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ANAMNESIS

**Communities, Identities and
Migrations in Southeast Europe**

Collected Articles

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FOREWORD

The articles contained in this collection appeared during the years 1993-2011 in several journals and books, aimed mostly at academic audiences. All of them are case-studies corresponding to the broad framework of communities, identities and migrations in specific historical, social and regional contexts. They reflect various approaches to phenomena that are interrelated: nomadism and pastoralism, “ethnicity”, pre-modern and modern group identities, state policy towards minorities and refugees, and the attempt at combining various types of historical sources and anthropological fieldwork.

All of the texts are supplied with up-to-date bibliographies (“further reading”), for two main reasons: firstly, in order to orientate the readers in the ongoing research, approaches and discussions and secondly, for educational purposes. The selection of the articles is closely related to several interdisciplinary courses, taught at the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski” and aimed at students of history and cultural studies.

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ALEXEI KALIONSKI

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I

THE POMAK DILEMMA

[Published in: *La transmission du savoir dans le monde musulman périphérique. Lettre d'information*, Paris, CNRS-EHESS, № 13, mars 1993, 122-130]

This text has two main purposes: to trace the stages in the historical development of the identity of the Pomaks/Muslim Bulgarians in Bulgaria, with some observations on ethnocultural aspects, and to attempt to sketch the present state of the Pomak dilemma.

“Pomak” is a relatively new name. It appeared in the Ottoman sources not earlier than the 18th century. In the 1850s-1860s it was mentioned more and more frequently in Bulgarian periodicals and in the first descriptive works. Gradually, the interest of Bulgarian intelligentsia was aroused. Simultaneously, contemporary European ethnography crossed the border between the romantic Philhellenism underlying the traveller’s accounts and the precise cartographic localisations. Up to the end of the 19th century, the language, history and culture of some smaller groups such as Aromanians, Yürüks, Karakachans/Sarakatsani, Gagauzes, etc. became classical problems of Balkan studies. Local nationalisms and national states had been already involved in the dispute about the Ottoman heritage. Descriptive ethnographic studies had been used directly as argumentation for the respective aspirations and nationalist programmes.

This stimulated both the speculative historiographic or journalistic theories (often only vaguely supported by any evidence) and the researches which claimed to be purely scientific. Discussions concerning Pomaks have always been located between these two approaches.

There exist in Bulgaria a solid historical-ethnographic tradition of studying the Pomak community as a whole and also its local groups, regions and villages. Contemporary Bulgarian studies of the Ottoman period between 1960s and the 1980s sum up the documentary sources about the scale and development of the processes of conversion to Islam in the 15th-19th centuries

and continually search for the Pomaks' place in the context provided by these documents. In addition to the publication of documents, there are studies of folklore (with emphasis on the local oral-history traditions), everyday life, and physical anthropology. Despite many disputable or less studied problems and the strong influence of the specific political set-up during this period, it is safe to say that it was productive and generally successful for the Bulgarian historical school.

One of the basic terms used in literature for marking this group is Muslim Bulgarians ("Bulgaromohamedani"). Its long scholar circulation from the end of 19th century to the present is obviously connected to the predominant Bulgarian views about their origin and nationality. The argumentation (based predominantly on Ottoman sources) usually includes some archeological data, the language, local traditions about the conversion to Islam and last but not least, the peculiar Pomak syncretism (e.g. traces of their "crypto-Christianity" and supposed influences due to non-orthodox Islamic sects). "Bulgaromohamedani" is, at the same time, a political term used with a clear intent and continuously promoted in official usage. In different ways, both of these denominations are not very precise and adequate. "Pomaks" was not a common name for all of the local Bulgarian speaking Muslim communities (only in the Lovech area and in some regions in the Rhodopes and Macedonia). It is a common pejorative used especially by Christians and Turks. "Bulgaromohamedani" is first and foremost a literary term, adopted within the community mostly among Pomak intelligentsia. Its relative value lies in the fact that it makes a clearer distinction between the local Muslim groups in Macedonia, Central North Bulgaria (the Lovech area) and the Rhodopes, who in the 19th and the 20th century spoke one of the Bulgarian dialects as their native language and other smaller non-Turkish groups (such as the Greek "Vallahades" in Southwestern Macedonia, Muslim Vlachs in the Meglen area, "Balis" in Herzegovina, etc.). "Pomaks", to a great extent, was a local name parallel to "Achriani" (in the Rhodopes), "Torbeshi" (in Northwestern Macedonia), "Apovtsi" (in Kichevo area in Western Macedonia), "Murvatsi" (in Serres area) and others. Further in this text "Pomaks" and "Muslim Bulgarians" are used as synonyms.

There exists a serious discrepancy between local (Christian and Muslim) oral traditions on the one hand, and the Ottoman documentary sources, on the other. Legends usually present the conversion of an area (village, community) as the result of a single act of violence on the part of the imperial authorities and agree about the presumable time of this forcible Islamisation (the second half of the 17th century). Studies based on the Ottoman tax registers (mostly from the 15th-16th century) and other sources, without excluding altogether the use of violence and pressure, suggest that the conversion to Islam was rather a long process of complex influences of economic, socio-political and cultural-religious factors, which ended in the beginning of the 19th century.

Some scholars compare the Pomak case with the Bosnian one. In this direction the origin of the Pomaks has been traced in the prozelitism of the heretics (Paulikians Massalians; Bogomils) who were rejected and persecuted by the official Orthodox church. One of the possible variants of extrapolation of this view in ethnogenetic terms is to combine some characteristics of the Pomaks' "physical type" and culture with some not quite clear references to these heretics (in the 15th-17th centuries). In the Greek literature one of the supposed groups, "Achriani", has been interpreted as ancestors of the pre-Slav Balkan (ancient Thracian) population. But to make a connection between the Bulgarian autochtones ("superficially Christianised"), heretics and the Pomaks is too risky. The available unambiguous historical material is more than scanty. This speculative approach usually disregards the Ottoman documents and the historical context and time. However, at some points, the argumentation of this last mentioned thesis is based on the Pomak ethno-cultural model itself. Some of its characteristics seem to be important for the development and the present state of the identity of this group.

Pomaks were predominantly mountain inhabitants with a specific, archaic native economy. It was a combination of primitive agriculture and small animal husbandry. Before the emergence of some new crops (tobacco, potatoes), this farming, very often on the vertical geographical limit of the agriculture, was self-sufficient, but very dependant on the natural environment. Famine was a major stress even during the 20th century.

With very few exceptions, Pomak regions remained closed and isolated from the economic development of the neighboring Christian population in the 18th and the 19th centuries (based on big transhumant sheep breeding, specialisation of the local handicrafts, textile manufacturing, trade, etc.). Even when the local conjuncture was relatively better (e.g. tobacco, timber industry), the position of the Pomak villages remained poor in comparison with many Christian villages and towns.

The Pomak micro-society was patriarchal, closed, isolated and often opposed both to the neighboring Turks and Bulgarians and there are many references to and commentaries on the Pomak conservatism and backwardness. To what extent this notorious Pomak isolation was one of the reasons for or a consequence of the Islamisation, is an important and debatable question. But it is obviously connected to the well known psychological complex of any marginal group, ignored by the "others".

In the following pages I will try to briefly trace the main stages in the development of the Pomak identity. Until the beginning or the middle of the 19th century, the Bulgarian speaking Muslims were officially a part of the big dominant religious community. Being a very small group, the representatives of the local enlightened and powerful elite above the level of local self-government, were part of the Ottoman ruling class. The main sources of Turkish influence were the administration, religious institutions, garrisons, and in some places, the largest of the politically dominant Turkish-speaking groups (e.g. Yürüks). Islam in its syncretic everyday life form did not much change the Pomak customs, but established an ethnoreligious border with the former Christian neighbors and relatives. They became part of another "millet". In addition, Pomaks were never fully accepted by the Turks themselves, despite their neophyte zeal. The cultural shock, expressed in the eschatological atmosphere of the legends, the endogamy, suspicions and prejudices among the three groups became important features of their cohabitation even when it was very friendly as in some mixed areas and villages. At the same time, the significance of the Pomak regions in the development of the Ottoman culture never approached that of Bosnia. They remained a deep province.

With time, during the 18th-19th centuries and throughout the period of

the Bulgarian national revival, the Christians became more enlightened, rich and consolidated. They succeeded in gaining some economic privileges and started to make strenuous efforts to obtain a separate church organisation, modern education and other assets. In the case of Pomaks the Christians considered them a marginal community, frozen at the former pre-national level as a peculiar relic of the medieval Ottoman ethno-confessional system. But the Tanzimat, the Age of reforms in the Empire, finally deprived the Pomaks of their formal position as Muslim masters, whilst Christian Bulgarians grew more and more receptive to the nationalist ideology. This reversal became clear after the establishment of a relatively modern educational network and the recognition of the Bulgarian Exarchate.

This process, which marks the second stage of the Pomak history, ended with the creation of the two Bulgarian states - the Bulgarian Principality and the autonomous province of Eastern Rumelia in 1878, and their unification in 1885. All those great changes resulted in further division between Muslim and Christian Bulgarians. The Pomaks' opposition to and disregard of the reforms, the crisis of the Empire and the fear of the Bulgarian revolutionary liberation movement caused an increase of local fanaticism. The Pomaks were poor and discontented. In some cases local Ottoman authorities were very successful in pitting them against the Christians. The part played by some local Pomaks in the "Bulgarian atrocities" of 1876, in the Muslim emigration on a mass scale during and after the Russo-Turkish war (1877-1878) and in the Saint Clair revolt against the feared resurrection of the Bulgarian state of San Stefano, marked the culmination of this conflict with the Christians. About 20 villages in the Devin area (Central Rhodopes) proclaimed themselves independent from the Rumelian authorities and in 1886 were handed over to the Ottoman Empire as a compensation for the unification with the Principality.

During the period between 1885 and 1944 the Bulgarian efforts for "national unification" led to the inclusion of some new territories, but also to the disasters of the Balkan wars and the two World Wars. The defeats in these wars had a serious traumatic effect on the national identity. As a result of the two Balkan wars a part of the Pomak group, those inhabiting the Rhodopes and a portion of Eastern Macedonia (Pirin, Razlog and the valley of the Mesta

river) was incorporated into the Bulgarian state boundaries. According to the clauses of the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), Western Trace was given to Greece, thereby a part of the Rhodopes Pomaks found themselves within the Greek state. Throughout the whole period the economical and cultural stagnation of the majority of the Pomaks already discerned in the previous period, was sustained and even strengthened in the context of an ever growing gap between them and the rest of the Bulgarian population. The official policy towards Pomaks was marked by general disregard and occasionally interrupted by inconsistent policies. For example, in the wartime years of 1912-1913 a large-scale conversion campaign was undertaken. This created a precedent of administrative pressure and violence which later became part and parcel of the state policy.

Ever since the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, prominent Bulgarian intellectuals and scholars have been trying to draw the attention of the Bulgarian society at large to the Pomak phenomenon, their aim being to bridge the Pomaks isolation as aliens. A debate in the press was launched during the 1920s-1930s. It was only then that, for the first time, members of the small group of Pomak intelligentsia took part in the debate. In 1937, a cultural and educational organisation, "Rodina," was set up with the goal of looking for possibilities to incorporate Muslim Bulgarians into the Bulgarian nation. To a major extent, this organisation was a product of the initiative of the Moslem Bulgarians trying to find the much needed compromise between national identity and religion. Its activity attempted to provide an alternative to violence and disregard and it was in some measure rooted into the suppressed, subtle, and genuine Pomak ethos. The "Rodina" society had some success in a number of regions, mainly in the Central and part of the Eastern Rhodopes. A religious organisation outside the jurisdiction of the official Muslim religious structure had thus been created. Bulgarian Muslim personal names were gaining growing acceptance among the "Rodina" supporters: those names were of Bulgarian non-Christian rather than Turkish-Arab origin. Religious services began to be conducted in Bulgarian. During its 7 year existence however, the organisation did not manage to secure enough state and public support. After 1944 it was disbanded under the accusations

of nationalism and Fascism. In October 1945 an act of the Council of Ministers proclaimed the reintroduction of the former Muslim personal names.

The last period between 1944 and 1989 finally shaped the present condition of the Pomaks in Bulgaria. Despite numerous self-evident transformations like the establishment of regional industries, incorporation within the universal secular primary and secondary education, and the modernisation of everyday life, a number of regions continued to be relatively isolated and self-concealed, like in the Western Rhodopes, the upper Arda valley, etc. Here, I am not going to rest extensively on the relatively active, but highly controversial state policy, in either its ideological or practical aspects. Suffice it to say that its demographic, social and cultural results which are at present subjected to strongly politicised debates await their disinterested treatment. However, I would like to focus on a few factors, which in my opinion strongly affect the current Pomak dilemma.

One of them is the all-round continuously growing pressure exerted on the Pomaks, aiming at their thorough "Bulgarisation." From the beginning of the 1960s and until the end of the 1980s, this pressure amounted to various administrative, political, propagandist, military and police measures. Their diversity was quite large: from privileged access to Universities with the result that the majority of the most educated developed Bulgarian identity, to the violence and murders in the 1970s in the Western Rhodopes. These two decades mark the preliminary stage of the well-known events of the so-called "revival process." Throughout those years there had been several name-changing campaigns carried out among the Vlachs, part of the Gypsies, part of the Turks, and of course among all the Pomaks. The growing economic and ideological crisis of the regime in Bulgaria made itself felt in the openly nationalist course of the ruling elite. The inter-ethnic tensions increased. The propagandist manipulations from the mid 1980s gradually created a climate of intolerance in some of the ethnically mixed regions. Given the obvious short-sightedness of this policy and its authoritarian and atavistic nature, the Communist period of the Pomak issue leaves behind an intricate and controversial heritage. Part of this heritage is the educational and cultural advancement of the Pomaks as a whole and the striving among the Pomak intelligentsia

and younger generations for modern civic, secular status even in its distorted version under the Communist regime, as well as that of some local groups and even whole regions, to be Bulgarian (e.g. in the Central Rhodopes, where there are also groups or individuals who, after 1989, have chosen conversion to Christianity).

The second significant factor was the gradual consolidation and subsequent resistance of the Turkish community in Bulgaria during the assimilation campaign of 1984-1989. Repressions led to growing articulation of the Turkish identity and to assimilation of some small isolated Pomak groups by the Turks (a tendency clearly discernible in the Eastern Rhodopes from the 1970s onwards). The "Turkicisation" of a part of the Muslim Gypsies, Tartars and some of the Pomaks points to the reverse effect of the total pressure. After November 1989, the civic and political freedom secured by the Turkish community as represented by the Movement for Rights and Freedom (MRF) released the long suppressed activity of that part of the Pomaks that gravitated towards the bigger Muslim community.

The third and to a big extent crucial set of circumstances is directly related to the significant politisation and polarisation of public life, the social mobility and economic crisis during the ongoing transitional period. The collapse of local industries as well as the discouraging market opportunities for tobacco export again threaten to doom part of the population in the Western Rhodopes to extreme poverty. Social tensions combined with patriarchal mores, and the inherited authoritarian culture have provided fertile soil for effective political manipulations. In those places the tendency to declare Turkish identity is still only a political idea, or a reaction against the recently committed acts of violence. It has been expressed mainly in demands for education in Turkish. In the regions attached to Bulgaria most recently as parts of Pirin Macedonia, a potential conflict has been burning.

Avoiding a generalisation about all relevant regions or localities, my own impressions of several relatively bigger settlements point to one dimension of this problem. In their large majority the younger Pomak generation between the age of 18 and 30 faces at present a total lack of economic security together with mass unemployment. Their precarious economic and so-

cial situation has been used by MRF for exerting pressure on them, forcing through their ethnic and political options. Under these conditions the occasional pronouncement on the part of some members of the intelligentsia to the effect that there exists a choice of promoting a genuinely Pomak ethnic identity remains in the sphere of wishful thinking. The Pomak community is progressively getting polarised and split along Bulgarian and Turkish lines. All these developments draw a dividing boundary between regions, groups, settlements, generations, strata and individuals. They leave less and less room for those of the Muslim Bulgarians who remain faithful to their old traditions.

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II

ETHNICITY AND MIGRATIONS: THE BULGARIAN CASE, 1830-1915

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The current chronology is framed by three wars - the Russian-Turkish War of 1828-29, and the two Balkan Wars in 1912-13. A period which saw one of the Balkan nations and nationalisms gradually take shape - initially as an idea in the heads of the secular and the clerical elite, later on the soil of its independent statehood. Two state formations emerged in the wake of the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78 - the Bulgarian Principality and Eastern Rumelia. Their unification in 1885, the declaration of full-fledged independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1908, and the two Balkan Wars that followed, paved much of the way for the development of the modern nation. It passed through the specific adaptations of the European economic, political and ideological models which were modified to the peculiar Balkan context and finally found their Bulgarian versions.¹

The same period outlined the imaginary "Bulgarian" ethno-national territory and witnessed the efforts to approximate it to a desired reality which never came to materialise - to forge an administratively, territorially and ethnically homogenous nation, the biggest on the peninsula. Theoretically, it encompassed Moesia, Dobrudja, Thrace and Macedonia.² The present-day Bulgarian borders embrace the bigger part of Moesia, approximately 35% of Dobrudja, 40% of Thrace (the Bulgarian part of the Rhodopes region

1 R. J. Crampton, *A Short History of Modern Bulgaria*, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

2 One of the best illustrations of this concept is the historical atlas, published during the First World War: D. Rizoff (Minister of Bulgaria in Berlin), *The Bulgarians in Their Historical, Ethnographical and Political Frontiers, 679-1917. Atlas with 40 Maps*, Berlin, Wilhelm Greve, 1917 (Text in German, English, French and Bulgarian; reprinted in Sofia, Spectrum Publishing House, 1993).

included), and 10% of Macedonia. The national historiographic, geographic (geo-political) and ethnographic traditions rest on the assumption for the historic and ethnic unity of these lands. Ever since the times of the Bulgarian Revival (end-18th century -1878), the Bulgarian people were seen as the legacy of the Middle Ages, which had preserved its ethnic and religious continuity under the Ottoman rule. Against the various Balkan, European or other ethnographic, cartographic and statistical views concerning the ethnic structure of the Ottoman possessions in the 19th century, the Bulgarian national idea set a rally of linguistic arguments as the decisive factor in determining the ethnicity of a given local group. In the course of the century, and in the first decades of independent statehood (1878-1913), the same arguments were increasingly used regarding both the Bulgarian-speaking proponents of Hellenism - who were quite numerous, and the Bulgarian/Slavic-speaking Muslims (Pomaks, Torbeshi, Gorani, etc.) in the Rhodope region, Northern Bulgaria and Macedonia.³ The standardization of the literary dialect was based on the Eastern idioms. Yet the established classification supplemented the "historically" genuine origin of many dialects with the comparative prevalence of Bulgarian-speaking communities in the Western Ottoman provinces, either as a whole or at least in certain parts.⁴ In the long run, and among the neighboring countries' national doctrines, Macedonia was to prove most important emotionally, and most controversial.⁵

In the course of the 19th century, European science, politics and public opinion "discovered", or "rediscovered" the existence of the Bulgarian community. Against the backdrop of the other Christian and Slavonic peoples in the Ottoman Empire, a gradual social, economic and communal emancipation began soon to arise to assert an independent national idea. A prolonged series of conflicts with the Constantinople Patriarchate tore away a consider-

3 A. Kalionski, «The Pomak Dilemma», in: *La transmission du savoir dans le monde musulman périphérique. Lettre d'information*, Paris, CNRS-EHESS, Vol. 13, 1993, pp. 122-9.

4 St. Mladenov, *Geschichte der bulgarischen Sprache. (Mit einer Karte)*, Berlin-Leipzig, Walter de Gruyter & Co., 1929.

5 H. R. Wilkinson, *Maps and Politics. A Review of Ethnographic Cartography of Macedonia*, Liverpool University Press, 1951.

able Bulgarian contingent from the cultural and national agenda of Hellenism - mainly the educated classes but also many a commoner, and finally brought the official recognition of the autonomous Bulgarian Exarchate and *millet* (an ethno-confessional community) in 1870.

