Thessaloniki, most as taxi drivers. Many children are also conversant in Greek as a result of the Greek television and music they enjoy. Some people who work in shops or cafés are able to speak a little Greek as well, such as Ana,

<sup>4</sup>Kosovo officially recognized the Tosk standard as recently as 1968.



Muslim man to marry a Christian woman or another "of the Book", such as a Jewish woman, Muslim women can marry only Muslim men. Nonetheless, one of my interlocutors admitted that her father was Christian and her mother was Muslim.

It is impossible to make a distinction between "Christian" or "Muslim" parts of town. One can observe poorer and richer districts that might coincide with religious belief. Most Muslims do live in the poorer part and most Christians in the richer. A perhaps more obvious division exists between people based on their class or financial status. My respondents claim that everybody lives together peaceably. They help each other, pay and receive visits. Both Christians and Muslims observe Christmas as well as Bayram. Both groups paint eggs for Easter and give them to neighbors and relatives<sup>7</sup>. Of course the explanation for this practice varies between one religion and the other. It is rather common in Leskovik to be Christian and not have been baptized. Muslims and Christians often take part in the same feasts, such as the Transfiguration of Christ in suburbs of Leskovik. I met many Muslims there who came only to meet friends and to attend the feast. Of course they did not enter the church or participate in the service. I also met a few boys who identified themselves as Christians but admitted at the same time that they learned Arabic in the mosque. The only person who

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<sup>7</sup>This custom is rather typical for Muslims living in a multi-confessional environment. See Zirojevic (2003: 34-35).



followers. In Albania, unlike Serbia or Greece, religion was not a very strong element of national identification. However, one of the leaders of the national Albanian movement, the poet Naim Frasheri promoted the Bektashi order in the late 19th century as a way to unify Albanians.

"He hoped that the heterodox and syncretistic Bektashis could eventually supersede religious divisions between Islam<sup>5</sup> and Christianity. Naim Frasheri seemed to believe that only a bond of religious nature could forge unity among the Albanians, an idea he shared with many other Balkan nationalists of his time" (Duijzings 2002: 63-64).

In Leskovik we meet both Muslims and Christians. There is a large number of Bektashi followers in particular<sup>6</sup>. In the town space, Muslims are more visible than Christians - the mosque is big and situated in the main street, while the church is small and difficult to notice. My informants claim that Muslims and Christians live together without any problems. There are even intermarriages between followers of the two faiths. While the Koran allows a

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<sup>5</sup>In the Balkans there is predominantly Sunni Islam, while Bektashism descends from Shiism.

<sup>6</sup>See the report of the Center for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe entitled "Southeast Europe; Bektashis of Albania", September, 2000, in which Leskovik is mentioned as one of the centers of the Bektashi movement. About Bektashism in general and in Albania see also Hasluck 1929, Clayer 1995 or Clayer 2002.



ethnographic fieldwork. Even my modest investigation reveals numerous issues for further analysis. For instance, one might pursue the following: the differences between what people say and what they do -incongruence between the public and private spheres perhaps- especially in cases of mixed marriages; friendship across religious boundaries; respect for other religious faiths; the image of Greece as it varies between those who have been to Greece and those who have not; varying levels of Greek-speaking ability; and sources for learning Greek. The results could then be compared with those of similar analyses undertaken on the Greek side of the border.

There is one significant remark of a methodological nature that I might make here. Above all, interviews and conversations are of the utmost importance. A language barrier such as the one I encountered makes anthropological investigations very difficult. A translator, even one who is also an anthropologist, is hardly sufficient. Conversations with interlocutors should be in their native language. Only then is talk natural and relevant, and only then are we anthropologists seen as credible in the eyes of our informants. After all, the most important aspect of our work is the interlocutor with whom we speak, an individual, not an anonymous respondent. An anthropologist who cannot speak the language of his or her informants must use other senses, skills and tools as I have. And there is certainly insight to be gained in such an exploration of the various dimensions of perception, but this is another question.



maintained that Christians are the majority was an Orthodox priest. However, we should remember here that many have changed their names and been baptized in order to take on Christian or Greek identification and benefit in some way in the context of their emigration to Greece in the recent past.

As mentioned above, due to its proximity to the border, many people in Leskovik speak Greek in order to work or study in Greece. Vasiliki, one of my Greek informants had lived some years in Athens and her father worked in Konitsa. She claims that because of the border and the consequent frequent contact with foreigners, people in Leskovik are more "*civilized*" or "*open minded*" than in the other parts of Albania. Vasiliki would often make such generalizations about people from Greece and Albania. Thus, according to her, Albanians are "*very nosy*", and "*not well educated*" while Greeks are "*hard workers*" as well as "*open-minded*" and "*civilized*". Probably because she lived in a big city, Vasiliki is fascinated by contemporary urban culture, technology and the modern lifestyle. Of those who have spent lengths of time in Greece, beyond the occasional trip across the border, many refuse to speak Albanian upon their return and try to behave as Greeks. This general trend can be seen in cases of return migration around the world.

## **Conclusions**

Leskovik is a particularly interesting place for



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how the individual theoretically relates to the nation-state (citizen-state) or to what can be called the individual's political identity. Albrow (1997:150), in reference to the above reflection, pointed out that the older, modernist theories mainly emphasised the nationalist discourse. Such theories pointed to these two levels of relations (agency/structure and citizen/state), which were the preconditions for the emergence of a distinct personal national identity in which culture, society and the modern state shared the same political borders on the map. The first level is based on the social construction of individual identity through social interaction (social identity), while the second level emphasised citizenship as the route to social recognition (political identity).

But nonetheless, it seems that globalisation, mass migration, trade liberalisation, massive global consumption, technology, political freedom, circulation of information, human rights and borderless countries, especially after the end of the cold war, have exerted tremendous influence on the concept of identity and have challenged the idea of how the modernist perspective perceived identity formation, especially when nation-states are believed to have become weaker while societies and cultures have gone global (see, Featherstone, Lash, Robertson 1995).

Referring to Albanian society, the collapse of communism and the end of isolation brought qualitative and quantitative changes that were reflected in society, culture, state and individual as well as in their relation to



**Between ideological and pragmatic identity:  
Negotiating existence among Albanian  
immigrants in Konitsa, North-western Greece.**

Social science, generally, has dealt widely with the concept of identity as socially created, given, manipulated, imposed, negotiated and above all 'lived'. Theoretical perspectives have greatly contributed to create a considerable amount of literature that gives us a wide spectrum of "ideas" concerning how to approach the issue of identity.

The so-called modernist perspective approaches identity formation within the context of the socialisation process, which enables individuals to acquire an identity that transforms them into members of a culture, society, nation, or nation-state. It could be said that such an approach has had major consequences in every sphere of the individual's social life, particularly, when we refer to the specific relationship between the individual and society (agency-structure), but also as important is that such an approach does have direct implications regarding

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## The case of an Albanian "tourist" in the 1990s in Konitsa.

Chatting with a Greek friend on the balcony of our dormitory in Konitsa, we don't know how we ended up talking about the 1990s, or at least what we could remember of that time. Among other things, he told us the shortest joke ever heard that was going on in Greece in that period that perfectly depicted Albania's transition during the 1990s from communism to democracy, which was accompanied by massive illegal migration. "Albanian Tourist!"

'On the other side of town, by the water fountain, under the shade of the trees,

*"I had a very difficult life here, when I first came in Konitsa..."* recalls Agim, an emigrant from Leskovik, *"...Together with another friend, we cut the wires that were surrounding the border and came here, that was 1991. I left because there was no jobs, no money, kids want food..."*

*"Did you find work in Greece?"* we asked. *"Of course, I am a mason, I work with stone, I am the best in town. The first wage I got in this country was a case of beer and 2 tape recorders, it was so nice, I drank the beer at once and I thought this is great, Greece is heaven..."*

continues Agim, sipping on his beer. He had met with us while we were looking for Albanian emigrants who lived and worked in Konitsa, so that we could ask a few



each other. Albanian society's liberalisation from the communist cage, has brought into being a market economy, legal and illegal massive emigration, political pluralism, religious freedom, human rights, mass consumption, television, mass media, the European Union and the USA that can be seen as the new mediums which marked and forged, after 1990, the relation between individuals and society, citizens and state, bringing about more focused and personalised.

The aim of this paper is firstly to present a brief overview of the main ideological narrative of the elite-based nationalist movement and the nation-state formation that reflected the Albanian identity's core prior to the 1990s. Secondly, to examine how the individual emigration experience after the 1990s resulted in the repudiation of this ideology and thirdly to explain this phenomenon through analysing our fieldwork in Konitsa, which has furnished us with new elements regarding the pragmatic articulation of individual identities tailored to fit the individual's new needs and desires that have arisen since the 1990s. We will try to discuss, from an anthropological perspective, how identity can no longer be attached only to group membership or collectivity i.e. citizenship, social class or religious affiliation but rather is something extremely flexible when publicly deployed in the host community (outside borders) and it is negotiated to meet individual needs and desires.



"...In the earlier times when we first came, they were really bad and racist to us, but now things have changed, there are some good Greeks and there are bad Greeks, as anywhere, right... and for me as long as I am paid I don't care..."

meaning that if the Greek paid him after the work was done, he is good, if not, he is bad.

"What religion are you Agim and has this thing had any influence on your staying in Konitsa and relations with locals, especially to find a job?" we asked. "I am an Orthodox, Albanian Orthodox, and I only practice in Leskovik... and in any case I don't really care about it.. For Greeks religion is important, they have feasts, public holidays and a lot of monasteries which we (Albanians) re-constructed after we came... and in any case as I said I am Albanian Orthodox and this thing has made things easier for me"

"You mean that you didn't have to change your name to find a job?" "Names, I can give you hundreds of names, I am called whatever the employer wants me to be called. Does he want me to be called God? I am called God, as long as I am paid... I know a Leskoviqar, friend of mine that had a Muslim name (Ethem) that changed his name to 'Vasili'(Greek-Orthodox name) and once we were working in a Monastery, we were calling him by his real name because we knew him from before, and the priest was becoming surprised and confused. The priest got the trick and one day he called



questions about their relations with Greeks. After telling him what we were doing in Konitsa, that we live and work in Tirana and we are here at a summer school, something that ensured him that we are not "looking for a job but his company" because given our immediate questions and appearance he couldn't paint a picture of us, he was very pleased to talk with us.

*"Good boys, study hard because emigration is a hard thing, I work the stone. I would like my son in Leskovik to study, if he doesn't, I have a lot of tools and cement for him, better he studies otherwise I will bring him here and the money he will make I will take it."*

The conversation goes on easily but we get interrupted because one of our colleagues from the summer school joins us. Agim gets suspicious even though we explain that she isn't Albanian, *"...she is not one of us, she is Greek, she doesn't understand Albanian..."* He doesn't believe us, we were obliged to ask our friend to show her ID to prove that she wasn't Albanian *"...You know guys between men, we can say things that are not appropriate for ladies, and we have got to be careful..."*. She salutes us and leaves astonished.

There was something in Agim's words that we were eager to know more about: relations with Greeks.

*"...We are between us now, no Greeks around, how do you live with them, do they treat you badly"*, looking at us he gets another round of beers, and continues



nationalism, which was strongly influenced by linguistic ties and descent affiliation.

As part of the Ottoman Empire, Albania's nation-state building process took place during the XIXth and XXth centuries. The Albanian intellectual and political elite were faced with the problem of how to define Albanian identity and how to "awaken the national self-consciousness". One of the issues was how to determine significant symbols of unity that would make sense within the Albanian cultural context and that would be usable within the political context as well. Due to a heterogeneous social formation, with regards to religious and political affiliations of Albanian society in that period, among the main challenges that the leaders of the society faced was finding a unifying *modus operandi* through which a distinct national consciousness could arise and operate, in order to create clear distinctions between Albanians and the rest. The majority of the population belonged to the Muslim religion and they maintained a strong affinity to Istanbul. About 10% ascribed to the Roman Catholic Church and almost 20% were part of the Greek Orthodox Church (Tirta 2003). In other Balkan countries, the process of nation building was based on key factors like language, history, "*fortia facta partum*", and certainly religion, which specifically stimulated the national consciousness by revitalising and evoking greatness and unity, as in the case of Serbia, where the

*"memories of a medieval kingdom preserved in songs*



him 'o Ethem' and the guys turned his head. We burst into laughter together with the priest.. Money my friend, the Greeks like the names and we like the money".

### **The modus operandi of Albanian national identity**

In his book *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* Hobsbawn (1990) offered a complete historical analysis of the rise of the nation, which he regarded as a historical and conceptual product of nationalism movements with the sole aim and goal to create and build a "nation-state". Hobsbawn's analysis distinguishes two types of nationalism with different operative models of nation-state formations. The first type is that of mass, civic and democratic political nationalist movements tailored to countries big enough to support a capitalist economy that needed a nation-state. This type of nationalism, according to him, flourished in Europe between the years 1830-1870. While between the years 1870-1914, in Europe, emerged a second type of nationalism that Hobsbawn calls "ethno-linguistic", characteristic of Eastern Europe and the Balkans, where small communities or groups asserted their rights to have their own state, reacting to separate from decomposing empires i.e. Ottoman Empire or Austro-Hungarian Empire, on the basis of ethnic and/or linguistic ties. Looking at the Albanian national awakening, it seems that it falls under the second Hobsbawn type of



Intellectuals, writers and politicians placing emphasis on the language, as a discourse of unity, encouraged the growth of national consciousness. One of the most prominent figures of the Albanian national renaissance, Naim Frasheri, writes about the quality of the language in his poem *Gjuha Shqipe* (Albanian language), emphasising its "beauty", "purity", "sweetness", "freedom" etc. Coming from the Baktashi branch of the Islamic religion, he spent most of his life in Turkey, where he wrote intensively and dedicated many other publications to the Albanian language. Another significant example is Father Gjergj Fishta, a Catholic priest who was an outstanding figure within the intellectual and political elite at the beginning of the XXth century. Even though he was a priest, in his publications he broadly delivered a nationalist discourse. Fishta wrote poetry dedicated to the Albanian language where he stressed its "beauty", its genius and above all he emphasised the "obligation" of parents to pass on the language to their children; a language that they had inherited from their parents. Due to the fact that the entire Albanian population was composed of Muslims, Orthodox and Catholics, the Albanian language was transcribed in Arabic, Cyrillic and Latin but in 1908, the Latin alphabet was adopted, to show continuity with European heritage and disassociation and difference from the Ottoman Empire and from the Greek and Slavic nations who were already in the advanced stages of nation-state formation (Thiesse 2004:100).

Side by side with the language, an important element



*and heroic story and in the daily liturgy of the Serbian church which had canonised most of its kings"*(Hobsbawn 1990:75-76)

paved the way to the Serbian nation-state.

The dilemma that the Albanian elite had to face was to find a common cultural and historic ground upon which they could define what makes a person Albanian. The solution and investment was made in the language and the 'ancestorship cult' that entered the political matrix of nation-building as one of the more profitable elements among other alternative criteria.

The "Albanian language" had long been the focus of romantic discourses. The seminal work that influenced and broadened the Albanian intellectual elite's opinion was called *Albanische Studien* (Albanian Studies), by Georg Von Hahn (1854). It claimed that the ancient origin of the Albanian language was Pellazgian - Illyrian. Thus, not only was the Albanian language unique and the same for all Albanians, but it has another important attribute: It came from Illyrian origin, it was the mother tongue and it was the language of Albanian ancestors. Based upon the above assumption, the elite found a strong base for a distinct, Albanian identity, which could be articulated within the context of the language. Therefore, this context gave the Albanian language the Herderian quality of the "Volksgeist" (see Cabej 2002). In this way, the Albanian language was seen as the most important aspect of Albanian identity and it was the duty of any Albanian to protect it and to pass it on to his heir.



Albania of 1924 claimed that no religion was the official one. Albania was among the first nation-state in Europe that had openly declared that religion will not have any space nor play any role in the nation-state with regards to acquiring citizenship in this community. The same politics were applied after WWII when the communist party rose to power. Meanwhile, the most drastic decision materialised in the Constitution of 1976. Here, it was clearly decided "that any kind of religious activity was outside of the law". Even in this case, Albania is perhaps the first country in Europe that made religious activities illegal. However, it is very interesting to emphasise that the communist period perpetuated the strategy of building the "nation" but now parallel with the strategy of building the "New Man" that was antagonist to it (Thesis 2004:348). On one hand, the propaganda system was concerned with implying the "communist moral" which is characterised formally by universalistic concepts, i.e. internationalisation of proletariats, rationalisation. On the other hand, the party-state was interested in figuring out the "uniqueness" in/of Albanian culture; the "uniqueness" must certainly come from the ancient times, with the language still in the spotlight.

With the communist regime's downfall, everything that was built or supported by the party-state, no longer seems adequate. The value system based on the communist moral is something that is considered in Albanian society as "immoral", "archaic", "totalitarian" and "isolative" especially when contrasted with market-economy democracy and the western European dream. The new



in the nationalist movements was the "ancestors' cult", i.e. Gjergj Kastriot, Skanderbeg, and the glorification of the "territory" as a territory which was inherited by them. Both of them are utilised as symbols of legitimising who is Albanian and what the Albanian nation means. Speaking from a so-called traditional culture this cult was considered as the main symbol of unity, continuity and solidarity of the social group that Benedict Anderson would probably consider a "non imagined community", such as kinship, brotherhood, village (1983: 15).

In this way, from our perspective, it seems that the Albanian elite utilised those symbols, with the emphasis on language and "ancestors' cult", to create the national identity as those symbols make sense in the cultural context. Under this lens, a cultural definition of an Albanian would be: An individual/person who originates from a father and mother that inherited the right to live on that land from the Illyrians via Skanderbeg via their respective kinship and speaks Albanian. A person who loses the language or forgets is almost not Albanian anymore. In this context, the nationalist discourse proclaimed that the political area where the Albanian state was supposed to be built should have incorporated all the areas populated by the majority of people who spoke Albanian and lived for a long time (centuries of successive generation) on the land of their ancestors, regardless of their religious background because the "Albanian religion is Albanianism" underlined by the sanctity of the language.

Therefore, based on this philosophy the Constitution of



*lindjes" (when you don't have bread to eat, work to do, you will change your name and you will speak the language that feeds you, but that does not change your heart, your kids, wife, family and kin you have, won't change your date and place of birth, because you know!).*

It might be suggested for our case study that speaking a different language from your mother language, even though that language is a key element of the Albanian national identity, could mean being marketable, changeable and able to maximise material ends either in terms of subsistence or luxury because you acquire knowledge of "the play" that you are about to perform in the "Greek Theatre of labour" and knowledge in a Foucauldian term means power in the market of labour. Consequently, the same logic accompanies the "staged identity"<sup>1</sup> of the names and religion that displays affinity with an employer's expectations, i.e. the "staged identity" of "Ethem" as "Vasili" (Greek Orthodox name) to meet Greek employers' expectations and have the job, or as Agim points when he says "I can give you hundreds of names, I am called whatever the employer wants me to be called". Therefore, for Albanian emigrants, Greek society is centre stage, where they display an identity through

<sup>1</sup>This term is drawn from Goffman's (1959/1990) theory of the presentation of self in every day life, where we as actors perform actually our lives on a "theatrical stage". The stage has a front and back region. In the front region, is where we actually perform and society is our audience. We dress, talk and behave in a certain way. While in the back region, we relax and get ready for our next performance.



Constitutional Dispositions endorsed in 1991 gave the Albanian state the same neutral position transcended from the past but pointed out that it respected any religious freedom and identity and the Constitution of 1998 claimed freedom of religion but no religion is officially known as the main one (Art 10: par. 1. The Republic of Albania has no official religion; par. 3. The State recognises equality between religious groups.)

Nonetheless we should be aware that this period of so-called "transition", is strongly characterised by the process/phenomenon that Saltmarshe (2001) calls "negotiating identity" - religious identity, national identity, citizenship, etc.

### **Instead of Conclusions: Negotiated Identities in the Host Community**

The "negotiating identity", which is part of what anthropologists called the "transformation period", is shown in different ways in different social contexts, inside and outside Albania, especially among emigrants.

When we asked our co-national emigrant in Konitsa what he thought of those Albanians that changed their names, religion and spoke Greek, his answer was

*"Kur nuk ke buk ne shtepi, nuk ke pune do e ndryshosh emrin, fene dhe do flasesh gjuhen qe ka ai qe te jep buken, por kjo nuk te ndryshon zemren, gruan, femijet, familjen qe ke, fisin, as daten, as vendin e*



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names and religion to meet the expectation or requirements of the Greek employer and back-stage is the nuclear family either in Greece or Albania, kin, or even homeland where they relax, use their given name, spend their holidays and where they get ready to perform again. Sometimes the "staged identity" is jeopardised by interference in the mechanism of the performance of the emigrant by other co-nationals or friends who reveal the back-stage, as in the case of "Ethem" and the "Priest".

To us this perspective of "negotiated identities" by "staged performances" seems to be similar to Banfield's (1958) thesis of "amoral familism", where through staging an identity each individual acts to maximise material, short-run advantage for his/her nuclear family. Thus, it is not national performance but rather individual performance in bring more focused and personalised "staged identities" that fulfils immediate needs, wants and desires. The negotiation of identities, in the Albanian case, should be seen as the negotiation of some elements of the identity that would allow a "play" to go on. Thus, the two elements (names and religion) that are pragmatically articulated by the emigrants, while staging an identity in the Greek community, is what enables the material existence of the family and individual because *"Money my friend, the Greeks like the names and we like the money"*.

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opportunity to reflect in detail upon the nature of the impact of self in this context is normally therefore limited. The Konitsa Summer School provided an exceptional opportunity to do just that, with students of varying levels from a wide range of backgrounds attempting to collect information in the field in a brief period of time. We felt that this opportunity allowed us to reflect on our own perceptions and role as researchers. The processes of researching cultural phenomenon are interactive and each interpretation offered is just one amongst many. However, these interpretations are normally restricted to a particular researcher with particular informants at a particular time in a particular place (Jordan 2001: 42). Although many of us at the summer school interviewed different people, we were in fact in the same place at the same time, which removes some of the particularity of the situation.

The location of the fieldwork raised issues at many levels of identity, however we have primarily focused on theories and understanding of national, ethnic and linguistic identities for the purpose of this paper. What we aim to do here is to introduce and explore briefly a few key concepts, before reflecting in turn on the way in which our own identification at these levels influenced us in our short period of fieldwork. We cannot comprehensively cover these topics here and we have chosen to focus on our own experiences primarily because the fieldwork carried out was very limited.



**Kathryn Louise Cassidy\* & Margaret Felis\*\***

**Reflections on Self in the Anthropological  
Study of Identity: Theory and Practice of  
Autoethnography in Fieldwork on Both Sides  
of the Greek-Albanian Border**

**Introduction**

Since the 1980s, the need to discuss and examine one's own role when studying "the other" has been widely acknowledged in many branches of the social sciences. This issue has been particularly pertinent amongst anthropologists, whose use of ethnographic techniques and particularly of participant observation in the field involves the whole person in a way which many other approaches do not (Jordan 2001: 41). How we see and define ourselves is a crucial factor in determining how we approach and interpret our interactions with those we are researching in the field. The conclusions drawn from any such type of research can be seen to be part of the way in which researcher and informants negotiate understanding and perceived reality (ibid: 42). In other words, what we find is discourses developed around our understanding of self and other (Fawcett and Hearn 2004: 201). However, anthropologists rarely find themselves carrying out fieldwork en masse and the

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group and another, making the role of the anthropologist to study these boundaries and not look for cultural traits. His final suggestion was that ethnic identities are defined solely by ascription and self-ascription to a particular ethnic group. Therefore, two people are of the same ethnic group only if they believe themselves to be. By this definition, ethnic identities are seen as dynamic and fluid constructions which can be manipulated.

Thomas Hylland Eriksen takes on this idea that identities can only be understood by looking at how boundaries are maintained (1993: 12). He asserts that group identities can only really be defined in the context of an "other". We often see this also employed in terms of discussions of the global and the local in modern society. As people have become more mobile, they have begun to define themselves in contrast to the other cultures they encounter. This is referred to by Katherine Verdery (1994: 39) as "situationalism", i.e. the importance or prevalence of a layer of identity is informed by the situation in which one finds oneself. Eriksen (1995: 250) claims what is actually happening is that as cultural practices become closer, people become more concerned with remaining distinct from their neighbours. However, social boundaries are seen by many authors as being porous and unclear. This phenomenon was also observed by linguists in reference to communities using local accents as a way of reaffirming their own regional identity. This comes as a shock to many because it is contrary to the belief that the media is in many ways homogenizing speech patterns (MacNeil and Cran 2005:



## Theoretical framework

This paper comes from an essentially interpretivist standpoint and in relation to identity the underlying belief is that people are part of a group if they believe themselves to be. However, approaches to the study and understanding of identity have been varied and some believe that ethnic and national identity is something that can simply be assigned to a person by the state or another organisation. This is shown, for example, in the nationalities policy of the Soviet Union, where everyone was assigned a nationality based upon that of their parents. These national identities were not negotiable, they were fixed. However, numerous approaches to identity, whether it is ethnic, national, regional or any other kind see it as much more complex an issue. An example of this would be Frederik Barth's work on ethnicity. Barth criticised earlier anthropological work on the topic, which had focused on the "cultural stuff" which makes up an ethnic group (1969: 10). Early anthropological study was informed by the belief that ethnicity was based upon common language or religion and set about trying to define these cultural markers. Barth's contention was that ethnicity is subjective in nature and cannot therefore be viewed and defined objectively. He described ethnicity as a form of social organisation, a way in which people could organise cultural difference and view the world around them and their own place in it. He asserted that this organisation is made through the definition of boundaries between one



negotiated construction. Harald Eidheim described two key terms in the negotiation of identity, dichotomisation and complimentarism (1971: 254). Dichotomisation refers to the articulation of ethnic relationships through what you are not. Complimentarism refers to the way in which ethnic difference can exist in a shared language, e.g. the education system.

If we view ethnic, national and other levels of identification as negotiable, there is another key factor which we must examine; that of language and communication. In most cases, this process of negotiation and determining whether we view another person as "self" or "other" relies upon our ability to communicate with this person on some level. Language is frequently seen as inherently linked to culture, and groups that have lost their language are seen as having lost their culture (Hall 2002: 155). Many sociolinguists believe that culture in one sense is created through varying acts of communication. The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis states that language unconsciously determines how we perceive the world. Thus language plays an intrinsic role in the negotiation of self and identities (ibid: 156).

### **Self-Reflections**

Kathryn

The aim of the group in which I found myself was to examine identity amongst people living close to either side of the Greek-Albanian border in Epirus. What was apparent from the outset, however, was that based on our



"The world as studied by anthropologists is not characterised by clear, 'digital' or binary boundaries, but rather by grey zones and differences in degree - analogic differences. It is not an archipelago of isolated cultures, but an unbounded system of multiple interrelationships." (Eriksen 1995: 289)

This is why many anthropologists no longer believe it is possible to study a community in isolation. It is maintained that all anthropological studies must be placed in a greater context, as the influences upon people's lives in the modern world are far-flung and numerous. In the context of ethnicity, Eriksen argues that it is the "(...) aspect of a relationship, not the property of a group." (1993: 12).

Eriksen and Barth also discuss the way in which ethnic lines are created by actors through the use of stereotyping (ibid: 24). In this case, it does not matter whether stereotypes are true to life or not, what is important is that people believe in them. Therefore, in this world what count are people's perceptions and understanding of the world around them, not what actually physically exists. It is this suggestion which has informed the focus upon perceptions and understanding in this paper. The assertion here is that villagers being researched in Greece and Albania make decisions based upon their own interpretations and perceptions of themselves, i.e. their own sense of place in the world. Identity is therefore a



As a pre-teen, I was keen to adapt to my new environment, I didn't relish being different. I therefore set about ironing out the primary marker of difference between myself and my peers, my language. This change was vital as I was also having difficulty making myself understood! However, it seemed that this adaptation had another effect, I became different from the "Geordies" I believed myself to be part of. I found when I told people that I was a Geordie they'd laugh and suggest I couldn't possibly be because of my accent. I began to see for the first time how my own way of judging and categorising people based on particular criteria was fundamentally flawed. Just because I didn't have the accent - a linguistic or cultural marker - I was judged to be not part of a group. I felt that there was something wrong in this, but was frustrated that I could not "prove" my Geordieness! Such opinions represent what I now understand to be a positivist approach to identity, in which people are defined through characteristics and markers. This relates to Frederik Barth's work on ethnicity, discussed above. In my experience I felt myself to be Geordie, but having lost my accent I would have to negotiate my identity with other Geordies so they accepted me. I could talk about where I grew up, childhood experiences, my knowledge of local places and, of course, football.

In approaching this fieldwork experience, I found myself faced with what I felt to be an insurmountable challenge. I couldn't speak any Albanian or Greek. My usual approach to examining the identity of others would have been to seek expressions of self through interactions with



own experience and abilities, each member of our group had very different ideas of how to approach the fieldwork. As a language and communications specialist, one of us was keen to make use of her skills in the Albanian language and to examine the implications her ability to communicate in their native tongue had upon their acceptance of her as "self". I, on the other hand, found myself absolutely unable to communicate with most respondents, having no Albanian or Greek language skills. I usually approach my research from an interpretivist standpoint (as described above) and in relation to identity my underlying belief is that people are part of a group if they believe themselves to be. I have spent a considerable period of time researching theoretical ideas (some of which are briefly presented above) and I know this to be intrinsically linked to my earlier life experiences and understanding of self.

I have a very strong sense of local regional identity, associated with the area of the UK in which I spent much of my early life. At the age of 11, my parents moved to another part of the same country. Much of what I had taken to be given in earlier life was challenged by this new environment. This can be tied in with Thomas Hylland Eriksen's argument concerning the relevance of a certain layer of identity in a particular setting. Therefore, for me, being a Geordie<sup>1</sup> in the Tyne Valley was not important, as I was surrounded by other Geordies. Eriksen's contention explains the way in which this became important when I moved to Essex.

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<sup>1</sup> Geordie' refers to people from a region in the far north-east of England, primarily Tyneside and parts of Northumberland.



spent time visiting most of Europe, I also lived in both France and Romania. However, in the negotiation of self and other that took place amongst our fieldwork group, I found that I identified most strongly with a native English speaker, who grew up in the US. There were of course other factors, such as age, life experience and interests, which played a role in this negotiation. However, I do feel that the key determinant was the ability to communicate rapidly and fluently in the same language. Having spent time working for an US firm, with US employees and in the US itself, I felt relaxed and comfortable in expressing myself with my co-researcher<sup>3</sup>. What this also meant is that I readily accepted many of her conclusions. As I viewed her as being "like me", I was more willing to demonstrate faith in her interpretations of her interactions in the field.

Margaret

As an undergraduate student of anthropology I remember reading the book *Return to Nisa* by Marjorie Shostak, and being impressed by the way she, as a cultural anthropologist, reflected on her own role in how she impacted her research and the community in which she was conducting her research. Having studied intercultural communications, I became specifically interested in the sociolinguistic value and link of language, identity and culture to the role of the anthropologist. Does speaking a

<sup>3</sup> The implication here is that not all English and North Americans can communicate fluently, as there are many cultural and linguistic differences. Over my time working with Americans, I was able to better adapt my use of language to create a shared sense of understanding.



people in the two towns of Konitsa and Leskovic, as well as nearby villages. In this sense, I found that my co-researcher and I had much in common, as we both stress the importance of language in understanding identity. However, for me, language cannot be separated from its cultural setting. Brewer (2000: 74) gives three reasons for assessing the use of natural language; it is a form of social interaction, it presupposes shared knowledge and is inseparable from its social setting. What interested me the most about her approach was that she had little or no shared cultural experience with the people of the area having grown up in a Greek American community in the North-East of the U.S. As I pointed out above in relation to my own regional identity, she certainly had some reference points, as some of her family came from the area of study, however would this in itself be enough to negotiate the status of being accepted in the community? I was interested in the topic; however, my own lack of language skills meant I would only be able to draw conclusions based on physical observation and the interpretations offered by my co-researcher. When I reflect on what role my own identity played in this, I would have to say that my co-researcher's position as a native English speaker, like myself, had an enormous impact. In addition to identifying strongly with the region of the UK in which I was born, I also had what I thought was a keen sense of European identity<sup>2</sup>, having

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<sup>2</sup> You will see the way in which for me, unlike my co-researcher, national and ethnic identity has not featured highly in my understanding of myself. For me, my ethnic identity is never or very rarely apparent or discussed. On the other hand, I find a British identity difficult to define and thus rarely invoked it.



identity; frequently, it is a matter of selecting a variety of tools that will either help us create bonds and diminish the appearance of difference or create difference and distinguish ourselves from others. Learning a culture is sometimes like learning the steps to a dance, once you feel that you have a grasp on the steps, you begin to feel confident and like you can participate. This participation gives you, the dancer, the sense of acceptance by the ensemble. As such, language can be seen as a step into a different reality and world, as mentioned earlier in reference to Sapir-Whorf.