From their first days of independence, and up to the Balkan Wars, the local small national states - Serbia after 1829-33, Greece after 1829, and Bulgaria after 1878-85, had made it their chief foreign priority to split the remaining Ottoman possessions in Europe. Which meant, sooner or later, dividing not only territories but people - and separating the sheep from the goats, "our own" from the "foreign". Minority problems got quickly entangled in a knot of acute controversies. Using all channels at hand in the European Ottoman provinces - from churches and schools to irredentism and terror against the supporters of what was considered rival and enemy ideas and options, the "national propagandas" worked hard to win over the Empire's Christian subjects. Both in Macedonia and elsewhere, the wars for the Ottoman legacy left a trail of ethno-national strife.⁶ The climax arrived with the Second Balkan War, which sealed the collapse of the Bulgarian territorial and ethnic maximalism. It largely predicated Bulgaria's subsequent setbacks resulting from the country's involvement in the two World Wars (1915-18, 1941-45). The attempts at a military and political revanche staged the Bulgarian replay of the periodical efforts for assimilating or expelling minority elements - repetitive, never fully accomplished and undertaken at one point or another by all Balkan states. The latest episode in Bulgaria was pulled off with the so-called "Revival Process" ("the renaming campaign") from the mid/end-80s of the 20th century, when the authoritarian Communist regime launched a large-scale assimilation campaign against the Turkish minority. Months before the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe (that marked the summer of 1989), another agreement was added to the long list since 1878 for a mass eviction of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey. Over 330,000-350,000 people were uprooted to

6 R. W. Seton-Watson, *The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans*, London, Constable & Co, 1917; E. Kofos, *Nationalism and Communism in Macedonia. Civil Conflict, Politics of Mutation, National Identity*, New York, A. D. Caratzas, 1993, pp. 9-45; Ch. and B. Jelavich, *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804-1920*, Seattle-London, University of Washington Press, 1977.

become temporary or permanently settled immigrants, 120,000-140,000 of whom returned to Bulgaria in 1990-93.⁷

Naturally, every epoch can be historically viewed through the lens of various migrations, differing both in type and reason. Probably the greatest migration of Orthodox Christians which was spurred by explicitly political (ethno-religious) motives, closed a series of anti-Ottoman uprisings in the late 17th century. It swept significant numbers of the population of Kosovo, Northern Macedonia, the Morava valley, and Serbia to the freshly acquired Austrian territories, namely Banat, Slavonia, Vojvodina. The "Great migration of the Serbs" was accompanied by migrating Bulgarians-Catholics heading from Northwestern Bulgaria to Wallachia and Banat, and others, whose final "Bulgarian", "Serbian" or "Macedonian" allegiance was to be determined no earlier than in the 19th-20th centuries, when the political maps were redrawn.⁸

The selected chronological interval reveals diverse "external" migration drives that proved instrumental in shaping the ethnic profile of present-day Bulgaria. Most frequently, they resulted from the combined impact of various factors, events and circumstances of economic, ethno-religious and political character.

The current text is far from the ambition to fully cover these "exter-

7 On modern history, demographic developments and migrations of the Turks in Bulgaria, see R. J. Crampton, «The Turks in Bulgaria, 1878-1944», in: K. Karpat (ed.), *The Turks of Bulgaria: The History, Culture and Political Fate of a Minority*, Istanbul, The Isis Press, 1990; R. J. Crampton, «The Turks in Bulgaria, 1878-1944», in: *International Journal of Turkish Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1989, pp. 43-78; B. Şimşir, *The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985)*, London, K. Rustem & Brother, 1988; A. Popovic, «The Turks of Bulgaria (1878-1985)», in: *Central Asia Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1986, pp. 1-32; D. Mishkova, «The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria: Solution to an Ethnic Conflict?», in: *Department of East European Studies Working Papers*, No. 40, University of Uppsala, 1998; A. Zheljaskova (ed.), *The Fate of Muslim Communities in the Balkans*, Vol. 3: *Between Adaptation and Nostalgia* (The Bulgarian Turks in Turkey), Sofia, IMIR, 1998; A. Zhelyzskova, «Sădbata na turskoto malcinstvo v Bălgaria», in: I. Elenkov (ed.), *Nova Publichnost. Bălgarskite debati 1998*, Sofia, Fondacija "Otvoreno obshtestvo", 1999, pp. 98-106; V. Stojanov, *Turskoto naselenie v Bălgaria mezhdur poljusite na etnicheskata politika*, Sofia, Lik, 1998.

8 According to different sources and estimations, the number of the Orthodox emigrants in 1690s ranged between 40 000-70 000, and 200 000. M. Todorova and N. Todorov, «Problemi i zadachi na istoricheskata demografija na Osmanska ta Imperija», in: *Balkanistika*, Vol. 2, Sofia, 1987, pp. 27, 36; on the emigration of the Catholic Bulgarians to Transilvania and Banat, see L. Miletich, «Zaselenieto na katolishkite Bălgari v Sedmigradsko i Banat», in: *Zbornik za narodni umotvorenija, nauka i knizhnina*, Vol. 14, 1897, pp. 284-543.

nal”, let alone all such relocations of groups towards/away from territories that even geographically and historically fall in the centre of the Balkan crossroads. It is rather an attempt to briefly outline - against the backdrop of the most consequential migrations - certain cases of “bordering” group identities, at least in the context of Bulgarian nationalism. I will therefore not delve in the specifically Bulgarian legislative (Constitutional) provisions from 1879 to the present⁹, nor shall I discuss the various political and scientific projections of ethnicity. Even in the vast range of possible approaches, theories and terminologies, the Balkans still remain a region of considerable ethnic and sub-ethnic (local, cultural, group) diversity.¹⁰ Above all, the conceptualisation of ethnicity is a matter of “objective” and subjective criteria, of defining and constructing a hierarchy of differences and similarities, boundaries, and formalising “otherness”.¹¹ Big as it is, the problem of studying and picturing ethnicity grows even more complex whenever we approach it in historical retrospect. The risk of speaking on the behalf of any community is quite apparent, especially taking into account the discrete, only partly rational (but emotional and to an extent irrational) nature of ethnic phenomena. In the course of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, the fickle state borders continually embraced communities that were considered an inalienable part of the main national body - everywhere on the Balkans, including the present-day Bulgarian territories. Both within their germinal state territories and beyond, within the

9 See Zh. Nazarska, *Balgarskata dърzhava i nejnite malcinstva (1879-1885)*, Sofia, Lik, 1999; id., «Malcinstveno-religiozna politika v Iztochna Rumelija (1879-1885)», in: *Mjusjulkanskite obshtnosti na Balkanite i v Balgaria. Istoricheski eskizi*, Sofia, IMIR, 1997, pp. 113-235; Kr. Kanev, «Zakonodatelstvo i politika kam etnicheskite i religioznite malcinstva v Balgaria», in: A. Krasteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Balgaria*, Sofia, 1998, pp. 67-117.

10 H. Poulton, *Minorities in the Balkans*, London, Minority Rights Group, 1989.

11 Fr. Barth, «Introduction», in: *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organisation of Cultural Difference*, Boston, Little, Brown & Co., 1969, pp. 9-38. Any attempt to classify ethnic and cultural diversity in a given national and social situation depends on criteria and terminology. An example of a “minimalist” general approach in the contemporary Turkish national context (“two working definitions”): 1. “By ethnicity we understand the concepts, sentiments, and actions which characterise ethnic groups. They define these in contradistinction to other comparable groups within the state”; 2. “Ethnic groups are generally endogamous groups, whose criteria for cultural self-definition are common traditions selected from the past”. – A. Andrews, «Introduction», in: *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, Wiesbaden, Dr. Ludwig Reichert Verlag, 1989, p. 17.

boundaries of the Ottoman Empire, each of the respective national doctrines had to deal with communities that instead “belonged” to its neighbours, as well as a patchwork of minor ethnic groups. The attitude towards them - and their destiny, loomed as a direct consequence of the variable political and ideological trends that closely echoed the dynamics of the national and pan-Balkan cataclysms.

The territorial acquisitions of 1912 left out significant numbers of people who traditionally considered themselves, or were considered, Bulgarian. That in turn produced substantial waves of refugees that opted out, or were forced to seek a new home within the boundaries of the Bulgarian state. And the universal institutional, social, cultural and political mechanisms of their integration with society and the nation immediately came at work.

As for the Slavic-speaking population of the Morava area (present-day Southern Serbia) and Macedonia (split today between Greece, [FYRO] Macedonia, Bulgaria and Albania), from a historical viewpoint it proved almost conclusively the triumph of the principle *cuius regio, eius religio*.¹² The 20th century saw the gradual evolution of a Macedonian national identity, which edged out the Bulgarian card from the new Yugoslav Federation in the wake of the Second World War. Following a shared pattern in the region, the

12 Or “natio” in regard to the numerous Bulgarians from the region of Macedonia (both in the Pirin area - the Bulgarian part of Macedonia, and the descendants of emigrants from that geographical region as a whole), the “Slavophones” in Greece, and the Macedonians in the Republic of Macedonia. Some Macedonian subjects in the Republic of Macedonia proclaim themselves Bulgarian, but there are also Bulgarian citizens, who consider themselves Macedonian in opposition to (or not quite) “Bulgarian”. In 1991, the members of the politically active, but legally banned, “Macedonist” organisation OMO “Ilinden” numbered about 2500. According to some sociological surveys, the groups and individuals associating with OMO “Ilinden” (about 10,000), as well as other “Macedonist” options in the Pirin area, vary from extreme cases of regionalism and Macedonian nationalism to self-ascriptions like “Bulgarian Macedonians”, “Macedonian Bulgarians”, etc. We can safely say that nowadays the vast majority of the population originating from the region of Macedonia (both in Pirin area and in the interior of the country) consider themselves Bulgarians: see V. Rusanov, «Etnokulturnata situacija v Pirinska Makedonija», in: *Aspekti na etnokulturnata situacija v Balgarija*, Sofia, Asociacija ACCESS, 1994, pp. 174-81; I. Tomova, «Vlijanieto na “Makedonizma” v Pirinska Makedonija», in: *ibid.*, pp. 181-6; M. Ivanov, «Za makedonskata identichnost v Balgaria», in: *Aspekti na etnokulturnata situacija. Osem godini po-kasno*, Sofia, Asociacija ACCESS, Izdatelstvo “Otvoreno obshtestvo”, 2000, pp. 105-12. In the last census in Bulgaria (1992), “Macedonians” were not listed as a separate group.

relatively belated realisation of a separate Macedonian nation sprouted numerous projections back to the “roots” (ethno-genetic, political, and cultural) that stretch far back in time to the Middle Ages or even Antiquity. Up to the region’s factual division in a bunch of territories, the Bulgarian, the Serb and the Greek causes were based on a more or less diverging argumentation, and held different positions among the Slavic-speaking/Bulgarian-speaking local population.¹³ At its best (counting in the pro-Greek Patriarchists and the Slavic-speaking Muslims), the Bulgarian official doctrine claimed about 51% of the region’s population, known for its vast ethnic diversity.¹⁴ The solid influence of the Exarchate, the schools and the “free” state were also brought into play - along with the shared “revival” processes, they all fostered an adherence to the Bulgarian nation/idea in the minds of the local Slavonic population. Of course, it is rather difficult to say to what extent, statistically and chronologically. Albeit vehemently counterattacked by the Bulgarian side, the views that were expounded by the prominent Serb geographer Jovan Cvijić are well-known - he spoke of the “marginal” identity of the Slavic-speaking Macedonians in the framework of the Bulgarian/Serb national context (ex-

13 B. Gounaris, «Social Cleavages and National “Awakening” in Ottoman Macedonia», in: *East European Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 4., p. 412.

14 The most authoritative (and “objective”) Bulgarian statistical record is that of Vasil Kančov (1900): Bulgarians - 1,181,336 (52.31%, with the “Grekomans”/pro-Greek Patriarchists included; and 148,303 Bulgarian-speaking Muslims); Turks - 499,204 (22.11%, 4,240 Turkish-speaking Christians-Patriarchists); Greeks-228,702 (10.13%, “Grekomans” excluded; 14,373 Greek-speaking Muslims); Albanians - 128,711 (5.70%, 119,201 Christian and 9,510 Muslim); Vlachs - 80,767 (3.58%, 77,267 Christian and 3,500 Muslim); Jews - 67,840; Gypsies - 54,557 (35,057 Muslim and 19,500 Christian); Russians - 4,000; Circassians - 2,837; Serbs - 700 (400 Christian and 300 Muslim); Armenians - 300; “Negroes” (descendants of African slaves, Muslim) - 200; Georgians - 60; Other (West Europeans, etc.) - 9,010; Total - 2,258,224. – See V. Kančov, *Makedonija. Etnografija i statistika*, *Izbrani prvizvedenija*, Vol. II, Sofia, 1970 (2nd ed.), p. 590; according to another Bulgarian calculation, the major groups in Ottoman Thrace before 1912 were: Bulgarians - 410,407 (43.37%); Turks - 336,779 (34.77%); Greeks - 180,612 (18.64%); Others - 40 877 (4.22%): St. Shishkov, *Trakija predi i sled Evropejskata vojna*, Plovdiv, 1922, pp. 112-8; About different statistics and calculations (Ottoman, Balkan, Western, Russian), see K. Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914. Demographic and Social Characteristic*, Madison, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1985; H. R. Wilkinson, op. cit.; N. Mihov, *Naselenieto na Turcija i Bălgarija prez XVIII i XIX vek*, Vols. 1-5, Sofia, 1915-68; D. Lučev, «Iz izmerenijata na “neosporimoto” - săvremenni proekcii v nauchnoto pole na bălgarskata vizija vărhu Naselenieto na Makedonija v perioda 1878-1912 g. prez prizmata na statistikite», in: *Aspekti na etnokulturnata...*, pp. 343-81.

pressed along the lines “neither Bulgarians, nor Serbs”).¹⁵ His is merely one of the many attempts at deliberately generalising pre-national identity which had long existed in the Ottoman ethno-confessional context (“Orthodox Christian”, “Muslim”, “Catholic”, etc.). Yet far from being a purely imaginative value, it indeed furnished the cultural and linguistic foundations for the respective national projects. In that particular case, and before the crushing defeat in the “national unification” wars, the Bulgarian, or pro-Bulgarian, option enjoyed for a while the largest popularity among the Slavic-speaking population in the region.¹⁶ It remains an open question - and an ambiguous one - how to define traditional “pre-national” identities in a rural environment.¹⁷ All sources - from the Ottoman and the other documents ante 19th century to every piece of observation and research post, in the majority of the cases all too biased and categorical, allow for many diverging retrospective projections.

Much can be speculated on the meaning and functioning of the distinctive markers/boundaries of different oppositions of the type “we/the others” before their translation in concrete national content in the course of the 19th century. An attempt of that sort would entail a difficult abstraction of various local and individual cases, levels and variants of association with, or dissociation from, the “big” traditional ethnonyms that later became national appellations - like “Bulgarians”, “Serbs”, “Greeks”, “Turks”, etc..¹⁸ Not only the

15 “Amorphous Slav mass and Balkan soul”: see J. Cvijić, *Balkansko poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje*, Vol. II: *Psihičke osobine južnih Slovena*, Belgrade, 1931, pp. 109-43 (1st edition in French - *La Péninsule Balkanique*, Paris, 1918).

16 F. A. K. Yasamee, «Nationality in the Balkans: The Case of the Macedonians», in: G. G. Ozdogan, K. Saybaşili (eds.), *Balkans. A Mirror of the New International Order*, Istanbul, Eren, 1995, pp. 121-32.

17 B. Gounaris, «Social Cleavages and National “Awakening” in Ottoman Macedonia», pp. 411-21.

18 About the “imagined” yet real Bulgarian community in the Ottoman times (15th-17th), see Tzv. Georgieva, *Prostranstvo i prostranstva na bălgarite, XV-XVII vek*, Sofia, IMIR, Lik, 1999; on the meaning(s) of “Orthodox Christians”, “Catholics”, “Muslims”, “Jews”, “Armenians”, “Bulgarians”, “Greeks”, “Serbs”, “Gypsies”, “Albanians”, etc., in the Ottoman religious, ethno-confessional, social and “professional” context in the 16th-17th c, see Sv. Ivanova, «Malkite etnokonfesionalni grupi v bălgarskite gradove prez XVI-XVII vek», in: *Bălgarskijat shestnadeseti vek*, Sofia, Narodna Biblioteka “Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodij”, 1996, pp. 49-82; see also B. Braude, B. Lewis (eds.), *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Empire. The Functioning of a Plural Society*,

major peoples but often the less numerous Balkan ethnic groups were constituted by compact and disperse sub-groups, social strata, various local (dialect and religious), urban and rural components, including endogamies. That was the environment where the different national and state causes strove to materialise.

The Aromanians (the Romance-speaking Vlachs) lend a typical example in the 19th and the early 20th centuries. Being (externally) defined as a linguistic and cultural entity, they were divided not only in local groups that branched off through migrations to different parts of the peninsula; they encompassed also nomads (transhumant shepherds, often without permanent or only seasonal settlements), sparse villages of sedentary farmers, major or minor communities living in their own towns or in a number of the ethnically mixed Balkan cities.¹⁹ The most compact group of Vlach farmers in the Mâglen area (today in Greek Macedonia) were Muslims. Like the Slavic-speaking Muslims, they adhered to the politically dominant *millet* in their religion but were culturally opposed to the linguistically close nomads from the adjacent mountains by their sedentary lifestyle.²⁰ As for the urban Vlachs, both in their citadel - Epirus, Thessaly, Southern Albania, and in their Balkan Diaspora, they shared in the formation of the economic and cultural elites of the respective larger communities. They also contributed a number of prominent figures, especially for the Greek national cause - but also for the Serbian, the Bulgarian and the Romanian national causes.²¹

Vol.1, New York-London, Holmes & Meier, 1982.

19 G. Weigand, *Die Aromunen: ethnographisch-philologisch-historische Untersuchungen über das Volk der sogenannten Makedo-Romänen oder Zinzaren, Bd. I-II, Leipzig, 1894-95*; A. J. B. Wace, M. S. Thompson, *The Nomads of the Balkans. An Account of Life and Customs among the Vlachs of Northern Pindus*, London, Methuen & Co, 1914; T. J. Winnifrith, *The Vlachs. The History of a Balkan People*, New York, St. Martin Press, 1987.

20 G. Weigand, *Wlacho-Meglen. Eine ethnographisch-philologische Untersuchungen*, Leipzig, 1892.

21 M. Peifuss, *Die Aromunische Frage. Ihre Entwicklung von den Ursprüngen bis zum Frieden von Bukarest (1913) und die Haltung Österreich-Ungarns*, Vlnna-Cologne-Graz, Hermann Böhlaus Nachf., 1974; D. Popović, O Cincarima. *Prilozi pitanju postanka našeg građanskog društva*, Belgrade, 1937; T. Balkanski, D. Andrej, *Golemite vlasi sred Bălgarite. Onomastichna Prosopografija*, Veliko Tărnovo, 1996.

In principle, considering the different statistical proportions and the presence/absence of certain minor ethnic groups, the starting territories of the two Bulgarian states before their unification in 1885 did not make an exception to the common ethnic diversity of Macedonia, Thrace, or the other Balkan Ottoman provinces. All their imperfections considered, the official statistics still seem illustrative enough.²²

Among the statistically registered small groups, many had their own sub-ethnic and/or religious sub-groups. "Russians", for instance - the Orthodox immigrants who had arrived from the multi-ethnic empire in the 17th-19th centuries, included also Ukrainians, Belorussians, Cossacks, Old Believers, etc..²³ Beside the prevalent Sunnis and the less numerous "Aliani" (Kızılbash, Alevi) - the Tatars, various other groups composed the Turkic-speaking Muslims.²⁴ A "marginal" case among them (ethnically or socio-culturally) were the Yürüks/Yörüks, today completely assimilated in Bulgaria. They were the descendants of the Anatolian nomads: colonised on the Balkans in the 15th-16th centuries, after 1913-23 they left en masse Macedonia and the lands bordering on the Aegean Sea. Mostly transhumant shepherds and, in certain places, nomads like the Vlachs, they were socio-culturally distinctive and for the most part endogamous with respect to the outer Muslim communities.²⁵ The

22 See K. Jirecek, *Knjazhestvo Bălgaria*, Plovdiv, 1899, pp. 53-5 (1st edition in German: K. Jirecek, *Das Fürstentum Bulgariens. Seine Bodengestaltung, Natur, Bevölkerung, wirtschaftliche Zustände, geistige Cultur, Staatsverfassung, Staatsverwaltung und neueste Geschichte*, Vienna-Prague-Leipzig, 1891). The official statistical data have been regularly published since the 1880s. Between the 1890s and the 1960s, the main official source for the ethno-demographic picture of Bulgaria is the series *Statisticheski godishnici* (Statistic Yearbooks).