Bilingualism and code switching (the linguistic term for switching between one or more languages) are of particular interest in the context of anthropological fieldwork. Code switching in many ways is used not only to clearly communicate one's thoughts and ideas in a variety of languages, but also to affirm ones varying ethnic identities or even create bonds and connections between varying linguistic and ethnic groups, as mentioned above (Hall 2002: 153-154). Code switching occurred during our fieldwork numerous times, and though my Albanian is not proficient I can converse reasonably well on a conversational level and thus chose this as my main language of communication while in Leskovic. In Albania, a great deal of identity and unity seems to be through language. Given the divisive nature of ethnic or religious identity, the uniqueness of the Albanian language appears for political reasons to have been used as the state's primary tool in unifying the nation.

It seemed to me that as soon as I spoke the language there



language allow one to negotiate a different sense of self and become a part of a group? Can it break down more than linguistic barriers?

My interest in language is also undoubtedly influenced by the fact that I grew up in a multilingual household with one of four languages being spoken at any given time; English, Albanian, Aromanian (also often referred to as Vlahika) and a little Greek. Because of this upbringing, I was often excluded from certain in-groups and seen as "other" because I either did or did not speak the lingua franca very well or I spoke a different language. In addition, I know many Greek-Americans that speak varying levels of Greek and many identify strongly with a Greek national identity. This led me to wonder what role language plays in defining who we are and how we identify ourselves.

My father was born in Fourka, Greece, a small Aromanian/Vlach village in the mountains of Epirus. In his twenties, he immigrated to America and began his American life in Montreal, Canada. He learned French-Canadian and worked there until he met my mother, a fifth generation US American of Albanian/Aromanian descent. He then moved to New England where my mom and grandmother were living at the time and continue to live. What drew the two of them together? It was probably a variety of reasons, however amongst them I would argue, is the language; they both speak Aromanian.

For those who are multilingual, language can become a tool of negotiating ethnic and national identity. Language is often one of the most apparent markers of culture and



to my linguistic ability and cultural affiliation. It allowed me to become a part of the culture, even if only superficially. This can be viewed both positively and negatively. It was positive in the sense that I had the ability to ask questions that others maybe could not ask and also because I had the ability to create bonds quickly. The language made me more than just an American woman. However, it inhibited me in the way that as to be seen as "us" carried with it certain cultural expectations, which were not significant in my own upbringing in the US. Many of these expectations related to my role as a female, and revolved around topics such as marriage and age. As such it was a bit of a challenge to separate certain layers of my identity from my research.

## Conclusions

What we have aimed to do through describing our own experiences at the summer school is to highlight just a few of the ways in which self and our understanding of self can influence our interpretations of interactions during fieldwork. Through examining our own role and identity, we are also better able to understand the theoretical underpinnings of debate on layers of identity. However, whilst there is a need for self-reflexivity in our work, the purpose of this should be to more critically analyse and assess our thoughts during and after fieldwork, not to become so focused on self that we stop trying to understand those we are there to study. The use of ethnographic methods by anthropologists enables them to observe,



was a sense of kinship associated with it. Especially, as many of those who travelled to Albania from the summer school were Greek speaking. By speaking Albanian I felt that I was asserting what I understand to be my Albanian identity.

Though I met with a variety of different people, I spent a fair amount of time interviewing a woman who was the wife of the local bar owner. A good part of our conversation revolved around the role of women in Albanian society, during communism and post communism. The discussion incorporated everything from age of marriage to job opportunities. Due to the fact that we were speaking Albanian there was sense of comfort in the conversation and there also seemed to be a sense of being able to express her feelings about the Greek culture. Though she claimed to have great respect for Greek culture, spoke the language a bit and though her mother was ethnically Greek, she said she felt more of an affinity to her Albanian roots. She felt that during her time in Greece, she had experienced racism in varying degrees, but she also said that she enjoyed living in Greece. She was not the only one who expressed her feelings about the Greek culture and people to me in Albanian. In several cases, I felt my use of the language created a sense of trust and ability to express certain feelings between myself and the respondents. I wonder if these same feelings would have been expressed to me had I approached people with Greek and reaffirmed for them my Greek identity?

For me it was especially interesting to be accepted to some degree as a part of Albanian culture and in-group due



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question and clarify repeatedly meanings and situations in the field. Living in a community for a period of time enables the researcher to observe phenomena in multiple contexts, which according to Okely (1994: 25) gives the work credibility. By demonstrating an awareness and growing understanding of self, we are able to be flexible in our approach and constantly review our thoughts and interpretations whilst in the field.

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filtering or closure towards alternative thinking<sup>1</sup>. These make the debate relatively unrepresentative of the grass-root situations and, consequently, with little echo from it. In such a case it is the micro level, longitudinal and systematic investigation, and in context analyses, especially in border areas<sup>2</sup>, which may provide the debate with the adequate means of escaping egocentric and highly emotional stances in intellectual discourses. (Ellen R. 1984; Wallman 1984: 42-43)

The variety of comparative facts guides us either to accept a broadened concept of technical term, or to develop a more differentiated conceptual system, with more apt alternative terms (Kissing and Strathern 1998 [1981]: 274)<sup>3</sup>. That what helps in conveying our stance against bunkerization of the terms "identity" and "culture" is expressed below:

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<sup>1</sup>This view has been criticized by various authors. Winnifrith takes a broad view of the phenomena stating also that "in far to many cases the history of the Balkans has been rewritten by historians of the present whose attitudes have been conditioned by events in the recent past and amplified and distorted by romantic propaganda and a particular political stance" (citation by Saltmarsh 2001: 30). See also Nitsiakos and Mantzos (2003) on the political use of polyphonic folk songs in Greece and Albania; See also Hart and Budina 1995.

<sup>2</sup>"The irony, though, is that, quite often, cultural boundaries in border zones are fluid and ethnic divisions not clear...", Nitsiakos and Mantzos 2003. "These zones are characterized by intensified political as well as cultural negotiation and contestation, even along those boundaries called "dead" or "frozen" by political scientists" (Thomassen 1996: 37) and "Borders are areas where ethnic and national identities meet, where identities are challenged, shaped and transformed" (Thomassen 1996: 39).

<sup>3</sup>See also about the term "culture" at Barnard and Spencer 2000 [1996]:136 - 142.



**Gerda Dalipaj\***

**Albanian (?) Women's Life Stories in the  
Greek - Albanian Border.\*\***

**Introduction**

Lately in Albania, the issue of the Albanian identity comes continuously at the central stage "of in-a-flesh" mediatic and publicistic debate with few interferences from the so called in jargon "fact-burdened" scientific thought. And especially the issue of "renegotiating the Albanian identity" has become a considerably fashionable discourse along specific lines of post socialist Albanian elites. What these discourses evidently seem to be deficient in is the concern in real contact with people on behalf of whom the discourse is being made, and the difficulty to detach from the "isolated mind", a heredity in its outmost from a half decade of hard dictatorship, colored by the romantic propaganda, reactive scientific thought, overgeneralization, "out of context" analyses,

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\*\* This field work was conducted by a group of four students of Konitsa Summer School, Gerda Dalipaj, Ljiljana Koritsa, Elisabeta Pavkovic and Sirin Ozgun. The included report of the case studies is a product of our common work in the town of Konitsa in Greece, while the introductory part in the beginning of the paper at hand, and the conclusions at its end are entirely my own responsibility.



conducted with Albanian women from different backgrounds in the form of an open dialogue based on their life histories. Tape recorders and cameras were used, while the interviews were conducted in the Albanian language. Other sources of information were observation and open discussions with other informants such as Albanian male immigrants living in Konitsa or Greek professionals. For ethical purposes, we will not reveal the identities of our main informants.

### **A Short Presentation of the Case Studies**

The interviewed women, two of whom were spontaneously met by members of our research group, and the other suggested by a Greek professional, differed in age significantly: **A.** was an 80 year old woman, **B.** was 36 years old and **C.** was 18 years old. They were all born in Albania, but were from different towns: **A.** was born in Leskovik, **B.** was born in a village near Korca and **C.** was born in Tirana. They also had different levels of education: **A.** attended only the primary school in Albania, **B.** attended the high school in Albania and **C.** was attending the high school in Greece and preparing for university entrance exams.

Their reasons for coming to Konitsa were also different. **A.** came to Konitsa during World War II, around the age of 12 or 13, together with her parents and with a minimum of personal belongings. She settled with her family in Konitsa due to the friendship of her father with a Greek man with whom he had worked and also fought



"The conventional definition of culture as a well structured, cohesive, homogeneous and stable body of representations that define people's perception of reality, collective attitudes and practices, which are reproduced intact through generations, notwithstanding historical changes, has been severely criticized within the anthropological domain as a a-historical and as such unable to deal with change and with dialectics over time" and "... we do not think of culture as a static set of things inherited from a distant past, which is reproduced intact through the generations, but rather as a dynamic process historically defined and subject to social and political manipulation", (Nitsiakos and Mantzos 2003).

The aim of this research paper is to sketch a brief picture of how women from Albania in the Greek-Albanian border town of Konitsa, in Greece, represent themselves. Following mainly a descriptive approach, we will try to draw a specific hypothesis on which further research may be conducted. We will deal with issues of women's identities and representations, considering identity as "self-identity", in terms of the properties of uniqueness and individuality, and as "group identity", in terms of qualities of sameness in that persons may associate themselves with group categories, or be associated by others (Barnard and Spencer 2000 [1996]:136 - 142).

Considering the short period of time within which we had to conduct our research (August 5, 2006 - August 10, 2006), the main information comes from interviews



conducted the interview, she had even spent three weeks vacation in Albania. As many of her Greek peers, she does not see her future in Konitsa and aspires to a life in the main cities of Greece. When we spoke, she was following her studies in Ioannina and preparing herself to enter university.

### **Identities and Representations drawing hypothesis**

One of the main questions posed, as represented by the question mark in the title after the word "Albanian (?)", is what identifies these women as "Albanians"? When asked, the women say that "*they were born in Albania*", "*their parents were Albanian*", "*their mother tongue is Albanian*", they "*feel linked with Albania*" and "*have a longing for their place of origin*". Important to notice is that none of the women interviewed, wish for a life in Albania. They argue that they are satisfied with the life they have in Greece, fitting in well with the environment, while remaining in continuous contact with their kin in Albania.

Another question is whether their self-identification and the way they see Albania, is related to the time they left Albania and their reasons for leaving it? As we already discussed, the first two women clearly identified themselves as Albanians. The first, who we called **A.** earlier, as we mentioned before came during World War II while the nationalistic movement in Albania was active. She says she belonged to a well-known family in



together with. As a result of this relationship, they were loaned land that they could use and later a house, all rent-free. By the age of 18, she married a Greek man and had three sons, one of which lives in Athens, another in Ioannina and the third one in Konitsa. She became a housewife and the language they used at home was Greek (her children did not learn Albanian).

**B.**, a woman in her early 30s, came to Konitsa in 1992. While on vacation in Greece, she fell in love with a Greek man who later she married. By the time we conducted the interview, she had worked as an employee in two different jobs: the first job was at the family enterprise in the tourism/travel industry and her second job was at a local shop that makes and sells sweets. The language they used in the house was Greek, but while her children could understand Albanian they had difficulty in speaking it. It is important to point out that prior to their coming to Greece none of the women knew Greek. They learned it spontaneously while living in a Greek environment, meaning there was no significant long-term language education.

**C.** was an 18 year old girl who was born in Albania and the daughter of an Albanian mother and a Greek father from Konitsa, who met each other in Tirana, Albania. She came to Greece in 1991, while she was 3 years old. She has two older brothers and two sisters. With one of her brothers, who lives in Germany, she used to always speak Albanian. With the other brothers she speaks Greek. As for her sisters, she switches between Greek and Albanian. She frequently visits Albania. By the time we



which she blames more the Albanians' way of social dealing or even their involvement in some kind of delinquency. *"Her family and kin"* are the people she mostly recalls while discussing her longing for Albania.

Going beyond: Is it only the way these women perceive and name themselves that makes them Albanian? Or indeed is it the way in which they are perceived and recognized as such by the community in which they conduct their everyday lives? Or is it their official recognition that makes their self-identification? An example comes from the 18 year old girl, saying that she is more Greek than Albanian, switching in between identities. Referring to situations that took place in the educational environment she says:

*"I hate those Turkish people. They have conducted so many crimes towards us, Greek people".* And later, *"Being an Albanian is not easy in my classroom, you are never treated in the same way as the Greeks are. They are always privileged, sometimes even discriminative towards an Albanian".*

Important to notice is that informants **A.** and **C.** have a Greek passport, while informant **B.** does not. She says that she tried and wished to have one but, as the procedure is long and highly expensive, she withdrew.

Another important source of meaning in self-identification is their continuous contact with Albania and their established networks both in Albania and Greece, some of which we previously discussed. All three



Leskovik and describes the wealthy life they had there; the burning of Leskovik during World War II destroyed all of it. She says that not only is she Albanian, but she is proud to be Albanian; memories of her childhood are what she mainly refers to. She is quite nostalgic about Albania and even sang patriotic songs learned in elementary school, songs which she remembered despite her weak memory. She does not bring into discussion any kind of negativity towards Albania or Albanians. Considering herself as a refugee by the time she came, she bears memories of how Greek people of Konitsa helped her and her family while they were poor; she brought up hundreds of examples of the kindness that her family found amidst local people. On the other side, she says she did not have difficulty in fitting into the Greek environment. It was easy to orient herself because they had almost the same customs and because there were no borders as we actually experience them today, so they even already had established contacts in Konitsa.

The second woman, **B.**, identifies herself as Albanian, but does not hesitate to be critical towards life in Albania or on some of the Albanian immigrants living in Greece. In the overall discussion we had, she was mainly referring to the hardships a woman has to deal with in Albania, primarily economical and patriarchal. She confesses that she managed to fit in well into the Greek environment due to the significant support of her husband and his kin and their social network. Coming to Greece during the huge flow of immigrants, she confesses to have faced some prejudgments on her being Albanian, a situation for



her life better.

C. frequently goes on vacation to Durrës, a city in central Albania. She says that once in Albania she tries to fit in with the way the Albanian girls dress. But she says also that she is totally Greek in her aspirations. Her social life mainly concentrates on friendships with Greeks. She differentiates in between, confessing that Albanians are sometimes rude and lack communication, and also sometimes put her in difficult situations while in the company of Greek friends; they tease her on her becoming totally Greek. It is also interesting to mention that none of the three women watch any Albanian television.

### Conclusions

Through this limited research, our aim was to give a first depiction of Albanian women's lives in Konitsa and their representations. The way these women categorise and represent themselves is continuously influenced by a variety of factors, in which agency and structure continuously transform each other. The *agents' age*, influences the way they deal with own memories, the way they see life and deal with it, in terms of their perceived role in the structure, and it also influences the aspirations towards which they tend to trace their future being. Interrelated with this is the *gender role* the women have undertaken in Albanian and Greece environments, expressed also in their *education* and *professional situations* and a relatively growing independency from



women have remained continuously in contact with Albania. The older woman managed to take a trip to Albania during the communist period. Interesting is the fact that she was able to keep in touch with her brother in Albania through exchanging letters. Although, in Albania, this act was not permitted during the extreme isolation which followed World War II, they managed to keep in touch by sending the letters from Greece to Turkey and from Turkey to Albania, and vice versa. Continuously the families exchanged photos of their ceremonial events.

In addition, the actual social network of woman for **A.** is made up of her children, her Greek friends and also some aged Albanian friends, with whom she came together from Albania during the World War II. One of her sons used to go frequently to Leskovik, spending vacations there. She says that though he does not speak Albanian, he is very fond of Leskovik and aims to build a house in the city. While in conversation with Albanians friends, she does switch in between Greek and Albanian and refers to their common memories.

**B.** used to visit Albania once every two months. Together with her sisters, one of whom is married to a Greek man, they used to meet regularly. She still practices a kind of "pilgrimage", to a sacred place [once a church] in Ocisht. Although she has little time to spare, she had previous relationships with Albanian women in Konitsa, but this is no longer the actual situation. She confesses that the friendships with Greek women suited her more, as they are more open-minded and understand



aspects in preserving or tending to accelerate the change, may be influenced by a variety of other above mentioned factors beginning from the continuously shifting importance of inherited networks (Dalipaj 2006) in the former living environment to the perceived freedom of choice and acting in the new ones. In the face of the complexity of notions of "identity" and "culture", of their being in continuous transformation and for other reasons put into words below, I would suggest to do away with the use of the term "identity renegotiation" but incorporate the term "identity transformation" as a broader and more appropriate term. Saltmarshe (2001: 3-11) in his book *Identity in a Post Communist Balkan State. An Albanian Village Study*, differentiating between the terms "transition" and "transformation" appeals to incorporate the second as a more apt one. While the "transition" means passing from one location to the other and is concerned with an end known state, the term "transformation", according to this author, involves the meaning of change in form and character; the meaning of a fundamental change, a change in the nature of structures; an open ended analytical concept and broad; a term concerned not with a known state, but with the unknown and with a drawn emphasis over the means and not the ends.

By the other side, the common meaning that the word "identity renegotiation" has taken in the every day discourses in Albania, is that of a passing abruptly from one structured entity to another structured entity, and sometimes involving also negative emotions towards that



the structure. It has to be noticed that in comparison with Albanian male immigrants in Konitsa, the interviewed women shared a more comfortable position to gradually and naturally deal with their changing life in the new environment. Coming from a patrilocal family to a patrilocal one, and accepting as purely natural the need to adapt to the husband's family and his social life, this helps the woman to deal more mildly and sometimes indirectly with the huger structure of a new society.

*The women's time and reasons for coming to Greece* influence also the way in which they wish or feel free to represent themselves and are also represented by others. This guides us to the socio-political transformation taking place in both countries and in between them, in terms of a continuous complex process and not a mere sum of points of change. Adding to this also the role of the type of education in which the women were or are involved. *The women's Albanian place of origin and also the small town of Konitsa in which they conduct the living* guides us in understanding the variability of cultural patterns in both areas (ex. urban versus rural, central urban versus peri-urban etc) and they continuously being transformed (Nitsiakos and Mantzos 2003; Spyridakis 2006) as such the inadequacy of overgeneralizations. All these aspects interrelate with each other, being also exposed to continuous change. As an example, the agents' preserved networks in their place of origin and the newly built ones in the new social environment, which in their self are other influencing



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which is very prone to change or, in the contrary, which is very slow to change. Another problem which comes from this usage of the word "renegotiating identity", is that it considers identity as something people possess and have and not as something people are (From 2001 [1976]). Hence the problematic arisen from the much spoken about "exchange of identity for practical benefit". Another meaning the word "renegotiation" conveys in hereby environment is that of a purely intellectual process, which involves clear ideas of how the person is and where he aspires to be. This shifts our attention from the spontaneous changing over time, and makes us overgeneralize in favor of a myth of rationality.

To summarize, shifting away from the word "renegotiation" and adopting a broader term such as "transformation", as a shift from collapsed old certainties, what I am trying to express is that what is 'Albanian' can have the moral legitimacy to be considered from outside or within, an in context dynamic process of multifaceted interrelating features.

At the end, I have to assert that this research remains very limited, mainly due to the short period in which it was conducted. For research of a more encompassing nature we suggest the inclusion of also Albanian women of Muslim origins, rural and urban women, Albanian women married to Albanian men and their daughters, Albanian women as economic migrants, which we couldn't have the possibility to include in this research.



**Some anthropologically inspired reflections on  
the Greek-Albanian borderland<sup>1</sup>**

**Anthropology and the study of space**

The turn by anthropologists to the study of space, place and landscape was delayed. It was partially the outcome of a critique of the structural functionalism that for decades had been the dominant theoretical paradigm in anthropology. This turn stems from the realization that the dichotomy dividing "nature" from "culture" was a culture-laden way of apprehending the world. Structural functionalism created not only a-temporal depictions of societies studied, but a-spatial as well, despite the fact that spatiality was thought to be contingent with structural functionalism. Societies were viewed as having their own social structures that were coterminous with a certain place. However space was treated as merely the framework of human action, as an environment providing material conditions, as a neutral stage on which

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<sup>1</sup>Professor Vassilis Nitsiakos, Lecturer Vassilis Dalkavoukis and my fellow PhD candidate Kostas Mantzos inspired me to study the Greek-Albanian border landscape. What's more, I had stimulating discussions about borders and borderlands with my fellow-participants in the Konitsa Summer School, especially with Kostas Boumbourides, with whom I presented an earlier version of this text. Photos number 1 and 3 are taken by Sofia Pantelidou. I extend many thanks to all of these individuals.



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1980's, mainly in a Marxist framework, inspired by the work of Foucault and Lefebvre. Social geography's major contribution was the realization that space is socially constituted, that it is the crystallization of uneven social relations in spatial terms. Every society takes spatial forms, in the sense that social relations produce spatial patterns.

Nowadays anthropologists envisage spatial entities as a dimension of culture. The influence of culture on spatial perceptions, the antagonistic representations of spaces and places by opposing discourses, the spatialized memory of displaced people, and tourist sites as places inscribed with cultural meaning are some of the topics that the anthropology of space deals with. Moreover anthropology, along with other social sciences, explores the ways that spatial entities obtain cultural significance, becoming an instrument of power creating new cultural meanings, not simply created by them. Anthropologists ask not only what spatial entities "mean" but what they "do" (Mitchell 1994: 1-2, see Tilley 1994, Nitsiakos 2003a: 87). Borders and borderlands should be researched as an example of this instrumental power of places.

### **Anthropology and the study of borders**

In recent years, anthropologists along with geographers and political scientists have focused on borders that demarcate national territories or regions within national states. A border, according to Anzaldua (1987: 3), is a "dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge".



human culture occurred. Space was seen to affect human action, imposing certain restrictions on it, but was largely taken for granted in the attempt to understand cultures.

This isomorphism between space, culture and society was related to the conception of space as something static, as it was opposed to the depiction of time/history as something dynamic. Certainly the split between space and time is a deep-rooted notion in Western Cartesian and Newtonian thought. Modern physics challenges this dichotomy of time/space (Massey 1993). The anthropological turn to a more theoretically complex study of space is one of the by-products of the critique of structural functionalism. Another is the reevaluation of time/history as an exegetic factor of social and cultural realities.

Modern anthropological theory incorporates space/geography in its theoretical and epistemological scope as another way of thickening ethnographic descriptions<sup>2</sup>. These developments in anthropology and other social sciences are in tandem with the maturing of geography as a social science. The convergence of geography with the social sciences took place in the

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<sup>2</sup>In a recent interview with Emma Blake (2001: 153) the prominent American geographer Edward Soja points out the lack of spatial thinking in anthropology: "I went into the anthropological literature and discovered remarkably little explicit discussion of the importance of territoriality in traditional societies and in anthropological theories and research. Occasionally I would find some interesting arguments, but then seemed to be this blindness or perhaps taken-for-granted attitude towards territorial behavior. Societies were put into place, mapped as occupying territories, but there was little actual spatial analysis". For the same critique to the delayed engagement of anthropology with the study of landscape see Bender (1996: 323), Tilley (1994).



Albania in 1921, the southern, belongs to Greece and the northern belongs to Albania. For a long period of time however, all of Epirus was under the rule of the Ottoman Empire. Despite local differentiation, the whole region was homogenized on the basis of common economic and cultural features during this period. The mobility of male residents in seasonal craft-works, the Epirotic diaspora of almost all metropolises of the Balkans, local festivities with apparent economic functions, and shared cultural traits such as polyphonic songs became emblematic of this common historical background<sup>3</sup>. The end of WWII was a watershed in the relations between the two parts of Epirus. Due to the political events of the late 1940's, especially the Truman Doctrine which divided the Balkans among Great Powers (Greece being the only Balkan state under Western political control), contacts

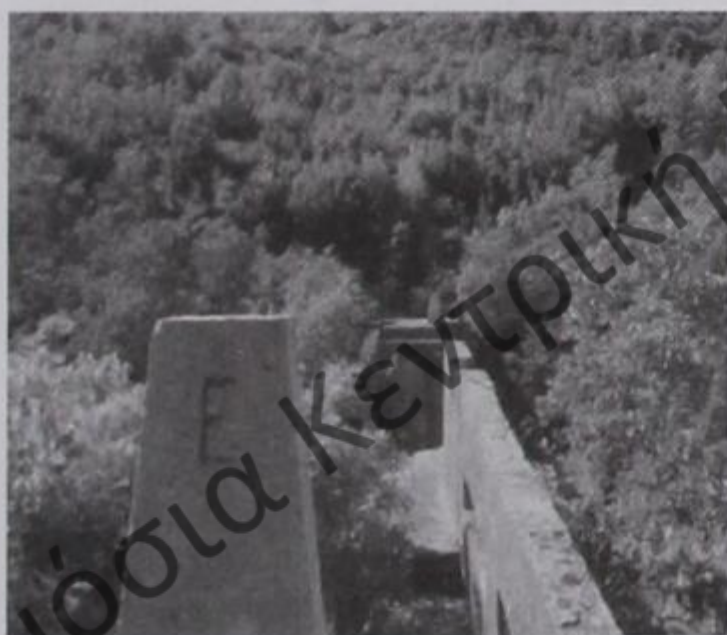


Photo 1  
Pyramids, the signs of the  
borderline

<sup>3</sup>Ironically polyphonic songs were later employed both by Greek and Albanian senior folklorists in order to prove the cultural superiority of their nation of origin.



Geographical fantasy invented the notion of "natural boundaries" based on natural features (mountains, rivers etc.). This notion has been severely criticized by social geographers. A natural feature is no less invented a border than walls, like those dividing Palestinians from Israelis (Gamster & Lorey 2005: xiii). There are no natural borders. Any border is a political invention that requires naturalization. An anthropological contribution to the study of borders should be, among other contributions, the elucidation of the processes under which this naturalization is achieved.

Despite their inventedness, borders demarcate space, imposing social and cultural relations that affect the daily life of borderlanders. A borderline is a political invention that nevertheless creates spaces in which certain power relations are imposed. Borders create space that is "in between", that has a very ambiguous status, one that is in constant transition. The borderland, the wider space across the borderline "is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary" (op.cit.). In this way borderlines, apart from mirroring international equilibrium of power between nation-states, create new social/cultural/spatial realities. Borders produce and are produced by cultural difference (Bourdieu 1999: 115).

### **Dying for borders**

The historic region of Epirus consists of two parts. Since the definition of the borders between Greece and



Όλοι. Όλο το χωριό. Όποιον γνωρίζω και με γνωρίζει εκεί πέρα δεν ξέρουν. Και όταν πάω εκεί το πολύ δέκα μέρες κάθομαι, (...) Άσε που ξέρουν ότι όσοι Αλβανοί είναι εδώ, έχουν άλλο όνομα και... από κει λειτουργεί το άλλο το όνομα, το κανονικό το όνομα..."

*"When I'm passing the borders, my brain is tuned accordingly... My own people do not call me with my Greek name, they cannot use it. They cannot.. My own friends as well.. All of them.. All.. Let aside that they know that every Albanian that live in Greece has changed his name... from the other side of the border the other name is used, the normal one..."* (Nitsiakos 2003b: 86).

Borders acquire different meanings in various, often antagonistic discourses (Paasi 2002: 192) as they are primarily ideological constructs articulated in spatial terms. Authoritative narratives depict the Greek-Albanian border as a place to die for, as a national stage on which heroes have sacrificed their lives in order to protect national territory from intruders. Signs of such national narration are evident at virtually every step. Flags, monuments dedicated to fallen soldiers, plaques, bunkers<sup>5</sup> and anti-tank ditches inscribe national history

<sup>5</sup>Bunkers, strewn across the landscape, are a characteristic feature of the Albanian countryside.



between the Southern and the Northern part of Epirus were severed.

The Greek-Albanian borderline of today can only be seen on a map. In some places one might distinguish, in the middle of thick Epirus flora, the characteristic pyramids (photo1) that are the signs of the borderline. In many cases the borderline can only be loosely defined even by local people, usually the Albanian workers that pass the borderline "illegally" every day in order to work in Greek villages as rural laborers. Most know of the existence of the borderline, but few can locate it exactly.

Borders are omnipresent nonetheless. It is not so much a case of physical presence but of a symbolic one. Every border-crosser has to pass many symbolic boundaries, for example. Many Albanian emigrants, in their effort to become accepted by Greeks, translate their Muslim names into Christian/Greek, in order to cross the symbolic boundary demarcating Albanian emigrants in Greek society<sup>4</sup>. Symbolic boundaries and national borders are, in many ways, mutually constituted and often empower each other.

*«Έ με το που περνάω τα σύνορα, ο εγκέφαλος ρυθμίζεται αλλιώς μετά... Οι δικοί μου δεν με γνωρίζουν μ' αυτό το όνομα, δεν μπορούν να το φωνάξουν. Δεν μπορούν. Και οι φίλοι μου επίσης.»*

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<sup>4</sup>Greek and Albanian identities are largely constituted by such symbolic ethnic boundaries. Border crossers cope with them in most aspects of their social life. The slogan "Albanian, you will never become a Greek" demonstrates the strength of this symbolic boundary.



local people normally transgress borders in their daily lives. It is important to take into account that mobility and contact among different ethnic groups across the borderline had been normal for centuries. After the fall of Hoxha regime, different networks of contact were (re)established. Albanian workers began to be moved daily from their villages in Albania in order to work in Greek villages, while Greek villagers began to travel to the other side of borderline in order to partake in local festivities (πανηγύρια). Such everyday transgressions challenge the assumption that a borderline should be controlled by authorities. Pervasiveness is the local response to the intensified official policing and militarization of borders.

### **Dying in borders**

During the Cold War era, the Greek Albanian border was a region almost completely isolated from the rest of



Photo 3  
The bar





Photo 2  
Nationalists usually depict the border  
as a protective wall

in space, nationalize visually and materially the landscape, rendering it a defensible space, a place to die for.

Greek-Albanian borders like any spatial feature and the residents of the "other" side are represented in various ways. Nationalists usually depict the border as a protective wall that should discourage unwelcome "illegal" intruders from violating national security (photo 2). Such a wall should logically be patrolled by the Greek state. Before the fall of the Hoxha regime in Albania, the border was depicted by Greek national ideology in a completely different manner. It was more a barrier imposed by Albanians in order to imprison the Greek "refugees" living there<sup>6</sup>. It was an "unnatural" and "violent" way to keep the Greek national body disjointed. Spatial entities and their collective representations do not acquire meaning but in wider, history laden discourses. Thus neither place nor its apprehension by people is necessarily "frozen in time".

National ideologies regard borders, despite their spatial marginality, as central features in national narration. But

<sup>6</sup>It is said that the fences across the Albanian borderline were electrified in order to prevent such refugees from reaching Greek territory.



the Albanian side of the borderline, shared a sense of insularity. Kostas N., a worker from the Greek minority in Albania who lives in a Greek town very close to the border, narrates this insularity very emotionally:

*"Ημασταν άνθρωποι ντιπ γελασμένοι και χαμένοι. Σαν άνθρωπος που τον κλειάς σ' ένα κουτί και δεν βλέπει τίποτα..."*

*"We were people absolutely deceived and ignorant... Like a person that is encapsulated in a box..."* (Nitsiakos 2003b: 175).

The isolation is reflected clearly in the narrations of immigrants from Albania as well. They used to refer to their country with the Greek adverb *mesa* (μέσα) which in English means 'inside'. An interview with Mihali K. provides an example:

*"Πολύ καλά είμαι εδώ. Και 'γω, να σου πω την αλήθεια από μια άποψη δεν θέλω να πάω μέσα..."*

*"I'm very well here. And to be honest, from a certain point of view, I don't want to go back 'mesa'"* (Nitsiakos 2003b, 69).