23 E. Anastasova, «Nekrasovci», in A. Krăsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bălgaria*, cit., pp. 272-85; E. Atanasova, *Staroobrjate v Bălgaria. Mit, istorija, identichnost*, Sofia, 1998.

24 Iv. Georgieva (ed.), *Bălgarskite Aliani. Sbornik etnografski materialii*, Sofia, 1991. According to the last census (1992), there are 83,537 "Shi'a Muslims" in Bulgaria: 58,060 have declared Turkish as their native (mother) tongue; 5,753 - Bulgarian; 18,342 - "Gypsy"; 617 - Tatar, and 460 - English: see *Rezultati ot prebrojavaneto na naselenieto i zhilishtnija fond na Republika Bălgaria kăm 4 dekemvri 1992*, Vol. I, Sofia, Nacionalen statisticheski institut, 1994, p. 222.

25 In Asia Minor they were divided in tribal groups, whereas in the Balkans they were organised in a special social category (auxiliary corps). In the contemporary Turkish national context their group identity is viewed as "a particularly difficult marginal case, since

majority of the existing statistics, however, place the Yürüks in one with the Turkish population. The same is always the case for some of the Muslim Gypsies/Roma.²⁶ Alongside with the urban population, the so-called Kariotes from present-day Southeastern Bulgaria formed a distinctive rural group within the Greek community which lived in the Bulgarian territories. They were bilingual (Greek and Bulgarian) but associated themselves with the Greeks, just like some of the Turkic-speaking Christian Gagauzes in Northeastern Bulgaria.²⁷

Both during the period and later, in the course of the 20th century, the migration processes added to, or took away from, the predominant groups various components and populations, perpetually rearranging the puzzle of small ethnic groups and sub-groups. In the Bulgarian case particularly, the

they satisfy only partially the criteria for ethnic definition: they are tribally organised, but recognise no apical ancestor; they have been treated as distinct for centuries, but speak Turkish and are mostly Sunnis; they have been handled administratively as a class, but have no unifying organisation other than occupation; finally, they can settle and lose their nomadic ethos, but still be regarded as Yörük by those around them. It appears that the consciousness of tribal descent, even without an overall common ancestry, is strong enough to define not only each group, but even the whole, in distinction to the majority, and that the memory alone of a nomadic occupation and the economic antagonism of the past is enough to sustain this for a century or even more, now sharpened by resentment at the greater access to power of the older villages": A. Andrews, «Introduction», in: *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, cit., p. 25; about the Anatolian Yürüks: D. Bates, *Nomads and Farmers. A Study of Yörük in Southwestern Turkey*, *Anthropological Papers*, Vol. 52, Museum of Anthropology, University of Michigan, 1973; J.-P. Roux, *Les traditions des nomades de la Turquie méridionale*, Paris, 1970; on the last Yürüks groups in Bulgaria before 1913: A. Kalionski, «Yurucite i etnicheskoto samoopredelenie na turskoto naselenie v Devinsko (Borino i Gjovren)», in: *Etnicheskata kartinav Bălgaria. Prouchvanija 1992 g.*, Sofia, Club'90, 1993, pp. 97-104. There were about 3300 Yürüks in Yugoslav Macedonia in 1980s; about their culture and identity, see *Etnogneza na Jurucite i nivnoto naseluvanje na Balkanot. Materijali od Trkaleznata masa, održana vo Skopje na 17. i 18. 11. 1983 godina*, Skopje, 1986.

26 Due to the lower social status of the Gypsy/Roma community in Bulgaria, many of them prefer to declare themselves as Bulgarians, Turks etc. According to recent sociological surveys, roughly 50% of the Roma in Bulgaria are Christians: I. Tomova, *The Gypsies in the Transition Period*, Sofia, IMIR, 1995; I. Tomova, «Romi», in A. Krăsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bălgaria*, cit., pp. 329-35; E. Marushiakova, V. Popov, *Ciganite v Bălgaria*, Sofia, Club'90, 1993.

27 G. Valchinova, «Gărci», in A. Krăsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bălgaria*, cit., pp. 207-20; N. Daskalova-Zheljaskova, *Karioti. Etnicheska prinadlezhnost i kulturno-bitovi cherti v kraja na XIX i nachaloto na XX vek*, Sofia, 1989.

occasions best studied or most widely known belong to the migration-related choice of better economic, political, social and ethnic circumstances by communities that were recognised as "fellow-countrymen" - either traditionally, or from the vantage point prescribed by the national ideology. Within the Balkan framework of wars, uprisings and ethnic strife, that choice was increasingly the result of violence.²⁸ Once an independent Bulgarian state had emerged, a similar choice - voluntarily or forcibly, translated into a "national" option for large parts of the Bulgarian-speaking Orthodox population in Macedonia, Thrace, Dobrudja, Constantinople/ Istanbul and Asia Minor. The same happened with some of the Bulgarian Catholics in Banat, who embarked on a voluntary return to the "historical Motherland", and the Uniats (the members of the Bulgarian Church united with Rome) from Macedonia and Thrace, who were forced to emigrate during and after the Balkan Wars.²⁹

A number of migration currents that were spurred chiefly by economic and social considerations marked the period 1830-78; some had started earlier, and many continued well into the 20th century. By the middle of the 19th century, the Eastern Bulgarian provinces, both economically and culturally, gradually took the lead. Constantinople - the metropolis, and the Western part of Asia Minor (the regions around Bursa and Smyrna/Izmir) also offered comparatively better chances than what the local environment could propose. Western and Northwestern Macedonia, as well as certain other highland regions, had been beaming migrants for centuries - masons, wood-carvers and other craftsmen, transhumant shepherds, merchants. In the 19th century, an

28 Although there were many other reasons and motivations. The social and economic conditions in Bulgaria and Macedonia led to emigrations to the two Americas, Australia and Central Europe in the 1890s and the first decades of the 20th c: Bl. Njagulov, E. Milanov, «Bălgarskite obshtnosti zad granica», in: A. Krăsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bălgaria*, p. 416; B. Gounaris, «Emigration from Macedonia in the Early Twentieth Century», in: *Journal of Modern Greek Studies*, Johns Hopkins University Press, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1989, pp. 133-53.

29 More than 10,000 Uniats immigrated to Bulgaria after the Balkan Wars: Sv. Eldarov, «Uniati», in: A. Krăsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bălgaria*, cit., pp. 398-406; I. Elenkov, *Katolicheskata carkva ot iztochen obrjad v Bălgaria. Ot vremeto na nejnoto uchredjavane s prisăedinenieto na chast ot blăgarskija narod kăm Rim prez 1860 g. do sredata na XX vek*, Sofia, Katolicheska apostolicheska ekzarhija, 2000, pp. 211-58 (edited also in Italian: I. Elenkov, *La chiesa Cattolica di rito Bizantino-Slavo in Bulgaria. Dalla sua costituzione nel 1860 fino alla metà del XX sec.*, Sofia, Montecchi, 2000).

increasingly strong impulse at the back of these motions was the Albanian demographic pressure. Thus as early as the end of the 17th century, the Orthodox “Arnauti” moved far east. Although it basically denoted Albanians, the term was also traditionally used in a regional meaning, designating Slavic-speaking/Bulgarian-speaking, and Albanian-speaking Christians from the Western Balkans.³⁰ East was also one of the chief destinations for the broad dispersion of the Western Balkan Vlachs (both nomads and urbanites - merchants, craftsmen, inn-keepers), whose extreme edge eastward reached the vicinities of Bursa.³¹ The Vlach migration was driven by the mutinies in Albania and Epirus from the turn of the 19th century which ended in separatism and political chaos; yet another motive was the search for new pastures and opportunities for trade (in this case, mainly amid a number of “Greek” urban communities).

At the beginning of the 19th century, the young Serbian state attracted, among many others, rural colonists from Northern and Western Bulgaria.³² The same picture described the Bulgarian state after 1878. Along with the growing numbers of refugees that streamed in from the “ethnic territories”, one-time political and economic emigrants to Romania, Russia and other countries also began to return. Some 7,000 Bulgarian Catholics from Banat, where an exodus had settled after the 1690s, moved back.³³ A multi-faced inflow of other colonists and “specialists” followed-peasants, military men, intellectuals; Russians, Czechs, Slovaks, Germans, etc. Bulgaria welcomed a comparatively strong group of Armenians who fled from the first outbreaks of genocide in Constantinople and Asia Minor. In 1896, the established local

30 D. Jaranov, «Preselnicheskoto dvizhenie na bǎlgari ot Makedonija i Albanija kǎm iztochnite bulgarski zemi prez XV do XIX vek», in: *Makedonski pregled*, Vol. 7, (2-3), 1932, pp. 63-118. Today there is only one village of Albanian-speaking Christians in Bulgaria: Mandrica in the Eastern Rhodope, near the border with Greece.

31 Iv. Georgieva (ed.), *Armǎnite v Blgaria. Istoriko-etnografsko izsledvane*, Sofia, 1998; Sv. Rakshieva, «Pastirite ot Gramos», in: *Bǎlgarska Etnologija*, Vol. XXII, No. 1, 1996, pp. 53-65; Th. Burada, *O cǎlǎtorie la Romǎnii din Bithinia (Asia micǎ)*, Iași, 1893.

32 J. Cvijić, op. cit., Vol. I, Belgrade, 1922, pp. 174-5, 201, 219, 228-9.

33 I. Bokova, «Katolici», in A. Krǎsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bǎlgaria*, cit., pp. 260-71.

Armenian community accepted some 20,000 new members, arriving mainly from Constantinople.³⁴

Approximately from the late 17th century to the first decade of the 20th century, peasant Romanian colonists from Wallachia, Transylvania and Banat crossed the Ottoman possessions astride the Timok river in a search for less oppressive social conditions and land tenure. They made a considerably powerful community in today’s Eastern Serbia and Northwestern Bulgaria.³⁵

Driven by economic and political reasons, the south (Ottoman) and the north (Wallachian and Moldavian) banks of the Danube had for centuries exchanged population.³⁶ Ever since the end of the 18th century and especially during the 19th (1830s-1860s), the Russian-Turkish military conflicts, the political and economic emigration, and the colonist policy of the Romanovs’ Empire in the former Tatar steppes managed to plant a number of Bulgarian rural and urban communities and regions in the Romanian lands, Bessarabia and Ukraine.³⁷

34 Around 23,000 other Armenian refugees came to Bulgaria from Asia Minor in 1912-18 and after the Greek-Turkish War (1919-22): E. Miceva, S. Papazjan-Tanieljan, «Armenci», in A. Krǎsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bǎlgaria*, cit., pp. 142-3.

35 Circa 50,000-100,000, according to Bulgarian statistics and estimations in the 1880s-1900s (the Aromanians were included with those speaking “Romanian as mother tongue”, but were listed as a distinct ethnic group after 1880s; 1,843 “Koutsovlachs” or “Cincars” were registered in 1910 but the number of nomadic Vlachs is unclear; there are also several groups of “Vlach”-speaking wandering Gypsies); up to 250,000 “Romanians” in Romanian sources. In Eastern Serbia, the number of Vlachs/Romanians was about 200,000: M. Mladenov, «Vlashkoto naselenie v Bǎlgaria. Razprostranenie, proizhodi toponimija», in: *Bǎlgarska Etnologija*, Vol. XXI, 1995, Izvanreden broj: Vlasite v Bǎlgaria, pp. 8-22; N. Zajakov, «Istoricheski prichini za formirane na Vlashkoto naselenie vǎv Vidinsko», ibid., pp. 28-51; Bl. Njagulov, «Problemǎt za Vlasite v Bulgaria mezhdu dvete svetovni vojni», ibid., pp. 54-6; St. Romanski, «Romǎnite mezhdu Timok i Morava», in: *Makedonski pregled*, Vol. II, No. 1, 1926, pp. 36, 49; G. Weigand, *Romǎnen und Aromunen in Bulgarien*, Leipzig, 1907.

36 M. Mladenov, N. Zhechev, Bl. Njagulov (eds.), *Bǎlgarite v Rumǎnija, XV-XX vek. Dokumenti i materialii*, Sofia, 1994.

37 K. Veliki, V. Trajkov (eds.), *Bǎlgarskata emigracija vǎv Vlahia sled Rusko-turskata vojna 1828-1829. Sbornikot dokumenti*; V. Djakovich, *Bǎlgarska Besarabija. Istoriko-etnografski ocherk*, Sofia, 1918; V. Djakovich, *Bǎlgarite v Besarabija. Kratak istoricheski ocherk*. Sofia, 1930; N. S. Derzhavin, «Bolgarskie kolonii v Rossii. Tavricheskaja, Hersonskaja i Bessarabskaja gubernii. Materiali po slavjanskoj etnografii», in: *Zbornik za narodni umotvorenija, nauka i knizhnina*, Vol. 29, 1914. According to some Bulgarian estimations, today there are 120,000 Bulgarians in the Republic of Moldova and 470,000 in Ukraine. Officially, there were 10,000 Bulgarians in Romania

When the war of 1828-29 ended, Orthodox Christians from the Eastern Bulgarian lands moved out by the thousand in 1830-34, heading mainly for Russian Bessarabia. 100,000 temporarily or permanently lodged in Wallachia. The vast majority came from Southeastern Bulgaria, Dobrudja, and the western coasts of the Black Sea. In their new homes, they were called "Bulgarians" - but also "Serbs", "Bulgaro-Sebs", "Serbo-Bulgarians", and, of course, "Greeks".³⁸ There were indeed some Greeks, Armenians, Romanians and Lipovani (Russian Old Believers) among them, but they were only small groups and individuals compared to the Bulgarian mass. The Wallachian authorities clearly associated the predominant part of the newcomers with Slavic language and the Orthodox religion (the Constantinople Patriarchate before the Bulgarian Exarchist movement finally succeeded in winning its autonomy).

The Russian authorities were rather surprised to discover among the colonists quite a few Orthodox Christians who were culturally close to the Bulgarians but were speaking Turkish as a native language. Those people were the Gagauzes, forming today a national minority in Ukraine and Moldavia and a small ethnic group in Northeastern Bulgaria. They had a distinctive identity, and some of their (religiously and politically) active representatives stood up as zealous supporters of the Greek Patriarchate.³⁹ Within the boundaries of the Bulgarian state, Hellenism was gradually abandoned as a viable religious and political identification. Individual ethnicity grew complementary to the common national (civic) framework. The assimilation processes in Bulgaria continually diminished their numbers, while the majority of the Gagauzes found themselves in Russia and, subsequently, the USSR. There, they became one of the many minorities enjoying its own standardised written language and cultural autonomy.⁴⁰

in 1992: Bl. Njagulov, E. Milanov, op. cit., p. 416.

38 K. Veliki, V. Trajkov, op. cit., p. 10.

39 There were two Gagauz "parties" - pro-Greek and pro-Bulgarian: K. Jireček, op. cit., pp. 166-71.

40 In the 1980s, there were about 200,000 Gagauzes in the USSR (in the Moldavian Soviet Republic, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Central Asia). Their number in the Moldavian SSR was 153,000: Zh. Stamenova, «Gagauzi», in: A. Krăsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bălgaria*, cit., p. 191; Zh. Stamenova, «Gagauzite - dinamika na etnichnostta», in: *Aspekti*

By its large scale, that migration heralded the periodical inflows of Bulgarians (population self-associating with the Bulgarian nation and statehood) to the "free" lands. They followed every uprising, every war, and little by little, spontaneously or forcibly, in small groups or migration waves, grew into a significant component of the modern nation. In the years after 1913-18, the 20s and the 40s of the 20th century, more than several hundred thousand Bulgarian emigrants from Macedonia, Thrace, Dobrudja, parts of present-day Southern Serbia, and Asia Minor migrated or were exchanged under respective agreements and conventions (mainly against Turkish, Greek, or Romanian population).⁴¹ The trend to mass emigration became apparent immediately after the events of 1877. According to various estimates, more than 75,000 refugees fled Macedonia and Thrace in 1877-78 to settle in the Bulgarian Principality and Eastern Rumelia⁴². The Gorna Djumaya revolt, which was set up in 1902 by the emigrant Supreme Macedonian Committee, drove out 2,000-3,000 refugees, while the big Ilinden-Preobrazhenie Uprising of 1903 pushed another 32,000 refugees from Macedonia and Thrace to Bulgaria, plus several thousand more who headed "for America".⁴³ In the aftermath of the Balkan Wars from 1913-15, around 200,000 refugees from Macedonia, Eastern Thrace, Dobrudja and Asia Minor left their homes to stay in Bulgaria provisionally

na etnokulturnata situacija. Osem godini po-kăсно, pp. 112-17; Bl. Njagulov, E. Milanov, «Bălgarskite obshtnosti zad granica», in: *ibid.*, p. 420; I. Gradeshliev, *Gagauzite*, Dobrich, 1993; Sir. Dimitrov, «Gagauzkijat problem», in: *Bălgarite v Severnoto prichernomorie*, Vol. 4, Veliko Tarnovo, 1995, p. 147-68.

41 According to some estimates, about 1,200,000 refugees came to Bulgaria in 1878-1940 from Macedonia, Thrace, Southern Morava and the Timok areas/Southeastern Serbia, Asia Minor and Dobrudja (both from Southern Dobrudja, annexed by Romania in 1913, and Northern Dobrudja after 1940, when the southern parts of that region were restored to Bulgaria): Bl. Njagulov, E. Milanov, op. cit., p. 414.

42 V. Trajkov, «Migracionnite dvizhenija na Bălgarite prez prizmata na dokumentite», in: A. Pantev, V. Trajkov, G. Stojanova, K. Georgieva, K. Nedevska (eds.), *Migracionni dvizhenija na Bălgarite 1878-1944*, Vol. 1(1878-1912), Sofia, Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. Kliment Ohridski", 1993, p. 9.

43 V. Trajkov, «Otvuk, posledici i znachenie na văstanieto», in: *Nacionalno-osvoboditelno dvizhenie na makedonskite i trakijskite bălgari*, Vol. II: *Organizirano nacionalno-osvoboditelno dvizhenie. Ilindensko-Preobrazhensko văstanie (1893-1903)*, Sofia, Makedonski nauchen institut - Institut po istorija pri BAN, 1995, pp. 387-8.

(until the re-occupation of some of these territories by Bulgaria in 1915-18) or for good.⁴⁴ When the Turkish army again took hold of Eastern Thrace during the Second Balkan War, practically none of the Bulgarian Christian population had remained. The waves of Bulgarian refugees included Turkic-speaking Christians as well (also called “Gagauzi” or “Surgutchi”), this time around fleeing Eastern Thrace.⁴⁵ Later on, another group of them responded like “Greeks” and joined the Christian exodus from Asia Minor and Turkish Thrace to Greece in the wake of the Balkan Wars and the Greek-Turkish conflict (1912-13; 1919-22). Alongside with the Greek population from Asia Minor, Karamanians - Turkish-speaking Anatolian Christians, Armenians, and others trailed on.

The above mentioned migrations of Bulgarians - as well as the ones that followed, and that were even bigger in scale - made a substantial impact both culturally and politically. They were instrumental in the country’s ethno-demographic and regional development by taking over entire areas, villages and neighbourhoods. Immigrants were actively involved on the cultural scene, but they were also embroiled in the political polarities and radicalism of the 20s -both left and right. Macedonian irredentism transmuted into various radical organisations (Bulgarian nationalist, procommunist, “Macedonist”), “mafias” and political terrorism. A number of fatal decisions shortly before and during the Balkan Wars were taken not without the sway of a certain military-political Macedonian lobby.

What matters for us here, however, are two other important corollaries to these events. The first concerns the painful “emigrant” ethos, albeit presently fading, as part of the Bulgarian national identity. It has been especially conducive to the sense of a “uniquely tragic” national fate, shared in principle by all Balkan nations. Yet the Balkan conflicts and specifically their migration-related consequences for Bulgaria proved crucial for the reciprocal

44 St. Trifonov, «Bezhangskijat vāpros v bālgaro-turskite otnoshenija (1913-1918)», in: *Izvestija na Bulgarskoto istorichesko družestvo*, Vol. 37, 1985, pp. 169-204; St. Trifonov, «Bezhangskijat vāpros v Bālgaria (1913-1915)», in: *Godishnik na Sofijskija Universitet “Kliment Ohridski”/Annuaire del’Universite de Sofia “Kliment Ohridski”*, Vol. 78, 1985, pp. 188-235; L. Muetich, *Razorenieto na trakijските bālgari prez 1913 godina*, Sofia, 1918.

45 N. Robev, «Trakijските gagauzi», in *Vekove*, 3, 1988, pp. 36-43; Zh. Stamenova, «Gagauzi», in A. Krāsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bālgaria*, cit., p. 190; K. Mladenov, «Odrinskite gagauzi», in: *Archiv za poselishtni prouchvanija*, Vol. III, 1938, pp. 51-61.

negative treatment of some of the country’s minorities. Bulgaria’s national history thus demonstrates not only the traditional climate of inter-ethnic tolerance and constitutionally guaranteed minority rights, but also the moments of repressive actions on the part of the state authorities and certain xenophobic feelings. During the reviewed period, they were levelled mainly against the Muslims, the Greeks and the Serbs -both in the core state territory (minimally expanded) and in the briefly possessed territories in 1912-18 (and 1941-44). I will not dwell here on the well-known pressure methods, direct or indirect, nor on the short-lived outbreaks of instigated intolerance. The pumped nationalistic passions from the first decade of the 20th century make a prominent example, venting finally in anti-Greek pogroms (in the broad sense of the word, since Bulgarians traditionally stand a far cry from the Central European and Russian anti-Semitism). These were a direct consequence of the Bulgarian-Greek conflicts in Macedonia where armed irredentist structures on both sides (“propagandas”) engaged in constant clashes. A mass terror over the supporters of the two rival causes (Bulgarians, Greeks, Bulgarian/Slavic-speaking “Grekomans”) swept the Ottoman province.⁴⁶ As a result, some 20,000 Greeks left Bulgaria between 1906-10.⁴⁷

Yet the Muslim migrations remained by far the most numerous. Flowing to or out of Bulgaria, they were the outcome of the wars and forced deportation, but also the reluctance of the Muslims to be ruled by Christians when the recent political changes shattered a century-old *status quo*.

Following Russia’s take-over of Crimea and the resulting regula-

46 Hr. Siljanov, *Osvoboditelnite borbi na Makedonija*, Vol. II, Sofia, 1983; D. Dakin, *The Greek Struggle in Macedonia 1897-1913*, Thessaloniki, 1966.

47 G. Valchinova, op. cit., p. 209; after 1912-13 and especially in the 1920s, 45,000-50,000 came to Greece from Bulgaria; 90,000-305,000 came to Bulgaria from Greek Macedonia and Thrace. The total number of migrants from/to the two states considerably varies, as it depends on the exclusion/inclusion of different waves of refugees in the number of the “exchanged” population (according to the Bulgarian-Greek conventions from 1924 and 1927-28): S. Ladas, *The Exchange of Minorities: Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey*, New York, 1932, pp. 122-3, 446; G. Vālchinova, op. cit., pp. 210, 217; *Rezultati otprebrojavaneto na naselenieto i zhlishtnijafond na Republika Bālgaria kām 4 dekemvri 1992*, Vol. VI, No. 1, Sofia, Nacionalen statisticheski institut, 1994, p. VI. About 61,000 Bulgarians were “exchanged” for 100,000 Rumanians in 1940: Kr. Kānev, op. cit., p. 83.

tions, hundreds of thousands Crimean and Nogay Tatars ebbed out to the Ottoman territories -Asia Minor, Rumelia (European Turkey), etc. Certain estimates place the number of these refugees over the period 1783-1922 at 1,800,000-3,000,000 (peasants, urban dwellers, steppe nomads from various tribal groups). In the 1860s, some 46,000-50,000 Nogay Tatars were installed in Dobrudja. The final phase of the conquest of Caucasus produced similar developments. The two decades from 1859 to 1879 saw 1.5-2 million "Circassians" leave the Russian possessions, to settle mainly in Asia Minor - but also in Northern Bulgaria, Macedonia, Thrace. 40,000 families, or approximately 250,000 people, provisionally or permanently settled down in the Danubian vilayet (Northern Bulgaria and Dobrudja)⁴⁸. The Ottoman appellation "Çerkes", meaning in principle "Circassian" and related groups, but also any "Muslim from Northern Caucasus", covered in fact various groups, differing both in language and identity, and coming from one of the world's most ethnically diverse regions. Beside the Circassians proper, the flux of refugees included also Adighe, Abkhasians, Kumuks, Lesghins, Avars, etc.⁴⁹

The provisional Russian government which ruled Bulgaria for nine months after the creation of the Bulgarian Principality and Eastern Rumelia, made and effected a decree barring Circassians and Tatars from remaining within the Bulgarian territories. A mass exodus to the neighbouring European and Asian Ottoman lands followed. Their common fate, the power of Islam as a shared religion, and of the Turkish language as a *koine*, predicated the gradual assimilation of the sparse Circassians by the Turkish population.⁵⁰ For a century and a half, similar developments affected the local Tatar community as well.⁵¹

48 K. Karpat, *Ottoman Population*, cit., pp. 66-9; M. Pinson, «The Ottoman Colonisation of the Circassians in Rumili after the Crimean War», in: *Etudes Balkaniques*, Vol. 3, 1972.

49 K. Karpat, *The Turks of Bulgaria:..., cit.*, pp. 27, 66-9; *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, cit., pp. 91-2, 105-7, 167-70.

50 According to the 1992 census, 573 individuals declared themselves as Circassians (343 specified Bulgarian as their mother tongue; 64 Turkish; 82 "Gypsy"; 13 Tatar; 71 other): *Rezultati ot prebrojavaneto...*, cit., Vol. I, p. 223. The present state of the "Circassian" identity is unclear.

51 St. Antonov, I. Miglev, «Tatari», in A. Krăsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bălgaria*, cit., pp. 356-70.

As a whole, the Muslim population forms Bulgaria's most significant religious minority. The enclosed statistics clearly illustrate how significant - even after the mass migration during and after the Russian-Turkish War of 1877-78. By 1879, Turks, Yürüks, Circassians and Pomaks flee the new Christian states - the Bulgarian Principality and Eastern Rumelia, by thousands. Kemal Karpat estimates their total number at even 1.5 million.⁵² In any event, the periodical displacement of Muslims became a recurrent feature in Bulgaria's ethno-demographic development down to the end of the 20th century.⁵³

However, the drastic violation of the human and religious rights of the Bulgarian Turks and Muslims evolved into a clear-cut ideology and practice only during the Communist period (1944-89), reaching its climax in the 1980s. Yet the Balkan Wars had set the earliest precedent with a large-scale campaign attempting to Christianise the Pomaks (the Bulgarian-speaking Muslims).⁵⁴ Their rights, enshrined in their Muslim names and worship, were restored in 1914 just before the outbreak of the First World War.

The fact that the Pomaks speak Bulgarian supplied the fundamental argument for several subsequent attempts to sever them from the Muslim traditions in a drive for "Bulgarisation". On a number of occasions - and in certain periods, the Bulgarian authorities interpreted that message along the lines of forced restoration to Christendom (which was allegedly no less forcibly taken away in the Ottoman days), and "modernity". That particular community was gradually embraced in Bulgarians' "own" sphere during the National Revival, endowed, however, with an essentially "border" identity - neither Turkish, nor

52 K. Karpat, *The Turks of Bulgaria:..., cit.*, p. 70.

53 The numbers of Turkish emigrants from Bulgaria vary considerably with the different sources, estimations and periods: circa 350,000 (1878-1912); 270,000 (1893-1913); 450,000 (1880-1926); 117,000 (1923-44); 170,000 (1923-39); 123,000 (1927-45); 270,000 (1945-80); 156,000 (1946-65); 270,000 (1948-84). Turks accounted for 19-20% (circa 603,000-607,000) of united Bulgaria's total population in 1887; 11% (504,000) in 1910; 10-11% in the 1920s-30s (577,000- 607,000); 8.6-9.6% in the 1940s-1950s (675,000-656,000); 9.1-9.5% (806,000-850,000) in 1975- 85; 800,052, or 9.4%, declared themselves as Turks in 1992: V. Stojanov, op. cit., pp. 235-7; *Rezultati ot prebrojavaneto...*, cit., Vol. I, p. 194. Permanent migration kept the percentage of the Turkish minority relatively constant - circa 9-10% of the total population - for decades.

54 V. Georgiev, St. Trifonov, *Pokrăstvaneto na Bălgarite Mohamedani (1912-1913). Dokumenti*, Sofia, Akademichno izdatelstvo "Prof. Marin Drinov", 1995.

Christian Bulgarian. Pomaks' Bulgarian language, "cultural retardation", geographical and communal isolation (locked in the Rhodope Mountains and the Balkan Range) all contributed to periodically push to the forefront the idea of their "provisional", "unstable", and therefore "reversible" identity. Generally coming down to a fitful and incoherent pattern, the government's campaigns for "integration" make only a small part of Pomaks' own history in Bulgaria.⁵⁵ And only one of the various factors behind the series of Pomak migrations to Turkey (testifying to their religious or pro-Turkish national choice).⁵⁶

The Bulgarian option, however, albeit variously defined in time, continually remained in the air - locally, individually, generationally. It materialised in a Christian, atheist, secular, or simply civic and national garment.⁵⁷ Both in the past and today, for the Bulgarian-speaking Muslims who remained within their own, comparatively closed tradition, the thesis of the German ethnologist Evangelos Karagiannis applies. To paraphrase his key arguments, in their position of a "post-Ottoman" relic, a community that would experience rapid assimilation outside its native mountains, the Pomaks can be viewed as the standard rather than the exception in the diverse spectrum of extinct or existing group identities. Their identity rests precisely on their socio-cultural "marginality" (in the context of numerically and politically dominant nation).⁵⁸ In a different mode and extent of validity, that summarised conclusion can be applied as well to the above mentioned small ethnic groups - e, Karakachans, Vlachs, etc.

55 See Y. Konstantinov, «An Account of Pomak Conversions in Bulgaria (1912-1990)», in: *Minderheitenfragen in Südosteuropa*, München, Hrsg. v. G. Seewann, 1992, pp. 343-57.

56 About the first steps of Turkish nationalism in the Rhodope area, see M. Gruev, «Bălgante Mjusjulmam i kemalistkoto dvizherue v Rodopite (1919-1939)», in: *Modernijat istorik. Văobrazhenie, informiranost, pokolenija*, Sofia, 1999, pp. 218-25. About the Pomak emigration and communities in Turkey, see B. Gjuzelev, «Bălgarite Mohamedani v Turcija», in: *Istoricheski pregled*, 10, 1990; *Ethnic Groups in the Republic of Turkey*, cit., pp. 92-7.

57 A. Kalionski, «The Pomak Dilemma», cit., pp. 125-6.

58 E. Karagiannis, *Zur Etnicität der Pomaken Bulgariens*, Münster, Lit Verlag, 1997. About the traditional identity of the Pomaks in Bulgaria, see Tzv. Georgieva, «Pomaci - bălgari mjusjulmani», in A. Krăsteva (ed.), *Obshtnosti i Identichnosti v Bălgaria*, cit., pp. 286-308.

The ethnographic, demographic and other studies and observations from the late 19th and the early 20th centuries, including travellers' accounts, often followed the unexpected migrational "appearance" of whole new groups that previously huddled behind the respective ethno-confessional terms ("Christians"/ "Greeks", "Muslims"/"Turks").

The nomadic Karakachans/Sarakatsani make one of the most interesting cases.⁵⁹ Up to the beginning of the 19th century, they were concentrated mainly in Epirus and Thessaly. Approximately in the reviewed interval, from the 1820s to the 1910s, they spread towards Macedonia, Eastern Serbia, Bulgaria, and Thrace, reaching also the western parts of Asia Minor. Caused by the same reasons, their migration repeated the chronological and geographical framework of the Vlach migration. Unlike the Vlachs, however, the Karakachans were almost 100% nomads without any immovable property or urban colonies. Their isolated existence of highland shepherds kept them for long "no one's people" despite their Greek language and Orthodox religion. Like so many other small groups, they long remained simply who they were, without the need to identify with any of the big Balkan communities except in religion. Thus their way of life and their cultural conservatism sustained for a long time a social self-isolation-if not absolute, at least highly selective in its external contacts. The pastoral migrations, the lack of permanent settlements and Karakachans' traditional self-appellation as "Vlachs" precluded the "discovery" of their specific ethnic and cultural identity up to the beginning of the 20th century. And that, despite their quite conspicuous presence on the peninsula, measuring over 100,000 people with hundreds of thousands sheep and goats (?). Up to the 1950s-1960s, the official statistics usually either included

59 C. Höeg, *Les Sarakatsans. Une tribu nomade grecque*, Voll. I-II, Paris-Copenhagen, 1925-26; G. Kavadias, *Pasteurs-nomades méditerranéens. Les sarakatsans de Grèce*, Paris, 1965; J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage*, Oxford University Press, 1964; A. Beuermann, *Fernweidewirtschaft in Südosteuropa. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeographie des östlichen Mittelmeergebietes*, Braunschweig, 1967; Zh. Pimpireva, *Karakachanite v Bălgaria*, Sofia, 1998; V. Marinov, *Prinos kam izuchavane na proizhoda, bita i kulturata na karakachanite v Bălgaria*, Sofia, 1964; A. Kalionski, «Karakachanski etjud», in: I. Elenkov (ed.), *Nova Publichnost. Bălgarskite debati 1998*, Sofia, Fondacija "Otvoreno obshtestvo", 1999; Dr. Antonijevic, *Obredi i običaji balkanskih stočara (Posebna izdanja Balkanološkog instituta SANU, Vol. 16)*, Belgrade, 1982.

the Karakachans with the “Vlachs”, or practically failed to count them.⁶⁰ The 1950s-1970s finally saw their sedentarisation, which was brought about by a number of political, economic and environmental factors - economic development turned the winter pastures along the Aegean coast into arable land (in Greece), and a plan for forced sedentarisation also took its toll (in Bulgaria).⁶¹

In contrast to the Pomak case, different studies were comparatively late to “discover” the Karakachans as “their own”. The Greek ethnographic tradition counts them in linguistically and culturally, the Bulgarian tradition - ethno-genetically. Both rely on the “archaism”, the conservatism and the isolation of the Karakachan culture, in which some Greek scholars read the legacy of pre-classical Hellas, while the Bulgarian vision finds the heritage of the ancient Thracians (in due course Hellenised themselves).⁶² Along with the Slavs and the Turkic-speaking (proto)Bulgarians, the Thracians have been officially (historiographically, ethnogenetically) recognised, or selected, as the chief constituents of the medieval population, and - by extension - the modern Bulgarian nation. If I mention that fact in the general migration context, it is precisely to underscore the selective mode of operation in picking out one’s “national” predecessors (ethnogenetic constituents) among the dozens of European and Asian peoples and tribes that have periodically invaded the “Bulgarian” space down the centuries. Similar constructs had been proposed

60 The most reliable statistical data was collected in Greece in the 1950s-60s. According to these estimations (which exclude Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania and Turkey), there were 70,000/80,000-110,000 Karakachans (10,000-12,000 families), still nomadic, with more than 1,800,000 sheep and goats: G. Kavadias, op. cit., pp. 20-1; A. Beuermann, op. cit., p. 154; A. Hatzimihali, *Sarakatsani*, Vol. I-A, Athens, 1957, (Parartima) pp. 85-6.

61 Today, the Karakachan cultural tradition is threatened with extinction, and the group - with ethnic assimilation (“Grecisation” or „Bulgarisation“). Still, there are chances (and signs) that the Karakachan cultural identity in Bulgaria may survive in a „invented“ form: see Zh. Pimpireva, op. cit., pp. 188-95; A. Kalionski, «Karakachanite v Bălgaria - izchezvashta tradicija i novi identichnosti», in: *Aspekti na etnokulturnata situacija. Osem godini po-kăсно*, cit., pp. 84-91.

62 A. Kalionski, «Karakachanski etjud», cit., pp. 124-6; as “Greek-speaking Vlachs” or “nomads with a Turkic ethnonym” (“Karakachans” meaning “black departers”, “black nomads”), this group was also claimed by some Romanian and Turkish authors: see Th. Capidan, «Saracacianii. Studiu asupra unei populațiuni romanești grecizate», in: *Dacoromania*, Vol. 4, Cluj, 1924-26, pp. 923-59; A. Caferoğlu, «Balkan’ın Karakaçan Çobanı», in *Güney-Doğu Avrupa Araştırmaları Dergisi*, Vol. 1, İstanbul Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi, 1972, pp. 1-6.

for the Gagauzes (“Turkicised Christian Bulgarians” or simply “descendants of the (proto)Bulgarians”), the Kariotes (“Hellenised Bulgarians”), and other less numerous groups. That line of argumentation reached the limits of absurdity with the attempt to justify the forced assimilation of Bulgaria’s most sizeable minority, both demographically and politically - the Turks. They were dubbed the descendants of Islamised and “Turkicised” Bulgarians, (proto)Bulgarians or other “kin” steppe tribes like the Cumans and the Pechenegs.⁶³

It is not possible here, nor it is necessary, to elaborate on the trends in the development of the processes of acculturation and assimilation, or the “inventions” of the separate ethnic traditions and borders (in their constant and dynamic re-defining) during the past century.⁶⁴ Past migrations come part and parcel with the mythologised notion that various larger and smaller communities in Bulgaria have about their own history. One is certain though - new emigrational attitudes have emerged. In a country that is just making a fresh democratic start in the grip of impoverishment and unstable economy, they possibly reveal minorities’ growing awareness of their ethnic and cultural differences. For some of the Karakachans that means seasonal jobs in Greece, for some of the Turks - temporary or permanent settlement in Turkey, for the Bulgarians from the former Soviet zone - emigration to Bulgaria, for the Jews - emigration to Israel. In a new outfit, and precipitated by different causes, comparatively mass migrations have again become a demographically consequential phenomenon in the life of the country and the nation. Bulgarians themselves probably make the most numerous emigrant group (according to various estimations, some 300,000-400,000 Bulgarians have settled provisionally or permanently in Western Europe, the USA, Canada, etc., in the last decade).

Yet the last census (1992) reported a statistical picture that, the change in proportion considered, reveals a striking persistence of the bigger and

63 See *Problemi na razvitiето na bălgarskata narodnost i nacija*, Sofia, BAN, 1988; Hr. Hristov (ed.), *Stranici ot bălgarskata istorija. Oчерkza isljamiziranite bălgari i nacionalno-văzroditelnija proces*, Sofia, 1989.

64 E. Hobsbawm, «Introduction: *Inventing Traditions*», in E. Hobsbawm, T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 1-14.

smaller “historic” ethnic constituents.⁶⁵ The next census, planned for March 2001, will have to register once more, at least partially, the dynamic developments in Bulgaria’s ethnic picture.⁶⁶ Not only legislatively, but also politically and in the media, increasing articulation is given to the idea that, in the final analysis, this is presently, and this is going to be, the Bulgarian nation of citizens.