Interestingly enough the word *mesa* seems to acquire even more semantic depth when used to describe Northern Albania, the farthest point from the border with Europe. The notion of *mesa* is rhetorically



Greece<sup>7</sup>. The road network was in very poor condition and in order for someone to reach the borderline a license was issued by the local security authorities or local military officer. The bar (μπάρα) (photo 3) was the emblem of the "specific" status of the Greek borderland at this time. I was told by residents of Molybdoskepastos, a village located a few meters away from the borderline, that they were forbidden even to look at the other side of borderline<sup>8</sup>.

On the Albanian side of borderline the notorious electric-powered fences demarcated the wider regions that used to be under very strict state and military control. It was reported that many Greeks residents of Albania died trying to cross the border or spent their lives in jail after such attempts. In many narratives of Albanians the border is attributed with a symbolic, even magical power. Even after the collapse of Hoxha regime the border was regarded as a gate to the outer world that for decades was tightly locked. The passing of the borderline was, and in many ways continues to be, a kind of a ritualistic passage to the sphere of freedom. The political strategy of the communist regime was self-sustained economic development, that which rendered Albania a remote country without international relations. Albanians and non-Albanians alike, those on

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<sup>7</sup>The same conditions existed along the Greek-Yugoslavian and Greek-Turkish borderlines at this time, especially in the regions occupied by populations with "ambiguous" ethnic identity (Slavomacedonians and Pomaks for example).

<sup>8</sup>Many Albanians mention that the Hoxha regime prevented them from looking at the border as well. Paasi (1999:131) mentions a similar restriction in the case of the Finnish-Russian borderline.



that irrigated the soil is the most eloquent of them, the most emotionally charged way of legitimating national character on the borders. Borders are depicted as thick black lines on maps that demarcate national territory. Nevertheless, borderlands are inhabited areas. They are not only nationally inscribed spaces but life-worlds, places of intimacy and familiarity. Movement is the anti-rhetoric that ordinary people make use of in order to counter the authoritative imposition of power. People from both sides of the borderline by-pass official points of control and custom houses creating their own network of footpaths. In this way they impose meaning onto the landscape, rendering it a familiar place of every day life.

These footpaths connecting Albanian with Greek villages in a semi-legal way cannot be located on a map. Footpaths, in a sense, are the collective violation of maps. Many emigrants without official documents narrate, in an emotionally loaded way, the experience of having walked on snow-covered footpaths in order to bypass the official control points. To these people, their border-crossing is not simply located in a certain space. Such movement constitutes a spatial anti-practice.

It is estimated that after the fall of Hoxha regime 500.000 people illegally crossed the borderline. Many of them were arrested and sent back to Albania, only to cross again following the same high mountain footpaths<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>9</sup>In many anthropological and cultural studies, place is approached in the light of wider developments- the movement of populations for example. The tone in the related discussion is set by those who privilege the fading of identities which emanate from roots in places in favor of new identities much more



connected with economic and social backwardness, with the apparent lack of modernization etc. This area, mainly occupied by Muslims, is depicted by Christians Albanians as even more *mesa* Albania. Kostas N., an emigrant from the Greek minority of Albania, employs the adverb "mesa" in this way:

*"Άμα είναι βόρειο Αλβανία, που είναι μέσα Αλβανία, είναι πολύ τρομερός ο κόσμος. Εγώ νιώθω φόβο... Νιώθω φόβο"*

*"In the case of Northern Albania, which is 'mesa' Albania, people are really atrocious. É feel fear... I really feel fear..."* (Nitsiakos 2003b: 179).

Language is a manner of being-in-the-world. Naming spatial features, for example, is not simply a neutral activity but reflects cultural and historical perceptions. No word acquires any meaning independent of its social and cultural context. Quite the contrary, words acquire meaning in social interaction. Language, especially place-naming, does not "refer to" human experience but "discloses" it. In this sense what is more important is not to clarify place-naming as if it occurred outside of any context, to simply locate place-names on a map, but to understand the way these concepts are conceptualized by the societies and cultures anthropologists study.

National ideologies strive to present borders as a natural, national landscape by inscribing upon them the shibboleths of national presence. The blood of forefathers



according to EU statistics, is one of the poorest European regions. Albania is ranked as one of the least developed countries in the world. In such ways these particular borderlands are depicted as "dying places"<sup>11</sup> still mired in the effects of historical backwardness.

Nowadays talk of the resurgence of borderland economies is mainly phrased in terms of tourism development<sup>12</sup>. Agrotourism and cultural tourism are envisaged by official institutions as the solution to the problem of poverty in mountainous communities<sup>13</sup>. Epirus and Albania are both promoted as potential attractions for modern tourists that seek out "authentic places", those "unchanged by time" (Urry 1995). The Albanian Organization of Tourism, in its effort to find a niche for Albania in the world tourist market, promotes

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Especially after the Greek Civil War, during which time hundreds of mountainous communities of Epirus and Western Macedonia were evacuated by the Greek government in order to deprive Greek communists of support. Mountainous places have rarely recovered from this compulsory population movement.

<sup>11</sup>This representation of mountains is historically obsolete. Most statistical and political analysis overlook the fact that until the mid 19th century, Balkan mountains were regions of marvelous economic and cultural diversity. Even during the mid-war period, mountainous spaces retained their demographic dynamism despite emigration. Moreover, in the wider region of the Epirus mountains were areas of frequent cultural contact. The reasons for the decline of "mountainous communities" lay far beyond the limited scope of this article.

<sup>12</sup>See for example the project forwarded by Greek and Albanian NGO's for the declaration of the borderland of Grammos as the landscape of the year 2007-2008 ([http://www.ezcal.com/ankas/images/questionnaire\\_grammos\\_gr.pdf](http://www.ezcal.com/ankas/images/questionnaire_grammos_gr.pdf))

<sup>13</sup>See interview with Brigitta Papastavrou head director of "Agrotouristiki", the institution responsible for the development of agrotourism in Greece (Papastavrou 2007).



We cannot estimate how many people died in an effort to cross the boundary due to bad weather or encounters with police and army gunfire. For many years after the waves of emigration began, newspapers published by Albanian immigrants in Athens listed requests for information about missing persons lost during such attempts to reach "paradise". The border is a place to die on as well as a place to die for.

### **Borders as places for tourism and sightseeing. An ongoing process.**

Borderlands have a palpable temporal aspect. They are "places that exist in the remote past", "places forgotten by God and people", "dying places". Officials, institutions and intellectuals, NGO's alike employ such rhetoric when referring to regions along the Greek-Albanian border. Epirus shares this perceived character with other Greek mountainous spaces. As early as the 19th century, Greek mountains were represented in official and unofficial discourses as places of chaos, political disobedience<sup>10</sup> and backwardness. Today, Epirus,

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"hybridized" and "mixed" (Appadurai 1988, 1993, 2003; Gupta and Ferguson 1992; Bhabha 1994; Clifford 1997; For a critique see Friedman 2002). Despite the "globalization process", people continue to fight over their "bounded" territories and strive to create new borders in ways that many social and political scientists discount (Friedman 2002; Paasi 1994: 133; Καυταντζόγλου 2001: 44). Moreover, even displaced people strive to relocate themselves in a place, in order to establish "a new life".

<sup>10</sup>In Modern Greek the expression "I take to the mountains" means to riot.



Sometimes poetry can grasp and express social reality and historical change much more vividly than any other aspect of human creativity. I cannot imagine a more stimulating expression of spaces' historicity, of the convergence of time and space, than these verses written by Tasos Porfiris (Porfiris 2004: 26), a poet from Epirus:

"Δεν μένει κανείς εδώ πια· όλοι έχουν/  
Μετακομίσει στον νέο αιώνα" ("Nobody lives here anymore/they moved all to the new century").

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Albania as "the last secret"<sup>14</sup>. Some communities in Epirus are transformed into agro-tourist attractions. Architecture, nature, and the sensual apprehension of places are the cornerstones of the new palimpsest of Epirus' landscape. Mountains gain a new meaning as potential fields of a new kind of nature-worship. Even the borderline itself is promoted as a place to be gazed upon by tourists<sup>15</sup>. In this way so-called "backwardness" is transformed by developers into a kind of comparative advantage vis-a-vis "tradition" and the "authentic beauty" of the landscape. Not surprisingly, these strikingly new representations of Epirotic landscape are not without tensions<sup>16</sup>. The transformation of mountainous communities into agro-tourist sites is an ongoing process that poses many questions to anthropologists regarding the notions of authenticity, purity and landscape apprehensions.

However, such communities, mountains, places of memory and life, cultural landscapes, and "breathtaking vistas" are represented in public discourses as wholly uncomplicated. Authenticity and purity of landscape and culture are eloquent symbols of post-modern tourist imagery, in conjunction with a pretentious pre-modern veneer. Above all it is a new reading of landscape's text.

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<sup>14</sup>See the web site of the Albanian Tourism Organisation (<http://www.albaniantourism.com/default2.asp?faqja=welcome.htm>.)

<sup>15</sup>See the web-site <http://www.travel.gr/index.php?SCREEN=ellada&RegionID=7&CountryID=38&menufor=2>

<sup>16</sup>For an ethnographic account of such a tension see Nitsiakos 2003: 65-83; Nitsiakos 2006:162-169.



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constructed "Us" imagined to be bound to a place and a community, but also takes into account the knowledge of cultural practices of other communities in other places that are set into a context of differing. While the constructed "Us" is set into relation with a notion of authenticity and uniqueness, the opposed "Others" are not characterized through the presence of other markers, but through the absence of the markers of "Us". They can therefore alternatively be termed "Not-Ours" as was proposed by Aretov (2001 cited in Toncheva 2005:54). These "Not-Ours" are used to define their own cultural boundaries and are consequently seen as connected with the threat of a "symbolic pollution" (Herzfeld 1987:190, in the sense of introducing external cultural elements into a homogenous and "pure" indigenous culture and therefore producing cultural ambiguity. Connected with this creation of cultural boundaries is in every case a definitive aesthetical judgement on the musicality and the musical style of the constructed "Not-Ours" (Pistrick 2005:72). This valuation is also applied to the places where the musical practices, considered to be fundamentally different are taking place. The mentally constructed difference therefore becomes a geographical reality that can be experienced. Summing up these processes one may say "the distinguishing or the finding of similarities with the others is one of the patterns for finding out identity" (Toncheva 2005:54).

One way to conceptualize and legitimize singing locally is in reference to an ideologically constructed homogenous "national culture". Underlying basis for the



## Eckehard Pistrick\*

### **Whose is this song? Fieldwork views on multipart singing as expression of identities at the South Albanian border.**

Music-making and particularly singing can attain different meanings as a cultural expression and as a way to establish and negotiate identities. These meanings are formed in performances, which are specific through their positioning in time, space and specific social surroundings. Singing practices allow communities to position themselves in relation to distinct but flexibly used categories of geographical, cultural, social and political belonging. Place, as a location of musical production and as a reference point to articulate origin and belonging, is an important concept for local communities because the way people think about identity and music is connected to the "way they think about places" (Wade 2000:2). Through singing "the hierarchies of place are negotiated and performed" (Stokes 1994:4)<sup>1</sup> and become socially meaningful in the sense that through performance people "recognize identities and places and the boundaries which separate them" (Stokes 1994:5).

But every performance not only establishes the

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<sup>1</sup>Hierarchies of place refers here to the internal (communal-local) and external (national) valuations of place (community, village, town, district, region, nation-state) according to its perceived social and symbolic significance.



dependent on these local perceptions and regional constructions as on nation-related identity constructions. Toncheva (2005) showed convincingly in the case of the Bulgarian Pomaks that the perception of specific features of folk music<sup>3</sup> as distinctive and characteristic for a musical heritage of a region or a community can be defined as a sort of "mythology"<sup>4</sup>, as a tool to articulate difference. This production of difference takes place through oral transmission and the elaboration of indicators of difference or sameness, which are only partly based on real musical or textual facts. The perception of regional style, understood as a musically distinct way of performing and as an identity-building strategy, can contribute actively to the preservation of song traditions.

Wade (2000) observed in his research in Colombia the existence of a "musical regionalism" relevant for the identity conceptions of local musicians. Wade is referring to "musical regionalism" both as a way for local performers to express cultural identities within a multicultural nation and as a way for nationalist elites "to discipline diversity" (Wade 2000:7). "Musical regionalism" can be read according to him as a cultural marker for the inconsistency of the nation, fluctuating between homogeneity and heterogeneity, between centralization and regionalism, maintaining at the same

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<sup>3</sup>Primarily the surviving practice of lament performances, the intonation connections between laments and epic songs, throat-voice production and the Turkish-Arabic names appearing in song texts are perceived as indicators of difference between Christian and Muslim (Pomak) musical practice.

<sup>4</sup>Term used by Aretov (2001:19 cited in Toncheva 2005:55).



fiction of such a unified "national culture" is the assumption of a "community of anonymity" (Anderson 1983). The performers are seen as a whole unified "collective individual" (Handler 1988) who share a set of cultural expressions and meanings proving their national allegiances. Performances that do not fit into the codified system of "national cultural expressions" defined by power-holders are, whether marginalized, considered as "inauthentic" or exhibited after they underwent the process of "cultural objectification" (Handler 1988). Here it becomes obvious that the multiple meanings of singing can be shaped, negotiated, transformed and instrumentalized by power-holders.

Identity formulation takes place not only in relation or in opposition to the nation-state and its ideologies, but also in association with the local and regional interpretations of culture. While taking ethnicity and religious affiliation as a basis for identity, different ways of modelling an identity are possible. The specific identification with *krahinë* (landscape) in the sense of an ethnographic region<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, allows the formation of a specific identity, which can be seen both as a counter-discourse, or as a constitutive part of a national identification. Regional interpretations are formulated by cultural power-holders and musicians on a local level and can lead either to the support or subversion of national identities or the creation of alternative identities. Music and identity are as much

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<sup>2</sup>A term used by Albanian scholars as well as by local communities.



mentally omnipresent boundary. Because singing is bound to and defined through place, any analysis of singing in a border region as a peculiar performance context,<sup>6</sup> would be incomplete without applying recent concepts from the field of "border studies".

As Donnan and Wilson argue in reference to state policies and local societies, "cultural practices which support or subvert states and their policies have always been found in border regions" (Donnan and Wilson 2003:9). This "borderland ambiguity", exemplified in local discourses and expressed through the continuous switching between national and local narratives, provides the framework for intensified identity formulations within border regions.

Singing in the cultural space of Southern Albania can be interpreted only in relation to all these multiple meanings of the omnipresent border, as an area of stigmatization of the "Other", threat, fear and isolation and as a culturally and politically highly sensitive region. People living in this space have to show "through symbolic action and self-designation" (Manos 2002:12), through language, dance and songs their conformity to national standards. After the reopening of the borders in 1991 the region has also been described as a "transnational space" (de Rapper 2005:192), characterized through increasing social, economic and cultural interaction and as a place where cultural

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<sup>6</sup>Border regions as places where the relation of music with identification processes takes place and becomes visible.



time the hierarchies of class, culture, region and race and the fiction of a unified homogenous "national culture". In applying this term to Albania I will use the term "musical regionalism" exclusively in its first meaning describing the activities of local musicians as a way to articulate internal difference within a "country of regions" (Wade 2000:3). The instrumentalization of "musical regionalism" for political purposes cannot be discussed in this paper but has been and still is relevant for the Albanian case. Applied to South Albania the concept of "musical regionalism" as identity concept is predominant in each of the larger ethnographic border-regions of Labëria, Toskëria and Camëria and its diverse subdivisions (Pistrick 2005:71). How a specific regional style is valued is dependent on the viewpoints of performers and audiences and could be described as an ideological struggle between larger territorial units such as North and South Albania, ethnographic regions such as Toskëria and Labëria and even between certain villages.

The paper is based on ongoing research<sup>5</sup>, which is focused on the southern parts of the Albanian regions of Labëria and Toskëria confined by the Greek-Albanian border and defined locally in reference to this at least

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<sup>5</sup>Fieldwork took place in the towns of Saranda, Gjirokastra and Leskovik and some villages in Labëria and Toskëria (South Albania) in March/September 2004 and August/September 2006, in the region of Konitsa (Northern Greece) in August/September 2006 and in the city of Thessaloniki in January 2007 as part of a completed MA research project on multipart epic historic songs in the Saranda region and an ongoing PhD research project on migration songs in Epirus.



discussion on multipart singing and enacted in every performance.

### **The regional identification of multipart singers**

The above mentioned ways of "reading" or "decoding" musical performances will be applied in the following section on a performance of *the group "Melezini" in Leskovik/Toskëria*.<sup>9</sup> Although this performance took place as a result of and in the presence of "Outsiders"<sup>10</sup> it can nevertheless be characterized as an informal performance both through its positioning in a local bar setting and through the incorporation of improvised elements and verbal statements. While an "Outsider"-group from Carcova, consisting of young workers from the Laberia region, came in later to sit on the ground floor in front of the bar, the Tosk group from Leskovik of middle aged men and pensioners chose a more intimate, acoustically and locally secluded place for their performance: a wooden living room decorated with wall-carpets and decoration pieces. The room, which was situated upstairs and reachable only by a small wooden staircase, possessed two curtained windows which allowed overlooking the ground floor of the bar. The performers from Leskovik sat half-circle in close physical

<sup>9</sup>Research was carried through during the Konitsa Summer School on 5.8./6.8.2006 in collaboration with ethnomusicologist Georgia Tenta.

<sup>10</sup>An interested audience of young anthropologists and ethnomusicologists and a group of singers from Carcova.

<sup>11</sup>This was especially the case with the leading voice.



diversity prevails over any concept of exclusivity (Pistrick 2005). Music-making in South Albania could be seen in this sense as an ambiguous activity, as "a means of stressing communality and consolidating national identity in a region with a contested musical identity" (Pistrick 2006:181). The Greek-Albanian borderlands are a prominent example for a location where the shifting and manipulation of identity takes place.

The present paper intends to examine some particular dynamics of border identity discourses exemplified in the local perception of multipart singing practices. Its focus lies on the aesthetic symbolic evaluation and decoding<sup>7</sup> of singing by the performers themselves, and not on "official discourses". The data presented here was collected during informal performances<sup>8</sup> such as improvised singing or rehearsals of different multipart groups. It should be argued that references to national categories in these contexts are often considered less significant than the sometimes interrelated concepts of regional belonging and the conceptualizations of "Us" and "Others", of inclusion and exclusion. Finally, it should reveal some of the ambiguities and interactions between different levels of identity incorporated in every

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<sup>7</sup>With decoding I refer to concepts used to explain the significance and meaning of the musical and textual content of multipart songs.

<sup>8</sup>Informal as participative activity opposed to formal events (staged performances) as performative activity, characterized through their official character, dislocation, decontextualization, strict division between audience and performers and purification of performance (exclusion of talk and roughness-features in singing).



upstairs. Their performance and comments were recorded simultaneously.

The multipart group "Melezini" from Leskovik shows its regional identification already through its name, depicting a nearby mountain known in local history as a location of armed conflicts between Albanian rebels and Ottoman forces at the beginning of the 19th century. The four singers came from different ethnic and social backgrounds. Leading voice Sokol Pandi,<sup>13</sup> argued to have his origin in a Moldavian family occupied as *coban* (shepherd). He mentioned his Vlach descent,<sup>14</sup> but considered himself an Albanian citizen. Thanasis Hajdini, second voice and Luka Selimi were ethnically and nationally Albanians. Pavlos Panajoti was bilingual, speaking Greek as well as Albanian and has been living and working in Konitsa on the Greek side of the border. The same heterogeneity could be found in the religious backgrounds of the group members: While two singers were orthodox and one singer non-religious, the fourth singer came from a Muslim family.

Despite this heterogeneity on the individual level, the singers tried to present themselves during the performance as a homogenous community to an audience of strangers; stressing common shared features rather than differences. Nevertheless the "Otherness" within

<sup>13</sup>All names have been changed in order to maintain the anonymity of the singers.

<sup>14</sup>He seemed to know at least some fragments of Aromanian language.



contact, looking and commenting on each other during the performance and communicating through mimics and through extensive use of hand gestures,<sup>11</sup> highlighting crucial metaphors of the text. Neither the consistence of the group nor the part roles were fixed. Both features were rearranged from song to song and decided for the moment. The parts could be exchanged according to the momentary knowledge of text, according to the vocal qualities<sup>12</sup> and the momentary mood of the singers. The number of involved singers changed constantly as singers and even the barkeeper were often joining in and then leaving the performance. The drone was executed for the most time by three singers only; the lowest number which allows proper multipart singing according to local conceptions. Intensive interaction took place between first and second voice both during the performance and in the discourses where they tried to express message and value of the respective song verbally. The singers from Leskovik performed in front of a student group that gave the small room a crowded festive atmosphere, stimulating them to perform in an emotionally charged manner and to translate certain textual passages into Greek language. It could be argued that the presence of an audience of "Others" created a need for the locals to demonstrate and negotiate their "identities". After one third of the performance, the group from Carcova began to sing on the ground floor. This was perceived as a "hostile" action

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<sup>12</sup>Voice qualities that made them fit better for example for an epical or lyrical song.



Leskovik)<sup>15</sup> and the intention to preserve a local singing style as heritage for the next generations.<sup>16</sup> These three main motivating forces were associated with specific genres of songs. *Qejf* became exemplified in a wide range of love and marriage songs, performed in an excited and expressive style incorporating exclamations and verbal interpolations indicating an increasing intensity of emotion. Shared history became expressed through songs for heroes and partisans like Zylyftar Podar, leading figure in the South Albanian insurrection against the Ottomans in 1831 (Panajoti 1982:172). The intention to preserve the local singing style became visible through the actualization of old songs with newly created texts.

The performance in Leskovik consisted as much of singing as of discussion. These two ways of communication were part of one *muhabet* (communal interchange or discussion) used to create the state of openness and affection indispensable for interchange within the group and between group and audience. As Sugarman (1997:3) argued<sup>17</sup> singing fulfils in this context the function of social exchange within a wider range of symbolic concepts such as *nder* (respect), *radhë* (order) and *muhabet* (in the sense of intimacy or appreciation). The final aim of the performance in Leskovik was not only the blending of sound in order to create a "sonic community" as a proof of internal coherence, but also the

<sup>17</sup>In reference to her research on weddings at Prespa lake (South-East Albania).



the group in ethnic and religious respect was recognized by the group members and interpreted positively as an internal richness and as a proof for tolerance. Although all recorded songs were sung in Albanian, the *Marrës* (first voice) stressed, that if he would speak Greek he would also be willing to sing in the language of the "Others". As unifying elements underlying their cultural activities they mentioned *qejf* (joy, happiness), a shared history as *leskovikare* (indigenous inhabitants of



Photo 1: Multipart group "Melezini" from Leskovik in performance, 20.9.2006 (Photo: Antonio Pusceddu)

<sup>15</sup>This presentation of a shared origin, dominant in the presentation of all respective biographies and kinship ties was intended to put the singers into the position to be regarded by Outsiders as "authentic bearers of an indigenous folk culture" (Handler 1988).

<sup>16</sup>This assumption fits into the above mentioned statement that the "mythologization" of local singing practices as markers of difference can actively contribute to the preservation of local singing traditions.



the interpretation of the Leskovik group was characterized through its intimate social dimension as an expression of male friendship, shared values and above all as a cultural practice exemplifying religious and linguistic tolerance in the region.

### **The "invention" of national categories**

That regional and national, collective and individual categories of identification are flexible and manoeuvrable cannot only be shown by negotiations during social events but also by specific cultural expressions that can be interpreted in multiple ways.

In the case of a dance known in Southern Albania as "dance of Osman Taka"<sup>22</sup> and in Northern Greece as "Tsamiko"<sup>23</sup> I will now abandon the analysis of specific performance situations and concentrate on comments about such a specific cultural expression.<sup>24</sup> Albanian performers when asked about the origin and significance of this dance within the folk tradition showed different opinions, opening up diverse national, ethnic and regional categories of identification which could change even during the course of a discussion. The opinions were collected during performances in Leskovik,<sup>25</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Alban.: "Vallja e Osman Takes".

<sup>23</sup> In some parts of Northern Greece also termed "Osman Taka" and Samantaka.

<sup>24</sup> The comments were collected mostly in interview form and on request; the performance situation in this context can be considered less significant than in the informal commentaries of the first part, created and conditioned by the dynamics of the performance itself.

<sup>25</sup> 6.8. and 20.9.2006.



affirmation of local identity and values, which not connected with an aesthetic valuation of their singing style. Challenged by the external group from Carcova, who started singing in the same bar in recitative Lab style, they commented continuously on the value of their "cultivated"<sup>18</sup> and "indigenous" Tosk singing style, juxtaposed to the Lab way of singing which they marked as "external" and "unelaborated". The discourse following the song performance eventually took place before the background of concepts of regionalism and authenticity.<sup>19</sup> The basic argument put forward by the performers for the valuation of a Leskovik song was its origin, which explained according to them its stylistic and "authentic" features. This origin was defined strictly in geographical and temporal<sup>20</sup> terms juxtaposed to the "Others" (Greece) and the "Others within" (Laberia and other singing styles of Toskeria<sup>21</sup>). Keeping distance in regional and aesthetic terms through stressing their local belonging to a specific ethnographic zone (*krahinë*) seemed to be for them far more important than the question of national affiliations. In addition singing in

<sup>18</sup>The reference to *kulturë* (culture) is common in the construction of difference especially between Muslim and Christian, rural and urban, plain and highland communities. In this case not only the regional singing practice but also the way to bury the dead in "clean" places and the experience of *kurbet* (migration) was perceived as indicator for *kulture*.

<sup>19</sup>Authenticity understood not as a property of music, musicians and their relations to audiences but as a concept of aesthetical self-legitimization.

<sup>20</sup>This argumentation was applied in distinguishing the two *Saze*-styles of Toskeria from Permet and Leskovik. While the style of Permet was described as the most popular style it was argued that the style of Leskovik was older and therefore more "authentic".

<sup>21</sup>Especially in regard of Tosk singing practices in Erseka and Permet.



between the practice, the musical form and the origin of the dance.

In discussing the practice they introduced over-national categories of identification implicitly referring to a notion of a distinct cultural space<sup>32</sup> not delimited by the actual territorial borders of Greece and Albania and their respective cultural policies. The dance as cultural expression was perceived as supertemporal and over-national practice, having existed before the time of mental and actual border making. In regard to the musical form and the origin of the dance, they came back to the arguments of "musical regionalism" which they used as well for the valuation and justification of their singing activities in general. By propagating a clear distinction between origin, form and practice of this cultural expression they ultimately questioned the existence of an exclusive claim of cultural ownership based on its origin. During the discussion they seemed to be especially concerned with justifying their regional, not their national superiority. Only in a singular case they used to describe themselves with the nationally-coined Greek term "Vorio Epirotes" ("North Epirotes").

The whole argumentation concept with its created boundaries began to shift and eventually became turned upside down after the introduction of the fact that Osman Taka was born in Konispolë a place now belonging to the state-territory of Albania. The singers

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<sup>32</sup>One may introduce here the term Epirus in its geographical meaning, excluding the political connotations, which have caused its general rejection among Albanians.



Gjirokastra<sup>26</sup> and Saranda.<sup>27</sup> The whole conceptualization of identity in these examples was built around this dance, which served in this case as a general metaphor for tradition<sup>28</sup> and which led ultimately to discussions about their own ambiguities and marginalities (Green 2005).

The members of the group "Melezini" in Leskovik argued that the "dance of Osman Taka" is danced and sung both in Greece and Albania and can therefore be seen as a symbol of the cultural proximity of Greeks and Albanians on both sides of the border ("we are neighbours, we are close"<sup>29</sup>). In discussing the musical form they termed it in the beginning as a "Greek folk song"<sup>30</sup> based on a Greek melody and qualified it afterwards through the over-national argument. Discussing the origin they claimed the dance to be distinct for the town of Leskovik although having admitted that the dance is even performed by the "Not-Ours" in Laberia. In an attempt of strengthening their cultural and moral superiority over their neighbours they added then that they dance and sing better than "the Others."<sup>31</sup> The singers made therefore a clear distinction

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<sup>26</sup>26.9.2006.

<sup>27</sup>25.9.2006.

<sup>28</sup>Dance as a combination of musical, choreographic and aesthetical features and a text dealing with "mythistory" was seen by many performers as an appropriate symbol for cultural expressions general.

<sup>29</sup>Alban.: "jemi komshine, jemi gjitone, jemi afër".

<sup>30</sup>Alban.: "kengë popullore grekë".

<sup>31</sup>Alban.: "neve kërcejme akoma me mirë ne ata". With "Others" they referred in this context both to the Lab people ("The Others within") and the Greek neighbours ("The extraterritorial Others").



with a stronger "national message" they considered as appropriate in this context.<sup>36</sup>

The "Others" from the Labëria themselves, represented by the group "Kurora Labe" from Gjirokastra, depicted the dance contrary to the singers from Leskovik as their own original repertoire and Osman Taka as exclusively Albanian figure of identification.<sup>37</sup>

Their "national interpretation" was also used by the singers of the group "Jonianet" in Saranda. They defined the dance as a "Camedance."<sup>38</sup> With the ironic remark, that names such as Osman and Ali do not exist in present-day Greece, they tried to avoid any further discussion, having proved according to their opinion terminologically doubtless the Albanian descent of Osman Taka and Ali Pasha alike. In discussing further the places connected with the memory of Osman Taka, such as Konispol (in present-day Albania) and Filiates (in present-day Greece), they ended up in a discussion about the "real historical size" of Albania whose southern border they imagined at the Gulf of Arta. At this point the singers turned out to be actors on the stage of predetermined ideological - patriotic - geopolitical

<sup>36</sup>The individual resistance to Ottoman reign is interpreted in this text as general metaphor for a constructed "spirit of resistance" of the Albanian people against foreign domination. In this sense the text resembles other songs on central figures of Albanian history such as those about Ismael Qemali and Abdyl Frashëri.

<sup>37</sup>Following the discussion about Osman Taka they started singing an expressive manly song dedicated to concepts of *besa* (honour) and regional pride for the Labëria region.

<sup>38</sup>Alban.: "valle camë", the term cam refers to an ethnic subgroup of the Tosks who inhabited the Camëria region in South-West Albania today divided between Albania and Greece.



tried to prove their adaptability to national standards in an ideologically sensitive border region by stating that Osman Taka was of exclusive Albanian origin and a "true patriot" in the sense of an unambiguous national affiliation<sup>33</sup> confirming the constructed correlation between origin and property of a cultural fact questioned before.<sup>34</sup> They even started to sing the text that accompanies the dance. During the performance they modified it, introducing improvised verses such as "my boy in Ioannina, he will not sell Albania"<sup>35</sup> providing it



Photo 2. Multipart group "Kurora Labe" from Picari (Gjirokastra) in performance, joined spontaneously by guests, 26.9.2006 (Photo: Eckehard Pistrick)

<sup>33</sup>Alban.: "vetëm shqiptar, vetëm alvanos!" ("only Albanian [using the Albanian term], only Albanian [using the Greek term]!").

<sup>34</sup>The assumption of a national (Albanian) origin of the dance and the central figure of the text was used as justification for exclusive national claims of the dance as Albanian cultural property. The distinction between origin and practice was abandoned in the following discussion.

<sup>35</sup>Alban.: "djalë morë në Janinë, shitë mos e do Shqipërinë".



or significance of cultural expressions not only through regional and over-national categories of identification, but also through the flexible and often overlapping application of national and ethnic categories. The propagation of a musical regionalism, perceived as supertemporal, apolitical and over-national can even coexist with an ideological view of a cultural fact as part of an exclusive and homogenous "national culture".

### **Multipart singing in South Albania as a cultural metaphor for the search for identity**

Multipart singing in South Albania is a cultural activity which takes places in reference to various sources of identification that serve as justification for the current practice. Each source of identification is itself stimulating musical practice. A dominant point of reference both for the social practice of singing and the interpretation of specific cultural facts is place and region (*krahinë*). This localization of multipart singing provides the basis for a wider concept incorporating questions of musical style, form, origin and practice, and serves the finding of a distinct musical identity. A useful term to describe this regional affiliation is Wades' term "musical regionalism". This "musical regionalism" proved to be the preferred concept for the performers in this case study on musical practice in a border region. It may be argued that this concept is especially valued in border regions characterized through an intensified negotiation of identities and an increased need to position their own



discourse.