65 *Rezultati ot prebrojavaneto...cit.*, Vol. I, p. 194 (population according to ethnic group, domicile and sex). About the different ethnic and religious groups, relations and stereotypes in contemporary Bulgaria, see also *Relations of Compatibility and Incompatibility between Christians and Muslims in Bulgaria*, IMIR, 1995; *Predstavata za “drugija” na Balkanite*, Sofia, Akademichno izdatelstvo “Marin Drinov”, 1995.

66 Maybe the most visible (legal and illegal) immigrants after 1989 are the “Chinese”. Probably part of them will appear in the next census:

Some statistic data:**Table 1: Population of Bulgarian Principality, 1881 and Eastern Rumelia, 1885**

BULGARIAN PRINCIPALITY 1881		EASTERN RUMELIA 1885	
Territory (sq. km.)	62,776	Territory (sq. km.)	35,901
Population (total)	2,007,919	Population (total)	975,130
<i>Bulgarians</i> (Pomaks included)	1,345,507	<i>Bulgarians</i> (Pomaks included)	681,734
<i>Turks</i>	527,284	<i>Turks</i>	200,318
<i>Romanians</i> (incl. <i>Aromanians</i>)	49,070	<i>Greeks</i>	53,028
<i>Gypsies</i> (Muslim and Christian)	37,600	<i>Gypsies</i> (Muslim and Christian)	27,190
<i>Sefarad</i> ("Spanish") <i>Jews</i>	14,020	<i>Sefarad</i> ("Spanish") <i>Jews</i> *	6,982
<i>Tatars</i>	12,376	<i>Armenians</i>	1,817
<i>Greeks</i>	11,152	<i>Italians</i>	210
<i>Armenians</i>	3,837	<i>Germans</i>	159
<i>Serbs, Croats, Montenegrins</i>	1,894	<i>Russians</i>	148
<i>Germans</i> and "German" <i>Jews</i>	1,28	<i>French</i>	102
<i>Russians</i>	1,123	<i>Others</i>	2,375
<i>Albanians</i>	530		
<i>Italians</i>	515		
<i>Hungarians</i>	220		
<i>Czechs</i>	174		
<i>French</i>	164		
" <i>Arapi</i> " (<i>Arabs</i>)	97		
<i>Poles</i>	92		
<i>British</i>	64		
<i>Circassians</i>	63		
" <i>Persians</i> "	58		
<i>Others</i> (<i>Kurds, Finns, Dutch, etc.</i>)	402		

* All the names are given as they are in the official statistical sources. I have put in inverted commas some cases of traditional self-appellation and/or definition "from the outside"

Table 2: Population of Bulgaria according to ethnicity, 1992

REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA 1992		
Territory sq. km.	111,000	
Population (total)	8,487,317	
	Official Statistics	Unofficial Estimates
<i>Bulgarians</i>	7,271,185 (85.67%)	150,000-200,000 <i>Pomaks</i> (Bulgarian Muslims)
<i>Turks</i>	800,052 (9.42%)	700,000
<i>Gypsies</i>	313,396 (3.69%)	500,000 -700,000 (incl. self-declared as Bulgarians, Turks, etc.)
<i>Tatars</i>	4,515 (0.05%)	...
<i>Jews</i>	3,461 (0.04%)	1,500 (minimum, as a result of emigration after 1992)
<i>Armenians</i>	13,677 (0.16%)	...
<i>Circassians</i>	573 (0.00%)	...
<i>Gagauzes</i>	1,478 (0.01%)	around 40,000 in the 1970s
<i>Albanians</i>	3,197 (0.03%)	...
<i>Arabs</i>	5,438 (0.06%)	...
<i>British</i>	1,578 (0.01%)	...
<i>Africans</i>	718 (0.00%)	...
<i>Vietnamese</i>	1,969 (0.02%)	...
<i>Vlachs</i>	5,159 (0.06%)	20,000-40,000 speak "Vlach" (local Romance dialect); 2,000-3,000 <i>Aromanians</i>
<i>Greeks</i>	4,930 (0.05%)	unclear; a total of 8,000 specified Greek as their mother tongue (Greeks and Karakachians)
<i>Kurds</i>	128 (0.00%)	...
<i>Germans</i>	879 (0.00%)	...
<i>Poles</i>	1,218 (0.01%)	...
<i>Russians</i>	17,139 (0.2%)	...
<i>Romanians</i>	2,491 (0.02%)	see above, " <i>Vlachs</i> "
<i>Slovaks</i>	452 (0.00%)	...
<i>Slovenians</i>	66 (0.00%)	...
<i>Ukrainians</i>	1,864 (0.02%)	...
<i>Hungarians</i>	343 (0.00%)	...
<i>French</i>	56 (0.00%)	...
<i>Czech</i>	588 (0.00%)	...

<i>Serbs</i>	418 (0.00%)	...
<i>Croats</i>	71 (0.00%)	...
<i>Bosnians, Herzegovians</i>	365 (0.00%)	...
<i>Karakachans</i>	5,144(0.06%)	12,000-15,000
<i>Others</i>	16,288(0.19%)	...
<i>Unspecified</i>	8,481 (0.09%)	...

Table 3: Population of Bulgaria according to mother tongue and religion, 1992

Mother Tongue	Total	Christian Orthodox	Roman Catholic	Protestant	Muslim-Sunni	Muslim-Shia	Judaic	Armenian-Gregorian	Other	Danov.	Unspec.
Total	8,487,317	7,274,592	53,074	21,878	1,026,758	83,537	2,580	9,672	6,430	315	8,481
<i>Bulgarian</i>	7,275,717	7,031,929	47,043	13,792	170,934	5,753	1,396	1,523	3,179	168	-
<i>Turkish</i>	813,639	8,755	1,116	843	744,127	58,060	84	280	300	74	-
<i>“Gypsy”</i>	310,425	176,773	1,581	6,514	104,831	18,342	396	459	1,500	29	-
<i>Tatar</i>	7833	2987	272	54	3300	617	41	414	145	3	-
<i>“Jewish”</i>	780	231	9	5	25	17	449	21	23	-	-
<i>Armenian</i>	9,996	2,979	35	38	44	2	30	6,853	15	-	-
<i>“Gagauz”</i>	402	338	14	3	28	3	2	12	2	-	-
<i>Albanian</i>	319	148	12	7	110	14	4	20	4	-	-
<i>Arab</i>	3,246	302	102	27	2,203	460	18	10	117	7	-
<i>English</i>	538	342	84	52	28	2	6	6	17	1	-
<i>“African”</i>	2,835	2,581	93	27	71	15	3	1	43	1	-
<i>Vietnamese</i>	1,217	692	33	14	70	11	12	10	368	7	-
<i>“Vlach”</i>	6,715	6,641	9	27	14	2	-	1	16	5	-
<i>Greek</i>	8,000	7849	84	19	14	-	-	6	28	-	-
<i>Kurdish</i>	196	97	1	3	68	12	2	-	13	-	-
<i>German</i>	625	213	214	167	-	1	8	3	19	-	-
<i>Polish</i>	1,197	202	969	14	1	-	1	-	9	1	-
<i>Russian</i>	17,608	17,248	107	56	66	6	24	30	67	4	-
<i>Romanian</i>	5,900	5,778	49	29	19	1	-	2	22	-	-
<i>Slovak</i>	596	467	100	7	9	5	1	-	2	5	-
<i>Slovenian</i>	192	155	21	4	3	9	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Ukrainian</i>	1,583	1524	25	5	12	7	-	1	8	1	-
<i>Hungarian</i>	279	117	150	9	2	-	-	-	1	-	-
<i>French</i>	188	72	64	10	25	4	-	-	12	1	-
<i>Czech</i>	467	171	267	16	2	-	1	-	10	-	-
<i>“Serbo-Croat”</i>	441	369	42	6	20	3	-	-	1	-	-
<i>Other</i>	7,902	5,632	578	130	732	191	102	20	509	8	-
<i>Unspecified</i>	8,481	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8,481

Table 4: Population of Bulgaria according to ethnicity, 1992 and 2001

	1992	2001
<i>Bulgarians</i>	7,271,185	6,655,210
<i>Turks</i>	800,052	746,664
<i>Gypsies</i>	313,396	370,908
<i>Russians</i>	17,139	15,595
<i>Armenians</i>	13,677	10,832
<i>Vlachs</i>	5,159	10,566
<i>Macedonians</i>	10,803	5,071
<i>Greeks</i>	4,930	3,408
<i>Ukrainians</i>	1,864	2,489
<i>Jews</i>	3,461	1,363
<i>Karakachans</i>	5,155	4,107
<i>Tatars</i>	4,515	1,803
<i>Romanians</i>	2,491	1,088
<i>Circassians</i>	573	377
<i>Gagauzes</i>	1,478	540
<i>Albanians</i>	3,197	278
<i>Arabs</i>	5,438	2,328
<i>Others</i>	70,499	69,204
<i>Unspecified</i>	8481	---
Total	8,487,317	7,973,671

Table 5: Population of Bulgaria according to religion, 1992 and 2001

Religion	1992	2001
<i>Christian Orthodox</i>	7,274,592	6,552,751
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	53,074	43,811
<i>Protestant</i>	21,878	42,308
<i>Muslim-Sunni</i>	1,026,758	966,978 (Muslims total)
<i>Muslim-Shia</i>	83,537	---
<i>Armenian-Gregorian</i>	9,672	---
<i>Judaic</i>	2,580	---
<i>Danovists*</i>	315	---
<i>Other</i>	6,430	14,937
<i>Unspecified</i>	8,481	308,116

* Followers of Petar Danov, members of the “White Brotherhood” sect

Table 6: Mother tongue, 2001

<i>Bulgarian</i>	6,697,158
<i>Turkish</i>	762,516
<i>Roma</i>	327,882
<i>Other</i>	71,084
<i>Unspecified</i>	45,454

Table 7: Ethnic groups in several regions, 2001

Region	Bulgarians	Turks	Gypsies/Roma
<i>Vidin</i>	118,543	139	9,786
<i>Kardjali</i>	55,939	101,116	1,264
<i>Pernik</i>	145,642	108	1,264
<i>Plovdiv</i>	621,338	52,499	30,196
<i>Razgrad</i>	67,069	71,963	8,733
<i>Smolyan</i>	122,806	6,212	686
<i>Haskovo</i>	224,757	31,266	17,089

Table 8: Ethnic groups in Sofia and the Sofia region, 2001

	Sofia	Sofia region
Inhabitants	1,170,842 (14.8% BG)	273,240 (3.4% BG)
Ethnic group		
<i>Bulgarians</i>	1,124,240 (16.9% BG)	253,536
<i>Gypsies/Roma</i>	17,885	16,748
<i>Turks</i>	6,036	654
<i>Russians</i>	3,127	301
<i>Greeks</i>	1,157	18
<i>Armenians</i>	1,672	20
<i>Jews</i>	893	3
<i>Macedonians</i>	858	11
<i>Vlachs/Aromanians</i>	195	26
<i>Romanians</i>	93	20
<i>Ukrainians</i>	571	59
<i>Unspecified</i>	4,645	661

Religion		
<i>Christian Orthodox</i>	1,122,944	255,214
<i>Muslim</i>	8,614	3,368
<i>Roman Catholic</i>	2,574	186
<i>Protestant</i>	3,269	2,320
<i>Other</i>	3,383	207
<i>Unspecified</i>	30,058	5,163
Mother tongue		
<i>Bulgarian</i>	1,124,932	255,214
<i>Roma</i>	16,931	15,144
<i>Turkish</i>	6,263	587
<i>Other</i>	14,419	858
<i>Unspecified</i>	3,913	617

Table 9: Population according to ethnicity, 2011

<i>Bulgarians</i>	5,664,624 (84.8%)
<i>Turks</i>	588,318 (8.8%)
<i>Gypsies/Roma</i>	325,343 (4.9%)
<i>Russians</i>	9978
<i>Armenians</i>	6552
<i>Vlachs</i>	3684
<i>Greeks</i>	1379
<i>Jews</i>	1162
<i>Karakachans</i>	2556
<i>Macedonians</i>	1654
<i>Romanians</i>	891
<i>Ukrainians</i>	1789
<i>Others</i>	19,659 *
<i>Unspecified</i>	53,391 (0.8%)
<i>Total</i>	7,364,570

* Including 235 individuals who have declared two ethnic identities, mostly due to "mixed" marriages and partnerships.

Table 10: Population according to ethnicity and mother tongue, 2011*

Ethnic group	Mother tongue	Number
Bulgarians	Bulgarian	5,571,049 (99.4%)
Bulgarians	Turkish	15,959 (0.3%)
Bulgarians	Roma	7,528 (0.1%)
Bulgarians	Other	7,511 (0.1%)
Turks	Turkish	564,858 (96.6%,)
Turks	Bulgarian	18,975 (3.2%)
Gypsies/Roma	Roma	272,710 (85%)
Gypsies/Roma	Bulgarian	24,033 (7.5%)
Gypsies/Roma	Turkish	21,440 (6.7%)
Gypsies/Roma	Romanian	1,837 (0.6%)

* Individual answers who have specified both markers. Bulgarian has been self-declared as mother tongue by 5,659,024 individuals (85.2% of the total population), Turkish by 605,802 (9.1%) and Roma by 281,217 (4.2%)

Table 11: Religious communities, 2011

Orthodox Christians	4,374,135 (76%)
Roman Catholics	48,945 (0.8)
Protestants	64,476 (1.1%)
Muslims total	577,139 (10%)
Muslims-Sunni	546,004
Muslims-Shia	27,407
Muslims-unspecified	3,727
Others	11,444 (0.2%)
Atheists *	272,264 (4.7%)
Unspecified **	409,898 (7.1%)

* Individuals who have defined themselves as “not religious”, 82% of them self-declared as ethnic Bulgarians

** Religion has not been specified by 21.8% of the total

Table 12: Religious affiliation of Turks and Gipsy/Roma, 2011

	Muslim total	Muslim-Sunni	Muslim-Shia	Muslim-unspecified	Orthodox Christian	Roman Catholic	Protestant	Atheist	Unspec.
Turks	444,434 (88%)	420,816	21,610	2,008	5,279	1,182	2,400	14,698	39,529
Roma	42,201 (18%)	---	---	---	84,867 (37%)	---	23,289 (10%)	30,491	49,491

Sources:

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III

REFUGEES IN BULGARIA BETWEEN THE TWO WORLD WARS: PROBLEMS OF
INTEGRATION

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1. Historical Background

The refugee question emerged as one of the main social and political problems at the very emergence of the Third Bulgarian state. The Russo-Turkish War (April 1877 - February 1878) resulted in considerable demographic changes in the eastern parts of the Balkan peninsula. Large masses of Muslims from Northern Bulgaria and Thrace, and later from the *sandjak* of Novi Pazar, Bosnia and Herzegovina migrated southwards, towards Istanbul and Thessaloniki. Many Bulgarians from the lands that remained under Ottoman rule headed for the Bulgarian Principality and Eastern Roumelia. According to some general estimation, more than 100,000 Bulgarians from Pomoravie, Northern Dobrudja, Macedonia, and Thrace emigrated to the two Bulgarian states. Less numerous immigrants came even from Bessarabia, Asia Minor, Banat, Crimea, and Southern Russia (Ukraine).

During its mandate the Russian administration made attempts to settle them permanently. In the end of 1877 the refugees in the region of Tarnovo were given the houses left by the Muslims and started to harvest the abandoned fields. In the spring of 1878 they were entitled to reclaim the abandoned farm lands. The gradual transformation of land property from Muslim into Bulgarian hands became one of the main economic and social changes in Bulgaria until the middle of the 1880s. In Bulgarian historiography

it is usually described as the “agrarian take-over” that led to the relative social equality of the Bulgarian peasantry. It was supported by the state through crediting and finally legalized in 1916.

Meanwhile, the Bulgarian society was affected by several new waves of refugees, usually associated with the activities of the revolutionary Bulgarian national-liberation movement in Macedonia and Thrace. According to various estimations, the uprising organized by the “Unity” Committees in the Struma and Mesta valleys in 1878-1879, the actions of the Supreme Macedonian Committee in the region of Melnik in the summer of 1895 and the region of Gorna Djumaja in the summer of 1902, brought more than 40,000 refugees to Bulgaria. They were left to the care of various public charity organizations and initiatives, without any specific state policy.

The Ilinden uprising in the summer of 1903 brought an additional 30,000 Bulgarians from Macedonia and Eastern Thrace and created a new situation, in which the governmental inertia had to be overcome. In January 1904, the Common Land Cultivation Law was passed and thus established conditions for settlement of the refugees on public (municipal and communal) lands. At the same time, the government of General Racho Petrov granted two relief funds of 1,000,000 Leva for the settlement of the refugees from the stricken areas. Incidentally, similar relief funds were granted before the Balkan wars. By the end of 1904, the National Assembly decided to issue one-time special loans through the Bulgarian Agrarian Bank, totalling up to 1,000,000 Leva for the building of refugee homes.

The refugee question entered a new phase after the end of the Balkan Wars. According to the information of the Foreign Ministry, approximately 200,000 Bulgarians from Macedonia, Eastern Thrace, and Southern Dobrudja had entered the country by the end of 1913. The government of the Liberal Coalition headed by Dr. Vasil Radoslavov failed in its attempts to solve the ever growing problems and was unable to follow up previous measures to aid the refugees. The relief funds granted from time to time by the state, municipal and district administrations and the activities of various charity organizations, were utterly insufficient, and the central and municipal authorities found themselves in an unusually difficult situation. The government was willing

to create possibilities for the refugees to return to their birthplaces through diplomacy. The contents of the Istanbul Peace Treaty with Turkey (16 September 1913) and the Edirne Agreement (2 November 1913) were on these lines. The majority of the refugees were from Eastern Thrace and the government attempted to secure their return. It was one of the main reasons for the tactical rapprochement between Bulgaria and Turkey at the end of 1913, which resulted in long time negative and tragic consequences.

The governmental inspections and the refugees themselves described the living conditions in dark, gloomy colours: “All of us are in a sorry plight, because we are almost out of money, and the relief granted by the state or some other charity organizations is insignificant; a more tragic sight are those of us who spend their gloomy days in the open fields. We are homeless, we have no blankets, we have nothing to eat; and because of poverty, starvation and cold, we are doomed to death. Dozens of us die every day and the huts we build number as much as the graves. No one gives us a thought, no one protects us, and much less mitigates this terrible situation we are not to be blamed for.”

In the beginning of 1914, when it became clear that Istanbul (Constantinople) would not allow the return of the Bulgarian refugees to Eastern Thrace, the government of V. Radolsavov prepared a plan to settle the refugees on the newly annexed lands, mainly in Western Thrace. For that purpose a Central Refugee Commission was established in March 1914, headed by Hristo Kalchev and assisted by 4 district committees headed by the governors of Strumica, Xanthi, Gumurdjina (Komotini) and Dedeagach (Alexandroupolis), and 20 local city committees. The committees were very active and in particular the Commissioner in charge of the settlement along the river of Marica – M. Rozentel – distinguished himself.

By the end of 1914 a sudden complication emerged due to the arrival of approximately 12,000 Bulgarians-prisoners of war who had served in the Serbian army. They were set free by the Austrian-Hungarian military command, aiming at attracting Bulgaria to the Central Powers in the early stages of World War I. Many of them were settled in the cities in the interior.

The efforts to settle the refugees depended on financial aid rendered by

the state authorities, private persons or immigrant groups. Four extraordinary credits, totalling up to 1,150,000 Leva were granted in the second half of 1913. In January 1914, a new credit of 300,000 Leva was granted by a government decree, and another 1,200,000 Leva for the expenses made were allotted by a resolution of the National Assembly in April 1914. At the same time, the Bulgarian Agrarian Bank was authorized to grant a loan of 5,000,000 Leva secured by the state to the population along the old state borderlands and from the new lands, with individual loans not exceeding 1,000 Leva. A new credit of 1,000,000 Leva was granted through the Agrarian Bank at the end of May 1914. The last loan before the beginning of the World War I was granted at the height of the July crisis and amounted to another 5,000,000 Leva. The state stopped issuing credit after the beginning of the war, but continued to allot timber and farm equipment.

Up until the Balkan Wars the destiny of the Bulgarian refugees attracted the attention of the public opinion and society at large, irrespective of social and political affiliations. There was an active and critical response to the shortcomings and faults in the governmental policy. The refugee question was considered as especially important and urgent matter. It was widely discussed as a national problem in the National Assembly, in the central and local media and the University. The predominant attitude created the social context for the gradual and complete integration of the refugees in the Bulgarian state and society.

2. Origin, Numbers and Geographic Distribution in Bulgaria

The lack of accurate statistical data makes it difficult to figure out the exact number of Bulgarian refugees after the end of the World War I. The official censuses of the population in 1920 and in 1926 are fragmentary and the responsible officials admitted themselves the serious discrepancies in the information. Nevertheless, some existent data may give quite a good idea about the situation if it is corroborated by the information of the Head Office of Refugees Settlement.

A petition signed by 31,000 heads of families from Eastern and Western

Thrace, totalling more than 166,000 persons, was submitted by the Bulgarian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference in August 1919. The census taken on 31 December 1920 showed that approximately 175,000 refugees, who had already acquired Bulgarian citizenship, were born outside the territory of the county, as 113,000 of them were born in territories under Greek rule; 39,000 - in Yugoslavian territories; 17,000 - in regions under Romanian rule; and 6,500 - in territories under Turkish rule. The records of the Foreign Ministry from 1924 showed that more than 221,000 refugees had submitted declarations on the basis of the Convention between Bulgaria and Greece only. According to the census carried out on December 31 1926, the Bulgarian refugees numbered over 55,560 households amounting to 252,000 persons. The flow of Bulgarian refugees continued after 1926 and gradually diminished by the end of 1930.

According to the records of the Head Office of Refugees Settlement, there were two main immigrant waves to the country. The first one of approximately 50,000 persons was provoked by the end of the World War I in 1918 and culminated in 1920. It was followed by a slight decrease in 1921-1923 and a new wave of immigrants in 1923-1926 that reached its peak in 1924 and 1925. Approximately 62,000 people entered Bulgaria during these years. After 1927 the number of immigrants did not exceed 1,000 per year. The final official records for the period between the World Wars enumerates 253,000 persons who had settled and been granted land by the state, and many more refugees in the towns for whom the figures are uncertain. The figure of 500,000 appeared in the propaganda materials and it gives a fairly good idea of the situation.

According to official data, more than 35% of the refugees came from Eastern Thrace, and approximately 30% came from Aegean Macedonia. Another 18% came from Western Thrace, between the rivers Mesta and Maritsa; 8% from Southern and Northern Dobrudja; 4% - from the Western borderlands; 3% - from Asia Minor; and 2% - from Vardar Macedonia. So, 48% of the Bulgarian refugees came from Greek territories, and 38% came from territories under Turkish rule. Only 12% of the immigrants came from Yugoslavia, and 8% - from regions under Romanian rule. These figures mark

to a great extent the different attitudes of the respective governments to the Bulgarian minorities included in their state borders.

The 50 km restricted zone along the state borders (the border between Bulgaria and Turkey not included) as specified in the Loan Agreement from 1926 played a vital part in the settlement of refugees. According to this provision, the state granted no aid to refugees who settled there. Thus, out of the total area of Bulgarian territory amounting to 103,000 sq.km., a strip of 62,500 sq.km. was excluded from refugee settlement. This restriction forced the Bulgarian state to modify its settlement plans radically. The greatest number of refugees settled in the Petrich district (mainly its northern parts) - approximately 17% of the total population - and the initially sparsely populated Burgas district, where the refugees made up 15% of the population. They formed 7% of the population in the Eastern Rhodopes and about 5% in the region of Varna. Only three of the total 82 administrative districts in the country had no refugees.

The refugees were distributed as follows according to origin. The Bulgarians from Asia Minor were mainly settled in the Eastern Rhodopes and the region of Burgas, with a smaller number in the regions of Varna and Plovdiv. The Bulgarian refugees from Eastern Thrace settled down in the same areas and in the central parts of Southern Bulgaria, as well as the region of Shumen. The other refugees were evenly distributed throughout the country: those from Aegean Macedonia made up more compact settlements in the regions of Petrich and Plovdiv, while those from Dobrudja - in the Deliorman (Ludogorie) region and the Northern Black Sea coast. The three administrative districts with the greatest number of refugees were: Petrich – with mainly refugees from Aegean Macedonia; Burgas – mainly refugees from Eastern Thrace; and Haskovo – mainly refugees from Western Thrace.

As a whole, the Bulgarian refugees, who were settled and given land by the state, constituted officially about 3.5% of the country's population but their actual percentage was at least twice higher.

3. The State Policy towards the Refugees, 1918-1939.

After the end of the World War I, the Bulgarian state weakened because

of the general economic crisis, the war reparations and other obligations imposed by the Neuilly Peace Treaty, and the international isolation imposed on the defeated states by the Entente. The growing number of refugees further limited the possibilities of effective settlement, while the growing inflation challenged every effort of the Bulgarian governments. The contents of the Neuilly Peace Treaty and the supporting Convention on Protection of Minorities did not curb the stream of refugees.

Immediately after Bulgaria's exit from the war in October 1918, the government of Prime Minister Alexander Malinov granted a one-time aid of 600,000 Leva to the refugees from the military budget. This line of symbolic relief was continued with the hope of keeping some of the territories acquired during the war, or of making it possible for at least some of the refugees to return home. But it also demonstrated that it was impossible to initiate any general refugee-orientated policy prior to the signing of the peace treaty.

In May 1920, the government of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union /BANU/ took the first steps to forming a refugee policy. A government decree, granted the first groups of refugees from Western Thrace found temporary shelter on church and monastery estates. The government established an Office of Refugees Settlement headed by the distinguished Macedonian revolutionary leader Giorche Petrov. It paid, however, much more attention to the political struggles among the refugees than to their social condition.

The draft Bill for increasing state lands was proposed in June 1920. The state confiscated uncultivated municipal and county common pastures and bought up all private lands exceeding 300 decares in the case of fields and meadows and exceeding 500 decares in the case of forests and pastures. Land from the established state fund had to be given to the multitude of refugees from "Aegean Bulgarian Thrace". The monastery lands confiscated by a decree of February 1920 were also added to the state fund.

The drafting of a special refugee law started already in May 1920 and was ratified by the XIX National Assembly in October the same year. The arguments inherent in the law were that the refugees from Macedonia, Dobrudja, Thrace and the Western borderlands "had left their property and emigrated on the basis of patriotic motives," and the society and state had to

manifest their national sympathy with the Bulgarians left under the enemy rule by helping them in establishing normal living conditions.

The Law on Settlement and Welfare of Refugees defined the category of “refugee” as including all individuals of Bulgarian nationality from Macedonia, Thrace, Dobrudja, and the Western borderlands, who had fled or would flee because of the political events and changes in those areas after 1912. Thus, the law excluded the Armenians and the Russian emigrants that came after the defeat of the White Army.

The main effort was directed to providing land for the settlement of refugees since they were predominantly farmers. Every family who declared to be farmers was entitled to 50 decares of land in the plain, up to 80 decares in the hilly areas, and up to 120 decares in the highlands. The refugees had to settle on the lands of public, church, monastery, or *vakf* estates that were not cultivated. The refugees had to pay for the land granted, houses, farm buildings and building sites at prices fixed by the district court for a period of 20 years at minimum interest, with a 3-year period respite before starting payments. The land and buildings granted were tax exempted for a period of 5 years.

In order to build houses and farm buildings, to buy livestock and agricultural equipment, the refugees were entitled to a loan granted by the state-owned Bulgarian Agrarian Bank /BAB/, not to exceed 20,000 Leva at 1% interest above the ordinary interest. Other opportunities were guaranteed, too: free timber, free transportation of household belongings, livestock, and equipment. The well-to-do refugees were not entitled to take advantage of these benefits.

District committees were responsible for the settlement of the refugees. These committees were under the jurisdiction of the Office of Refugee Settlement and consisted of the district constable, one councillor, and one refugee representative. The committees’ decisions were binding to the state and local authorities. The distribution of land and other property had to be approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs and Public Health.

To assist the district committees, town and village municipal committees were established in all the places inhabited by refugees, in accordance to the

rules ratified later. In this way, a separate, semi-autonomous structure was established and started to work on the refugees’ settlement and to gain over public opinion. It was finally formed in January 1921, and special reception committees were established a little bit later at the border crossing points where the refugees were arriving to the country. They were the first organs to meet the pressure from the gradually growing refugee wave.

The law was amended several times in order to include the Bulgarian refugees from Asia Minor and the war victims (1912-1918) and to increase the sums granted for home building up to 50,000 Leva. On 21 February 1921, the Council of Ministers decided on the places for settlement of refugees, while the Office at the Ministry of Home Affairs put pressure on the district governors to speed up the practical measures for their permanent settlement.

Some of the measures were specified during the agrarian reform implemented by the government of BANU: the Law on Cultivated Land ratified in April 1921. The municipal committees in charge of its implementation had to distribute state land also to “Bulgarians-farmers, who came from the Bulgarian territories under foreign occupation.” The same requirement was included in the Rules on Implementation of the Law and in the Internal Colonisation Plan prepared by the Office.

Nevertheless, the refugees opposed the agrarian reform on a mass scale. Even the staff of the Office of Refugee Settlement felt the reform did not comply with the Law on Settlement and Welfare of Refugees and jeopardised their land settlement. The refugees were in the last category for land settlement and the municipalities would be reluctant to distribute land to them. That policy was supposed to force them to return to their homelands, “tainting the Bulgarian name.” The head of the Office of Refugee Settlement G. Petrov suggested that the agrarian reform should begin after the refugees were given land, but his idea was not accepted. Different groups of Macedonian and Thracian refugees made similar statements.

At times of crisis, the BANU government returned to the usual routine of letting the executive authorities solve emergencies. By a decree of 20 December 1921, the refugees in need, who had arrived in the country in 1918-1920, were granted credit to buy flour and bread. Several refugee settlements

were built under extraordinary laws: village of Konstantinovo (region of Burgas), village of Dimitrovo (region of Oriahovo), etc. The Bulgarian National Bank made many advances to the Bulgarian Agrarian Bank of funds secured by the state earmarked for refugees. More than 1,000,000 Leva were allocated for relief through the Foreign Ministry and under the extraordinary credit intended for covering the expenditures made in connection with World War I outside the state budget for 1920. By a resolution of the National Assembly from July 1921, the correspondence and the documents of the Office of Refugees were exempted from stamp-duty. The movable goods and livestock transported over the border by the refugees were exempted from duties and taxes. A government decree provided for the free transportation of building materials for the refugees' homes.

Along with these measures, the government of BANU was trying to limit the number of incoming refugees by means of foreign policy. The question of protection of the rights of Bulgarians outside the country's borders was tabled at every bilateral meeting and every international forum. It was persistently promoted in the League of Nations. In connection with this policy, the government often resorted to restriction of the refugees' political activities. The Nish Agreement with the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in March 1923, for example, made provisions for removing active members of irredentist organisations, and even of educational societies, from a 5 km zone along the border. The principle of bilateral border guards was adopted, and the Yugoslavian army had the right to enter this zone to pursue armed irredentist bands. This policy created a sharp conflict between the authorities and the refugee organisations at the beginning of 1923.

After the coup d'état of 9 June 1923, a new government of the National Accord Committee was formed headed by Professor Alexander Tzankov (former Socialist), in which the military took the key Ministries. It gradually transformed into a government of the new political party - Democratic Accord, the National-liberals and the Social-democrats. These were the parties that governed the country during the two Balkan wars and the World War I, and the nationalist attitudes of their members were more clearly expressed in comparison with the socially orientated BANU. Officers on active duty and in

the reserve forces, as well as members of the National Accord took the leading positions in the government, but they were not clearly politically orientated and were, in fact, new to high politics.

Because of the unstable political situation in the country and the armed Communist riot of September 1923, the new government did not manage to launch a determined policy to encounter the growing refugee stream. The sizable sum of 60,000,000 Leva for the relief of the refugees was not allotted until December 1923. Credits at low interest were also granted in 1924, intended for the construction of dwellings in the towns. In the winter of 1924-25, a centralised programme for supplying provisions commenced in the cities due to the unexpected food crisis, in which the problem of maintenance of refugee families played an important part. Even the new approach inherent in the agrarian reform did not solve the persistent refugee problem, although it reoriented the land settlement from the ex-private farm lands to the municipal common pastures and uncultivated areas. The rural settlement of refugees was left to the care of the municipalities that in turn were making more efforts to provide land for their inhabitants. Nevertheless, the government managed to differentiate the programme for refugee settlement. The Head Office of Co-operative Farms took the responsibility for the refugee farmers, while the Social Department of the Ministry of Home Affairs was in charge of the accommodations in towns. The Foreign Ministry was responsible for meeting the refugees at the border points. The so-called United Service headed by Dr. Vladimir Rumenov was formed at the end of 1925, and coordinated the actions of the different government bodies.

It became abundantly clear at that time that the state was not able to resolve the refugee problem by its own efforts, and the government was forced to do its best to contract a special international loan secured by the League of Nations. The loan petition to the September session of the General Assembly of the League of Nations presented the entire programme for its realisation. It included measures for land settlement of more than 30,000 families, as well as measures on infrastructure improvement of some of the less developed regions.

During the preparation of the programme the Bulgarian diplomacy

intensified its Balkan policy and signed three international agreements that regulated the country's relations with some of its neighbours. Several conventions were signed between Bulgaria and the Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian Kingdom in the spring of 1924 and the Nish Agreement was officially confirmed.

The Kalfov-Politis Protocols were signed through the mediation of the League of Nations on 29 September 1924. The League's representatives in the joint Greek-Bulgarian commission received the right to "assist the Greek and Bulgarian governments in protecting minorities in accordance to the existing international treaties." Greece recognised the presence of a Bulgarian minority in Aegean Macedonia, but the Parliament in Athens refused to ratify the agreement after pressure from Belgrade. The relations between the two states became strained, which led to the invasion of the Petrich region by the Greek army in the autumn of 1925, and the intervention of the League of Nations.

The Angora Treaty with Turkey was signed on 18 October 1925 after difficult negotiations. According to this treaty Bulgaria recognised the deportation of Bulgarians from Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace and reached a financial agreement on the liquidation of the contested properties in both countries.

The change of government on 4 January 1926, when the Democratic Accord took power, gave a new direction to the efforts for permanent solution of the refugee problem in the country. The Prime Minister, Andrej Ljapchev himself was a refugee from the town of Ressen in Vardar Macedonia after the Russian-Turkish War in 1877-78. The majority of his Ministers were experienced politicians, who entered the Democratic Accord from the old traditional political parties that were in close contact with the legal and revolutionary organisations of the Bulgarians outside Bulgaria. The Prime Minister took personally charge of the Ministry of the Interior, which had to play the principal part in the land settlement of the refugees.

The hard times for the Bulgarian refugees in the mid-1920s and the government's inability to solve their problems by its own efforts forced the authorities to seek external financial aid. The experience of the neighbours, more particularly of Greece which was granted a special refugee loan secured

by the League of Nations in the autumn of 1924, directed the government's efforts in the same direction. After almost two years of expert investigations and after a number of impediments by the neighbour states, an advance of 400,000 pounds was granted in May 1926 and in September 1926 the loan papers were signed and ratified by the XXII National Assembly.

The refugee loan amounted to approximately 3,000,000 pounds and was granted for a period of 40 years at 7% annual interest, realised at the stock exchanges in London, New York, Rome, Zurich, and Amsterdam simultaneously, on 21 December 1926. The net loan was transferred to a special account in the Bulgarian National Bank in January-April 1927 under the supervision of the League of Nations' Commissioner, Rene Charon. A special Head Office of Refugee Settlement headed by Eng. Stoimen Sarafov was established for its implementation, which took charge of accommodation and land settlement of the refugees-farmers with families, while the Social Department at the Ministry of Home Affairs continued to take care of the urban refugee. The unmarried refugees were left, to a great extent, without any special state support. The district and municipal committees were the main agencies for executing the instructions and the general plan of the Head Office. The Prime Minister personally was at the head of this structure. A commissioner was appointed by the League of Nations as his advisor, who approved each sum spent.

In fact, the land settlement of the refugees continued the policy of resolving the refugees' problem pursued by the Bulgarian governments after World War I. It annulled the Law on Refugee Settlement of 1920 without revoking what was done under it. That was an actual prerequisite for solving the social and economic problems of the refugees and for commencing their integration into Bulgarian society and the Bulgarian state.

The winter of 1926-27 marked the inauguration of the municipal and district committees, reception of the fund loans from the Head Office of Co-operative Farms, and the preparation of a plan for particular measures for land settlement. This plan was especially elaborate for the eighteen districts in which the majority of the refugees were established. These were usually the border regions or the biggest cities in the country. Of a total of 72 districts,

58 were included in the system of land settlement. Some of them were later excluded since it had been previously agreed in international accords that no refugees would be settled in the 50 km zone along the state border. The purpose of this restriction was to limit the eventual organisation of armed bands and the straining of relations with the neighbouring states the refugees originated from.

Until it closed down in 1932, the Head Office and its agencies accommodated and gave land to approximately 50,000 families, 36,000 of which were settled in villages and 14,000 in towns. Another 15,000 families relinquished their legal rights voluntarily. In 1927, land settlement and accommodation of refugees took mainly place in the Burgas district, while in 1928 and 1929 - when it reached its peak - it took place all over the country. According to the final report, about 1,100,000 decares of farm land were distributed and the largest groups of refugees were settled in the districts of Burgas, Petrich, and Haskovo. Refugees who were not farmers settled mainly in the biggest cities, especially in the regional centres. Only a small number of towns and villages in the country were not affected.

The programme of refugee settlement coincided with the earthquake in Chirpan in April 1928. The greater part of the so-called Stabilisation Loan granted in November 1928 through the mediation of the League of Nations was spent on reconstruction. This loan provided funds for the completion of the 100 km railway line Rakovski-Haskovo-Kardjali-Mastanli which integrated the Eastern Rhodopes in the economic life of the country.

The final regulation of the bilateral relationships with the neighbours contributed greatly to the permanent solution of the refugee problem. In December 1927, the signing of the Mollov-Kafandaris Protocol specified the financial liabilities of Greece and Bulgaria related to the liquidation of refugee property. In January 1930 the Pirot Agreements regulated the status of the "double owned property" possessed by Bulgarian refugees but remaining within the post war borders of Yugoslavia. The provisions of the Angora Treaty of October 1925 were of a similar nature. The relations with Romania were still uncertain but they did not cause any serious pressure.

The stable system created by the government of A. Ljapchev and by the

Head Office was not affected even by the political cataclysm provoked by the replacement of the government of the Democratic Accord by the government of the National Bloc Coalition in June 1931. The new government successfully completed the final measures by July 1932. After that, the only thing left was the issue of deeds for the newly acquired property and the payment of debts to the state.

A more serious problem was caused by the different interpretation of the Mollov-Kafandaris Agreement by Greece in the context of the Hoover Moratorium on the post-war reparations, as well as the resulting decrease in reparations negotiated at the second Hague Conference in January 1930 and their actual cancellation at the Lausanne Conference in 1932. According to the Greek side, the two payments were interrelated, while Bulgaria maintained the private legal nature of the payments under the Mollov-Kafandaris Agreement in contrast to the public legal nature of the reparations. The formation of the Balkan Pact in February 1934, which Bulgaria refused to join because of its goal to guarantee the post-war borders, also intensified this dispute. Instead, Bulgaria suggested that all neighbouring states should sign bilateral guarantee agreements (giving preferences to Yugoslavia and Turkey). This position was the decisive factor for the gradual nullification of the Balkan Pact on the eve of the World War II.