Journalist and local historiographer, Gentian Cerro, from Saranda<sup>39</sup> also pointed on parallels between Osman Taka and Ali Pasha as national identification figures, significant both for Greek and Albanian history. He defined the dance as an "authentic Cam dance from the region of Thesprotia."<sup>40</sup> In combining the Albanian and Greek terminologies for the nationally contested home region of Osman Taka (Cameria vs. Thesprotia) he opened up a new over-national category of identification, avoiding any national statement. He affirmed that the Greek appreciate the dance as a "heroic dance, death dance, fighters' dance"<sup>41</sup>, as a dance, which fulfils a psychological function in preparing fighters mentally for the battle. Finally he stated that the region of Cameria, divided between Greece and Albania is according to his point of view<sup>42</sup> only linguistically assimilated into the Greek nation-state but not from the folkloristic point of view. He therefore sees the dance, itself depicting actions of resistance in the Ottoman past, as a symbol for contemporary cultural resistance against a homogenized Greek "national culture".

As the above-mentioned examples show, the actors of the performances and local historians use cultural expressions as a tool for the "articulation of difference". They are able to contextualize the origin, form, practice

<sup>39</sup>Interview in Saranda, 27.9.2006.

<sup>40</sup>Alban.: "valle autentike camë krahinës e Thesprotisë".

<sup>41</sup>Alban.: "valle heroike, një valle vdes, një valle luftarake".

<sup>42</sup>Alban.: "nuk është assimiluar nga pikëpamje folklorike".



expressed his point of view, that there exists no "Greek or Albanian music" at all, but "a special tradition of a special place no matter how we call it." According to his viewpoint no nation has a right to claim music in borderlands, characterized through ethnic, religious and political complexity. The antagonistic interpretation of borderland song repertoires remains an outward invention of folklorists and cultural policy makers. Performers will continue to use with flexibility different identification models in search of their own cultural identity.

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cultural practice in a region with a contested musical identity. Regional identification or over-national identification concepts, which can function independently from national references, provide the performer with a tool to express belonging individually. These "unofficial discourses" can exist outside or in relation to "official discourses" in which the features of multipart practice and questions of origin and belonging are treated as an entity and as representative part of a homogenous "national culture". The outcome of this coexistence of discourses is often an ambivalent or contradicting self-perception of musical practices. These two ways of giving sense to musical practice show that there are other ways beside the decoding of songs as unambiguous cultural metaphors in national terms as Adela Peevas' film "Whose is this song?" (2003) implicitly claims. Singing provides performers not only with a means to create boundaries in the regional ("The Others within") and over-regional sense ("the extraterritorial Others"), but also enables them to question and even dismantle these boundaries. Songs should therefore not be seen as a mirror or a means for the discussion of issues of language, authenticity, religion, politics and nation, but also as a way to open up alternative discourses not pre-determined by power-holders. This provisional hypothesis deriving from field research in South Albania was confirmed by a Greek musician originating from the Ioannina region,<sup>43</sup> who

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<sup>43</sup>Interview in Thessaloniki, 20.1.2007.



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life.

However, this bustle proved to be temporary. On our second visit, the village was almost empty. Only some passersby and a few locals were to be found at the site. The temperature was high, in spite of the fact Molybdoskepasto is situated at altitude. We went again to the church, in order to observe the landscape by the light of day and hoping to meet someone in order to speak to them. During the daytime, things seemed different. Most houses appeared to be dilapidated and the architecture of the houses, i.e. the intense use of stone, gave an air of antiquity. Marks of nationalism were scattered about the place. Two machine-guns had been placed near the village's central square. Along the street to the church there was a monument that informed us of the execution of some villagers by the Nazi troops during WWII. The war and the disturbance in the Balkans reside in the memories of many. Soon we reached the Church of the Apostles. Some tourists wandered there, staring at the border, although perhaps without the ability to conceive of the landscape's symbolic importance. Another monument stood erect, a mark of WWII.

We stood at the end of the courtyard and observed the borders. In the beginning, the border was impossible to define. The River Sarantaporos crosses the Greek-Albanian plains and we perceived it erroneously to be a natural border. In the depths of the valley, the new Customs bridge [Mertziani] appeared. Observing more carefully, we began to uncover new borders. From the middle of river, we discovered anti-tank dykes, which



**Konstantinos Poumpouridis\***

### **Reconstructing Diaries**

This paper is part of the diary I kept during field research conducted at the Konitsa Summer School. My field notes focus on the impact of borders on people's lives. Five months after the Summer School, I returned to my writing and critically reconstructed the notes highlighting the most important moral and theoretical dimensions.

We started early in the morning by car from Konitsa to the border. Our first destination was the village of Molybdoskepasto, with a population totalling approximately 40 and a fairly high average age. We had been in the same village exactly 4 days before for a concert of polyphonic music at the Byzantine Church of the Apostles. I have to admit that it was my first experience of this kind of music and it carried me away. Perhaps the combination of landscape added to the emotion of the occasion. The 16th century church combined with the music and the view of the landscape beyond the Greek borders into the Albanian territory sustained this feeling. The concert finished and people began to leave, emptying the plastic chairs that filled the courtyard of church. It appeared to be a village full of

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didn't bother me, although I do not know why; perhaps the picture of the interior of church fitted with the more general feeling of abandonment throughout the village or perhaps it marked other eras passed. The father appeared and started talking to us. His intense desire to communicate emerged and we learned new things. The church was outside the Greek border in the initial mapping of territories following World War II and then following proposals, the government moved the border by a few metres. The father's zeal for the work that is carried out here was intense. Information on the place came out of his mouth effortlessly. He carried out his duties in this area for a long time before the fall of Albanian communist regime. He showed us a path which led to two Greek-speaking villages, one hour apart from each other. He spoke with enthusiasm for this area. He paused and then continued, saying that there had been many Greek-speaking villages in Albania, but after the forced change of residence, the use of the Greek language had been downgraded. The criterion of language appeared to have a sovereign place in the mind of the priest. Of course, after historical research, I learned that the bishop of this region was such a nationalist that he often preached that the Greek state ought to extend as far as GjiroKastër, liberating other Greek populations.

The relationship of the priest with Greek-speaking Albanians appeared at first glance to be on good terms, however this proved to be misleading. When we asked his opinion about the relationship with the Albanians, he said that only when they work efficiently and hard were



came towards us and stopped in a ravine about 50 metres in front of us.

As we kept our eyes in line with the ravine, we discovered a stone pyramid, a mark of the border. Looking again at the river, we perceived that the border after the anti-tank dykes becomes, henceforth, the river itself. In all this searching, we saw abandoned guard posts scattered all over the place, marks of what we want to label "history". Behind the river were the peaks, "Maria" and "781". Looking more carefully, we saw that these mountains were more densely vegetated on the Greek side, highlighting the intense livestock-farming of the former Albanian regime. In front of the mountains, the small valley resembled a crossword. The fields, which were divided with mathematic precision, represented symbols of old Albania.

Behind us lay the church. I looked behind and I saw two wooden seats that paradoxically faced away from Albania towards the village. Suddenly, I felt the intensity of an unspoken prohibition. Do not look at the Albanian territories! Then I learned that it is prohibited to look at the Albanian ground. I do not know how much this is true or just an unwritten rule of nationalism. A change in the dull landscape occurred with the arrival of talkative Father A. He opened the church in order to make a small conducted tour of the temple. We gathered along with other visitors and entered.

The humidity filled our nostrils in the Byzantine church. It could be described as untidy, with many of hagiographies having been considerably tarnished. It



Archdiocese in Albania all led to institutionalised legal processes (passports etc). The borders appear fictitious and were adapted in the historical framework of each era. The priest experienced the borders with residents of the village in their own particular way; sometimes with fear and sometimes with nostalgia. I believe that the significance of the border lies both in the conscious and the subconscious. At university, I learned that in the Balkan Peninsula do not exist borders but frontiers. In other words, they are big areas that separate the modern nation-states. I believe that these people live simultaneously in three countries. The first is that defined by the official regime, the next is an intermediary area of frontier and last is imaginary, perhaps the desirable one...

We left the village for our second destination: the new Customs point at Mertziani. It is known that the Customs point at Kakavia serves a larger population, while Mertziani serves roughly 100 individuals per day. From various individuals I heard that the new Customs point does not have as much traffic because of the poor condition of the Albanian roads something that is true but I don't think that Greek roads are any better. The Customs point at Mertziani could be described as first class. It has big dimensions, with huge exterior spaces and intense lighting. It could be said to characterise the modern European rhythm. On the contrary, the Albanian side has a small building but it serves well the needs of local society. Seeing the buildings alongside one another I noticed certain proportions: European Union and Balkans, West and East, a state more powerful than



there no problems. In the beginning, I was perplexed by his words, but then I understood that only a relationship of power exists between them. The relationship has been defined thus: the Albanians are workers who use only their muscles to earn their living. This immediately called to mind the fact that an explicit segregation exists between those who work with their hands and others who do not use bodily energy but their mind and usually have control over a society (perhaps the theory of the Leisure class in action, by T. Veblen 1994 [1899]). As we remained in the church's courtyard, we saw an Albanian, who was repairing the roof of the church and wore a German hard rock band shirt. I imagined that he didn't know anything about this. The band is inspired by fantasy themes like fabulous creatures with horns, wings and feathers. As I grew up in a city, I remembered the zeal of priests against wearing such shirts, but here in the village they did not appear to play a major role, as long as the work of the priest is done. Finally, I observed that the father spoke constantly to the Albanian worker, perhaps in these villages the lack of population can function as catalyst to communication with the "other".

The priest reminisced. The path he followed in order to go to the Greek-speaking villages, where he led the religious mysteries. We didn't notice any fear in his words but rather a childish enthusiasm. He said that he sometimes bribed the Albanian border guards with a parcel of spaghetti and cigarettes, while today it is impossible to do so. After the political changes in Eastern Europe and the creation of an Orthodox Christian



building, which appeared to be a school, but could easily have been mistaken for a cultural centre or a military camp, as in the courtyard there were some fences painted in military colours.

Inside the building we found plastic chairs, which were probably used for a feast. We also found a library full of dust and sand. I began to rifle through the books only to discover that the majority of these were written between 1964 and 1965. We also found some data, such as the school's correspondence, details of the daily program and mess. I wondered why they were here and in such a situation, wasn't anyone in charge in this region to come and collect them. We sat for a while in the village but did not see anyone. Then I came up with an idea, I would take all these books and copy them for further research about the frontier region. However, my supervisor said what I needed to do first is to get permission. But from whom I thought!

We returned to our base full of thoughts. I caught myself thinking about the moral dilemma, should I have stolen these books? Should I have left them? I could wait and ask the local authorities for permission, but certain bureaucratic procedures would mean the books remained god knows for how long in this degrading condition. At 21:00 I couldn't stand the temptation. I took my car and went to Kalovrissi. At night time, the village seemed haunted. No one was around in the village and there was this deadly silence that gave me the creeps. I wasn't prepared for something like this and I didn't even have a torch with me, as I expected to find a switch to turn the



the other. The slant of stereotypes can be situated through the environment that was converted by human beings. Perhaps the relationship between the priest and the Albanians that I characterised as one of power in this case is like the association of power between the two nation-states. At that moment, B. Anderson (1983) came to mind and I caught myself as I reinvented the Greek state through the symbolic marks and perhaps I am a prisoner of my own stereotypes.

A few metres from the Customs point, we found the old bridge of Sarantaporos river, which is slowly disappearing under thick vegetation. The bridge lies in ruins. At the beginning of the bridge, we found a small wreath of flowers and one small metal script written in Italian as a monument to alpinists. The bridge of Sarantaporos was destroyed during the Italian retreat in 1940. Immediately, I was overcome by curiosity to go to the other side of bridge and to ascertain if corresponding monuments still exist. I believe that I will never learn. At the other side, I couldn't see any road, just two well-hidden outposts.

At this point, the research was due to have finished, but we decided to carry on a bit longer. We reached the village of Kalovrissi at the end of the road. I have never in my life seen a road that ends, except certain dead ends in cities. We decided to walk into the village. The condition of the village seemed worse than the previous village. Here in Kalovrissi, the houses in a good state of repair can easily be counted. At the entrance of the village, there was a house with broken windows but its furniture remained unspoiled. Next we saw a white



abilities only of adaptability and participation. I believe that no matter what our course of action is, we won't be able to fully comprehend the field through theories of field experience (Argyrou 1999: 29-41). We outline symbolic meanings only as a rough sketch, unable to get the full picture. In the frontier region, things seem to be accelerated. Somehow the basic elements of a border area start to emerge through time and space, like xenophobia, the other side of the line, power of symbols and constant appearance of the church. Previously, I stated that I believe these people live in three countries simultaneously and now I come to add the spiritual/religious land. It reminds me of a silent limit of nationalism: one land, one folk, one language and probably one religion...

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lights on; how naive I was. I tried to gather a few books using the light from my lighter. I felt like a thief to be honest but there wasn't any other way to do it. I took a few and put them in the boot of my car and returned to Konitsa. The summer school entered its second and last week, so in my free time I started to read and I kept notes of anything that seemed interesting. My second moral dilemma was the copy procedure. I wanted to photocopy the books for further investigation in my home town of Thessaloniki, to compare the information I found from other sources. I was already feeling guilty for taking them, so I decided not to make a copy but I promised that someday I would return there and follow the official procedures in order to take a copy of all these books for further research. I remember my supervisor's face when he learned that I had taken all this material by roguish means. He didn't encourage me nor scold me. The only thing he said was that I should be a historian. At the end of the week, I finally returned the books to Kalovrissi. I ended the turbulence or better still, I healed the anomaly in the space-time continuum. It was an adventure. The irony was the fact that when I parked my car near the school and started to carry all the books, I found a villager. He was very happy to see me and he immediately initiated a conversation. I told him about my theft almost apologizing. The old man smiled and said: "Come anytime again and take them my son".

The moment we enter into the field we start to transform it, not by our will, but slowly and steady. I would describe myself as an alien in a new world with the



the appearance of a pronounced social division of work, such as for example, between intellectual and manual activities (Goody 1977, Ong 1982, Goody 1986). Among scholars' debates on nationalism, literacy has been regarded as an important element in creating modern citizens (Gellner 1983) and "imagined communities" (Anderson 1991).

I would like to emphasise how local narratives can be transformed into historical facts through conversion to written text. I do not mean to propose that everything written is, by definition, "history", or that an oral tradition cannot be "history". Rather, I suggest that a process of textualization acts to cut those stories off from their local oral channels of transmission and context of reproduction, and transforms them into a sort of official representation. In this way elements better suited to the narrative structure of national history as a collective memory are emphasised - whereby local narratives are portrayed as historical facts. "History" is identified here in two ways: as a hegemonic discourse about the past, and to refer to the use of this term in "common sense" as an appropriate setting for the reconstruction of the past as a collective memory. "Common sense", as an apparently indefinite social knowledge can provide many hints in exploring the uses of polysemous concepts like "history", "tradition" or "identity" in popular discourses, and the way these uses are related to a wider set of social relations. I use this term having in mind some reflections of Antonio Gramsci's about *senso comune*, as a view of things poorly systematized, with a very low degree of



**Antonio M. Pusceddu\***

**Border (hi)stories.**

**Notes on literacy and the making of "history"  
in an Epirote village.**

In these brief notes, I address some questions that arose during the first part of my fieldwork in the Epirus region - located near the Greek-Albanian border. The material consists essentially of a number of written accounts of local "history" produced since the 60s - mainly, in the 80s. The general argument I hope to develop is aimed at helping me cope with this sort of material that would be reductive to consider simply under the respect of its usefulness or not in knowing local history. I will make use of notions such as "history" and "ideology". I am aware of their complexity and so I will try, as far as it is possible in these pages, to clarify the way in which I use these here. The argument cannot be fully articulated within the limits of this essay, but I hope to at least outline the central issues.

Core to this investigation is the way a local oral tradition is turned into "history", and how literacy is central in this process. It has been acknowledged that literacy is a significant phenomenon- both for the development of analytical thinking, and for the organization of society. This is the case especially with

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Moreover, several forms of self-censorship functioned as filters in conforming the narratives to the canon of what could be considered "History" - deleting what was perceived as incongruent with it. Thus the third type of narrative -that of mundane anecdotes about life experiences- was represented as opposed to the aura of sacredness surrounding "History" and stood outside it (Karakasidou 1997: 125, 235, 236).

This argument contains several threads that can clarify my meaning. Jan Assmann has noted how the term (and implicit notion) of "canon" is a crucial element in the outlining of a "culture of literacy"- what he calls "cultural memory". The term "canon" denotes fundamentally a model - a norm that provides the necessary "textual coherence" in structuring this kind of collective memory. It reduces complexity producing a one-dimensional vision of social reality. As noted before, self-censorship is one way to confront the incongruence of some elements of reality with the consolidated "canon". However this is also a way to forget. Socio-anthropological studies of collective memory have highlighted how the past easily becomes a refraction of the present, and how memory is moulded by the social context within which it functions (Borutti & Fabietti 1998). Maurice Halbwachs is an essential reference when talking about this issue. His fundamental thesis is that every memory is socially conditioned (he speaks of social frames - *cadres sociaux*). According to Jan Assmann, this theory is useful not only to explain what is remembered, but also, it is useful so as to explain what is forgotten. What is forgotten is that



articulation (Gramsci 1975). I want to point out the complex articulation of "common sense" in Gramsci's writings, in a wider discussion of the notions of "ideology" and "hegemony". It expresses a dominant view of things (or, in Gramsci's term, "a world conception"), but without the exclusion of others, potentially opposite views.

I am not referring to scientific debates on the value of oral history, neither am I necessarily reducing historiography to a kind of "social memory". Rather, I am referring to some implicit and unarticulated assertions of "common sense" with regards to what could be considered "history" and "national history", and how these act as a powerful discourse about the past. National ideology provides a general perspective of the key aspects of the historical narratives that are relayed below.

Anastasia Karakasidou, in her well known book on nationhood in Greek Macedonia, makes a useful analytical distinction between three types of "historical narratives": a) a generic national history with a canonical periodization and evaluation, as "taught [...] in school and in church"; b) a narrative that links local events and places to "the grand heritage and destiny invoked, preserved, and defended by national history"; c) a type of "local narratives", made up of "personal and family histories". According to the author, only the first two types of "historical narrative", were perceived (in local common sense) as "History". The third one was considered as "irrelevant to historical record, as defined by established (and hegemonic) national canon".



present day Albania, just behind the border.) It was "autonomous". The village did not belong to a *tsiftlik*. There are several stories about the struggle for autonomy / independence of the Loupsiototes against the "Turk-Albanians" or "Arvanites" or simply "Turks" used varyingly depending on the narrative.

The location of the village is relevant to understanding the issues I discuss here -namely, the village is located in a border area. The location of the border has been highly contested since its initial allocation in 1913. Recently the area has again started to be perceived as an unsafe place -especially due to social alarmism on migrant issues (according to Green it has been depicted as a "wild" place. Green 2005, Seremetakis 1996).

The contestation of the location of the border, which was played out during several congresses and international commissions, revealed the real ambiguities surrounding models of nationality and the criteria which were explicated with an aim to establishing these definitions. For each of the two states, the new border revealed difficulties with claiming internal homogeneity and posed the question of minorities - or shall we say demanded a definition and recognition of an internal diversity (Hart 1999, Hart-Budina 1995, Triadafilopoulos 2000). Nowadays it is commonplace in anthropology to acknowledge that the construction of the "other" is a complementary to the processes of identity construction (Barth 1969). The construction of otherness acquires particular relevance within the nation-building process, in certain precarious situations, given the complex



which no longer has a frame of reference. It is something that has been expelled from a coherent discourse on reality. It would not be too much of an exaggeration to consider "the canon" as a hallmark of powerful discourses on reality (of discourses such as the "national discourse" often is) (Assmann 1997).

Kefalohori is a new village -with a new name- in the border area of Epirus. It was constructed during the 70s. The old settlement, which was located just under the peaks of mount Grammos, had to be abandoned due to landslips. The name of the old village was Loupsiko until 1928. Then, it was translated - as were a number of the toponyms in the area and in northern Greece in general- to the more "Greek" Likorrahí. Like the rest of Epirus, in 1913, Loupsiko was incorporated into the Greek state. In Greece, Kefalohori (literally: head village) is a common name. The meaning usually translates to mean "a main village", but in this case the choice of the name has its own "history". In 1981, the local town-clerk, Sotirios Fasoulis, motivated the choice. The new settlement "had to be named [...] -and the Community Council preferred this name which was considered symbolic- since the Community (koinotita) was not *tsiftlik* like the other villages around, but Kefalohori" (Fasoulis 1981b, 297). According to local oral tradition, thanks to a brave Loupsiotis named Gousa Sdoukos who reached a high rank in the "Turkish" army during the Russo-Turkish war (presumably in 1788-1793), the village Loupsiko was declared "Kefalohori" - meaning a free village. (as it was before the encroachment of the beys of Kolonia - in



source- even if they also insist they had learned the stories from their fathers and other old people (Gatsopoulos 1964: 7, Sdoukos 1982a: 112, Sdoukos 1988: 75). Anyway, to this priest are dedicated some affectionate and respectful descriptions. Gatsopoulos recalls the same occasion in which the priest acted as a storyteller for the villagers in the schoolrooms. "Giorgos Sdoukos, quoting several parts of Gatsopoulos' text, also attends to the meeting between the priest and the teacher - especially referring to the teacher as having a "mission" (*leitourghima*), "exhuming some facts from the depth of time" for the villagers. He depicts the priest as the "historian of the village", stressing how "Greek history owes a lot to these 'popular' historiographers (*laikous istoriografous*) who brought to light some unknown pages of it" (Sdoukos 1988: 75). The image of the priest as a depository of knowledge, together with the leading role of the teacher in educating villagers about the past, can be considered as a nationalist *topos* - given the importance of the church and education (priests and teachers) in "cultivating a national consciousness" (Karakasidou 1997 cfr. Koliopoulos & Veremis 2002).

Even though the village has, throughout the last century, experienced a number of important events (such as the war of resistance and the civil war in the 40s -still alive in the living memories), the facts most mentioned and most significant in these texts refer to the Ottoman period. There is an implicit assumption of what is to be considered the "history of the village" (namely history worth paying attention to). For example, Nikos Sdoukos



historical frames in which they develop.

The emergence of a national consciousness is a very complex process and deserves more attention than that I can allocate it in this essay. However, here I would mention that what concerns me is the way in which national ideology becomes an important frame of reference and how it functions in "localizing national history".

I will refer to four texts. All of them of them were published between 1964 and 1988. Except for the text by Stavros Gatsopoulos, a well-known teacher and writer in the area whose text preceded the others' these publications were written by people that were from the village. Only one of these persons lived permanently in the village- he worked there as a town clerk. All the texts, except the book by Giorgos Sdoukos, are articles published in the local journal *Konitsa*. Of these texts, only two are elaborated- the ones by Gatsopoulos and Giorgos Sdoukos. The other two- the ones by Sotirios Fasoulis and Nikos Sdoukos- contain short accounts of the oral tradition and are more of a transcription because they have very low levels of elaboration. I will try to sketch a partial synthesis of several parts of the texts, referring to all of them when they treat the same facts in order to stress differences and variations.

To a large degree, all the texts mention their sources. Gatsopoulos (who was a teacher in the village from 1920 to 1924) tells us that it was the old priest - papa Giorgi that told him the stories. Nikos Sdoukos and Giorgos Sdoukos also indicate papa Giorgi as an important



king Stephen Dushan (XIV century). The Greeks found shelter in the inaccessible mountains around Konitsa. However, "between 1670 and 1700", they had to leave their initial settlement because of starvation. They moved onto better places such as "Kastoria, Bitola, Ioannina, Koritsa" (Sdoukos 1988: 16). Similarly, the issue of who were the first families of the village is treated differently in different accounts. According to Fasoulis and Nikos Sdoukos, the first were the Fasouleoi, Karanikeoi and Tsiades (these surnames are still present in the village nowadays). They were followed by the Sdoukades ("Slavs" - according to Fasoulis, "from Bitola of Jugoslavia" - according to N. Sdoukos), Noutseoi and Koloniareoi (according to Fasoulis both were from Albania, while for N. Sdoukos the former were from Souli,<sup>3</sup> and the latter from Kolonia).

Some stories told by local oral tradition seem to refer to local conflicts between the landlords, beys and peasants of the small villages. While one of the texts does not make use of ethno-national categories to define the conflict- speaking simply of the Loupsiototes and the beys of Kolonia ( N. Sdoukos 1983)- in the others, the conflict is easily translated into an opposition between the "Greeks" (Loupsiototes) and "Albanians", the "Turk-Albanians" or "Arvanites"<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>3</sup>Souli is a celebrated place of the Greek rebellion against the Turks. According to Giorgos Noutsos, a retired surveyor from Likorahi, today living in Athens, the forefathers of his family had to escape from Souli after the repression of Ali Pasha, and settled in Loupsiko around 1800 (Noutsos 2000).

<sup>4</sup>Turk-Albanian were usually defined the Muslim landowners, but without



states that "our village has a big history, compared to its size". He is referring to the struggles against the beys which continued until the 19th century (Sdoukos 1982a: 112). Giorgos Sdoukos points to Loupsiko/Likorrahi as the "Souli of Konitsa". He writes: "in the great book of the History (Istoria) of Greece, a page with golden letters belongs to this small village" (Sdoukos 1988: 1).

All the authors, except for Gatsopoulos (who is the only outsider), report on stories concerning the origins of the village. One common element of these stories is the complete depopulation of the village (as a result of the "Turkish-Albanian" raids<sup>1</sup>) and the following return of the villagers. The village clerk, Fasoulis, explains that according to the tradition (paradosi) the village consisted of three settlements<sup>2</sup> (Loupsiko, Ramousta and Mesohori) that were abandoned after the "raids and lootings" of the "Turk-Albanians" at "around 1850". A big raid took the villagers by surprise during the feast of the Virgin Mary (to panigiri tis Panagias) on the 15th of August. The villagers fled and scattered going to "safer places in Greece". Only the Loupsioties want back to their houses (Fasoulis 1981a: 276). G. Sdoukos provides a more articulated version: the village Likorrahi was founded by Greeks escaping the invasion of the Serbian

<sup>1</sup>Stories about raids and lootings in the "Greek" villages from "Turk-Albanian" or simply "Albanian", since the late 18th century, are not uncommon (Foss 1978, Rapti 1996), and these actions are frequently related to the depopulation of whole villages.

<sup>2</sup>This is a common story in the local oral accounts, and the place-names "Ramousta" and "Mesohori" are still in use in the local toponymy, to point out sites near the old village Likorrahi.



authority of the decree for the liberation of the village (declared Kefalohori), Gousa leads a detachment of Turkish soldiers against the "Turk-Albanian" beys. He defeats and drives the beys out from the village. He also permanently enlists a small detachment of Turkish soldiers to protect the village.

The brigandage has been a problematic figure for weak states like Greece, Italy and Spain. It has been inscribed in popular imagination, nourishing an epic of bandits (Damianakos 1985). Sometimes this exemplifies a popular rebellion against the social order (according to Hobsbawn's well-known thesis), other times, they exemplify nothing more than a way to cope with the dramatic conditions of material poverty. In Greece, the destiny of the brigands operating during the Ottoman period is probably somewhat peculiar due to their nationalistic connotations. Depicted as fighters against the Turks, the *kleftes* became a hallmark of the national epic (Koliopoulos & Veremis 2002). Together with this romanticized view, Greece has had to face - as a small and weak state - serious problems with brigandage as an endemic phenomenon. The surviving bandits who were operating within the Greek state -even if they were strictly connected with the national political life- were considered nothing more than *listes*, meaning bandits without any romantic aura. In particular cases, such as the case of the so-called "Dilessi Affair" -the kidnapping and murder of a group of rich Englishmen- these figures have become a matter of national embarrassment. According to Tzanelli, this episode was a starting point



The main hero of these local epics is Gousa Sdoukos to whom the teacher Gatsopoulos dedicated his article. Being the oldest written version of the story, this has probably served as a model for the others (at least Giorgos Sdoukos' text presents many formal analogies). Consequently, I will relay it herein. This is the story.

Gousa is a young man when the beys of Kolonia encroach on his village making it their own *tsiftlik*. Disgusted by the exploitative system, after a quarrel with the beys, he's obliged to leave. From Ioannina, where he went subsequently, he's enlisted into the Turkish army and glimpses the possibility to set his "homeland" free. With the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war ("probably the one between 1788 and 1792"), he's sent to fight. He shows himself to be a brave man, rescuing the life of the "Turkish Pashas" and eventually enabling "the victory of the Turkish army". His reputation - based on his "heroic deeds" - spreads in Konstantinopoli. He's singled out as "a brilliant example of heroism and abnegation". When he is dismissed from the army, the Sultan rewards him with the title of "Hand of Mohamed" and tells him he will grant him any one request. "Humbly", Gousa doesn't want anything for himself, but desires only that his village be set free again - as it was before the encroachment of the beys of Kolonia. Under the

regard to other criteria, such as language, later identified as a basis for the definition of nationality. In the texts the beys are always termed "Turk-Albanian", while the ones who fight for them only "Arvanites". But interchangeable expressions are used like "Arvanitic leeches" and "Turk-Albanian leeches". For a synthetic description of the complex situation in the area oversimplified by national (and ethnic) discourses see Hart (1999) and Hart - Budina (1995).



are members of the Sdoukos family (cfr. fig. 1). According to G. Sdoukos, the first to come back after the depopulation and to give new life to the village was a Sdoukos- "chased (kinigimemos) by the Turks". Nikolaos is the first to encourage resistance to the encroachment of the beys and the first victim of their violence. Gousa is the main figure of the family and his life is depicted as something prodigious. His birth is predicted by a "prophet" in Ioannina - consulted by his mother, Nikolakena, after a "dreadful dream". When he's seven years old, his village receives the blessing of the monk Kosmas of Aetolia- martyr of Hellenism. Growing up, Gousa starts to develop a "hate" for the beys of Kolonia. After the liberation of the village from "the Arvanitic slavery", he becomes the protector of all "Christian villages" in the area. While disappointed with the fact that the border of the new Greek state "arrived only till Arta", he reassures his fellow-villagers that, as Kosmas of Aetolia once prophesied, "it will not be late the moment in which also Epirus will be united with the rest of Greece". He is arrested and sentenced to death due to being accused (although not formally) of supporting the Greek struggle for liberation by encouraging Christians to rise for the "incorporation (ensomatosi) of Epirus in the liberated Greece" (Sdoukos 1988) and of poisoning the Turkish army.

One of his sons, Kostaki, became a *kleftis*. He is narrated as being active in "Southern Epirus" and having died "with the gun in his hands fighting the Turks". His other son, Nikolaos, is described as a prominent figure



for a redefinition of the internal national indeterminacy (Tzanelli 2002). As Herzfeld has noted: it was to demonstrate that "the *kleftes* were true Greeks; the surviving brigands were either of foreign blood (Albanians, Koutsovlachs) or the relics of Turkish oppression" (Herzfeld 1982).

The same expressions that were used at the time to refer to Albanians in public debates on brigandage (reported in Tzanelli 2002), are frequently used in the two extended texts I have mentioned, those of Gatsopoulos and Giorgos Sdoukos. Particularly the former, depicts the conditions in the Konitsa province as unsafe, not only for Greeks, but also for the Turks, who had to suffer a lot from the Albanian "scourge" (cfr. see also Raptis 1996). Also, the expression commonly used to refer to the condition of Greeks under the Turks ("Turkish slavery"), is used for the Loupsiotiote "under" the "Turk-Albanians" or "Arvanites" ("Kolonial/Turk-Albanian slavery"). With the latter, the teacher is particularly harsh, describing them as a: "wild", "beastly" and "ferocious Turk-Albanian race" (*fili*), "bloodthirsty", "leeches", "infamous". In contrast, he celebrates the hero "Gousa of Loupsiko" as "the unforgettable saviour of the homeland".

I wish to make some final quotations from the texts, in order to highlight the prominent place of a single family in the history of the village, and the rhetoric forms in which it is depicted as a supporter of Hellenism. The epic of resistance against the beys of Kolonia (or depending on the text, against the "unfaithful Turks") is a kind of familiar epic; all the brave heroes who fight, die or win,



Turks. Our children, however, must learn that everything here is Greece, and we are Greeks. For this reason we must baptize them with ancient Greek names. [...] The children, with these ancient and byzantine names, will feel that they are descendants of the glorious Greeks, and don't have any relation with the barbarian Ottoman. With their struggles they will succeed to set themselves free". Other prominent figures in these local narratives are Andronikos, who shot a bey (to whom refer several stories), and finally, Hristos - who fought as a local chief in the "national resistance" against Italian and German occupation (as a member of the national liberation front - EAM). These are the last 'heroic' members of the family (Sdoukos 1988).