The serious economic crisis in 1931-1933 forced the governments of the National Bloc to take radical measures in accordance with a number of international economic conferences of the Danubian countries. To protect agriculture, they established the State Office of Food Export that kept the domestic purchase prices of wheat higher than the international ones. Thus, the state was secretly financing the grain production. The land tax on the first 100 decares of every farm was cancelled from 1932 on. The Law on Protection of the Farmer-Owner was passed at the same time, thus preventing the farms from fragmentation through inheritance. Maximum permissible prices for the majority of basic industrial goods were fixed and anti-cartel laws were adopted. By governmental proposal the XXIII National Assembly declared moratorium on all debts to the state and state-owned banks, and the bad debts from previous years were later cancelled. Well planned measures for

stabilisation of the municipal budgets of villages and towns were introduced based upon the principles of social solidarity. The leading right-wing party in the coalition - the Democratic Party - was an adroit partner of the left-wing BANU-Vrabcha 1 and did its best to overcome the most negative effects of the crisis in the spirit of the modern European legislation. The results were positive and affected mostly the economically weak strata, predominated by the refugees.

The internal and external refugee-orientated policy of the governments of the Democratic Accord was followed by the National Bloc, and with some insignificant changes, by the non-party governments after the military coup d'état on 9 May 1934. Individuals and small groups, who had arrived at the end of 1920s and even in the beginning of the 1930s, were given land and settled down as an exception. This had already become a routine procedure, with the funds available in the budget of the Ministry of Home Affairs or the Refugee Department at the Office of State Debts. The law adopted in 1936 made provisions for 10-year payment of the liabilities related to the accommodation and land settlement of the refugees. In 1940, the law was amended and the procedure was prolonged to 1975.

4. Organisations of the Bulgarian Refugees

Under the existing acute post-war economic, social and political crisis, the restoration of the pre-war structures and mechanisms of the Bulgarian national-liberation movement started and new ones were created. In September 1918, on the eve of the Thessaloniki Truce, the first meeting of the Central Committee of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) was held, consisting of Todor Alexandrov, General Alexander Protogerov, and Peter Chaulev. They issued a resolution on the restoration of the Internal Organisation. The Executive Committee of the Macedonian Fraternities in Bulgaria closely related to the IMRO, resumed its activities under the leadership of General Protogerov. A month later, a group of left-wing members from the former revolutionary districts of Seres and Strumitsa around Giorche Petrov, Dr. Hristo Tatarchev, and Dimo Hadjidimov broke

away from the Executive Committee. They formed an Interim Representation of the United Former IMRO (the so-called Sandanists). Unlike IMRO and the Executive Committee which aimed at keeping Macedonia intact and securing its annexation to Bulgaria at the future peace conference, the Interim Representation recognised the unfavourable international status of the country and thought that the Bulgarian national question could be resolved through the autonomy of Macedonia, respecting the rights of all the native nationalities and transforming it into the core of a future Balkan federation. An autonomous Macedonia had to be placed under the mandate of the League of Nations or some of the Great Powers. To what extent it was a tactical demand, can be judged by the conduct of the same people during the Balkan Wars and the World War I, in which they promoted by their deeds the efforts for direct annexation and integration with Bulgaria.

The Thracian movement started at the same time. In September 1918, the refugees from Eastern Thrace in the area between the river of Maritsa, the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara united in the Odrin Thrace Society. Its chairman was the prominent philosopher and social-democrat Professor Dimitar Mihalchev. The organisations of the refugees from Western Thrace joined the society at the end of the same year and it was renamed the Thrace Union. The union's objective was to keep Thrace territorially intact and to annex it to Bulgaria.

In November 1918, the structures of the Dobrudja movement commenced their quick restoration. At that time, the Central Dobrudja National Council (CDNC) headed by Dr. Ivan Ognianov moved from Dobrudja to Varna. It supervised about 300 local Dobrudja committees formed in Southern and Northern Dobrudja during World War I. The Dobrudja Organisation in Sofia also resumed activities, and its Supreme Executive Committee was presided by Dr. Peter Vichev. Both organisations campaigned for the direct annexation of all Dobrudja to Bulgaria.

Taking into consideration the international isolation of the country, the three movements suggested that the Entente should carry out a referendum in all contested regions on the Balkans. That thesis was maintained in many memoirs and appeals by all the organisations to the Paris Peace Conference

which commenced in January 1919, to the governments of the Entente states, and to European public opinion. Generally, they followed the official Bulgarian state policy formed by the coalition governments of Teodor Teodorov (November 1918 - October 1919) and Alexander Stambolijski (October 1919 - May 1920).

Bulgarian society was informed about the clauses of the future peace treaty outlined at the Paris Peace Conference in the spring of 1919. The Entente did not take into consideration the ethnical principle in drawing the new post-war borders. That led to the ideological reorganisation of the entire Bulgarian national-liberation movement. All organisations gave up the indefensible idea of direct annexation to Bulgaria and returned to the old attitudes towards autonomy as a guarantee for the preservation of the "predominantly" Bulgarian ethnical nature of the regions and an intermediate phase before national integration.

As early as June 1919, the Executive Committee of the Macedonian Fraternities and IMRO took the line of the Interim Representation and insisted on the autonomy of Macedonia under the protectorate of the League of Nations. The CDNC and the Dobrudja Organisation held a Grand Dobrudja Convention in Sofia in November, adopted a resolution for a united and indivisible, autonomous, Dobrudja. The same was proposed by the Thrace Union. In November 1919, the refugees from the Western borderlands (Tzaribrod, Bossilegrad, Kula areas) formed their own union presided by the writer Emanuil Popdimitrov. This was the only organisation opposed to the demands for an autonomous regime and insisted on the idea of direct annexation to Bulgaria.

The ideological reorganisation was accompanied by a temporary organisational consolidation. At the Grand Dobrudja Convention, the CDNC and the Dobrudja Organisation merged into the Dobrudja Union headed by Dr. Peter Vichev. The Interim Representation of the Macedonian Bulgarians dissolved in December 1919. Nevertheless, the contradictions and ideological struggles in all organisations continued. They were seriously influenced by the inter-party political conflicts in Bulgaria and especially the growing influence of the left-wing forces - the communists, social-democrats, and the members

of the BANU - which did not have a strong influence on the national movement until then.

Under these circumstances the Bulgarian national-liberation movement changed radically. The quickly growing authority of the BANU led to the formation of the Bulgarian Emigrant Agrarian Union. The Central Dobrudja Military Revolutionary Committee (CDMRC) was formed under the influence of the Bulgarian Communist Party in Varna in May 1919. It became the reconnaissance patrol of the Red Army. Its goal was to establish the Dobrudja Soviet Socialist Republic that would join the planned global Soviet Federate Republic. The CDMRC existed until April 1920. At the same time the Central Committee of the Communist party organised the formation of the Emigrant Communist Union (ECU) "Liberation" headed by Dimo Hadjidimov. It existed until August 1923 and aimed at forming soviet republics in Macedonia, Dobrudja, and Thrace.

The Bulgarian national-liberation organisations were not able to influence significantly the development of the national question immediately after the World War I. They complemented the efforts of the Bulgarian state for the protection of its national interests, accelerated its propaganda campaign, made popular the official doctrine of new state borders based on ethnical principles. The organisational fragmentation, the new influence of politicians on the national-liberation movement, as well as the international isolation of Bulgaria immediately after the lost World War, doomed any activity to failure.

The signing of the Neuilly Peace Treaty on 27 November 1919 was a serious stimulus for the Bulgarian national-liberation organisations to resume their activity. From the beginning of 1920, the old traditional internal revolutionary organisations resumed their underground activities. The IMRO sent 10 small armed squads supervised by General Al. Protogerov into Vardar and Aegean Macedonia in February the same year. These actions coincided with conflicts within the Executive Committee of the Macedonian Fraternities. In October 1920, at the fraternities' congress, an Interim Commission headed by Dr. Fillip Atanasov and architect Nikola Jurukov separated from the Executive Committee. They maintained the idea of an autonomous Macedonia, not as a part of Bulgaria, but as a centre of the future Balkan federation. In 1921,

on the basis of the Interim Commission, a Macedonian Federate Emigrant Organisation (MFEO) was formed, presided by F. Atanasov. It actually existed until the coup d'état of 9 June 1923. The MFEO quickly extended its influence among the Macedonian emigrants thanks to the support of the BANU government. Its members held the highest administrative offices - Alexander Dimitrov was Minister of the Interior and Giorche Petrov was Commissioner of Refugee Settlement.

In 1921, some of the members of MFEO formed the Internal Macedonian Federate Revolutionary Organisation (IMFRO) headed by architect N. Iurukov. With the help of the agrarian government it controlled the old organisational structures in the region of Pirin established as the so-called Relief Organisation under the leadership of Aleko Vassilev (Aleko Pasha). The idea of reunification originated from the split of the Macedonian movement into autonomists and federalists and the formation of the procommunist ECU "Liberation." Thus, at the end of 1921, some of the Macedonian intellectuals headed by Arseni Jovkov and Georgi Zankov formed the Ilinden Organisation. They aimed at keeping in touch with all the different Macedonian circles and stimulating them into reunification. Although several unifying protocols were signed in 1921-22, the fragmentation continued.

In contrast to the Macedonian movement, the Dobrudja movement developed more steadily. From the beginning of 1920, it was definitely dominated by left-wing and procommunist figures. At the end of 1922, under their pressure the Dobrudja Union decided on the formation of Internal Dobrudja Revolutionary Organisation (IDRO). It was formed in March 1923 under the leadership of Nikola Kemilev. Leader of the armed bands of IDRO was the communist functionary Docho Mihailov. The objectives of IDRO were identical to those of Dobrudja Union - autonomy, separation from Romania and annexation to Bulgaria.

Urged by the Union of their emigrant structures, the Bulgarians from the Western borderlands formed the Internal Western Borderlands Revolutionary Organisation "Vartop" by the end of 1923. It usually resorted to terrorist actions and assassinations.

The destiny of the national-liberation movement of the Thracian

Bulgarians was radically different. A rapprochement and united actions of Bulgarians and Turks against the Greeks commenced under the autonomous regime of the Entente (1919). Their representatives acted together in the Supreme Administrative Council of Thrace - an elective body with consultative functions by the French governor, General Charpi. The united actions multiplied after the resolution taken at the conference of San Remo in April 1920, according to which Eastern and Western Thrace had to pass under the mandate of Greece. A convention by the revolutionary functionaries - Bulgarians and Turks - was held in May the same year and an interim Bulgarian-Turkish government of Thrace was formed in the mountain village Hemetli (today Organi) above the principle town of Komotini. Its goal was to keep the autonomous regime and avoid annexation by Greece. The main act of this government was the organisation of an irredentist movement and armed resistance against the coming Greek army. In spite of its failure, the Bulgarian-Turkish Internal Thracian Revolutionary Organisation (ITRO) was formed in the summer of 1920. Its chairman was a Turk, while the principal leader of its armed bands was the Bulgarian Tanjo Nikolov.

ITRO received full support by the Bulgarian authorities. At that time, the government of BANU sought a rapprochement with Turkey in order to secure the return of its Aegean Sea outlet through autonomy of Eastern and Western Thrace. The attitude of Ankara changed after the Turkish victory in the war with Greece. The borders in Thrace were finally outlined at the Lausanne Conference in July 1923 and it made the Turks withdraw from the revolutionary movement. Therefore, in September 1923, the leaders Dimo Madjarov and Kosta Georgiev withdrew the Bulgarian part from the joint organisation and formed the independent Bulgarian ITRO. It maintained armed bands and organised revolutionary activities almost to the end of 1925. Under the government of A. Ljapchev, the activity of the ITRO was seriously restricted due to the rapprochement between Bulgaria and Greece aiming at concluding the refugee loan in the end of 1926 and the signing of the Mollov-Kafandaris Agreement in the end of 1927. Under the pressure of the government, ITRO dissolved, but was actually transformed into a Committee for the Freedom of Thrace (CFT). The movement's objective changed from autonomy (as an

initial step to a subsequent annexation to Bulgaria) to direct annexation by the means of diplomacy and the Bulgarian army. The main reason for such a change was the decreasing number of Bulgarians in Western Thrace, which meant that autonomy would not lead to a subsequent unification with the "Homeland".

The unity of the Dobrudja movement was broken after the coup d'état of 9 June 1923. After the September revolt, the government started exerting great pressure on the organisations because of the dominant left-wing trends in the movements. It was easy for the Dobrudja Union, as a legal cultural and charity organisation, to adjust in accordance with the change of government policy, but the underground IDRO split. The procommunist functionaries D. Mihailov, D. Donchev-the Doctor, and Georgi Krossnev were removed from the executive body. Based on the armed bands of IDRO and according to a decision by Comintern, they formed the Dobrudja Revolutionary Organisation (DRO) in September 1925. Thus, from 1925 to 1940, there existed simultaneously the IDRO supported by the Bulgarian governments and the DRO - subjected to the underground Communist party. They established parallel committee networks and armed groups (*cheti*). Their differences resulted in frequent clashes between them.

The Dobrudja Union preserved its formal unity, although at the end of the 1920s, during the world economic crisis, Dr. P. Vichev was removed from the presidency after pressure by the government. Together with a group of left procommunist figures, he formed the Central Dobrudja Action Committee. The committee got in touch with the opposition and rejoined the Dobrudja Union after the victory of the National Bloc in the elections of June 1932. P. Vichev was again appointed its chairman but became a victim of assassination in July 1933. This act caused a new crisis in the Dobrudja movement.

The development of the Macedonian movement after 1923 was particularly dramatic. Due to the rapprochement of A. Stambolijski with Belgrade, he started to restrict the activity of the Ilinden organisation. On 21 June 1921, members of the IMRO killed G. Petrov, and four months later they killed Al. Dimitrov too. Detachments of IMRO ousted the federalist bands from Nevrokop in October 1922 and from Kjustendil in December 1922 and

occupied these towns. This became a real war that was lost by the agrarians and the federalists. In December 1922, an abortive assault on R. Daskalov occurred and another one upon four Ministers in the National Theatre a little later. As a result of these events and especially of the Nish Agreement of March 1923, the BANU and IMRO were in open conflict. That was why members of the organisation took part in the coup d'état of 9 June and in the suppression of the resistance movement against it.

The new government of Professor Al. Tzankov was forced to confirm the Nish Agreement and even to sign additional protocols. Thus, it came into conflict with the IMRO leaders who decided to find new allies among the enemies of the government. IMRO entered into an agreement with the Bulgarian Communist Party. It was decided that a communist revolt would not be staged in Pirin Macedonia and that IMRO would maintain neutrality in the region. The communists dismissed their subordinate organisation ECU "Liberation." However, the agreement was violated by the communists, but IMRO's conflict with them was lesser than the conflict with the official authorities and IMRO continued to seek cooperation with the left wing forces.

The next unification protocol between federalists and autonomists was signed through the mediation of Comintern at the end of April 1924 and the federalists acknowledged the Central Committee of IMRO as their central committee. On 6 May 1924, in Vienna the Central Committee of IMRO signed the "May Manifesto" by which the Macedonian movement was connected with the Comintern. This document was without doubt anti-Bulgarian and, in the spirit of the communist ideology, implied that the Macedonians differed from the Bulgarians. In spite of the resistance by T. Alexandrov and General Al. Protogerov, the manifesto was published and caused a serious crisis in the movement. Both of the leaders renounced their signatures, but the third member of the Central Committee, Peter Chaulev, acknowledged it. In the height of the crisis, on 31 August 1924, on his way to the congress of the Serres revolutionary district, T. Alexandrov was shot by members of the Macedonian left on the initiative of Al. Vassilev.

In retaliation to this act several representatives of the left, among them Al. Vasilev, G. Zankov, Ars. Jovkov, were shot on 12 September 1924

by the order of the secretary of T. Alexandrov. Gradually, assassinations took place all over the country and even abroad. P. Chaulev was killed in Milan in the end of 1924, and Mencha Karnicheva killed Todor Panitza in Vienna in May 1925. Under such conditions, the unification of autonomists and federalists became impossible and did not occur again.

After they failed to establish full control over IMRO or any other Bulgarian national-liberation movement, the Comintern decided to provoke their dissolution. Thus, DRO and IMRO (united) emerged at the end of 1925. The latter was built on the basis of the May Manifesto of the extreme left in the movement and had followers mainly in Vardar and Pirin Macedonia. It did not manage to form serious structures because of the opposition of both Greek and Yugoslavian communists.

Strong efforts were made to strengthen the legal structures of the Bulgarian refugees as a reaction to the crisis and the fratricidal struggles. In some places they participated with separate tickets in the municipal and regional elections as early as 1924, thus demonstrating disagreement with the inconsistent policy of the Bulgarian governments towards them and towards the national question. However, they stood for the governmental parties in the parliamentary elections in order to influence the official refugee policy of Bulgaria. As this tactic proved to be inefficient, a group of some ten deputies separated from the majority in December 1925 and formed a separate Macedonian Parliamentary Group in the XXI National Assembly. By analogy, a Thracian Parliamentary Group was formed by the two deputies who were refugees from Thrace. The same policy was followed in the XXII National Assembly and in the elections for the XXIII National Assembly in 1931, when the refugees from Macedonia participated independently of the party tickets for the first time and won 8 seats.

The Macedonian movement was completely fragmented by the end of 1927. In IMRO (united) the wing of Vladimir Poptomov, who observed strictly the instructions from Moscow and openly spoke in favour of a Macedonian nation, and the wing led by the old revolutionary Mihail Gerdjikov, who was opposed to this thesis, separated completely. The federalist group round N. Iurukov continued to espouse the ideas of a future Balkan federation.

The group around Georgi Rindov and Nikola Kalamatiev was closely tied to Belgrade and preferred to see Macedonia within a Yugoslavia reorganised on federate basis. Among the autonomists, contradictions arose between General Al. Protogerov and Iv. Mihailov. These were not questions related to personal rivalries and not of principles and at the end of 1928 the general was shot by order of Iv. Mihailov. His successor was Peter Shandanov. He gradually gravitated towards the Bulgarian political left.

The total fragmentation up of the national-liberation movement seriously endangered the Bulgarian state. From the beginning of 1926, the irredentist actions outside the country were rare; the activities of all groups took place within the framework of Bulgarian politics and caused considerable destabilisation. This phenomenon reached its peak in the end of 1930 when followers of Iv. Mihailov kidnapped Ivan Marinopolski, colonel in the General Staff, accused him of espionage on behalf of Yugoslavia, and shot him. Thus, the national-liberation organisations definitely antagonised the king, the military, and the political leaders. In the end of 1933, while still in power, the National Bloc started restricting their activity. After the coup d'état of 19 May 1934 an Ordinance-Act for the Protection of State Security was adopted. It prohibited the participation in such organisations and many of their leaders were arrested. This in reality marked the end of the movement. The only officially existing structures were the cultural charity organisations of the refugees and the related Research Scientific Institutes of Macedonia, Thrace and the Western borderlands.

The Bulgarian national-liberation movement after World War I gradually transformed from being a factor in the Bulgarian national question into becoming a factor on the internal Bulgarian scene and played an active part in political struggles. During the general crisis in the constitutional and parliamentary system, it was a destabilising factor because of its tendency to resort quickly to violence and its lack of consistent political views and positions. It affected negatively the army stability and the stability in the border areas where its power was greater than the official state. Besides this many other external factors justified the restricting measures taken by all Bulgarian governments. The banning of the irredentist organizations was the

natural outcome. In the interwar period the Bulgarian state gradually became not only the main, but also the only, factor for the fulfilment of the desired “national unification” by means of diplomacy and the army.

5. The Process of Integration

According to various estimates, the total number of refugees in 1878-1940 varied between 700,000 and 1,200,000. There was also an intermittent but quite numerous stream of refugees in the opposite direction – consisting of Muslim emigrants (Turks, Tatars, Circassians, Muslim Bulgarians), Greeks and others. The migrations to Bulgaria for various reasons, but mainly as a result of violence related to local and regional Balkan political cataclysms, were a permanent process, an integral part of the life of the country and the nation.

In the first three decades of the 20th century, however, the refugee problem reached an unprecedented demographic scale and had to be solved under severe internal and international circumstances. Accommodation, settlement and economic support of about 3.5% of the total population tested severely the state institutions, the specially established services, the municipal authorities, the refugee organizations as well as Bulgarian and foreign charity initiatives.