In conclusion, I would like to make some observations about recurrent us/them oppositions in the texts. Especially, I would point to their prevalence in the more elaborated texts. Also, I would like to note the articulations of such oppositions as part of a wider national discourse in the local context.

As mentioned above, all the stories refer to the Ottoman period - the so-called "Turkish rule" (tourkokratia) - during which, according to most national narratives, the Greek-Orthodox population was enslaved and oppressed by the Muslim Turks ("Turkish slavery"). This is the ideological frame within which the stories of Loupsiko take place. Furthermore the population of the Konitsa region is narrated as having to carry not only the "Turkish yoke" but also as having to bear the continuous raids of the Albanians to the point where the population



inside the village (*mouhtaris* - a kind of president). The latter had two sons, Andronikos and Epaminondas from his wife (who was from the vlach village Samarina). According to Giorgos Sdoukos, they were given those second names through the intervention of Gousena-Gousa's wife. This woman, daughter of a doctor from Ioannina, is depicted as a cultured (*morfomeni*) woman and a fervent supporter of Hellenism. During the children's baptisms, she requested that while the children's first names were to be Thanassis and Giorgos, they should have Andronikos and Epaminondas as their second names as those names were reminiscent of ancient Greece saying: "Our homeland is slave to the

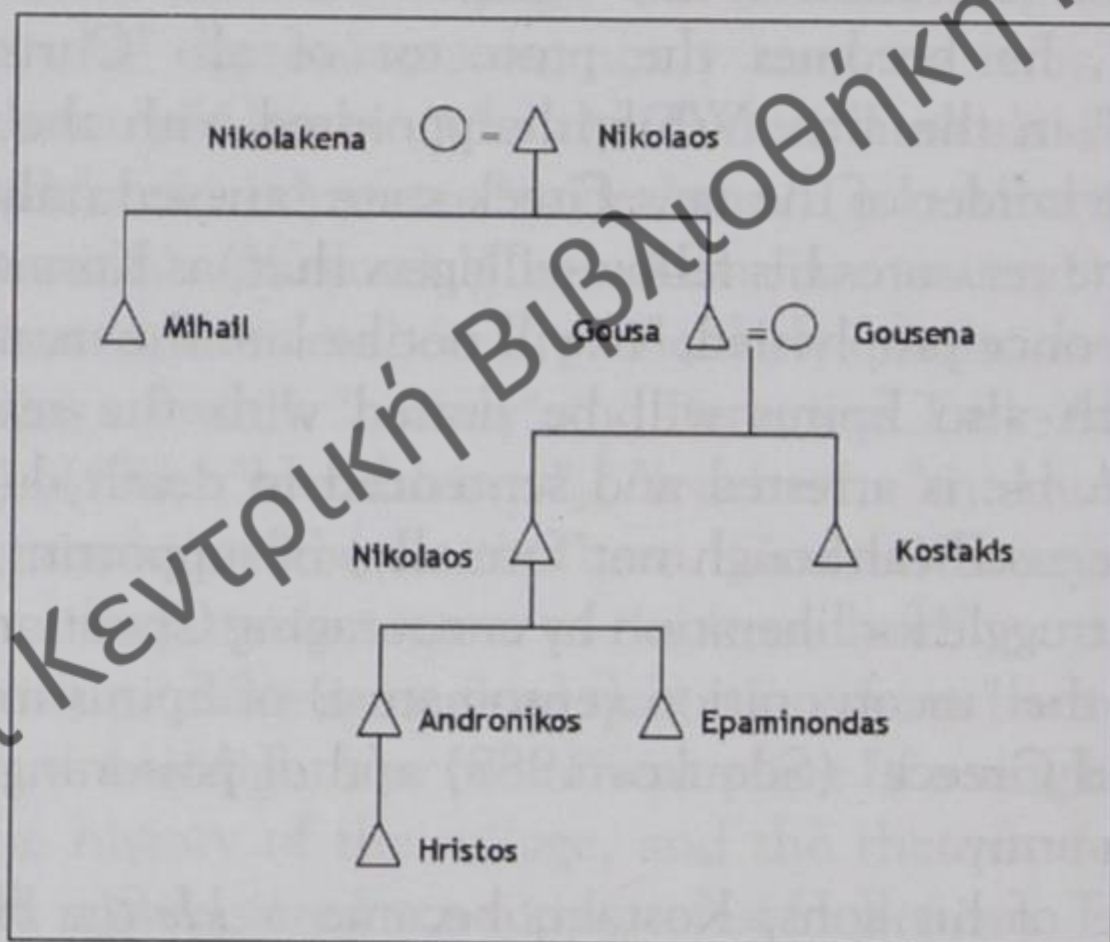


Fig. 1: Heroic kinship: the Sdoukades of Likorrahí



supported by the "Turks"- positive representatives, in this case, of law and order. The negative qualities commonly used for "the Turks" are now used for the Albanian enemies. The stories of conflicts between Loupsiko and the beys of Kolonia become "history" through their integration in a collective struggle and through the "writing" in the "book" of History. In this way an ideological integration into a collective national destiny is realised while simultaneously the same local identity is defined in opposition to the otherness over the border.

Finally, I would like to note that this fragmentary attempt to analyze a few texts of local history in the frame of the national narratives, has no necessary relation with the feelings of the people living in Kefalohori about the border and the people living over the border. I wanted to highlight the fact that processes of the textualization of an oral tradition can reveal some implications that exist due to unarticulated assertions of what can be conceived as history. Moreover I believe that ethnographic fieldwork can provide several hints about the same "common sense" perceptions about history that may be at odds with the ones elaborated in the texts.

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of Konitsa was almost totally subjugated by the Albanians. Loupsiko and the surrounding villages became property of the "Turk-Albanian" beys of Kolonia.

These are the main oppositions articulated throughout the text- sometimes without a particular care for the description, other times with a rich use of formal expressions to define the qualitative differences of the opposing parts. In the narratives with some degree of elaboration (i.e. in the texts of G. Soukos and Gatsopoulos), the local conflicts are always expressed through ethno-national categories. Hence the story narrated is not simply a story about the conflicts between the peasants of Loupsiko and the arrogant beys of Kolonia. It's a part of the whole history of the oppression of the Greek population. Although (part of) a collective history, it is not an ordinary history. With its brave heroes (the "Souli of Konitsa") and glorious deeds, it stands as a brilliant example of the national struggle for freedom and deserves to be "written in golden letters" in the "big book of the History of Greece" (Sdoukos 1988: 1).

It is interesting important to make a last point about the interplay between the general ideological frame (turkokratia), and the border situations to which these narratives refer. The separation us/them, symbolized and materialized by the border between "Greeks" and "Albanians", overcomes the more general opposition Greeks/Turks. It makes the latter the guarantors of the autonomy of Loupsiko in the regional context. In their battle against the Turk-Albanians, the Loupsiotés are



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**Knowledge of sovereignty: the border you must know in order to see**

A soldier in the Molyvdoskepasto outlook post tried to "show" our group of students the location of "the border" but no matter how hard I tried I could not "locate the border". I was not alone in my predicament. While he was referring to markers which were invisible to us, following an obviously prepared speech, it struck me that in reciting these referents this conscripted soldier became a mouthpiece; a physical embodiment of state sovereignty and knowledge, and of a boundary that was obviously otherwise immaterial. My second contemplation about the boundary's presence came after a visit to the village of Vlahopsiloteria located just inside Albanian territory. Our journey to the village was tricky to say the least. The village is bounded on side by the river, while on the other it sits on a hill. Like most villages in the area the climb towards it was tiring. The route into the village was more cumbersome than I could have ever expected. At one point we walked along the side of a steep gravelled slope - a sharp drop toward a quick river promised no reprieve if someone slipped. Arrival at the village was sudden and unexpected;

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I looking for something that did not really exist? My imagination of the border was dominated by the image of The World Map, of a European Map, of the photocopied maps we received before venturing out onto the field where countries lay clearly separated by a continuous line. However, as I pondered the lack of physical barrier in this ordinary albeit scarred landscape I realized that my expectations were shaped by my unproblematic acceptance of geographical knowledge. I had fallen victim to what Haley calls "the discourse of maps" (Harley in Cosgrave 1988: 278).

"Both in the selectivity of their content and in their signs and styles of representation maps are a way of conceiving, articulating, and structuring the human world which is biased towards, promoted by, and exerts influence upon particular sets of social relations." (Harley in Cosgrave 1988: 278)

In the above quote Harley sets out clearly why maps should not be viewed passively and taken at face value. As argued by Foucault no knowledge is free of power relations and maps are just another form of knowledge. Harley looks at map making as the assertion of political knowledge and territorial claims within and about the world with a long history as object in apparatuses of the state going back to Renaissance. The production of the political map here is revealed as a discourse, an action that is a deliberate statement and expression of ideology and power relations. In various way maps are expressions



unanticipated by visual warning. The surreal nature of this access route struck me only after I eventually followed the road through the village, out the other end and into the wilderness that contains the imaginary Greek - Albanian border. From thereon continued an easy route towards Molyvdoskepasto (Vlahopsiloteria's spatially closest neighbour). This road was wide, easy and walking towards the village along it you could prominently see the church as you approached back into the village. This route was also theoretically a dead end - due to the presence of the state boundary.

The division of this landscape seemed preposterous yet was obviously real. In this essay I wish to talk about some of the apparatuses that I can identify as active in dividing, *agents* in this border landscape. The length of my study was insufficient to provide an exhaustive list, so I will focus on one in particular; the nature of the territorial boundary as a knowledge system embodied in certain border apparatuses and proliferated through cartographic and nationalist territorial notions. One aspect of the boundary's existence left unexplored is the ethnographic subject's relationships and conceptions of this boundary. In this case, I will examine my personal encounter with the border, what it made me realise, and the text on which I drew to expand this understanding. I would like to begin by pointing to the dual nature of a boundary: as a "line on a map" and as an entity that exists in the field. My purpose in dividing up these two features of a boundary is to highlight its "imaginary" aspect. In the field I failed to identify the location of the boundary. Was



to weave them with spoken words into the very foundations of social life" (Basso 1988:102). Finally Nugent's (1996) discussion of pre-colonial African forms of political boundaries and the subsequent process of subdivision and fixation of boundaries in the colonial period shows the constructedness as well as transforming imposition of the territorialising vision.

We can now see that the imagining of a borderline as evoked by the Molyvdoskepasto soldier's description is an active form of state imagination. A map is a symbol *par excellence* (Robinson and Petchenik 1976). The political map with territorial boundaries is a key symbol of nationalist discourses (see for example the notion of "geopolitical vision" in Gertjan Dijkink's "National Identity and Geopolitical Visions: Maps of pride and pain"). Nationalism and cartographic representation have become intricately bound. An example of one representation of the relationship is Kennet Olwig's notion of 'cartographic-pictographic episteme'. This episteme amounts to:

"the assumption of the bounded homogenous cartographic and pictorial space of landscape. Something deemed to be native to the space of this landscape is authentic and desirable, whereas that which is alien is inauthentic and undesirable... when the map is co-equated with the territory of a nation-state, the discourse can become loaded with the symbolism of nationalism, xenophobia and racism. The ability to conceptualize both nature and the



of the way we are asked to see the physical plane. These grand images propose that we see the world as a mosaic of territorial encompassment and many people do. In this context the mapping of boundaries, everyday references and acceptances of a mapped boundary reveal a Foucauldian subjection to a statement of territorial encompassment.

The ability to unquestioningly accept the "truth" of a map is embedded in a Western intellectual heritage, of expectation of how we would see a landscape, of an acceptance of the map's "objective" view of reality (Cosgrave 1984). Praising this objectivity, proponents and analysts of geographic practice and knowledge about space note and often praise the ability of this production of knowledge to enable "factual discourse" (Sack 1980) and set fixed boundaries which reduce conflicts over territorial rights (Prescott 1987).

The conception of an objective, political map as a way of seeing landscape, of seeing space, is however also ethnocentric and state-centric. The map as we know it - especially the political map - is one particular way of seeing, one conceptualisation of landscape and one particular all-seeing, territorialised vantage point of viewing a landscape. Writing about Visualism and Landscape, Okely (2001) stresses the importance of understanding that engagement with the landscape is a process shaped by everyday encounters and actions by local actors. Similarly Basso (1988) shows how "men and women learn to *appropriate* their landscapes, to think and act 'with' them as well as about and upon them, and



was through entry points - guarded passport controls. Meanwhile, the physically easiest way of entering Greece was directly into Molyvdoskepasto through the forested border landscape.

There are two forms of power active in this border landscape. Both have been defined by Foucault (1979, 1980). One is knowledge systems which define an imaginary line; a boundary dividing the landscape you have a legal right to walk from the one you must acquire a right to walk - one that is "your" homeland and one which is not "your" homeland, one that is the sovereign domain of one state and one which is the sovereign domain of another. Having that knowledge you might also be aware that there could be guards waiting to catch up if you transgress at every corner, feel yourself visible, vulnerable, panoptically observable at the more bare points of the border landscape. The legal consequences of being caught illegally abroad could be sufficient to enforce obedience to the border. The second form of power - that of legal, sovereign right to punish - is experienced if caught in illegal activity. In this case military and police personnel are the non-subjective active agents of state power on the border. Yet the scenarios I have so outlined focus on the condition where state power is successfully exercised and the channels of state power along the border zone work impeccably.

In reality there can exist a number of local practices, semi-sanctioned or benevolently ignored by some state centre - or completely locally determined - which might allow transgression of legality and/or a disregard for the



nation in this way came about, it will be argued, as a consequence of the discovery of the foundations of modern cartography in the Renaissance." (Olwig 2003:63)

From Olwig, we see that key to the conceptualisation of this episteme is the definition of relationship between state, population and territory, through the idea of nation. As noted in the quotation above, this conceptualisation importantly serves as an exclusionary principle whereby in the process of defining one's population, one also actively excludes others (see also Mouffe 1998, Schmitt 1985 and Agamben 1998). The setting of boundaries is key in this process.

As discussed by Harl (1999), the process of setting boundaries can become the very process of defining the rightful population of a state. The drawing of boundaries is thus revealed as a process of creating knowledge both in defining population and in defining boundaries. Hence the boundary, the imagined line that defines the claim to sovereignty of the state, becomes the "symbolic boundary" of an imagined national community. This territorial dictum is encoded legally to the effect of defining the limits of one's electoral population, the extent of legal responsibility over citizens and the definition of people who can rightfully live, work and purchase property within a certain territory. In accordance to this legal framework one can have an illegal or legal presence within this bounded territory. From Vlahopsiloteria, the legal way of entering Greece



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idea of territorial differentiation between two sovereign states. People in Vlahopsiloterä are part of that very much more complex reality. In the course conversation with villagers, members of the group which whom I worked were told that the Border was a mistake, that members of local authority disregarded central canon with no consequences, that services that the Albanian state should provide to its population did not stretch very far and that in some cases people in the village used services from Molyvdoskepasto. Actually all inhabitants of Vlahopsilloterë had minority status however pensions were given to +65. These are the kinds of practices that question the integrity and homogeneity of state territory both as a concept and potentially as reality. Yet I believe that an understanding of how far that can be seen as a state subverting action should remain under question. Boundaries are potentially both powerful and locally subverted. They exist in a fascinating balance of *local politics* and state conflict.

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## Acrobats on Borderlines: The Konitsa Border Guards\*\*

### Introduction

In our fragmented times more and more borders emerge, more and more borders are crossed, more and more, borders are being guarded. Guarding state borders presupposes a number of prerequisites: An area segregated naturally or artificially from its surrounding areas with which the former shares a borderland, states that set the borders and structure the mechanisms for guarding them, citizens that constitute the state population, *neighbouring states / states-nations and their citizens, conflict of interests* (actual or imaginary) between neighbouring states, fear/threat (actual or fictitious) involving the "other side of the border", policies that lead to the decision to guard the border, citizens' consent or

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\*\* This article is based on ethnographic research carried out in the area of Konitsa as part of the course: "Ethnographic Research in Border Areas: Field Practice in both Sides of the Greek-Albanian Border". The course instructors were Pr. Vassilis Nitsiakos, Dr. Vassilis Dalkavoukis and Mr Kostas Mantzos. The course participants who worked on the topic: "Border guards and their relation to the border" were Nadia Duchacek, Rosalia Nousi, Filio Sinni, Giorgos Stathopoulos, Fenia Tsobanopoulou. The group supervisor was Dr. Vassilis Dalkavoukis.



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among the Border Guards of Konitsa at the Greek-Albanian border highlights the complexity of social networks, the power dynamics involved and the binary oppositions imbuing the life of this professional community, getting them to walk along real as well as symbolic borderlines. Analogy is employed to contextualize border guarding as part of a power landscape.

### Theoretical Exploration

The *Republic* (*Πολιτεία*) constitutes Plato's political as well as metaphysical masterpiece. Written around 380BC, it spins the web of the ideal/utopian state (πόλις) as structurally isomorphic to the human soul/mind (ψυχή). In a macro-micro analogy, Plato proclaims the class of guards/assistants (φύλακες / επίκουροι) to act as the connective tissue in the republic, mediating structurally between the ruling class of the philosophers and the productive class of "creators" like in "psyche" the spirit/character (θυμοειδές) mediates between the intellect (λογιστικόν) and the appetite/desire (επιθυμητικόν). The duties and roles of the three classes in the city are distinct but "if there are any misfits, promotion or demotion is to take place" (Hare 1996: 59).

The guards' role in the *Republic* entails control and protection of the state from external and internal enemies, assistance to the rulers-philosophers in their just and proper (αγαθή) governance. The guards' qualities should be similar to those of a well-bred dog (Πλάτων,



tolerance of these policies, citizens' voluntary or mandatory participation in forming the body/bodies of guards.

Temporal and spatial particularities may modify parameters regulating the actual frame of practice of border guarding. Contemporary border guarding primarily aims to combat the incidence of certain illegal or criminal actions, such as illegal immigration, weapons, explosives and drug trafficking. "Border Guarding Services have been established in order to address the problem of illegal immigration and cross-border crimes" (Law 2622/98).

Border guards' (BGs') tasks involve constant patrols and scrutiny of the border areas, inspections of suspect persons, vehicles or personal belongings. They often engage in chase, capture or direct confrontation with actual or suspected law-breakers. Their professional training varies globally as well as the scope of other public-order operations in which they might also temporarily be requested to assist, whether their service is manned by civilians, policemen or soldiers, men and/or women. However, internationally they wear specific uniforms, commute in jeeps and among their personal equipment there are weapons such as guns or hand-grenades.

In this paper, along with the philosophical and sociological parameters of border guarding (issues of an institutional, socio-political, humanistic and moral nature), the actuality of border guarding is explored, both internationally and in Greece. Ethnographic fieldwork



In integrative theoretical social systems like the ones produced by Plato's idealism, Hobbes' mechanical materialism and natural law (in *Leviathan* 1651) or Locke's social contract, the notion of common good acts as a regulating umbrella in favour of the overall growth of society; yet, in a repressive way, according to Firth (1951) who speaks in favour of examining the dynamic aspects of social interaction, the conflicting interests that force groups and individuals to choice and strategy. Marxist theorists point out how mechanisms of social control presented as being in the interests of all, serve only an elite group. "The question of control presents itself inevitably in the light -or should one say in the shadow- of its social utility" (Lianos 2003: 412).

Border guarding as the embodiment of control raises issues of authority, policing, surveillance, law enforcement, coercion, violence, militarisation of societies. "As such practices attempt to isolate the legitimate user from a dangerous Other ("thief", "terrorist", etc) they fragment the social environment. This process of fragmentation is an efficient machine for producing social identities and ideotypical situations of threat that are subject to the broader structures of social stratification" (Lianos 2003: 415). Stereotyped categories and a discourse of social order produce marginalization and allow for the exclusion of certain people as "unworthy life-forms" as in the case of the Holocaust (Bauman 1989).

Durkheimian collective representations such as nation, ethnicity etc often intermingle in this discourse providing



*Πολιτεία*: 148-150): To be fearless before a stranger, calm before a friend; to possess integrity, prudence and give constant prioritisation to the common good over the individual's. Strong education will guarantee these qualities as well as certain social facts: No private property, no private and exclusive love partners (all children have all adults as parents), a satisfactory state-provided salary, men and women having equal access to all offices of the state (Mpalla 2004: 107-108) "...so that the dog won't turn into a wolf and attack the flock" [...] "and instead of allies meaning well become alike with fierce masters". Plato, Republic (Πλάτων, *Πολιτεία*: 257)

- "How will we make them share our vision?" (of the ideal state?)

- "We will throw for them a fairytale, a myth. That we are all brothers coming from the same womb: the earth". Plato, Republic (Πλάτων, *Πολιτεία*: 253)

The Platonic account of the ideal republic, although constituting a fictitious construction of a social system, it does pertain, as a Wittgensteinian "form of life", to "rational institutions, rules and patterns of behaviour embedded in the play of forms and inconceivable without them" (Philippe de Lara 2003: 124). Its coherence (even myth has its own function as a normative vehicle employed to sustain a socio-political status-quo, like religion or ideology are incorporated in the Hobbesian model of society) averts inter-strata conflict towards a perpetual state of peace -the latter being a Kantian aspiration as well.



relations among the state-members". This involves "elementary control" that should be "simple and quick" with "total respect for human dignity and no discrimination on the basis of a person's sex, race, nationality, religion or convictions, disability, age or sexual preferences" (L 15,14.04.2006:2).

In fact, the Russian border guards also received from their Head an extra directive ordering them to "smile more" (*The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, 2004:1).

As documented in the November 2005 Human Rights Watch report, "border guards in Poland and Slovakia who intercept persons crossing from Ukraine interview and process them generally within forty-eight hours, with no genuine effort to identify them by name, origin or status, and without their having access to lawyers or interpreters or the possibility to challenge a decision by the border guard to return them to Ukraine". In Spain, immigrants coming illegally from Morocco have been shot or sent back to the desert with no food or water (Immigrants and Refugees Social Support Network announcement 27/1/2007). Italy has been accused officially of violating human rights by pushing the "invaders" back into the sea on plastic boats with little hope of survival.

Greece "faces also a flux of illegal immigrants that are being expelled or piled up waiting on the islands (currently about 1000 people in rough conditions) since the land borders are densely guarded and the sea route has alternatively been selected by the international people trafficking or modern slave-trade network" ("Το διεθνές κύκλωμα δουλεμπορίας", [www.aegeantimes.gr](http://www.aegeantimes.gr)).



the ideological frame for the legitimisation of authoritarianism and human rights trespassing. In border areas particularly, that are also borderlands -with ethno-historical processes still in progress, collective consciousnesses possibly at stake and open issues/open wounds, still oozing or at a healing stage, power demonstration and balance as well as the respecting of human rights are extra delicate matters in need of diligent treatment.

Border guarding inevitably affects the integral respect of human rights by messing with the boundaries of privacy as in the "simple" process of personal identification or examining one's personal belongings. International collaboration to abolish cross-border crime and protect the human rights of life, health and safety - an honourable aspiration in itself- provides, however, the context for the flourishing of what Nick Taylor (2002: 66) calls "an Orwellian society, where citizens are constantly under the vigilant gaze and attentive ear of 'Big Brother'". The moral issues of responsibility and ethics are involved multiply when one explores the global praxis of border guarding.

### **Actuality**

According to the *Schengen Border Code* (ER 562/2006:1), the border guards' duty is to guard the outer borders of the European Union in order to keep out anything that might constitute "a threat for public order, internal security, public health and international



office with the use of an approved questionnaire-with the consent of their superior officer, b) conducted *informally* outside their work environment in a free-flowing, off-the-record style.

- Local people: a) *natives*, personally related to border guards or with no personal connection such as carpenters, merchants, bus drivers, b) *immigrants* who are also permanent residents of the area; mainly construction workers.
- Participant observation, observation of the landscape, trips, field-notes, diary.
- Bibliographic research (books, journals, the Press, the Internet etc.).

The methodological problems that we faced were the following:

- Achieving research group consensus on methodology due to each member's different disciplinary background and divergent epistemological approaches. It resulted in enriched ethnographic material though.
- The use of the tape recorder in the formal interviews proved to be handy yet impeded the natural flow of the conversation; it caused suspicion and fear: one informant preferred to give her views partly in writing while gestures were used on their behalf to substitute verbal expressions that could be recorded. We had to turn it off at times for them to make comments off-the-record.
- Persuading our main informant to give an unofficial interview. There was evident suspicion/mistrust (to be



Humanitarian organisations make a plea internationally for border guards' collaboration in order to combat the exploitation of the people in need; e.g., UNICEF on the helpless children after the tsunami. (8/1/2005)

### **Case Study**

The area of our fieldwork was the Greek-Albanian border around Konitsa. Our goal was to explore issues relating to practicing border guarding in the Greek-Albanian border area. More specifically:

- The group identity (sex, age, background, educational level, marital status etc.) duties, tasks, working conditions, legal framework, wages, hierarchy, solidarity, risk factor, status, interpersonal relationships, moral satisfaction, dilemmas, perception of their job.
- Their interaction with local society, strata, professional groups, ethnic groups, minorities, the state, illegal subjects.
- Exploration of issues such as gender, language, authority, repression, crime, integrity, ethics, bribery, war, patriotism, stereotypes, uniform, racism, nationalism, landscape, hobbies, social integration, handling of emotion (fear, sympathy, guilt, remorse, suspicion, pride, personal fulfilment, feeling of accomplishment etc.), story-telling, their experiences.

The main methodological tools used were:

- Personal interviews with:
  - Border guards: a) conducted *formally* at their



*was not an interview, it was a chat, a confession. We opened our hearts. Both of us.*

*-"What a pity! I have to go! Thank you so much for this coffee!" she cried happily... -No dear, thank YOU! THANK YOU my informant!!!*

### **Case Description**

The Konitsa border guards were among the first BGs to have been employed in Greece. Their service was constituted in 1994 in order to cover the emergency caused by the massive wave of immigrants crossing the northern borders of Greece after 1990. Due to the insufficient number of police and soldiers to cope with the illegal immigrants and for political reasons as well -it was just before the elections-citizens aged 25-30 of both sexes (female percentage:10%) were employed. The basic criterion was that they were locals. After 6 months of training, they were appointed as a body of "illegal immigrants' persecutors" on a 5-year contract.

Nowadays in the area of Konitsa the BG service numbers 102 employees out of whom 13 are women (StE 2906/2003). 30 of them are university graduates (yet without any allowance for that nor for the danger factor involved in their job -as opposed to ordinary policemen (Moukidis 2006: 1)). However, they are permanent public service employees now and access to the profession is on equal terms for both sexes.

Locals' opinion of BGs: some said they are highly esteemed (-"They are guarding our border!"), their



expected in professions related to national security) which had to be reversed through the author revealing personal information to win their trust. Extract from that day's diary:

- *I'm sitting on my own at the coffee house, waiting...I wonder if she's changed her mind and if, eventually, decided not to come. I still can't believe she agreed to meet me. She was so reluctant at first...so suspicious: "Who are you? Why do you want to know about us? You're not a spy, are you? ...What are you going to do with this information? How do I know you are telling me the truth?" It felt as if she was holding an imaginary rifle at my face crying out loud: HALT! Identify yourself!...I had no choice: "Look! Here are my notes, my thoughts, what I wanted to ask you about. Do you see now?"...Quiet. She went through the first page meticulously, along each line; she handed me my notebook. "I don't need to see the rest, I got it". She grabbed her mobile. "Give me your number" she said. "I'll call you". I had passed.*
- *"I see you've already got your coffee. I'll get one too. Sorry I was late!" I smiled with relief. My date was there! Before I could utter a thing she looked at me and said: "OK, now tell me about yourself!" "WHAT? Shouldn't it be the other way round?" I thought. But I did as she wanted and I told her; where I was born, what I had studied, my zodiac sign...! Luckily we matched! (just joking!) And then it was her turn to strip. She told me everything herself. I almost wasn't posing questions! We talked for three hours; it*



Konitsa though they were employed thanks to their locality. Most of them come to our town only to work, bringing even their sandwiches from home in Ioannina. Here they don't spend one cent. Not even to buy a bottle of water."

- demonstrating zealously (some of them) power and authority during control:

"-I like them, some are friends of mine, we drink ouzo together but what they do with the torch when inspecting the cars at night...it's unacceptable. Once I had the children with me in the car. They got scared, they started to cry. Of course it's natural, dark outside, quiet and all of a sudden men in uniform stopping the car, shining strong beams of light in our faces, their guns pointing right at us..!"

"-What are we border guards supposed to do?" they respond. "These are our orders, pointing the guns, using torches. I understand this must be disturbing or intimidating for civilians but what if the driver or a passenger is illegally carrying a gun and shoots me before I have the time to react? How am I supposed to protect myself? Sometimes I disobey orders, avoid having my gun at hand to be polite, not to frighten people. But I know that I do this at my own risk!"

In valley villages where fields exist and crops are cultivated locals aren't friendly with border guards but for different reasons. They deprive them of cheap, "black", low-wage farm workers:

Before border guards came here all the Albanian illegal immigrants worked for us for pennies...Now they don't



presence is reassuring, others that they do nothing special and the local community don't particularly appreciate their contribution. They themselves feel proud, yet in official interviews they mentioned public respect and acceptance while they unofficially admitted being rather unacknowledged both at a local and at a state level.

Our local informants pictured them as being remote, too official (especially the BGs who aren't locals and come from Ioannina, the regional capital), using the gun during control procedures and their torch light right in the eyes. BGs state that they just follow orders from their superiors, that there is so much stress and danger in their work that guns and torches are inevitable.

What was revealing as far as the complexity of the regional relations is concerned, was the varied points of view we encountered depending on the origin and the profile of our informants. That is:

The Greek inhabitants of Konitsa accused border guards of:

- wasting their time, idly sitting at local cafes:  
"-They are civil servants!" some said in a derogatory manner, implying the negative connotations civil service carries among Greeks (one's reluctance to work hard/a feeling of security deriving from the factor of permanence in their job that causes them to be indifferent, arrogant or rude).  
"-They think we're just having coffee; observation, control, that's what it is!" the border guards reply.
- not contributing to the local economy:  
"- Ninety of them reside permanently away from



they dislike BGs, accuse them of "hunting" Albanians and treating them in a rude, often racist way.

- permanent residents/family people/temporary residents for work purposes/those who live at villages far from the border appear indifferent, neutral or slightly positive:

"-We're o.k. with them, we don't mind really."

"-We have our life here, our job..."

Elimination of the criminal element in the area seems to suit them fine.

It is striking that one's perspective may provide one with a unique perception of reality (that is not shared with the "Other") and what, ultimately, seems to determine the positive or negative attitude towards a social/professional group (BGs) are factors such as: power balance, economic issues (profit/damage), safety, individual benefit, direct/indirect interaction. In a border area where national/ethnic factors would be expected to prevail, it appears that power and economic dynamics are the regulatory forces.

For BGs, maintaining a certain type of attitude i.e. treating everybody the same way is an issue. If they behave in a friendly way they might not be able to exercise authority when necessary, their attachment to individuals might cause them trouble with superiors/get them to be abused by certain interests. Their duty to follow orders makes them unpopular/sociability might weaken their efficiency when faced with criminals; tough might mean safer (especially when gender issues interfere). Yet, moral issues of choice appear when faced with the obligation to capture a young impoverished boy



even stay at our region. They cross the borders and leave directly for the big valleys south, in Thessaly. They don't even stop to ask for a job. How are we supposed to find workers for the fields now? The young Greeks either leave for big cities or have become too 'well-bred' to work all day long under the sun for almost no money at all. Our fields are now deserted..We cultivate them on our own. For as long as we will be able to..."

- On the contrary, mountain villagers, some old, almost forgotten poor people, see border guards as their guardian-angels, as saviours. They bring a livelihood to their deserted villages and compressed communities and protect them from illegal invaders:

"-We see them sit at our only café and we feel safe. We are old. What if somebody attacks us? We thank God that these nice boys and girls are with us. We feel grateful. We are not alone anymore."

- The soldiers doing their military service in the area feel relieved by the presence of border guards:

"-They now do what in the past used to be our responsibility. For us it's a relief. If we see somebody sneaking to cross the border we do not intervene. We just call the border guards to settle the situation. I like it this way better. It relieves the tension in the area and is safer for us".

The Albanian immigrants' opinion seems to relate directly to the degree of their integration in local society and the regional factor:

- "newcomers"/single males/residing close to the border:



## Conclusion

The results of this ethnographic research roughly draw the picture-or rather, the motion picture- of the border guards community within a regional society. What we can see is the interaction of forces, complex interrelationships and conflicting individual/group interests of basically, an economic or power nature.

Within a frame of binary oppositions (Levi-Strauss 1963: 160) (law/deviance, safety/danger, abuse of authority/ respect for human rights, efficiency/popularity etc.) the border guards look *like acrobats walking along symbolic borderlines*. This image like a "symbolic source of illumination" (Geertz 1973: 45) may lead to another analogy: *the BG as an acrobat being a miniature or micrography of the international balance of power*. It is a micro-macro depiction of the volatile situation around real borders of nation-states and also around symbolic borders. "The environment relates to specific spaces and geographies, both physical and imaginary" (Yuval-Davis 1999: 124).

In this post-modern Wittgensteinian "game" (Das 1998, Geertz 2000) it is not so much the "flux of power" (Foucault's power dynamics in Troulinou 1991: 171) as the "power of flux" (Lianos 2003: 426) that sets the "rules". When border guarding in a certain region can affect the country's black economy or indeed, the routes of international modern slave-trade then it is in the same context and along the same line that globally we witness "civilianized conflict and militarized civil societies"



of 13 or be polite to a women-trafficker who stares at them in an arrogant and sexist way.

As a conclusion, based on research and fieldwork limited in terms of time, it can be stated that: BGs are actually like acrobats. They need to balance not only between country borders but also on thin dividing lines, on symbolic and abstract borders, i.e. between: friendliness/distance, /duty/human/expression, legality/illegality, efficiency/popularity, courage/fear, office loyalty/honesty, exercising power/being victimized, duty/categorical imperative (Kant), reason/emotion, law/deviance, safety/danger, a man's job/femininity, abuse of authority/respect for human rights.

It is remarkable how many different interpretations and subtle differences, how many hidden aspects or fine highlights can be traced when exploring a simple, phenomenally ordinary profession. The complexity of the border guard case is immensely intriguing and further research should take place in order to explore in depth the social dimensions of this ethnographic topic. Possible topics might include:

- Comparative studies of city/country BGs.
- BGs and other professionals: dichotomies.
- Religious issues-role of the church/priests.
- Language and power; power and gender.
- Power language/symbols/semiotics.
- Class issues or conflicts in Konitsa.
- Relations of local/State authorities with BGs.
- Detailed exploration of BGs training.
- Their perception of the future of their profession.



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(Saigol 2004: 19).

Modern border guards -like the ancients- assist the rulers, only the latter are not "ideally" philosophers. *Analogy* is an articulating notion in the platonic dialectic ( Penolidis 2004: 117) that joins denoting the different. "Dia" signifies the between, the borderland. Borders essentially unite. Border guards, alternatively, can assist along this line. They only need to find a balance.

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challenges have arisen in this zone- a zone that was characterized by isolation up until 1990. New networks have been developed. New relations and links have been created.

There are several commonalities that span the border and have brought, and continue to bring people together: kinship, language, tradition and religion. Additionally, a considerable part of the current exchanges between communities on both sides of the border are based on economic parameters. Flows of people, goods and capital from one side of the border to the other originate for the most part in the economic differentiation of the two neighboring states.

Daily life, on the Greek-Albanian borderland, has been affected in multiple ways. Thousands of people have emigrated from South Albania to the Greek side of the border. Many of them have settled close to the border--providing low-cost labor to the local labor market on a permanent or temporary basis (Baldwin - Edwards 2004). Also, Albanian citizens sometimes make daily visits to Greece for shopping, entertainment and other services. Several enterprises have been established on the Albanian side of the border, either, for importing products from Greece and distributing them to the Albanian market, or, for labor intensive manufacturing production (Andrikopoulou - Kaykalas 2000). Cultural and educational events, as well as, exchange programs are organized with the cooperation of people coming from both sides of the border.

The transformation of the Greek-Albanian borderland



**Recent transformations of the Greek-Albanian borderlands. Effects on urban life.**

**Transformation of the Greek-Albanian borderland**

The collapse of the communist regimes in Balkan countries was followed by the radical transformation of the border zones between, on the one side, Greece and on the other side, Albania, FYROM and Bulgaria (Petrakos 2000, Andrikopoulou - Kaykalas 2000, Petrakos - Economou 2003). There are several factors that shape the framework of relations between countries on both sides of these borders. Some of these factors are: the structures of their economies, the mechanisms of production, historical links, public and private initiatives, external relations and existing infrastructure.

In the case of the Greek-Albanian borderlands, the geopolitical changes in the area have created a very dynamic environment (Nitsiakos - Mantzos 2003). New

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<sup>1</sup>This paper is based on a presentation entitled "Challenges for the Greek border cities. Recent transformations of Ioannina city", presented by the author at the 50th World Congress of the IFHP in Geneva, in September 2006. The research data come from the MSc thesis of the author titled "Ioannina city after the opening of the Albanian borders" that was presented at NTUA in October 2005, under the supervision of Prof. Maria Mantouvalou.



The limits and administrative subdivisions of Ioannina



*pasaliki* (the administrative unit which had Ioannina as a capital) in 1845/1846 and the existing national border lines between Greece, Albania and FYROM (Kokolakis 2003)

Communication between Greek and Albanian communities ceased as soon as communism was established in Albania and the border was closed. This resulted in a further shortening of the social and



has different dimensions in the particular cities where the majority of the population, as well as, the majority of social and economic activities are concentrated. Border cities are influenced by, and influence, cross-border exchange and mobility within the framework of the world economy and global politics. Ioannina, Kastoria, Igoumenitsa and Konitsa -on the Greek side- Gjirokastër, Korçë, Sarandë and Permët -on the Albanian side- are the cities at the Greek - Albanian borderlands that have upgraded their position in the network of Balkan urban centers due to the changed status of the border line. Daily life in these cities has been affected deeply, in accordance with local factors. Even a short discussion with local people can reveal the variety of daily practices that derive from the opening of the border.

### **The city of Ioannina: borders and history**

During the Ottoman era, Ioannina was the most important social, economic, administrative and cultural center throughout a sizable geographical area in the Southwestern Balkans (kokolakis 2003, Dimitriadis, 1993). In 1913, this area was divided into two parts: what is nowadays called the Epirus region -which included Ioannina and was annexed to the Greek State, and South Albania - which was annexed to the newly founded Albanian State (Veremis et al. 1995). This division seriously damaged the network of social and economic relations that had existed in the past.



settled temporarily or permanently. Nowadays, seven to ten thousand Albanian citizens live in Ioannina while the whole population of the city is about a hundred thousand people. It is estimated that eighty to ninety percent of them belong to the Greek ethnic minority of Albania<sup>2</sup>. The population of immigrants coming into the city has transformed the local labor market (Epirus co 1998), enriched the local cultural and sport life, affected the real estate market, and influenced the mechanisms of public administration.

Albanian population				
	Ioannina	Prefecture of Ioannina	Region of Epirus	Greece
Albanian citizens	7-10.000	20-25.000	40.000	550.000-600.000
Total population	106.109	170.239	353.820	10.206.539
Albanian citizens population	6,6% - 9,4%	11,3%	11,3%	5,4%-5,9%

Sources: National Census 2001, Region of Epirus, Consulate of Albania in Ioannina

### Commerce

Commercial exchange is a key-aspect of the relations between Ioannina and Albania. The needs of the Albanian society for daily goods and for goods that represent the "western way of life" are significant. Many

<sup>2</sup>Directive of Urban Situation, Foreigners and Emigrants of Region of Epirus and Faik Dishnica, General Secretary of the Consulate of Albania in Ioannina.



economic periphery of Ioannina.

When the Greek-Albanian border opened in 1990, cross-border networks were re-invigorated. Old networks and historical links throughout the Greek-Albanian borderzone were revived and new networks were created (Nitsiakos - Mantzos 2003). Ioannina, located just sixty kilometers from the border, became the center of a newly transnational area.

Nowadays, Ioannina is the biggest city in Northwest Greece and the main centre of development activity in the whole region. The current dynamics of development are based on the expansion, improvement or creation of new urban infrastructure (national road system, airport, university, hospital, congress halls, sport facilities, shopping centers, hotel resorts), but also, on the challenges that have emerged after the opening of the Albanian border. At the same time, the opening of the Albanian border in 1990 has affected or transformed several aspects of urban life in formal and informal ways.

### **Informal networks**

A large amount of the transformations that have taken place recently in Ioannina- because of the new geopolitical situation in the area- are informal and spontaneous. These transformations are presented below.

#### *Population*

Ioannina was, and still is, a city where many immigrants from Albania - especially from South Albania - have



its geographic proximity and the presence of the Greek ethnic minority (Veremis et al. 1995, Andrikopoulou - Kaykalas, 2000).

### *Construction sector*

A large proportion of male Albanian immigrants have entered the construction labour market (Epirus co 1998). Furthermore, a number of engineers from Albania have moved across the border and work in construction projects in Ioannina. Finally, low cost construction materials, such as stone, are imported from Albania.

### *Real estate*

Albanian immigrants participate in the housing market at a small, but important, percentage. Most of the houses that are sold to Albanians are either old or low quality flats at central districts (Girokomio, Kastro, Kaloutsiani), or new single family houses in suburbs where the cost of land is relatively low (Kardamitsia, Anatoli, Katsika, Kastritsa, Koutselio). There are also cases of Albanian immigrants that have bought or constructed new houses. What seems to be the main characteristic of the distribution of Albanian immigrants in these urban spaces is that they are spread across the city.

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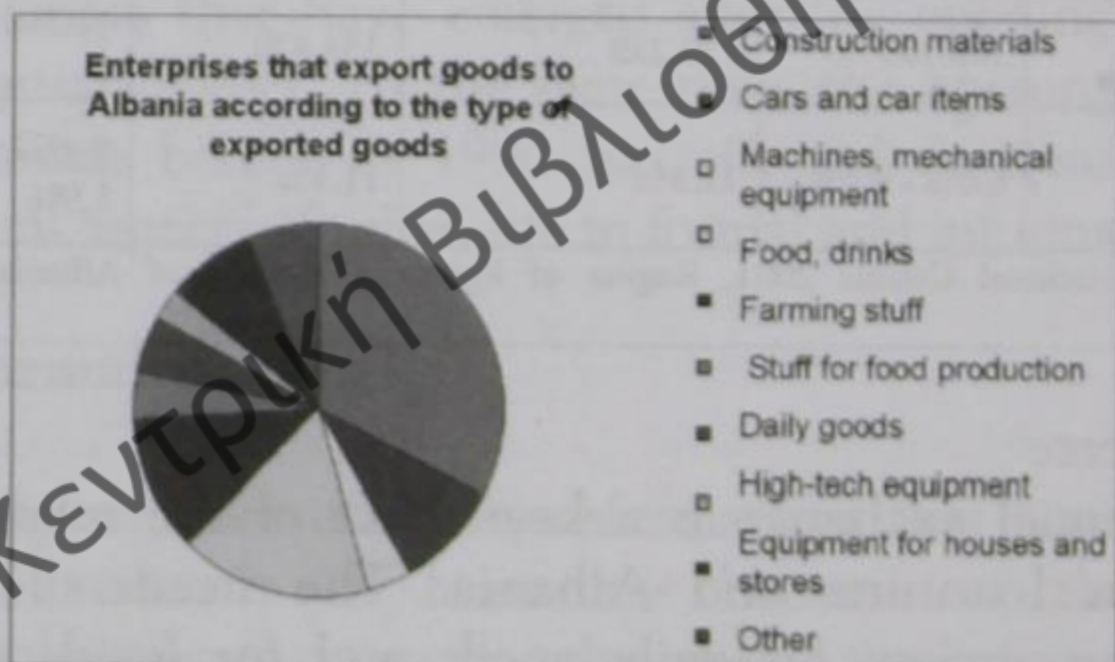
<sup>4</sup>Interview with Dant Gumeni, General Consul of Albania in Ioannina, 3/5/2005.



local trade companies export to Albania structural materials, food and machines either in cooperation with Albanian businessmen or through local representatives. The majority of the exported goods go to Tirana and the cities of South Albania<sup>3</sup>. Additionally, many Albanian citizens visit Ioannina for shopping individually.

### *Investments in Albania*

Although businessmen from Ioannina are interested in investing in Albania, until now, they had not taken much initiative in the matter. It is estimated that twelve to thirteen companies with headquarters in Ioannina have investments in Albania<sup>4</sup>. The majority of these investments are concentrated in South Albania- due to



<sup>3</sup>Data on exports is based on telephone interviews (7/5/2005 to 15/7/2005) with representatives of all the export companies of the Ioannina Prefecture.



transport node in the Southwest Balkans<sup>5</sup>.

### Formal networks

Local institutions have encouraged the contacts, and supported the relations, between Ioannina and Albania (Kitsios 1997). The opening of the Albanian border has widened the field of activities of existing institutions and has created new ones. In several cases, more than one institutions have been working together towards the completion of a project. As a result, a large network of links has been created. In this network, the public and the private sectors, as well as, state and civil society are in close cooperation.

Contacts between Greek and Albanian communities are achieved in several ways. The provision of support to Albanian institutions and to Albanian immigrants in Greece by local institutions, especially in the first years after the opening of the border-, as well as, the promotion of cultural and educational exchanges, create links of communication and transfer ideas and models of life from one side of the border to the other.

The institutions that have been involved in issues that emerged from the opening of the Greek-Albanian border can be grouped as follows:

- Institutions that existed before the opening of the border, such as local authorities, University of

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<sup>5</sup>In 2002 and 2003 more than 600.000 Albanians crossed the borders from Kakavia crossing point annually. It means that more than 50% of the Albanians that enter Greece pass the borders from Kakavia crossing point.





Areas of high concentration of Albanian emigrants (Air photo, Hellenic Military Geographical Service)

### **Mobility and transport infrastructure**

The number of private cars, buses, taxis and trucks on the road that connects Ioannina with the Kakavia check point on the Greek-Albanian border has increased dramatically since 1990. The improvement of the road system that connects Ioannina with Kakavia and onto Gjirokastrë city in Albania has encouraged mobility between Greece and Albania. Thus Ioannina, the main gate from Albania to Greece, has become an important



sides visited the land of their ancestors on the other side. During the first years after the change of the Albanian political system, Greek society offered humanitarian aid to the Albanian society -especially to the Greek ethnic minority of Albania- through local institutions. Several exchange initiatives have been based on common roots- i.e. on history and tradition. In particular, the shared language (Greek) and shared religion (Orthodox Christianity) of some members of the two communities have brought people closer.

Concerning the role of Ioannina in the area, it seems that the city has regained the central role that it once held. Ioannina is the nearest big city for the population of a large area of South Albania. Albanian citizens go to Ioannina for shopping (as they used to do in the past) because of the shortage of goods and the preference of the Greek ethnic minority for Greek products. Apart from being a commercial centre, nowadays, Ioannina provides technical, educational, medical, recreational and transport services to a transnational area.

Additionally, Ioannina links Albanian society with "the Western World" and capitalism. It:

- is the first stop to the "West" for thousands of immigrants that have left Albania and will probably continue to be so in the future. Ioannina is the place where Albanian immigrants came into contact with a capitalist society for first time - this was especially true during the first years after the opening of the border.
- is the place where the new consumption habits of the Albanian population can be satisfied.



Ioannina, Regional Hospital and Industrial and Commercial Chamber, that have modified their structure and/or have taken initiatives in response to the new dynamics in the area.

- Institutions that existed before the opening of the Albanian border that focus on issues relevant to the population, history and civilization of the Greek ethnic minority of South Albania. "North Epirus Association" and the "Foundation of Studies on Northern Epirus" - which belong to this group- have created links between Greek society on the Greek side of the border and the Greek ethnic minority of Albania.
- Governmental institutions that have set up branches in Ioannina after the opening of the border in order to coordinate actions relevant to the new situation in the area. Initiatives by the "Hellenic Foreign Trade Board" and "National Foundation for Reception and Rehabilitation of Repatriated Greeks" reflect the governmental policy on Greek-Albanian relations.
- Non-governmental organizations, such as the "Egnatia Epirus Foundation", the "Research and Support Centre for Victims of Maltreatment and Social Exclusion" and the HUMANET organization that implement development projects in developing countries and especially in Albania.

### **Ioannina and the other side of the border line**

The opening of the border has regenerated historical links at the Greek-Albanian borderland. Relatives and old friends have been reconnected. Residents from both



occupying a central role in the Southwestern Balkans (especially in relation to Albania). After the opening of the border, the Epirus region- one of the poorest regions of European Union- became central, while South Albania became its periphery.

Uneven development on both sides of the border has encouraged exchange practices which reproduce inequalities in capitalist societies (Harvey 1992, Amin 1976). Simultaneously, opportunities for restraining these inequalities have also become available.

The relation between Ioannina and Albania exemplifies the variety of current exchange practices that exist on a global level. The points of contact between the two sides of the border are wide and are affected by several factors. The issues that arise in this context are of the same kind that exists in other contemporary transnational contexts. These are related to the mechanisms of cross-border exchange, the nature of global exchanges and contemporary practices of local development.

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- connects Albania with the Greek State and the European Union, through the programs and formal meetings that are conducted in the city.

### **Aspects of local development: inequalities and dynamics**

While discussing inequalities between Greek and Albanian societies, one should focus on the specific characteristics of each side. These characteristics create a unique framework for describing the relations between these two entities. The uniqueness of the current relations at the Greek-Albanian borderland derives from local factors (Allen - Massey, 1995) -in particular- historical links and socio-economic parameters.

Apart from the differentiated socio-economic environment of society on both sides of the border, there can also be found many contact points between Greek and Albania borderlands. Albania is one of the less developed countries in Europe, but social structures that could support future development towards a capitalist pattern do exist. On the other side of the border, Greek society is a capitalist one, but it is less developed than the "traditional" capitalist societies of Europe. It means that several levels of hierarchy exist between different spatial locations (Braudel 1992).

The vitality that characterizes Ioannina nowadays is at least partially connected with cross-border exchanges. When the Greek-Albanian border opened, Ioannina was at the "right" place and had the "right" characteristics for



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not only requires such a deconstructionist stance, but also entails a process of actively (re-)constructing the field in which one's evolving insights are grounded.

For a number of reasons, I had chosen the city of Mostar as the geographical focus of my research, but rather than having predefined notions about the setting in which to conduct participant observation, I had defined my unit of analysis in terms of three groups - international administrators, local bureaucrats and city councilors, and citizens of Mostar. Concentrating on their interactions allowed me to escape the idea of a bounded field. Given the fact that Mostar is a town of approximately 100.000 inhabitants with a diversified and still divided set of administrative bodies and a host of international agencies, the question nevertheless arose of where and when to observe such interactions. Finding settings in which members of these groups interacted and which were accessible to me proved to be the main challenge in the initial phase of research. Fieldwork became a matter of conceptually and physically linking fragmented settings - the choice of which was more often influenced by pragmatic considerations than by theoretical and methodological reflections. Early on, I conducted participant observation in local community offices (*mjesne zajednice* - MZ) which - stemming from times of socialist self-management - still function as a contact point between city administration and citizens. Later on, participant observation shifted to a recently re-united department of the inner city administration and then took the form of an internship with an international



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**Reflections on "the Field": Local community offices in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina as sites for investigating state-society relations in a post-conflict country.**

**Introduction**

In this contribution, I consider the dialectical relation between field settings and the production of knowledge as I experienced it during 14 months of fieldwork in the town of Mostar between 2004 and 2006. In 1997, Gupta and Ferguson forcefully argued that "the field" is not a naturally given location and that it has remained dangerously under-theorized within the discipline. Since then, an awareness of the manifold ways in which the anthropologist's own positionality and the ways in which unspoken assumptions that exist within the discipline influence and prefigure his choice of field has greatly increased (Gupta & Ferguson 1997, Abu Lughod 2000). PhD students today are generally expected to employ a considerable degree of reflexivity in designing their research projects. And although this exercise in de-centering and de-fetishizing the field has lost none of its importance, I want to argue that contemporary fieldwork

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<sup>1</sup>The most important being the Office of the High Representative (OHR). Its responsibility is to supervise all civilian aspects of the implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement.



social aid while trying to catch a glimpse of what visitors either took out of the storage room, or deposited there. Often, visitors simply engaged in lengthy discussions of particular families in the neighborhood, the history of Mostar, current political affairs, or war-related events.

With time and increased involvement in conversations, my astonishment over the presence of personalized and private relations in this public administrative body gave way to a better understanding of the social relations observed in the MZ. I was able to discern patterns in the seemingly random comings and goings. Among regular visitors one could distinguish the secretary's relatives and friends, many of whom dropped by every day to take care of family matters and plan common activities. Another group consisted of representatives from various institutions active in the neighborhood (ranging from the veterans' club secretary, the director of the local elementary school, to a social aid worker, or the head of the dominant political party's neighborhood association) who all made a point of regularly visiting the MZ to keep up with neighborhood news. A steady stream of clients asked for residence certificates or other documents issued by the MZ secretary. Employees of other administrative units (such as the police, or the public housing department) frequently paid visits to solve neighborhood issues in personal cooperation with the MZ secretary. What made it difficult for me to recognize the official nature of transactions in all these encounters, was the fact that they were embedded in more personal forms of interaction. Conversations usually centered on family



organization. Additionally, I conducted interviews, regularly visited various offices and homes of city employees, participated in trainings for civil servants and attended public hearings, city council sessions and other public events. I also accompanied informants on their walks through the city thus taking part in their experience of urban space in a divided town.

### **Participant observation in the *mjesna zajednica* (local community office)**

Throughout my fieldwork, the intimate knowledge of socio-cultural contexts gained in one particular community office served as a valuable point of reference. It is this setting - the MZ that I would like to analyse in more detail. Since I was interested in the tasks the MZ carried out and this changes over time, I had negotiated with the secretary of MZ to systematically go through the office's records. As I sat at a desk in the rear of the small community office every day, I was able to observe how people, who drifted in and out of the office, seemed to be concerned with matters I could not relate in any way to administrative issues. While I was leafing through certificates of residence, somebody would come in and exchange greetings with the secretary, only to pick up her office phone and start a heated argument over payment for the recent sale of a painting. Reading residents' requests for street lightning, I would simultaneously listen to a conversation on cooking recipes and prices at the local market. I would pretend to look at applications for



grasp the nature of solidarity or exclusion, either within, or across, ethno-national groups. As I tried to readjust my fieldwork, a phase of fieldwork began during which I relied on more peripatetic forms of research. I visited all international organizations active in the field of public administration reforms, and attended city council sessions and other public events.

I was first struck by how specific public settings shape the activities taking place in them, when listening to debates on how to best re-structure Mostar's public institutions, during city council sessions and meetings with representatives of international organizations. Having been immersed in the daily events of the MZ, I took it as a given location - a stage on which events unfolded which allowed me to observe them in a conveniently bounded entity. Now, with, on the one hand, the comparative perspective of highly ritualized city council sessions, and, on the other, my unstructured movements through the city's public spaces in search for new settings, I became aware of the extent to which an institutional setting, e.g. the specific structuration of MZ offices, allowed for specific kinds of interaction.

In the MZ, state and society were linked in a historically contingent way creating a unique "intimate-public sphere". Under Tito's rule, the gradual absorption of state functions by society had been the declared goal of Yugoslav Socialism - as expressed in the term "workers' self-management". With the MZ-structure, the state had "gone native" by stretching out into the social fabric of neighborhoods: merging public norms with private



matters, neighborhood gossip, and recent political events - the administrative issue at hand was mentioned only in passing. Often, clients and employees of the city administration approached the MZ secretary on the street or through common acquaintances and only the final result - the issuing of a certificate or the presentation of an inspector's protocol for signature by the MZ secretary - took place in the MZ office. Four months into the field, my understanding of the MZ office had undergone a profound transformation. Rather than seeing an ill-defined, poorly regulated and neglected administrative sub-unit, I now recognized a microcosm of meaningful relationships criss-crossing the boundaries between public and private.

### **Linking the *mjesna zajednica* to the city's wider public sphere**

Meanwhile, I realized that my aim to investigate the consequences of externally initiated public administration reforms on structures of solidarity/exclusion at the level of local self-government had shifted to studying one specific neighborhood within the municipality of Mostar. Turning from an anthropology of the city to an anthropology *in* the city (Low 1996) was clearly problematic, given the degree to which Mostar's division along ethno-national lines -into a predominantly Croat Western part and an Eastern part with Bosniac majority- is a decisive factor shaping life in the city. By studying one neighborhood, I could not hope to fully



or less mono-ethnic in composition. Especially in the older residential areas, and, on the outskirts of the city, extended families built their houses on the same plot of land. Ties based on residence thus overlap with, and are reinforced by, ethno-national belonging and family relations. The public constituted by the MZ is consequently one of *naši ljudi* (our people). Both the HDZ and the SDA are eager to maintain such ethno-nationally defined, and territorially grounded spheres of influence.

Situating this specific structuration of my first fieldwork in the wider context of public life in Mostar helped me grasp an essential point: The long-lasting struggle to reorganize the MZ-system was not only a conflict over competencies and administrative efficiency, but rather, a conflict over the delineation of a specific public space at the interface of state and society. Each group involved in this struggle (the OHR, other international organizations, local politicians, MZ secretaries) put forward a different notion of how state-society relations should be configured in accordance with its own standing in a public sphere comprising further sites and settings. The positionality of various actors in this broader urban public could only be captured by a wide-ranging ethnography covering both structured settings, such as the one suggested by Roger Sanjek (2000), and more unstructured sites of observation, as advocated by Kusenbach (2003). According to Sanjek, ethnographic fieldwork conducted in this manner has the potential to generate "terrain-specific theories of significance",



values, and public interests with private needs -without, however, relinquishing the Communist Party's control over the central decision-making process. Doubling as a top-down administrative state-body and simultaneously as a bottom-up avenue for participation, the MZ constituted a controlled public realm within the neighborhood (Simmie & Hale 1978). When the Yugoslav state violently collapsed in 1991, the MZs became crucial building blocks of the newly emerging successor states, state-like entities, and para-states on the contested territory of the Bosnian-Herzegovian Republic. In Mostar, MZs mobilized military defense, distributed humanitarian assistance, provided housing for incoming refugees, and generally became the basic units of a dispersed administration (FBiH Ministarstvo odbrane 1998). In 1995, with the Dayton Peace Accords, a period of state-building began which was characterized by the heavy involvement of the international community and a top-down approach which paid little attention to the existing MZ-structures. When in 2003, the OHR imposed a new statute for the city of Mostar, there was no longer any reference to MZs as part of the administration (Commission for Reforming the City of Mostar 2003).

Although out of sight, many MZs continued to function as peculiar neighborhood meeting spaces where public and private issues were negotiated as before, and the two main nationalist parties (the Croat HDZ and the Bosnijak SDA) smoothly took over the Communist Party's mediating function. Due to population exchanges during the war, most neighborhoods nowadays are more



open the channels of communication and interaction.<sup>3</sup> Such linkages make it possible to alternately connect the intimate-public of the MZ to the city-wide public of the city council, to the ethno-national public of nationalist parties, or even, to the global public of international organizations.

## Conclusion

Mostar's public sphere might best be conceptualized as a field of interaction made up of a variety of settings with the boundary line between public and private being defined differently in each setting. Individual and collective actors negotiate their standing in this field by making use of the opportunity structures different settings offer to them. Through their activities, settings are linked in manifold ways and a public sphere emerges - this process is not limited or bound to Mostar, but embedded in specific settings and sites. Returning to the debate on what constitutes the anthropologist's field, I suggest we should perceive it as constructed, not only by the anthropologist, but also by all other participants (might they be local, national, or international actors) through social practices located in specific settings. Such

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<sup>3</sup>The intimate public of the MZ has many similarities with the "public-private sphere", which Oswald and Voronkov identify as a specific characteristic of Soviet, and post-Soviet societies (Oswald & Voronkov 2004), but unlike its Soviet counterpart, it is not rigidly separated from the "official public". For a good introduction to theories on the public-private distinction in general, see Weintraub (1997).



setting into motion a dialectical process between the specificities of fieldwork and knowledge production (Sanjek 2000: 284). In my case, searching for settings in which to conduct participant observation, experiencing the restraining and/or enabling effects of different settings, and attempting to forge a conceptual link between them did indeed give rise to a novel understanding of what constitutes the public sphere in Mostar.

Crucial to this theoretical reassessment was the realization that I was not alone in my search for structured settings and meaningful sites - that this was rather an aspect of social life I shared with most of my interlocutors. Much as I struggled to make sense of public life in Mostar, its residents struggle to delineate a public sphere and to define access to, and participation in it after a war that has torn their city apart. In this context, the MZ forms one among many settings in which the nature of a public sphere is negotiated. It constitutes an internal public sphere grounded in the intimacy and informality of ties based on proximity of residence, and often, also, on ethno-national belonging.<sup>2</sup> This "intimate-public", however, is structurally linked to the city administration as well as to the sphere of political decision-making. Actors in all three settings have an interest in keeping

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<sup>2</sup>This contrasts sharply with the city council, where all ethno-national groups are represented, or with, the city administration - which is supposed to provide services regardless of ethno-national background.



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a socially constructed field is in equal measure the object, and the frame of one's investigation. Both aspects are open to theoretical analysis.

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contextualizing history regionally. Memory in this context should be understood as a process, which allows the envisioning and experiencing of the world. In conceptualizing migration as a construction of historical memory, one gains a tool for the understanding of places, identities and collective existence (Waugh 2005). Migration as part of regional history has become a "mythistory" (Schöpflin 1997) embodied in the symbolism of terms, places and sounds. Migration has served as an identity marker in a region, self-perceived by their inhabitants through a discourse about geographical, political, social, cultural and/or temporal marginality and ambiguity (Green 2005). In addressing these anthropological issues a basis for the understanding of regional conceptions of migration songs should be provided. An important role in this anthropological part will be the discussion of *emic* and *etic* terminologies of migration in Albania and Greece and its sentimental connotations. Another part will be dedicated to regional places of remembrance, connected with the memory of migration. Each of these places such as bridges, rocks, trees or roads is of symbolic value for the specific regional and visual contextualization of "mythistory" and interconnected with individual destinies. This particular way of interpreting history through the symbolical "reading" of landscape is backed by the same construct of migration as the conscious "listening" to the sound of migration songs.

The core of this thesis will consist of ethnomusicological basic research, documenting, transcribing, analyzing and



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**Presentation of the PhD thesis**  
**"Migration Songs in Epirus - Multipart Singing**  
**and the Construction of Identity and Memory**  
**in a borderland region"**

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Migration (Albanian: *kurbet*, Greek: *xenitia*) has been and still is a significant characteristic feature of the Epirus region. The short-term labour migration and the long-term migration abroad, as a shared historical legacy and contemporary experience, has shaped the economy and social characteristics of the region divided between two nation-states significantly. *Migration Studies* have analyzed the phenomenon under different demographic, sociological, economical and anthropological viewpoints but neglected the cultural dimension of migration. On the other hand, ethnomusicology in Greece and Albania has studied the extensive repertoire of migration songs (Vasili alone lists 413 examples) almost exclusively as a textual category from the perspective of a national musicology (Vasili 1981, Michail-Dede 1994). But migration can be examined also as a cultural construct, defined through a selective way of memorizing and

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movement), allowing a re-reading of migration history for propaganda purposes. Another period of re-reading migration history through songs can be understood as an artistic reaction following the traumatic mass migration of the 1990's. Some of these contemporary songs, which could be analyzed from the ethnomusicological point of view as interesting examples of "hybrid music", have proved to function successfully as a "low-tech counter-dialogue" (Papailas 2003: 1071) to Greek and Albanian mass media. These new migration songs became an accepted symbol for the "society's mourning for the death, both literal and social, of the Albanian youth, through migration" (Papailas 2003: 1070). The public discourse about some of these new migration songs questioned the omnipresent border itself, its relevance, transformations and reaffirmations in highlighting the visible and invisible wounds it causes. As a way of actualizing and re-interpreting regional migration within the changed contexts of a globalized world, these new migration songs will be discussed in juxtaposing them to traditional musical expressions. Greek folkloristic and ethnographic research in Epirus on the other hand was lead by the search for a lost "authenticity" which they suspected to find in the migration song repertoire. Different ways of how migration songs have been instrumentalized through re-reading and "cultural objectification" (Handler 1988) will be discussed in the thesis.

Another focus will be the discussion of the emotional value of migration songs leading to the creation of an



contextualizing a neglected repertoire of multipart singing on basis of material collected during field research in 2004 and 2006. The thesis will address exclusively migration songs, performed solo, in two-part, three-part or four-part style, sung either in Albanian/ Greek, or in bilingual versions in the borderlands between the imagined line Konispol-Sagiada north to the line of Leskovik-Konitsa. In textual respect, only songs with a distinct notion of migration events from Ottoman times to the present will be included. Recruit's songs (Albanian: *këngë nizam*) connected with a specific form of labour migration will be excluded, because they are treated both in *emic* and *etic* systematizations as a distinct category.

Migration songs in multipart style are a specific way of memorizing history and representative for a popular memory "held by a group of people who do not necessarily possess power but have shared an experience" (Yow 2005: 54). Migration songs are a specific way of expressing the cultural construct of migration, of digesting migration experience through the exemplification, personalization and emotionalization of a collective experience. Migration songs are also a way of "speaking back" to an official discourse on migration formulated by cultural power holders. At the same time migration songs can be seen as a repertoire, embedded into the official discourses of a region with a contested musical identity. Of special relevance in this respect is the practice of "recreating" texts for migration songs during the communist regime in Albania (within the *Folklori I Ri* - New Folklore-



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"emotional community" between performers and audience. A crucial role in this discussion is the concept of *ponos* (pain) embodied in migration songs as in the repertoire of Laments (Albanian: *vajtim*, Greek: *miroloyi*). The resulting discussion of the musicological interrelatedness of these two repertoires and the question if migration songs can be defined by specific features as a distinct musical genre in multipart music will be of central importance for the thesis.

The main hypothesis of the research will be the assumption of cross-border repertoire of migration songs as an expression of a cultural concept. In dealing with this question, a strict application of a comparative perspective, combining anthropological and ethnomusicological approaches and a cooperation with local Albanian and Greek scholars is indispensable. The results of this work will hopefully contribute to the documentation of a specific repertoire of the endangered repertoire of multipart singing, protected through decision by the UNESCO in 2005 as "Oral World Heritage" and allow new comparative insights how identity is constructed culturally in border-regions.

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communist strategy. The downfall of the communist regime was followed by a period where many eminent figures of anthropology emerged (Hann 1998, Verdery 1998etc), and it is considered the period of "transformation" (not just transition) in former socialist countries. In my perspective these periods, may be called the three periods of "great transformation" in Albania. This request for the transformation was initiated by the political and intellectual elite but we will not focused only on the changes that come from 'above' but also its reflection in and reaction from "below" (Hobsbawm 1989) In this case we observe the impact of the Government Law considering it as one of the main means of the Government in order to meet the final goal - the transformation. Based on this fact I have tried to address the question of the relationship between of the State Law and Customary Law and the system of values in a local context. Consequently, there is the problem of Government Law legitimacy in a grassroots standpoint in the state of pluralistic legal system. (mostly dualistic system).

My thesis is based mainly on the data gathered during my fieldwork in addition to other literary and archival sources. The fieldwork took place five years ago in the small region called *Has*, which is located between Albania and Kosovo. The attribute of being the "borderland" was one of the reasons that I chose this Case Study. The *Has* Region is characterized by the "traditional life", where one of the major foundations that represents the social life in general and 'system of



**Nebi Bardhoshi\***

**The role of Customary Law in Social Life in the Has Region.**

Law, in an important anthropological perspective, is considered the integral part of culture and in cooperation with other agencies often plays the main role in creating social control or social equilibrium. However, at the same time we can find that the legal pluralism phenomenon is ever present (Beckman 2004, Griffiths 1986, Merry 1988 etc). This presentation will address the following questions: What is the relationship among the judicial system, morality and religion at the horizontal level? What are the relationships between Customary law and Government Law (I will refer to them as vertical relations). What makes a decision or law legitimate at a grassroots level?

The period of the previous century (1912 - until now), for Albanian society (borrowing the sociologist Andreas Pickel's expression) has been a period of building "homo nationalis" in the terms of nation-state. In this period the *Kanun*, which was appraised before as one of the crucial factors of "ethnic cohesion", now for the political and intellectual elite is just the "old fashioned way of living" that they must get rid of. The period after the World War II was considered the time of building the "New Man", a

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Δημόσια Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσας



values' was the so called the "Kanun of Lek Dukagjin". Until now, as far as I know, there does not seem to have been any previous studies conducted about the issues of the Customary Law in this region.

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### Teaching methods

Lectures, film screening and workshops. Lectures are given in Greek and English.

### Lecturers

Dr. Georgios Agelopoulos, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki

Dr. Deema Kaneff, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Dr. Alik Angelidou, Panteion University Athens

Dr. Roza Basilaki, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki

### Coordinators

Dr. Georgios Agelopoulos is assistant Professor at the Department of Balkan, Slavic and Oriental Studies, University of Macedonia, Thessaloniki. He holds an M.Phil. (University of St. Andrews, UK) and a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology (University of Cambridge). His research interests include the study of Nationalism and Ethnicity, Balkan Anthropology, Minorities, and Migration. E-mail: ag@uom.gr and avgiagel@otenet.gr

Dr. Deema Kaneff, is a Senior Research Fellow at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology in Halle, Germany. After receiving her PhD in Social Anthropology (University of Adelaide, Australia), she was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Cambridge, UK. Her research interests include: states in transformation, transnational property relations and emerging inequalities. Email: kaneff@eth.mpg.de



# **1. Anthropological Theory and the Understanding of the Balkans**

## **COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Dr. Georgios Agelopoulos, University of  
Macedonia, Thessaloniki**

**Dr. Deema Kaneff, Max Planck Institute for  
Social Anthropology**

### **Description**

During the last decade the Balkans has attracted the interest of an increasing number of social anthropologists. Recently published papers and monographs have influenced both our understanding of the region as well as anthropological theory. The course looks at the origins of ethnographic accounts of the Balkans, the interwar fieldwork projects in the region, the relationship between Mediterranean Anthropology and Balkan ethnographies, the postmodern perspectives of the Balkans and the post-socialist anthropological analysis of the region. We do not intend to cover all the anthropological literature on SE Europe. In addition, we are not encouraging the development of a "Balkan Anthropology". Our priority is to highlight the relationship between historical developments, epistemological paradigms and ethnographic research conducted in this region.



τισμών". Θα εξετάσουμε επίσης τη σχέση ανάμεσα στις αναπαραστάσεις των Βαλκανίων και τις πολιτικές συνέπειες τους στο παρόν.

## References

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- Burke P., 2005, *History and Social Theory*, Polity Press, Oxford.
- Hall S. - Gieben B., 1992, *Formations of Modernity*, Polity Press, Oxford.
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- Smith P., 2001, *Cultural Theory. An Introduction*, Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Oxford.
- Todorova, M., 1997, *Imaging the Balkans*, O.U.P., Oxford.

## 2 . Ethnography in the Interwar Balkans

Structure - Functionalism and rural community studies. The case of J. Obrebski, K. Karavidas and I. Sanders. Ethnography, rural development and social scientists in the interwar Balkans.



## Course Outline

### 1. The Balkans as a focus of anthropological analysis

The starting point of our discussion is the relationship between modernity, social theory and area representations. We will outline the main arguments of E. Said, M. Todorova, V. Goldworthy, Bjeliβc and Saviβc. The key concepts examined are those of Orientalism, Balkanism and Occidentalism. Special attention is given in the work of 19th century traveler writers and historians who construct an image of the "Balkan people and cultures". The lecture will also consider the relationship between representations of the Balkans and political implications in the present.

#### 1. Τα Βαλκάνια ως αντικείμενο ανθρωπολογικής ανάλυσης

Βασικό σημείο εκκίνησης της συζήτησης μας αποτελεί η ανάλυση της σχέσης της νεωτερικότητας με την κοινωνική θεωρία και τις αναπαραστάσεις διάφορων γεωγραφικών ενοτήτων. Θα εξετάσουμε τις απόψεις των E. Said, M. Todorova, V. Goldworthy, Bjeliβc και Saviβc για το ζήτημα. Ο Οριενταλισμός, ο Βαλκανισμός και ο Οξιντεταλισμός αποτελούν τις έννοιες κλειδιά αυτής της διάλεξης. Ιδιαίτερη μνεία θα γίνει στο έργο των ταξιδιωτών συγγραφέων και των ιστορικών του 19ου αιώνα που συγκροτούν τις εικόνες των "Βαλκάνιων" και των "Βαλκανικών πολι-



and 1980s considered the Balkans as a part of the region. The key issues of this "Mediterranean" ethnography were: kinship and the family, the village and the community, gender identities, political structures and patronage, the modern state and the incorporation of rural communities into the nation - state, honor and shame, religious practices. This research agenda coexisted with different epistemological paradigms such as folklore studies and socialist "ethnology".

### **3. Η Ανθρωπολογία της Μεσογείου και η Εθνογραφία των Βαλκανίων (1950 - 1980)**

Διαχρονικές κοινωνικές δομές στο Μεσογειακό χώρο. Η ενότητα των κοινωνιών της Μεσογείου σύμφωνα με τους ιστορικούς των *Annales*: μονοθεϊσμός, πολιτική συγκρότηση, μετανάστευση, μεσογειακό οικοσύστημα. Το ανθρωπολογικό ενδιαφέρον για τη Μεσόγειο και η απαρχή της μελέτης των κοινωνιών της νοτίου Ευρώπης και της Βόρειας Αφρικής. Τα Βαλκάνια ως μέρος του Μεσογειακού κόσμου. Η ανάπτυξη της "Μεσογειακής Ανθρωπολογίας" στις δεκαετίες του '70 και του '80. Η οικογένεια, η συγγένεια, το νοικοκυριό, το "χωριό", η κοινότητα, οι ταυτότητες φύλου, το αξιακό σύστημα ("τιμή και ντροπή"), θρησκευτικές τελετουργίες, μορφές πολιτικής εκπροσώπησης και οργάνωσης, πελατειακές σχέσεις και κρατικοί θεσμοί, εκσυγχρονισμός και ενσωμάτωση των αγροτικών κοινωνιών στο εθνικό



## 2. Εθνογραφικές Έρευνες στα Βαλκάνια του Μεσοπολέμου

Εθνογραφικές έρευνες στα Βαλκάνια του Μεσοπολέμου. Δομολειτουργισμός και μελέτες αγροτικών κοινοτήτων. Οι περιπτώσεις των J. Obrebski, K. Karavidas και I. Sanders. Εθνογραφία, αγροτική ανάπτυξη και ο ρόλος των κοινωνικών επιστημών στα Βαλκάνια του Μεσοπολέμου.

### References

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- Obrebski, J., 2001, "Ritual and social structure in a Macedonian village" (edit. by Kerewsky B. and Halpern J.M.), *EthnoAnthropoZoom* 2: 1-18.
- Sanders, I., 1949, *Balkan Village*, The University of Kentucky Press, Lexington.

## 3. The Anthropology of the Mediterranean and Balkan ethnographies (1950s-1980s)

The Mediterranean unity according to the *Annales* historians was based on: political structures, migration, monotheism, the sea and the land. Ethnographic research that was carried in the Mediterranean in the 1960s, 1970s



The lecture's starting point was a description of the nature of state socialism: how it operated and how it differed from a capitalist state. We looked at a number of features of the centrally planned socialist economy: the importance of the specialisation of production and labour; the redistributive role of the state which was a main source of power in state socialism (elites were those who had the ability to distribute and control the flow of goods and services); the economy of shortage; and strategies employed to deal with shortages, including engagement in the 2nd economy. The lecture ended by focussing on the tensions between different groups within the socialist economy which played a role in the downfall of state socialism. Some of the major features of neoliberal reforms initiated in 1989 were also introduced (a topic developed more fully in the following lecture). Some of the consequences of the reforms were emphasised through a case study on Romanian miners - using a film made by American anthropologist D. Kideckel. Once a privileged sector of the socialist economy, the mining community is now experiencing the negative effects of reforms (rising inequalities, poverty and unemployment).

#### **4. Η εμπειρία του υπαρκτού σοσιαλισμού**

Η διάλεξη αυτή εξετάζει κριτικά τα ζητήματα της μετάβασης από τα λεγόμενα "σοσιαλιστικά" στα "μετασοσιαλιστικά" κράτη. Ειδικότερα, εστιάζει στη συνεισφορά της μελέτης αυτών των κρατών στην αν-



κράτος. Ανθρωπολογία, Λαογραφία και "Εθνολογία" στον Βαλκανικό χώρο.

## References

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- Valtchinova, G., 1998, "Anthropology of the Mediterranean and the Perspectives of National Ethnography", in A. Krasteva (ed.), *Communities and Identities*, Sofia.

### 4. The nature of state socialism

In this lecture we looked at why it was important to study states that were socialist and are now under reform. What was "actual existing socialism", how have the reforms taken place and what are the consequences?



## 5. Is "postsocialism" still a valid concept?

(Offered exclusively in English)

This lecture took up from where the previous one ended, by firstly looking more closely at the features of neoliberal reforms: the withdrawal of the state from the control and ownership of production which included privatisation, decentralisation and deregulation. In order to display more concretely how these processes are being played out locally in southeast Europe, the lecture presented the case of Bulgaria where a booming property market is being driven by British citizens buying into the newly established market. This case study underlines a few central developments in post 1989 Bulgaria: the central importance of private property in the establishment of a neoliberal state, the emphasis on private ownership as a form of security in a situation where the state is reducing/eliminating the provision of welfare services, the transnational effects of neoliberalism as British excluded from their own local property market seek to find security through cheap foreign investment, and the emergence of new inequalities in Europe, both nationally and transnationally. Finally, the case study leads us to question how relevant is the category "postsocialism" or even the political-geographic based term "south east Europe" as the region or event becomes increasingly incorporated into global economic and political relations (e.g. EU membership).



θρωπολογία, στο ζήτημα του τι ήταν ο "σοσιαλισμός", ποιες είναι οι κοινωνικο-πολιτικές μεταβολές στη μετά το 1989 περίοδο και ποιες οι συνέπειες αυτών των μεταβολών. Τα ερωτήματα αυτά τοποθετούνται στα πλαίσια συγκεκριμένου εθνογραφικού υλικού από έρευνες της διδάσκουσας που εστιάζουν στις ξένες επενδύσεις στην Βουλγαρική αγορά. Τα εθνογραφικά αυτά παραδείγματα αναδεικνύουν τους τρόπους με τους οποίους διεθνείς μεταβολές βιώνονται στο τοπικό επίπεδο. Η διάλεξη τονίζει τα προβλήματα πρόσληψης της ΝΑ Ευρώπης ως τμήματος της "Ανατολικής Ευρώπης" ή/και των "σοσιαλιστικών" και "μετασοσιαλιστικών" κοινωνιών.

Στα πλαίσια της ίδιας θεματικής, θα υπάρχει παρουσίαση της εθνογραφικής έρευνας της Αλίκης Αγγελίδου αναφορικά με τους κοινωνικούς μετασχηματισμούς και τις ταυτότητες σε ένα μετασοσιαλιστικό Βουλγάρικο χωριό.

### References

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- Verdery, K., 1991, "Theorizing socialism: a prologue to the 'transition'", *American Ethnologist* 18(3): 419-439.



## 2 . Yugoslavia's dissolution and new postsocialistic concepts of new Balkan States

### COURSE SYLLABUS

**Dr. Ljupco S. Risteski, University St. Cyril and Methodius - Skopje**

#### Goals

The intention is students to get more and more different approaching to the question of Yugoslavia and on that way to increase their skills in the researched and lectured topics. Also, the main goal of the course has been just to give directions to the students interested for the topics how to continue in further searching on the topics.

#### Teaching methods

Lectures; Power Point Presentations; Presentation of Video Materials

#### Topics of the lectures

1. The Three Yugoslavias - State Building and Legitimation (1918-2005). Brief history of main social and historical points in the history of the three Yugoslavias. Brief preview on social, economic and ethnic characteristic of Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (1918-1929) and Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1941)
2. Socialistic Yugoslavia (Communist Takeover and Consolidation, Socialistic Society, Introducing of



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- Harvey, D., 2005, *A brief history of neoliberalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Kaneff, D., 2006, "Holiday location or agricultural village? British property owners in rural Bulgaria", *Eastern European Countryside* 12: 79-92.
- Turner, T., 2004, "Shifting the frame from nation-state to global market", in *Globalization. Critical Issues*, Berghahn Books, Oxford.

### **Ethnographic films on SE Europe**

Film screening and critical discussion.

### **Εθνογραφικά φιλμ για την ΝΑ Ευρώπη**

Προβολή, κριτικός σχολιασμός και συζήτηση.

### **Feedback, further reading**



- Colovic I., 2002, *The Politics of Symbols in Serbia: Essays in Political Anthropology*, C. Hurst, London, transl. from Serbian by C. Hawkesworth..
- Halpern, J. M. and. Kiideckel, D. A. (eds.), 2000, *Neighbors at War. Anthropological Perspectives on Yugoslav Ethnicity, Culture and History*, The Pennsylvania State University Press .
- Glenny M., 1999, 2000, *The Balkans: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers, 1804-1999*, Viking Press, New York.
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- Ramet S., 2002, *Balkan babel: The Disintegration of Yugoslavia from the Death of Tito to the Fall of Milosheovich*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colo.
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- Socialistic Self Management, Nonalignment and Yugoslav-Soviet Rapprochement)
3. Socialistic Yugoslavia (Social Groups, Religion, Education, Economy, Economic Management Mechanism, Government and Politics)
  4. Socialistic Yugoslavia (Regional Political Issues: Slovenia, Serbia, Kosovo, Vojvodina, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia)
  5. The Road to War. (The War of Yugoslav Succession, Phase 1 - 1991; The War of Yugoslav Succession, Phase 2, 1992-1995)
  6. Reasons for Breaking-Up Yugoslavia (Different opinions)
  7. Separate Paths. New States on the Balkans and Europe. (Slovenia, Croatia, FYugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Bosnia and Hercegovina, Macedonia)
  8. Separate Paths. New States on the Balkans and Europe. (FYugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Bosnia and Hercegovina, Macedonia)

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- Anderson K., 1990, *Yugoslavia: Crisis in Kosovo*, Helsinki Watch, march, New York.
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- Cohen Lenard J., 1995<sup>2</sup>, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colo.



literatures, the media, and popular culture which provide a set of images, national symbols, and rituals which *represent* the shared experiences, sorrows, triumphs and disasters which give meaning to the nation. In the contemporary world most people are members of such an "imagined community," and consequently they have their own national narrative.

Much emphasis is placed upon *origins, continuity, tradition, and timelessness* in the process of building up of a national identity. Despite the fact that nation - states are seen by historians and social scientists as very modern phenomena, the discourse of nationalism represents "the essentials" of the national character as been unchanged through all the discontinuities and the vicissitudes of history. This strategy is what Hobsbawm and Ranger call *the invention of tradition*. In their perspective, national cultures are traditions which while appear or claim their existence from time immemorial are often quite recent in origin and sometimes invented.

Implicit part of the national narrative is quite often a *foundational myth* locating the origin of the nation, its people, and the national character in mythic, rather than in real time. These myths of origin, reinterpret and resignify historical events, establishing homogeneity and an unbroken, linear continuity from immemorial times to the present. In this section, drawing on the work of theorists such as Stuart Hall, Homi Bhabha, Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson, Ernest Renan, Ernest Gellner, David Held, and Kenneth Thompson our aim is to deconstruct the modern nation and to provide the rational of its "physical" posture in the era of



**3. Nations, migrations and the construction of ethnic groups: rituals, narratives, discourses and material culture**

**COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Dr. Giorgos Tsimouris, Panteion University, Athens**

**Dr. Vasiliki Kravva, Technological Educational Institute of Thessaloniki**

**First Part**

Dr. Giorgos Tsimouris, Panteion University, Athens

The first part of this course is divided into six sections each one scheduled for one and a half (1.30) teaching hour. We address the following subjects in each one of these sections.

**Course Outline**

**1. First section**

In the first section we trace the genealogy of the nation, attempting to make explicit the construction of national cultures. Following Anderson, nations are seen as modern phenomena and imagined communities composed not only of cultural institutions, but of symbols and representations. A national culture is predominantly a narrative told and fixed in national histories,



therefore all forms of identity including ethnic and national ones. Some theorists argue that the general effect of these globalizing processes has been the displacement of national identities. They also argue that the trend towards greater global interdependence is leading to the breakdown of all strong cultural identities and is producing that fragmentation of cultural codes, that multiplicity of styles, places emphasis upon the ephemeral, the fleeting, the impermanent, what we might call the *global post-modern*. However, other theorists suggest that because of the new media there has been a great surge of interest recently in the local as well as in origins, in "roots" and therefore in ethnic and national identities and ties.

### 3. Third section

In the third section we explore the fascination with *difference*, ethnicity and "otherness" simultaneously with the tendency towards global homogenization. We also deal with what Doreen Massey calls globalization's "power geometry". In her words "Different social groups have distinct relationships to this differentiated mobility; some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don't; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it." Forced migrants, for example, may be seen as groups "imprisoned" by mobility flows. Other theorists deal with globalization, as an encounter of colonial centre and colonized periphery in more immediate and intense ways. In this respect



globalization, imperialism and print /electronic capitalism.

## 2 . Second section

In the second section we explore the global aspect of modernity and the limits of national sovereignty in the context of world economy. Our point is that the desire for national autonomy and the global dominance of capitalism, both products of modernity, operated in contradictory directions. While globalization is not a recent phenomenon, since the 1970s, the pace of global integration has greatly increased, accelerating the flows and linkages between nations. Exploring the interconnection between nation and globalization we can trace *three* possible consequences:

- A. National identities are being eroded as a result of the growth of cultural homogenization and "the global post-modern."
- B. National and other "local" or particularistic identities are being *strengthened* by the resistance to globalization.
- C. National identities are declining but new identities of hybridity are taking their place.

In the latest phase the impact of globalization on national identities was the "time-space compression" - the speeding up of global processes, so that the world feels smaller and distances shorter. Economic, media and ecological inter-dependencies are among our daily images of "time-space compression" which drive to transformation all systems of representation and



ethnographic example in our attempt to discuss some of the previous theoretical issues. This ethnography concerns Aghios Dimitrios, a rural community established by refugees from Asia Minor after the Catastrophe of 1922 in Lemnos, a North Aegean Greek island. It is concerned with the sense of belonging and how this is experienced by members of this group after long term settlement. The inhabitants of Aghios Dimitrios express a distinctive sense of identity in the terminology that they use to identify themselves, in their narratives and in a wide range of embodied practices associated with laboring, singing, dancing and food making. My main aim is to show how the inhabitants of this community represent themselves in relation to their Ottoman and refugee past in contrast to indigenous Lemnians and other Greeks, on the one hand; however, I am also fundamentally concerned with the profound tension between the terms and the practices that they activate to represent themselves in relation to national, ethnocentric images of Mikrassiates. I argue that the belated national incorporation of a huge number of Mikrassiates, usually relocated at the geographical margins of the nation, has enabled the stubborn persistence of multiple pre-national, non 'pure' embodiments and recollections associated with their recent past in the context of the Ottoman Empire. My investigations focus on the tension between the Ottoman past and the national present explored in narratives, songs, labor and the social life of objects of material culture.



globalization is an uneven process and having its own power geometry. While retains some aspects of western global domination, at the same time relativizes cultural identities as a consequence of time-space compression.

#### 4. Fourth section

In the forth section we discuss the dilemma of returning to "roots" or disappearing through assimilation and homogenization regarding national or ethnic identities. We support the idea that there is another possibility which is "translation", describing those identity formations which cut across and intersect natural frontiers, and which are composed of people who have been *dispersed* forever from their homelands. Such people retain strong links with their places of origin and their traditions, but they are without the illusion of a return to the past. These groups of people belong to *cultures of hybridity* (migrants, transnational and/or diasporas) and most of them know that there is no way back to a fixed home. Cultures of hybridity are one of the distinctly new types of identity produced in the era of late-modernity. Some theorists argue that "hybridity" and syncretism is an extremely powerful creative source producing new identities while others, attached to an essentialist understanding of identity, announce the clash of cultures and the resurgence of religious or other fundamentalisms.

#### 5. Fifth and sixth sections

In the fifth and sixth sections we present an



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- Barnett, A., 1982, *Iron Britannia*, Allison and Busby, London.
- Bauman, Z., 1990, "Modernity and ambivalence", in M. Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture*, Sage, London.
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subjects. By the same token such strategies inspire nationalist feelings and sharpen the distinction between "our nation" and "other". It is important that the above strategies are set in motion by the elite either the political leaders or those responsible for planning and implementing educational programmes. Yet the people do manipulate such symbols and attach upon them strong emotions thus perpetuating the myth of the nation.

On the other, the bottom-up approaches are going to be examined. Such approaches focus on the politics of everyday life and the centrality of seemingly unimportant activities. As will become clear people are not passive victims of national categorisations but through everyday means challenge and negotiate their national belonging and formulate their own flexible identifications and fluid boundaries. Ethnic and religious boundaries are always shaped and re-shaped in relation to personal, local needs and external responses. Ethnic groups are not empty categories but a dynamic matrix of internalised personal and communal histories, emotions and resisting strategies. Aspects of commensality including cooking and eating practices can be examined as strategies of ethnic survival able to narrate local, multicoloured stories and challenge national discourses of homogeneity. Of course it is obvious that in this case the people themselves become actors and creators of ethnic discourses that interact with nation-state building processes.

The first lecture is going to cover the two different approaches in relation to nations and ethnic groups both



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## **Second Part**

Dr. Vasiliki Kravva, Technological Educational  
Institute of Thessaloniki

### **1. Aims and objectives**

The second part of the course shall focus on the two different perspectives that have sought to explain the formation of nations and the construction of ethnic communities: the top-down and the bottom-up perspectives. Thus on the one hand the course aims at understanding the macro-politics meaning rituals, narratives and discourses that have shaped modern nations during the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. Parades, national commemorations, educational politics, museums are only some strategies through which the nation and the myths of national continuity and national unity are instilled on the



As far as the top-down perspective is concerned:

The work of Anderson about the origin and the spread of nationalism. The nation as an imagined, limited and sovereign community. The nation building processes in Europe during the end of the 18th century: the standardisation and nationalisation of language, history books, maps, the museum and censuses as means to consolidate national consciousness. Adamandios Koraes and the Greek ancestral glory. The national boost by print capitalism. Memory and forgetting as syndromes of all nations.

The work of Kitromilides about the national question in the Balkans. Balkan nationalisms as competing national programmes and competing imagined communities. The cultivation of Greek national identity through: the educational system, the regular army and judiciary. The gradual nationalisation of the Orthodox Church.

Hobsbawm's work on "invented traditions": symbols, nation, repetition, continuity with a suitable historical past.

Karakadidou's work about the celebration of the nation in northern Greece. She discusses many examples of commemorative celebrations from 1945 until very recently. The Greek blue-white flag, the Greek anthem. The examples of the celebration of Salonica from the Ottomans and from the Italian invasion. The recent demonstration in Thessaloniki against FUROM and its intention to be called "Macedonia".

As far as the bottom-up perspective:



theoretically and ethnographically. The ethnographic example of the Jewish population in the Greek city of Thessaloniki will be examined in detail in the remaining lectures. The research, for my doctorate thesis, conducted among Thessalonikian Jews -from October 1998 till January 2000- will be used as a vehicle to examine closely the two approaches that have been briefly analysed above. Thus the gradual formation of the Greek nation state effected the Jewish community in the city and the present Jewish minority has been shaped and continuous to re-shape its boundaries always in response to the Greek nation building processes. My ethnographic research and my doctoral thesis are also examples of the bottom-up approach since the main argument is that cooking and eating are used as external devices, as survival strategies, as a language of communality and commonality. And as such they are seen as the basic ingredients in the everyday formation of ethnic boundaries in this case of the Jewish identities in the Greek city of Thessaloniki.

### **Course Outline**

#### **1. Lecture One: The construction of nations and ethnic identifications: The implementation of politics or politicising everyday life?**

The first lecture is going to cover briefly some representative texts of the top-down and the bottom up perspective.



- Food is good to talk about and remember with: narrativising the present and the past

### **3. Lecture Three: Deepening the understanding of cultural distinctiveness and belonging through life-story telling**

This lecture is going to be a discussion of the life-stories as helpful and illuminating ethno-methodological tools. A specific life history is going to be used as an example of the fluidity, localness and constant shifting of personal and communal identifications. It is the life-story of a 95 year old woman who was an Orthodox Christian until the age of 18, "became" a Jew after that age and lived as "a Jew" ever after. The interview was taken at the Jewish old people's home in Thessaloniki a few months ago and is part of a European research programme called CENTROPA which researches pre-War and post-War lives of European Jews, in this case of Salonican Jews. Several issues emerge from this particular life history such as:

- the diasporic conditions of the birth of the Greek nation -state
- issues of belonging and membership
- the creation of a work community
- the experiences related to the second world war
- leisure time and leisure pursuits
- the constant interaction between personal and communal, private and public
- the construction of various subjectivities and



Discussion of some important works representative of this approach. The area of Macedonia as a liminal space of contested rhetorics. Local peculiarities and contingencies, "numerous and often idiosyncratic collective and individual accommodations to the national standard" (Cowan 2000: 12-13)

Discussion of Vereni's article: the construction of Macedonia through the memory-diary of Leonidas -a Macedonia Farmer- National history Vs unofficial narratives. The interaction of personal and national. The centrality of everyday activities and decisions.

## **2 . Lecture Two: Discourses of food and identity among the Jews of Thessaloniki**

The second lecture is going to be a discussion of the main issues found in my PhD thesis which is concerned with cooking, eating and Jewish identities in Thessaloniki, the biggest city in Northern Greece. Thus, after a presentation of the history of the Community, the important historical periods that marked its presence and the historical dialogue between the Community and the Greek nation (later nation- state) the main topics to be discussed are:

- Why food matters? Food as an indicator of social relationships, eating food constructing boundaries and making communities
- Eating and constructing the Family. Men's world and women's empowerment. Food and embodiment
- Eating and constructing the Community



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Karakasidou A., 2000, "Protocol and Pageantry: celebrating the Nation in Northern Greece", in M. Mazower (ed.) *After the War was Over: Reconstructing the Family, Nation and the State in Greece, 1943-1960*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Kitromilides P., 1989, "Imagined communities and the Origins of the National Question in the Balkans", *European History Quarterly* 19: 149-194.

Kravva V., 2003, "The construction of otherness in modern Greece: the state, the church and the study of a religious minority", in P. Caplan (ed.), *The Ethics of anthropology: debates and dilemmas*, Routledge, London.

Vereni P., 2000, "Os Ellin Makedonas: Autobiography, Memory and National Identity in Western Greek Macedonia", in J. Cowan (ed.), *Macedonia: The Politics of Identity and Difference (introduction)*, Pluto Press, London.

(food)

Appadurai A., 1988, "How to make a national cuisine: cookbooks in contemporary India", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *Man* 30(1): 3-24.

Barthes R., 2000 [first published in another book in 1975], "Toward a Psychosociology of Contemporary Food Consumption" in Counihan



collectivities and the constant interaction between those two -seemingly separate- domains.

#### **4. Lecture Four: On the traces of my neighbour**

There is going to be a video- screening of a recent documentary shown on a public Greek TV Channel. The documentary focuses on the present situation of the Jewish community in Thessaloniki with reference to school life, the Community centre, the synagogues and the cemetery. Men and women of all ages talk about their identities, their fears, their knowledge of Ladino and Hebrew, prejudice in modern Greece and "different treatment".

An English translation of the documentary is going to be distributed.

Discussion of the last chapter of my PhD thesis regarding contested belonging, issues of anti-semitism, religious identity and the Church, language and mixed marriages.

#### **References**

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S. Zubaida and R. Tapper (eds.), *Culinary Cultures of the Middle East*, Tauris, London.

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- Dubisch J., 1986, "Culture enters through the kitchen: Women, Food and social boundaries in Rural Greece", in J. Dubisch (ed.), *Gender and Power in Rural Greece*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
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- Harbottle L., 1997, "Fast food/ spoiled identity: Iranian migrants in the British catering trade", in P. Caplan (ed.), *Food, Health and Identity*, Routledge, London.
- James A., 1997, "How British is British Food?", in P. Caplan (ed.), *Food, Health and Identity*, Routledge, London.
- Kravva V, 2001, "Food and Remembering: the case of Thessalonikan Jews", *Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery 2000*, Prospect Books, Devon, England.
- Zubaida S., 1994, "National, Communal and Global Dimensions in Middle Eastern Food Cultures", in



- First we introduce the topic through some classical theoretical works and major case studies;
- Then we discuss, if necessary in two smaller groups, texts distributed previously that students have to read beforehand.

The bibliographical references are to texts that should be easy to find! More readings will be given during the seminar.

## Course Outline

### 1. Monday 7th August

#### **1st session: Introduction to the history of economic anthropology**

We will present specially the three main "schools": the formalists, the substantivists (focusing on Polanyi) and the marxists (the French school). And what's on today in economic anthropology.

#### **2nd session: Transformation of the organisation of production**

We will present a case study of the organization of production in Bulgaria during the planned economy and its transformation after 1989, specially what happens with cooperatives.

#### **References**

Creed, G., 1998, *Domesticating Revolution. From Socialist Reform to Ambivalent Transition in a Bulgarian Village*, The Pennsylvania State



## **4. Economic Anthropology and Social Transformation in SE Europe**

### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Dr. Alik Angelidou, Panteion University, Athens**

**Dr. Sophie Chevalier, University of Franche Comte, Besancon**

#### **Description**

We propose an anthropological reading of the socio-economic transformation of post-socialist Balkan societies. We will first focus on theory, and more specifically on some anthropological texts which seem particularly useful for the analysis of ongoing social and economic processes in this area. We will examine also how, and to what extent, the study of these societies has had an impact on the renewal of anthropological thought itself. The fall of the Berlin wall may be said to have brought "the market economy" back to the front stage. Our aim is to show how anthropology allows a shift from ideological and abstract debate to the study of concrete economic practices, considered more as "cultural" rather than as "natural" events. We will supplement theoretical approaches with ethnographic material from our own researches in Bulgaria as well as from other ethnographies published in the last few years.

Sessions will be topical and organized in two parts:



### 3. Wednesday 9th August

#### 1st session: Material Culture and Consumption

Consumption is the third dimension of the conventional trilogy -production, exchange and consumption- which for a long time was neglected by anthropologists, except for the study of material culture in traditional societies. It is no longer so.

#### 2nd session: Are things organizing our world?

We will discuss with examples how we use things to organize, classify and build up our world and how things are classifying us. We also will discuss the political dimension of consumption practices.

#### References

- Appadurai, A., (ed.), 1986, *The Social Life of Things*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Bourdieu, P., 1984. *Distinction: A social critique of the judgement of taste*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Douglas M. and Isherwood B., 1981, *The World of Goods*, Basic Books, New-York.
- Miller, D., 1987, *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Blackwell, London.
- Veblen, T., 1992 [1899], *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Transaction Publishers, New Brunswick.



- University Press.
- Hann C. and Hart K., 2006, *A short history of economic anthropology*, [www.thememorybank.co.uk/papers/SHEA](http://www.thememorybank.co.uk/papers/SHEA)
- Polanyi, K., 1944, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origin of Our Times*, Beacon Press, Boston.
- Sahlins, M., 1972, *Stone Age Economics*, Routledge, London.

## 2 . Tuesday 8th August

### **1st session: On exchange**

Based on Mauss's most famous work, we will discuss the three main forms of exchange: gift, barter and market.

### **2nd session: Articulation of different forms and spheres of exchange**

We will discuss how different forms of exchange are articulated and how they are integrated as different spheres of exchange.

### **References**

- Mauss, M., 1976, *The Gift*, Norton, New York.
- Parry J. and Bloch M. (eds.), 1989, *Money and the Morality of Exchange*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Simmel, G., 1978, *The Philosophy of Money*, Routledge, London.



human body. Human life is never fully a commodity, yet it has a price. We will watch a movie on land becoming a commodity in Bulgaria.

## References

- Hart, K., 1982, "On Commoditization", in E. Goody (ed.), *From craft to industry: The ethnography of proto-industrial cloth production*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Kopytoff, I., 1986, "The cultural biography of things: commoditization as process", in A. Appadurai (ed.), *The Social Life of Things*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 64-91.
- Zelizer, V.A., 1985, *Pricing the Priceless Child*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

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#### 4. Thursday 10th August

##### **Session: The market**

"Market" refers not only to a place, but also to a way of organizing relationships of exchange between actors. This session will present different case studies of the market, based on a text of Geertz.

##### **References**

- Alexander, J. and P., 1991, "What's a fair price? Price-setting and trading partnerships in Javanese markets", *Man* 26: 493-512.
- Carrier, J. (ed.), 1997, *Meanings of the Market*, Berg, London.
- De la Pradelle, M., 2006, *Market Day in Provence*, Chicago University Press, Chicago.
- Dilley, R. (ed.), 1992, *Contesting Markets: An Analysis of Ideology, Discourse and Practice*, Edinburgh UP, Edinburgh.
- Geertz, C., 1979, "The bazaar economy in Sefrou", in C. Geertz, H. Geertz and L. Rosen, *Meaning and Order in Moroccan Society*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

#### 5. Friday 11th August

##### **Session: Commoditization**

In the course of their social life, things may become commodities or be taken out of the market as patrimonial property. Various "things" can be transformed into commodities, including human beings or parts of the



2. Hidden Frontiers
3. Crossing Borders
4. Borders and the Transnational Turn
5. Personal and collective identities and symbolic borders
6. Ethnic, religious and national identities on the Balkans
7. Reshaping symbolic borders: ambivalent, multiple, unstable identities
8. Borderlands and identity shift.

### Other teaching material

Several Bulgarian ethnographic films illustrating the problem of identity shift will possibly be screened.

### References

- Barth, Fr., 1994, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries - Ethno-nationalism: The Quest for Understanding*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Barth, Fr. (ed.), 1998, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, Waveland Press, Long Grove, Illinois.
- Grazer, N. and Moynihan D.P. (eds.), 1975, *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass.
- Karagiannis, E., 1997, *Zur Ethnizitat der Pomaken Bulgariens*, (translation, manuscript).
- Konstantinov, Y. and Alhaug, G., 1995, *Names*,



## **5. Borders and Identities**

### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Dr. Evgenia Krasteva-Blagoeva, New Bulgarian University**

#### **Description**

The course aims to discuss the basic problems of borders and identities in Balkan context, especially ethnic and national identities on the Balkans. The main elements of the construction of collective identities, such as common origin, language, religion, history and memory etc. are presented in the context of majority-minority relations on the Balkans. Several cases of obvious discrepancy among these elements and the resulting ambivalent, multiple or unstable identity (Pomaks, Bosnians, Gagauzes, Wallachians, Macedonians) are analyzed. The main motivations of identity shift are outlined. Special attention is paid on data of borderlands and regions with mixed population. Theoretical achievements are combined with empirical data to broaden the students' knowledge on the problem in particular and to expand their capacities in the field of anthropology of the Balkans as a whole.

#### **Thematic Units**

1. Borders, Places, Spaces - theoretical approaches.



## **6. Ethnographic Research in Border Areas: Field Practice in both Sides of the Greek- Albanian Border**

### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Pr. Dr. Vassilis Nitsiakos, University of  
Ioannina**

**Dr. Vassilis Dalkavoukis, Democritus  
University of Thrace**

**Mr. Kostas Mantzos, University of Ioannina**

#### **Description**

The aim of this course is to offer, both a theoretical knowledge and a practical, hands-on, experience of what it means to practice ethnographic research on a border area. In addition, through the short ethnographic trips planned, the participants will have the opportunity to contextualize their presence in the Summer School in Konitsa, by understanding and experiencing the area that host us, specially that part defined by the Greek-Albanian border, as an ethnographic milieu.

#### **Teaching methods**

Lectures, film screening, workshops and fieldtrips. Lectures are given in Greek and English.

#### **Coordinators**

Pr. Dr. Vasilis Nitsiakos is Professor of Social Folklore at the Department of History and Archaeology, University



*Ethnicity and Politics. Islamic Names in Bulgaria 1912-1992*, Novus Press, Oslo.

Kiossev, A., 2002, "The Dark Intimacy: Maps, Identities, Acts of Identification", in Bjelic, D. and Savic, O. (eds.), *Balkan as Metaphor. Between Globalization and Fragmentation*, The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England, pp. 166-190.

Kolev, A., 2001, *Why Bulgaria Remained Peaceful and How This Helps Us Understand Nationalist Conflict in Post-Communist Eastern Europe*, Unpublished MS.

Mucchielli, A., 1986, *L'Identite*, Paris

Konstantinov, Y., 1993, "Minority Problems of Self-Definition: Conventional and Minority Representations", in Anson, Jon (ed.), *Ethnicity and Politics in Bulgaria and Israel*, Aldershot - Bookfield, USA-Hong Kong-Singapore-Sydney, pp. 66-80.

Smith, A., 1991, *National Identity*, Penguin Group,

Todorova, M. (ed.), 2004, *Balkan Identities. Nation and Memory*, Hurst & Company, London.

Vilag, K., 2002, "Of Boundaries and Revolving Doors: Some Thoughts of Europe, Balkan cinema and Identity", *Space of identity* 2(1): 58- 70.



straightforward with state borders, he brought forward the value of localized studies for understanding how cultural landscapes are superimposed across social and political divides. There, also were posed the two leit-motifs of ethnographic research agenda of border areas. The first point was the socially constructed nature of (ethnic) boundaries and the second, related to the first was their porosity, meaning that no matter how well guarded borders are, they always are points of interaction and exchange.

As anthropologists started to address issues of nationalism, political economy, class, migration and the integration and disintegration of nation-states, a distinctive body of anthropological work on international borders emerged. We can not avoid mentioning here the ground-braking work of Cole and Wolf (1974) in the Italian Tyrol, where they focused on the persistence of cultural frontier long after the political borders of state and empire have moved away. International borders started to look promising for researchers with an interest on the relation between local communities and the state. This was done either by focusing on how borders have influenced local culture (Kavanagh 1994), or on nation and state-building (Kopytoff 1987), or on people that choose or are forced to move across borders (Alvarez 1995, Hann and Hann 1992, Malkki 1992).

In the last decade of the twentieth century the study of the borders gained momentum following the political turmoil in the beginning of the nineties and the waves of



of Ioannina. He holds an M.A. in Folklore Studies (University of Leeds, UK) and a Ph.D. in Social Anthropology (University of Cambridge). His research interests include the study of Cultural Ecology, Nationalism and Ethnicity, Balkan Anthropology, Minorities, Migration, borders and identities. E-mail: b.nitsiak@cc.uoi.

Dr. Vasilis Dalkavoukis is a Lecturer in Ethnography of Greece at the School of History and Ethnology, in Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini. He holds a Master's degree in Modern History and a PhD from the Faculty of Philosophy in Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. His research interests include: local and ethnic identities in Greece. Email: vdalkavo@he.auth.gr

Mr. Kostas Mantzos is a Researcher and PhD student at the Department of History and Archaeology, University of Ioannina. He holds an M.A. in History and Anthropology (University College London). His research interests include Social Transformation, borders and identity formation.

### **Introducing the object of study**

State borders as sites of ethnographic research have as Wilson and Donnan point out a long, but not very deep history. Looking back to this history one can not avoid to stop at F. Barth's seminal work on ethnic groups and boundaries (Barth 1968). In the introduction of that volume, F. Barth, despite the fact that did not deal



This was the legacy of the multinational or multiethnic Ottoman Empire, where intermediate groups which were combining different "national" characteristics, co-inhabited the same space.

However despite the new political divisions, the border areas on the two sides remained substantially connected during the interwar years. Marital relations, and commercial exchanges did not cease to exist overnight, and supra-local routes that were cutting through the newly founded border retained their importance. It was only after the end of the Second World War and the Greek Civil War that followed, when the border area became once again a fighting ground, that the borderline became a line of seclusion. As the two countries fell on different sides of the post-war world the relations between the border areas were violently severed.

This dichotomy of space was felt quite strongly in the area of Konitsa, as in other border areas of Epirus, like Pogoni and Filiates further to the west. Villages and groups that retained close relations until then, like Konitsa with neighbouring Leskovik, were cut off, kinship groups, even families are separated, wider economic exchange networks cease to exist. To give just an example, mobile professional groups such as builders and transhumant shepherds were forced to change their routes, something that had severe consequences to their future.

The collapse of the communist regime in Albania led as well to an opening of the borders from below, an opening that to a certain extent one could support that



mass immigration that followed. In the new world of movement and flux, borders seemed to be a condition of the past. New concepts were devised, such as transnationalism, (N. Glick Shiller et al., 1994) in order to describe migrant communities that defy national borders creating a dual existence at home and abroad. Following this, border or rather the crossing of, took over a strong symbolic meaning for the renegotiation of the relations between place, culture and identity (Clifford 1997). However, our focus during this course will be on the specificities of the Greek-Albanian border attempting to ground our theoretical investigations on the realities of the borderline.

In addition, borders are sites carrying immense historical burden. This being said a short introduction on the interplay of history and geography in the specific area is needed in order to contextualize our ethnographic field. The national borders are rather novel in this area and were drawn with great difficulty due to the ethnologically complex character of the area, which made it impossible to create an absolute correspondence among the specific ethnic groups, and the under construction national dichotomies. The drawing of the border was done, in 1913 initially, at the end of Balkan Wars, and finalized in the Paris Peace conference in 1921. The war years between 1912 and 1921 had forced the border populations in the most dramatic way to take sides. Further on, the arbitrary drawing of the borderline created islands of difference, or rather irregularity in terms of national rhetorics, on both sides of the border.



courses goals. No need to mention here that the use of such storage devices should be done with great cautiousness, and *always* with the consent of our informants, as it is quite easy to alienate the people that offer us their time, knowledge, and we hope confidence. That of course, is the case in any social field chosen for social research, however is doubly so in border areas, where the constant presence of the state in past and present make people even more sensitive to intrusions to their everyday life.

Course Schedule

DATE	Session 9:30 – 11:00	Session 11:30 – 13:00	Session 16:00 – 17:30	Session 18:00 – 19:30
Thu 3/8	Lecture and film Screening		Introducing the area of research	Introducing the area of research
Fri 4/8	Doing Research at the Greek-Albanian border		1st Ethnographic trip - Visiting the Greek side of the border	
Sat 5/8	2nd Ethnographic trip - Albania			
Sun 6/8	3rd Ethnographic trip - Albania			

## References

- Alvarez, R. R., 1995, "The Mexican-US border: the making of an anthropology of borderlands", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24: 447-470
- Barth, F., 1968, "Introduction", in F. Barth, (ed.), 1968, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Cultural Difference*, Little Brown, Boston.
- Borneman, J., 1992, *Belonging in the two Berlins: kin,*



leads gradually to the restoration of the lost historical unity of space. Old roads and footpaths are in use again, old social relations and kinship networks are restored and old and new forms of economic exchange are again taking place over the border. People, animals and commodities move from village to village and from country to country, crossing the border even in the course of the same day, creating a trans-national space where before there was only trans-local.

### **Possible Topics of Interest**

Through this introduction, but mainly through the ethnographic trips we hope that participants will come up with individual topics and ideas on the importance of borders as sites of ethnological research. However we would like to put forward some topics that might be interesting to keep in mind:

- Understanding the border landscape
- Routes and Networks that cut through the border
- Local interpretations of the borders
- The presence/absence of Nation or State
- Sub-local divisions/groups/categories and their relation to the border
- Borders appearing and disappearing

### **Practical Issues**

During the field trips, participants should be equipped with notepads, tape-recorders and cameras in order to store information gathered in the field. Learning how to keep a detailed diary should be considered part of the



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## Course Outline

### First Part

## How to Make a Qualitative Anthropological Study

Dr. Bojan Zikic, University of Belgrade

**Key topics:** What is a qualitative study? (theoretical background, basic research techniques description); aims of qualitative studies (methodological issues: interpretative ability and consistency, applicability: goal orientation - how to designate a "goal"); research methodology (ethical and technical aspects, human resources, conducting the research, data gathering techniques); processing the data (assembling, assessing, coding, interpreting); case studies (Belgrade Intravenous Drug Users research, Belgrade Sex Workers research)

**Brief description:** This part of the course presents an introduction to specific aspects of qualitative research methodologies. During the course students have the opportunity to get acquainted with basic and advanced concepts of this kind of anthropological fieldwork methodology and to participate in focused discussion of their own research projects.

At the end of the course the students are expected to present a detailed description research agenda on a chosen topic. Presentations involve group discussion and tutorial evaluation of suggested projects. After the course, students will have the necessary skills to independently design and conduct qualitative and applied research in the future.



## **7. Fieldwork Methodology: Qualitative and Applied Research**

### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Dr. Bojan Zikic, University of Belgrade**

**Mrs Jana Bacevic, University of Belgrade**

#### **Description**

The course we intend to offer concentrates, respectively, on qualitative and applied aspects of anthropological research. We feel that these aspects have sometimes been neglected in "classical" methodological courses offered to under-, and sometimes even post-graduate students. Therefore, in a week-long series of informal lectures and group discussions, we will attempt to demonstrate certain approaches and methodological strategies in these types of research projects, in order to encourage students to actively consider conducting similar projects in the future. We are certain that this will prove beneficial to students even if they choose to pursue their careers outside the academy, and that by this course we would help to broaden scientific agendas for cooperative and interdisciplinary research in the Balkans.



## References

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- Smaling, A., 2002, "The Argumentative Quality of the Qualitative Research Report", *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 3(4):1-15.
- Zikic, B., 2006a, "Managing HIV/HCV-related Risk at Private Places Among Belgrade Injecting Drug



## Second Part

### Applied Research Projects

Dr. Jana Bacevic, University of Belgrade

**Key topics:** What is applied research? (theoretical background, applied research in relation to research techniques); methodological and ethical issues (applicability as methodological goal, applicability in history of science, are there methodological particularities of applied research? Political and cultural contexts and restraints of applied research, interest of informants vs. interest of researcher vs. interest of employer); designing and presenting applied research results (presentation and evaluation of results of applied research, participating in specific projects based on applied research results); case studies (Religious and Civic Education - implications of educational policy analyses on cultural critique, anthropology of tourism and applied cultural tourism projects).

**Brief description:** This part of the course focuses on the applied dimension of fieldwork research. During the course students have the opportunity to get acquainted to and discuss in detail various aspects of applied research methodologies, based on a number of examples including those from their own experiences. We particularly examine the ethical issues concerning applied research, as well as the advantages and disadvantages of applicability as a methodological goal. At the end of the course students present ideas related to future research projects involving the applicability of results.



## **8. Music and Dance in the Balkans. Culture, Identity and Power**

### **COURSE SYLLABUS**

**Dr. Panayotis Panopoulos, University of the Aegean**

**Dr. Ioannis Manos, University of Western Macedonia**

#### **Description**

Music and dance are interrelated social activities and critical cultural domains in which social relations, cultural symbolisms, transformations and conflicts are collectively articulated and expressed. In this course, we approach music and dance as social and cultural practices, as well as symbols, implicated in the construction of collective identities and the formation of local, national and transnational processes of network-building. Based on the instructors' ethnographic fieldwork in the Florina region of northern Greece (Manos) and in the Greek island of Naxos (Panopoulos), as well as on several case-studies from various Balkan countries, we will address the role of music and dance in the construction of gender, national and other individual and collective identities, as well as the politics of culture identity in state border regions. We will also consider some wider theoretical and methodological questions of ethnographic practice: the



Users", *Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnography LIV*, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, pp.189-199.

Zikic, B., 2006b, "Anthropology of AIDS. Risk environment and injecting routine. The case of Belgrade injecting drug users", *Issues in Ethnology and Anthropology* 1(1- n.s.): 35-46.

Εθνολογία Κεντρική Βιβλιοθήκη Κόνιτσα



## Course Outline

### 1. Music, Dance, Society and Culture: Theoretical and Methodological Issues

Dr. Ioannis Manos, University of Western Macedonia

This session will be an introduction to the ways dance and music have been studied as social practices within Anthropology. It takes as its point of departure the perspective which understands dance and music as the means and the context of individual and collective action and expression, negotiation and contestation of multiple ideologies and relations of power. In addition, issues of methodology regarding the study of both phenomena will be addressed.

#### References

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- Stokes, M., 1994, "Introduction: Ethnicity, Identity and Music", in Stokes Martin (ed.), *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*, Berg Publishers, Oxford, pp. 1-27.
- Wulff H., 2001, "Anthropology of Dance", in N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes (eds.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences* 5: 3209-3212, Elsevier, Amsterdam.



interplay of observation and participation in music and dance performances; the position of the ethnographer; issues of "authenticity", revitalizing of "tradition" and the influence of the market in the transformation of music and dance. The course will also include short fieldwork practice in local music and dance events.

### Coordinators

**Dr. Panagiotis Panopoulos** is Assistant Professor of Music and Dance at the Department of Social Anthropology and History, University of the Aegean, Mytilini, Greece. He studied Education at the University of Athens and Social Anthropology at the University of the Aegean. He was awarded a PhD by the University of the Aegean in 1998. His recent ethnographic publications concern the symbolism of sound and hearing in modern Greece, through a case-study of animal bells. Another part of his research interests concerns the study of local associations and the role of musical performances in the construction of identity.

**Dr. Ioannis Manos** is lecturer in Social Anthropology in the Department of Balkan Studies at the University of Western Macedonia, Florina, Greece. He holds an MA (1998) and PhD (2002) in Social/Cultural Anthropology from the University of Hamburg in Germany. He has conducted fieldwork on the politics of culture and identity, the politicization of dance and its role in identity formation processes in Greece and the Balkans.



ideologies are shaped and cultural practices are appropriated, de-contextualized, objectified and re-contextualized to serve national(ist) goals. We will try to follow these processes through ethnographic examples from various Balkan countries.

## References

- Giurchescu, A., 2000, "Gypsy Dance Style as Marker of Ethnic Identity", in M. P. Baumann (ed.), *Music, Language and Literature of the Roma and Sinti*, VWB, pp. 323-329
- Ilieva A., 2001, "Bulgarian Folk Dance During the Socialist Era, 1944-1989", *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 33:123-126.
- Loutzaki, I., 2001, "Folk Dance in Political Rhythms", *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 33: 127-138.
- Ozturkmen, A., 2001, "Politics of National Dance in Turkey: A Historical Reappraisal", *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 33: 39-143.
- Silverman, C., 1989, "Reconstructing Folklore: Media and Cultural Policy in Eastern Europe", *Communication* 11: 141-160.

#### **4. Local, National and International Forms of Music and Dance in the Balkans: Globalization, Hybridization and the Emergence of New Musical Genres**

Dr. Panayotis Panopoulos, University of the Aegean



## **2 . Music and Dance in the Construction of Gender, Community and Local Identity**

Dr. Panayotis Panopoulos, University of the Aegean

Gendered perspectives in the ethnographic study of singing and dance events. Singing as symbolic practice. Revitalizing of "tradition" and local cultural practices.

### **References**

Caraveli, A., 1985, "The Symbolic Village: Community Born in Performance", *Journal of American Folklore* 98(389): 259-86.

Cowan, J., 1990, *Dance and the Body Politic in Northern Greece*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.

Panopoulos P., 1996, "Revitalizing the Past, Contextualizing the Present: Cultural Responses to the Tradition of Improvised Singing in Aegean Greece", *Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 6(1): 56-69.

## **3. An Ethnography of Music and Dance in Border Regions: The (Re)Construction of National Identities**

Dr. Ioannis Manos, University of Western Macedonia

The recent growth in studies of nationalism has turned dance and music researchers to study the ways and the processes through which national identities and



## References

- Cowan, J. K., 2001, "Ambiguities of an Emancipatory Discourse: The Making of a Macedonian Minority in Greece", in J. K. Cowan, M. - B. Dembour and R. A. Wilson, (eds.), *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 152-176.
- Cowan, J. K., Dembour M. - B. and R. A. Wilson, 2001, "Introduction", in J. K., Cowan, M. - B. Dembour and R. A. Wilson, (eds.), *Culture and Rights: Anthropological Perspectives*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 1-26.
- Manos, I., 2005, "Border Crossings: Dance performance and Identity Politics in a Border Region in Northern Greece", in T. Wilson and D. Hastings (eds.), *Culture and Power at the Edge of the State: National Support and Subversion in European Border Regions*, European Studies in Culture and Policy, Lit Verlag, pp. 127-154.

### **6. Sound as a Cultural System - The Cultural Construction of Hearing**

Dr. Panayotis Panopoulos, University of the Aegean

The ethnographic study of sound and hearing. From music to sound. Animal bells as symbols. The regulation of noise in socialist Bulgaria.



Local musical practices and world music. The role of music industry in globalization processes. The "cultural imperialism hypothesis" and critiques to it. Aspects of the Eurovision Song Contest. German-Turkish hip-hop and globalization. New musical genres at the end of Yugoslavia and turbofolk.

## References

- Stokes, M., 2003, "Globalization and the Politics of World Music", in M. Clayton, T. Herbert and R. Middleton (eds.), *The Cultural Study of Music: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, New York.
- Longinovic, T., 2000, "Music Wars: Blood and Song at the End of Yugoslavia", in Radano, Ronald and Philip V. Bohlman (eds.), *Music and the Racial Imagination*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

### **5. The Politics of Culture and Identity: International Discourses and Local Implications**

Dr. Ioannis Manos, University of Western Macedonia

This session will address issues of identity, politics, politicisation of culture, and power based on the ethnographic example of the Florina region in northern Greece. Borders, minority rights claims, ideas about cultural difference, politics and individual choices are interconnected and expressed within dance events.



## References

- Guentcheva, R., 2004, "Sounds and Noise in Socialist Bulgaria", in J. R. Lampe and M. Mazower (eds.), *Ideologies and National Identities - The Case of Twentieth-Century Southern Europe*, Central European University Press, Budapest, New York.
- Panopoulos, P., 2003, "Animal Bells as Symbols: Sound and Hearing in a Greek Island Village", *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 9(4): 639-56.

## Suggested bibliography

- Brandl, R. M., 1996, "The 'Yifti' and the Music of Greece: Role and Function", *The World of Music* 38(1): 7-32.
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- Petan, S., 2003, "Male, Female, and Beyond in the Culture and Music of Roma in Kosovo", in T. Magrini (ed.), *Neighbors Music and Gender: Perspectives from the Mediterranean*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London pp.287-306.
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- Danforth, L. M., 1982, *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*, Photography by Alexander Tsiaras, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J.
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- Keil, C. and Vellou Keil A., 2002, *Bright Balkan Morning: Romani Lives and the Power of Music in Greek Macedonia*, Photographs by Dick Blau, Soundscapes by Steven Feld, Wesleyan University Press, Middletown.
- Kligman, G., 1988, *The Wedding of the Dead: Ritual, Poetics, and Popular Culture in Transylvania*, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Magrini, T., 1995, "Repertoires and Identities of a



## 9. Ethnography of Socialism

### COURSE SYLLABUS

Dr. Ilia Iliev, University of Sofia

#### Course Outline

##### 1. Constructing a new society. The concepts of class and ethnos in the Soviet tradition.

The concepts of 'class' and 'ethnos', which played a major role in Soviet and Bulgarian political thought and practically shaped the social policy of the period, will be introduced in this lecture. Both concepts represent a highly specific combination of constructivist thinking, that the human being could be shaped and reshaped, new classes and nations to be constructed and established, and essentialism, a deep conviction that class and ethnic characteristics are transmitted from generation to generation.

#### References

Weiner, A., 1999, "Nature, Nurture, and Memory in a Socialist Utopia: Delineating the Soviet Socio-Ethnic Body in the Age of Socialism", *The American Historical Review* 104(4): 1114 - 1155.



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- Manos I., 2004, "Signifying Self in Plural Cultural Contexts: Subjectivity, Power and Individual Agency in North-Western Greek Macedonia", *Anthropology of East Europe Review* (special issue on Dance and Music in Eastern Europe), pp. 125-138.
- Mursic, R., 1995, "The Creative Game of Believing and Misunderstanding: An Anthropological Field Research of Punk Rock in Two Slovenian Villages", *Etnolog*. 5(LVI):269-281.
- Mursic, R., 2002, "Games of Identification and Self-Presentation: Local Radio Broadcast in Skopje, Macedonia", in K. Kärki, R. Leydon and H. Terho (eds.), *Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Popular / Music Studies 20 Years Later*, Proceedings of the 11th Biannual IASPM Conference July 6-10, 2001, Turku, Finland, pp. 331-345.
- Panopoulos, P., 1996, "Revitalizing the Past, Contextualizing the Present: Cultural Responses



specific housing project (to transform the everyday life by eradicating the boundaries between public and private space), the implementation of these ideas, and how the average citizens commented, subverted or opposed this project by trying to reestablish a clear distinction between public and private. The main reading will be Victor Buchli, archeologist by training, and the archeologists have a venerable tradition of studying material culture, which could be very useful for the anthropologists.

## References

Buhli, V., 1999, *An Archaeology of Socialism*, Berg, Oxford, pp. 63 - 76 (The Narkomfin Communal House and the Material Culture of Socialism) and 99 - 136 (The Narkomfin Communal House and Marxist Domesticity).

Boym, S., 1994, *Common Places. Mythologies of Everyday Life in Russia*, Harvard Univ. Press, Harvard, Mass, pp. 121 - 167 (Living in Common Spaces).

## 4. Interior design. Politics, furniture and materials.

Here we will discuss the political meanings of furniture in socialist countries. Everything was ideology and politics in the socialist countries, and the major periods of their history was dominated by different design style, different taste, and different materials, each of them with its own





Oxford.

- Sugarman, J. C., 1997, *Engendering Song: Singing and Subjectivity at Prespa Albanian Weddings*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Sugarman, J. C., 2003, "Those 'Other Women': Dance and Femininity among Prespa Albanians", in T. Magrini (ed.), *Neighbors Music and Gender: Perspectives from the Mediterranean*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, pp.119-146.
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## References

Lovell, S., 2002, "Soviet Exurbia: Dachas in Postwar Russia", in D. Crowley and S. Reid (eds.), *Socialist Spaces. Sites of Everyday Life in the Eastern Bloc*, Berg, Oxford, pp. 105 - 122.

### 6. The control of time.

Here we come to the 1980s, when Verdery did her field research. I will use the occasion to speak a little bit about the specific ideas about the time in a society oriented towards the future. The main readings will be from Katherine Verdery and Sheila Fitzpatrick.

## References

Verdery, K., 1996, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, pp. 39 - 57 (The "Etatization" of Time in Ceausescu's Romania).

### 7. Remembering socialism.

Here we will discuss the nostalgia for socialism, a major trend in Bulgaria now, but also in Germany (they call it *Ostalgie*), Russia, etc.

## References

Creed, G. W., 1999, "Deconstructing Socialism in Bulgaria", in M. Burawoy and K. Verdery (eds.),



## 2 . Shaping a Socialist Middle Class.

Here I would like to start discussing the processes of shaping new social groups in socialist countries, and the role of consumption practices. Of course we will start with Stalin. The main reading will be Vera Dunham, whose analysis is based on a specific type of literature, very typical for the socialist societies - dull, instructive, in-between propaganda, soap opera and general moral education. Here demonstration of the role of the literature for establishing a two-way communication in a totalitarian society is one of the most elegant.

### References

- Dunham, V. S., 1990<sup>2</sup>, *In Stalin's Time. Middleclass Values in Soviet Fiction*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, pp. 1 - 38 (The Big Deal, The Uses of Literature).
- Fitzpatrick, S., 1992, *The Cultural Front. Power and Culture in Revolutionary Russia*, Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, pp. 149 - 182 (Stalin and the Making of a New Elite).

### 3. New men in new houses. Architectural projects and popular reaction.

One of the major problems while studying a totalitarian society is to understand the popular reactions to the major projects of the regime. The texts we will discuss in this lecture are extremely useful in that sense, because they demonstrate the political intentions behind a



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ideological justification. We will discuss mostly the period after 1950s, when a minimalist design replaced Stalin's baroque, and plastics was prized instead of the steel (by the way, Stalin means 'man of steel').

Regarding the plastics, I will argue that the enthusiastic acceptance by the customers of the plastic goods in 1950s and 1960s and the following rejection in 1970s and 80s coincided with periods of larger public support of the regime, and the following refutation.

## References

Stokes, R. G., 2000, "Plastics and the New Society: The German Democratic Republic in the 1950s and 1960s", in S. Reid and D. Crowley (eds.), *Style and Socialism*, Berg, Oxford, pp. 65-80.

### 5. Work and privacy.

'Work' was extremely important category in socialist ideology - after all, officially it was a society dominated by the **working** class and the **workers'** party. The more interesting is that by 1970s the socialist statisticians raised alarm that people work more at home than in the enterprises. I will argue that small repairs, cooking, cleaning, raising children, gardening, etc. small domestic tasks had a specific symbolic importance in the socialist countries.