During and immediately after the wars, the basic humanitarian measures were most urgent: acceptance and distribution of larger or smaller groups of starving and miserable people, supply of a minimum daily support in products and money, transportation across the borders and in the interior of people, farm equipment and livestock, disease control in the temporary camps, town quarters and village neighbourhoods. Along with the state, municipal, military, and church institutions, the refugee organizations - charity, cultural, educational, political, private individuals - played an important part in accepting and providing temporary or permanent settlement to the refugees as well as facilitating their adaptation to the new conditions. The ties of kinship and to acquaintances in the abandoned birthplaces also mattered, as well as the mutual solidarity within the compact groups that left their native towns

and villages in large numbers.

In this way, separate refugee suburbs quickly appeared and grew steadily in Sofia, Plovdiv, Stanimaka (Asenovgrad), Stara Zagora, Varna, Burgas, Haskovo, Gorna Djumaia, Nevrokop, Petrich, Ruse, Pleven, Nesebar, Anhialo (Pomorie) and many other towns. They also formed neighbourhoods in dozens of villages, and about 20 newly established refugee villages.

The process of settling the refugees in new places gradually passed its most difficult period by the mid-20s, but the state policy for its regulation encountered significant difficulties. The majority of refugees in Bulgarian towns and villages were families or individuals who had been forced to emigrate rather quickly. There were groups and whole neighbourhoods from Macedonia, Eastern and Western Thrace, Dobrudja, the Western borderlands and Asia Minor, with insufficient or almost without any means of existence. The living conditions in the new places were often harsh. It was a common practice to build any kind of shelter just for one day, in order to have a roof above their heads. These “homes” still remain a subject of semi-anecdote reminiscences. There are many stories still remembered about spontaneous or regulated acquisition of waste lands, about sympathy or problems with the neighbouring locals, the municipalities, the fire service, about charity and benefactors, about clientelism, exploitation, etc. There was strong competition for any available job in the cities since they received insufficient assistance in food, clothes or money.

Factors such as the shock experienced by the forced migration, the starvation and diseases, economic and living conditions etc., resulted in very high infant mortality. The older generation experienced great difficulties in adapting to the new situation. Even against the background of the post-war Bulgarian reality, the widespread occurrence of typhus, tuberculosis and other diseases (inherited and acquired syphilis for instance) was especially striking. The danger of malaria was prevalent in many places in Upper Thrace, Northern Bulgaria, and along the Black Sea coast, where refugees found themselves in marshy lands that had to be drained and turned into fields and gardens.

The main legislative, financial and administrative measures for the distribution of the refugee wave were gradually taken until the beginning of

the 1930s. By this time the land settlement, building and re-allotment of the housing fund as well as different infrastructure and communication projects were more or less completed. However, the process of buying out of farm lots, houses and yards, of developing public utilities, disease control and of overcoming the utter poverty was slow and protracted. In the 1930s and 1940s, and even later, the building of better homes, installing of plumbing and sewage, provision of health care et., had only been partially settled or were still pending.

The land required for distribution to the refugees was taken from public, municipal, wasteland and private land. The property of the minority groups who were leaving Bulgaria together with some of the forests and marshlands were of particular significance. Like in Greece, one of the solutions to the land problem consisted of the clearing of wood areas for the purpose of agriculture and stock-breeding and the draining of marshes in order to reclaim cultivable land.

The refugee wave created serious problems, but in retrospect it also contributed positively in supplying additional manpower for agriculture, industry and other spheres, to somewhat compensate the loss of working population during the wars. It also contributed to the change in the ethno-demographic picture of many regions with mixed population, and to the cultivation of desolate or poorly utilised land.

Approximately 15,000 families voluntarily renounced their rights to land settlement and accommodation. In most cases this meant that they were able to manage their own affairs under the new conditions. Among the refugees there were certainly villagers and townsfolk deprived of any property, but also groups such as craftsmen able to apply their professional skills, small traders, intellectuals, teachers, and priests. In some cases relatively rich people with contacts and even estates in Bulgaria had sufficient funds to re-establish their previous status.

Those who survived "*bezhanijata*" (the forced migration) in the period between the two World Wars were mostly either poor, or moderately wealthy farmers, who gradually reached the economic level of their neighbours in the villages, towns and suburbs; they formed the proletariat in the cities and the

marginalised paupers; they were hired workers, farm-hands, servants, and craftsmen.

For a long time, the refugee quarters were notorious for their poverty and misery in the capital and many other towns. In some places, standard family buildings were constructed with state support by private enterprises, complying with the respective town-planning schemes. They are somewhat predecessors of the concrete blocks of flats that went along with the large-scale urbanization of the 1960s - 1980s carried out under the Communist regime. Groups of such standard refugee houses still exist in Sofia, in some towns and villages along the Black Sea coast, in Upper Thrace, and many other places. However, the refugees more often shaped the appearance of the densely populated suburbs with their hastily built miserable homes, narrow streets and with problems related to public utilities and elementary sanitation remaining unsettled until the 1940s - 1960s. Today, a long time after the refugee quarters appeared in the suburbs, it is still possible to see groups of tumble-down immigrant cottages there. Although these houses are not necessarily occupied by the heirs of the refugees, some of these homes are very similar to present ghettos of the marginalised Gypsies (Roma). The refugee suburbs became no less of a typical phenomenon of the Bulgarian cities and towns than the central parts that were modernized in the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, and the architectural remains of the Ottoman period.

Sofia represents a good example. Taking into consideration its size at that time, a great number of refugees from different regions concentrated here and made up a significant part of its population. They came mainly from Macedonia - Kukush, Lerin (Florina), Voden (Edesa), Kostur (Kastoria), Seres, Drama, Demirhisar (Sidirokastron), Gevgeli, Scopie, Prilep, Veles, Ohrid, Bitolja, Struga, Kavadarci, Krushovo (Achladochori), and other towns, villages and regions. In 1919-1926, the total area of the newly built 19 refugee quarters in the western and south-western suburbs of the capital increased to a size three times larger than the area of the inner city.

On a national level, the 1920s and 1930s were times of energetic activity of Macedonian, Dobrudja, Thracian, and Western Borderland movements

of emigrant organizations that espoused different political orientations, and made up different circles that covered the entire spectrum of existing ideologies. The activities of the irredentist organizations and armed groups inside and outside Bulgaria were an integral part of the general radicalization and polarization of the political life until the early 1930s. On a local level, the different wings of IMRO competed for the position of being “a state within the state” in the region of Pirin Macedonia, while the reciprocal murders on the streets of Sofia and elsewhere took place within the political framework of internal and international factors. Thus, the “revolutionary” organizations whose followers were mainly drawn from the numerous refugee communities and the population of the newly annexed territories made up a powerful factor of political instability and left- and right-wing terrorism. These unruly elements were finally harnessed after the establishment of the authoritarian regime of 1934.

During the whole interwar period many immigrant intellectuals put their stamp on the press that was very rich in terms of topics and genres. There is a long list of prominent intellectuals, scholars, writers, poets, journalists, politicians, and military men of refugee origin. The mutual aid organizations of the refugees, the charity fraternities, the orphanages, etc. multiplied fast. At the same time, the young generation’s integration in terms of culture and education took gradually place through the activities of various educational organizations and unions, youth-, student-, women’s-, and sports - societies, reading houses and cultural centres, institutions such as the Macedonian and Thracian Research Scientific Institutes (established in 1924 and 1934 respectively) and the growing network of public schools in the refugee quarters. The economic progress of Bulgaria in the years after the world economic crisis has to be mentioned too.

The presence of refugees from even before the two Balkan Wars and World War I together with the next wave of immigrants and their heirs was quite notable in all spheres of public life. The first three decades of the 20th century witnessed some of the largest migrations. Later the exchange of (Bulgarian and Rumanian) population from Northern and Southern Dobrudja followed the Krajova Agreement of 1940. The national policy of returning refugees

to the “new lands” (in Macedonia, Thrace and the Western Borderlands) in 1941-1944 resulted in repeated migrations – the third or the fourth one for some refugees - following the withdrawing Bulgarian troops.

In this context we can speak of a “refugee syndrome” in the modern history of the country and of a specific long lasting “refugee ethos.” For several decades the problems of social and cultural integration in Bulgarian society constituted a very important factor for its preservation. As carriers of distinct (to some extent or another) local traditions, the representatives of different groups of refugees from various regions, town and villages formed compact communities in their new settlements. The living ethnocultural tradition in its recognizable local (dialect, folklore, etc.) variations preserved the sense of unity of “Thracians,” “Macedonians,” “Dobrudjans,” and smaller sub-groups for a long time. It was sustained by the whole spectrum of their own organizations, ties of kinship between them or the contacts with the relatives, fellow-citizens and countrymen who remained outside Bulgaria. An important part in this was played by nostalgia: the idealization and mythologisation of events, persons (heroes) of the past, the land that was now out of reach and, therefore, situated in the symbolic geography of the Aegean Sea, Vardar and Dobrudja. Gradually, those lands transformed from being actually lost in concrete economic and political terms into becoming a part of the imaginary geography of the unrealized ethno-national space. The deeply shared - personal, family, and group (community, local) - intimate feeling of tragic fate can be found in the oral history, folklore and memoirs, the press, literature and art of the persons who experienced “*bezhanijata*” and their heirs. The oral tradition that is gradually fading away with the passing of generations, together with the literature, official historiography, and media of the past decades, hold on to the national memory of the Bulgarian “national catastrophes” as a specific Balkan concept of a unique and traumatic modern history.

The refugees themselves tried for decades to keep alive the idea of their homelands and to transmit it to the next generations, to preserve their cultural identity in both the local and national cultural space. At first, the effective mechanisms of collective solidarity, local tradition, kinship,

and even (quasi)endogamy predetermined the differentiation in separate quarters and neighbourhoods bearing the specifics of the respective towns, villages and regions left behind in Macedonia, Thrace and elsewhere. In Sofia, Plovdiv, Burgas, and many other cities, there were whole streets of refugee craftsmen who had carried over their traditional occupations to their new places. In the 1930s and 1950s, and even after that, research on dialects, folklore, other ethnographic specifics of communities and regions outside the country could be carried out among relatively compact and still distinguishable groups of “*Gevgelijci*,” “*Kukushani*,” “*Veleshani*,” “*Prilepchani*,” and other groups of refugee origin in the villages of Bulgarian Thrace, Pirin Macedonia, Dobrudja, etc. Neighbourhoods, villages, streets, town squares, craftsmen’s workshops, inns, hotels, reading houses, and schools were named by the refugees according to their local origin, geography, folklore, heroes and the historical events associated with their homeland. The state policy of renaming “non-Bulgarian” town/village toponyms often followed this rule. This is especially true for the 1930s but also later. In the period between 1944 and 1990 some of the streets in the towns were again renamed for ideological reasons, before their “emigrant” names became restored in the last decade of the 20th century. Today in Sofia, for example, a city with almost completely assimilated, acculturated and integrated immigrant communities, this can be seen in quarters and districts that have lost their specific “Macedonian” appearance a long ago.

Without acquiring the status of official holidays, *Ilinden* (2 August) and *Preobrazhenie* (19 August, and to a much lesser extent - “The Day of Macedonia” - the Holy Spirit, 50 days after Easter) remain in the collective memory of the heirs of the refugees, their neighbours and fellow-citizens and are important dates in the national calendar. On the local level, fairs are organized in the villages even today at particular dates associated with the refugees’ past. A long time have passed since the celebration of the anniversaries of the *Ilinden-Preobrazhenie* uprising of 1903 at *Predela* (in Pirin Macedonia) and *Petrova Niva* (*Strandja*) lost the appearance of being purely “Macedonian” or “Thracian” and this is also true for some city quarters or districts too (for example, in the large district “*Ilinden*” in Sofia, encompassing

a considerable part of the former refugee suburbs). The commemorative feasts are already symbolic collective expression of the transformed and vanishing local “refugee” traditions (more particularly of their stylized, theatricalised elements - costumes, songs, etc.) that became part of the wider national cultural space. It encompasses the cultural heritage of the refugees by including it in the mythology of the “national fate.”

In spite of this, even today the third and fourth generation of the immigrants from the beginning of the last century are still keeping the faded reminiscences of their ancestors to some extent, depending on place, family tradition, education and personality. In the big cities like Sofia, Plovdiv, Varna, or Burgas, the grandsons and grand-grandsons are not any more a part of the socio-cultural informal neighbour groups which were still distinguishable in the 1980s. In this environment, the young generations are no more bearers of the dialects, folklore and traditional memory of the past in its mythopoetical wholeness. The heirs of the refugees are a part of the regional and local communities in Pirin Macedonia, Thrace, Dobrudja. As the decades passed by a processes of integration into common “Macedonian,” “Thracian,” or “Dobrudjan” identities gradually developed in the surroundings formed both by the local people and by the immigrants. At the same time, on local or town/village level, the dialect, folklore and other specifics characteristics are still preserved, together with other elements of the old traditions acquired during the times of the forced migrations.

As a heritage of the family, clan, village or town, the oral history of the “*bezhanijata*” is gradually fading away too. For the Macedonians, Thracians, Dobrudjans and to some extent for today’s Bulgarians at large, the myth of the one-time bigger ethno-national space, of the “lost territories” remains an important part of the national identity, irrespective of their particular (closer or more distant) origin within or outside the present Bulgarian state borders. The official national history taught in the schools, universities and by the media meet and interact with the oral history (or histories). This can easily be seen in the still prevailing “common Bulgarian” emotional attitude to the Republic of Macedonia in spite of the established political and public consensus on acceptance of the radically changed “realities.”

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IV

TRANSHUMANCE AND NOMADISM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: THE CASE OF SOUTHEASTERN EUROPE, 15th-20th C.

[Unpublished, 2006]

Pastoralism, or the way of life based predominantly on seasonal grazing of herds of domestic livestock, has been present in the Mediterranean for centuries. It was widespread in various forms, all over the mountains, coastal and inner plains, steppes and deserts.¹ In this text, I will try to briefly outline the characteristic features of this phenomenon and its historical destiny in a Braudelian *longue durée* perspective. My aim is not to present a general view of seasonal migrations of different groups, practicing pastoralism. I would prefer to distinguish typologically two historical, economic and social cases – the *transhumance* and *the nomadism* in the Balkans.

According to the classical definition of Fernand Braudel, transhumance “...implies all sorts of conditions, physical, human, and historical. In the Mediterranean, in its simplest form, it is a vertical movement from the winter pastures of the plain to the summer pastures in the hills. It is a way of life combining the two levels, and at the same time a source of human migration... Transhumance, so defined, is simply one form of the Mediterranean way of life, alternating between the grazing lands of the plains and the mountain pastures; it is a regulated and on the whole peaceful form the result of a long period of evolution. Transhumance even in its most disruptive forms², only concerns a specialized population: the shepherds. It implies a division of labor, a settled form of agriculture with crops to maintain, fixed dwellings, and villages. The village may lose part of their population according to the season,

¹ F. Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. I (Harper & Row, New York, 1976), 87-102.

² To the agricultural environment. Seasonal migrations of hundreds of thousands and even millions of sheep, often covering long distances (up to 800 km) could result in gradual change of the landscape of whole areas.

either to the plains or the mountains. Many documents of the sixteenth century mention these half-empty mountain villages, where only women, children, and old men remain.

Nomadism, on the contrary, involves the whole community and moves it long distances: people, animals, and even dwellings. But unlike transhumance, it has never been a way of dealing with enormous flocks of sheep. Even its largest flocks are scattered over a vast area, sometimes in very small groups".³

The definition of pastoralism in the Balkans, as everywhere else in the world, depends on approach, generally accepted criteria and terminology. Among different opinions one could outline the differentiation of nomadism from the traditional "complex" rural economy, consisting of agriculture and sedentary stockbreeding. Besides the completely "stationary" cattle breeding, there are three basic forms of pastoralism, generally articulated in the literature: *mountain pastoralism* (*Almwirtschaft* of the German "antropogeographical" school), *transhumance* and *nomadism*. Furthermore, they can be rather formally classified in various distinctive and intermediate forms, local variations, etc. Here the seasonal movement of the flocks and the shepherds from summer to winter pastures and then back appears as a common unifying feature (most often vertically, but sometimes – only in the plains).⁴

The *mountain pastoralism*, well studied in Europe, is in general an agricultural-pastoral combination, where the cattle (cows, sheep, goats, horses) and the herdsmen go to summer pastures relatively not far from their permanent settlements. This happens within the same mountain area and in

3 F. Braudel, 87-88.

4 A. Beuermann, *Fernweidewirtschaft in Südosteuropa. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeographie des Östlichen Mittelmeergebietes* (Georg Westermann, Braunschweig, 1967), 15-31; L. Marcu, 'Formes traditionnelles d'élevage pastoral et systèmes d'organisation chez les vagues balkaniques (seconde moitié du XIX^e siècle)', in: *Odredbe pozitivnog zakonodavstva i običajnog prava o sezonskim kretanjima stočara u Jugoistočnoj Evropi kroz vekove* (Beograd, 1976), 67-85; N. Dunare, 'Typologie pastorale sud-est européenne', *Ibid.*, 189 - 210; K. Kaser, *Hirten, Kämpfer, Stammeshelden: Ursprünge und Gegenwart des balkanischen Patriarchats* (Böhlau, Wien-Köln-Weimar, 1992), 295-336.

the winter animals are kept in cattle-sheds. Sometimes there are two villages, summer and winter, and temporary summer dwellings. In some cases part of the population accompanies the shepherds during their seasonal movements. Usually the distance is relatively short and the routes are more or less fixed. Here, the breeding of the cattle is less vulnerable to sudden climatic changes or the condition of the pastures. It is relatively stable, and the mowing of the meadows provides forage for the winter.⁵

The main distinctive feature of *transhumance* is the migration of bigger or smaller flocks during the whole year to the main pastures and to the intermediate ones, situated along the routes. The migrating flocks are attended by specialized shepherds, while the rest of the population – women, children, elders, and part of the men, remain in their villages or towns. They are occupied with various economic activities: agriculture, trade, textile production, organization of manufacture, etc. Given the high degree of specialization and organization of that form, it provides relatively good opportunities for accumulation of capital. Under favorable economic and political circumstances, the sheer number of the total flocks of such a settlement or region could be enormous. It could increase through the use of hired labor and investment in new seasonal pastures. Different vertical, horizontal, regional and local variants of seasonal movements and shorter or longer distances could be observed. Also, the variants regarding the ownership and the social differentiation differ: from social exploitation to relatively equal terms of cooperation between migrating herdsmen. Usually the pastures and routes are firmly established and permanent, as well as the whole network of contacts, personal and institutional relations, markets, etc. However, there is certain risk related to the natural conditions (sudden or periodic climatic changes, floods, epizootic etc.), which can affect this traditional model. This is also true for the political and economic environment.⁶

It is considered that, in different traditional forms, transhumance

5 A. Beuermann, 17-24, 42-50.

6 *Ibid.*, 56-63.

existed in the Mediterranean at least since Roman times.⁷ In the West, especially in the Apennines and the Iberian Peninsula during the 15th–18th centuries, transhumance became a specialized, independent branch, well fitted into the economic conjuncture. This development responded to the growing demand for wool for the booming textile industry, as well as other commodities. Here, one could observe a real expansion of huge flocks, belonging to smaller or bigger owners. That is how the whole system of organization and regulation of the seasonal migrations of millions of sheep through the agricultural regions appeared, facilitated by legal privileges and protection. Gradually, long distance transhumance on a big scale took the shape of a complex system, based on the migration of specific “itinerant” breeds (such as *merino*) and their specialized shepherds. It involved networks and lobbies, interests and conflicts, old traditions and fresh capital. A famous example is the “syndicate” Mesta in Spain, enjoying royal privileges since 13th century. During the 16th century a certain level of institutionalization had been reached. For instance, it is well known that the powerful interests of Mesta and the four big “sheep cities” in Castile (León, Segovia, Soria and Cuenca) were regularly defended in the Cortès.⁸ As an important resource for the developing international market, “sheep breeding meant more to the Iberian economy, says one historian, “than the olives, grapes, copper or even the treasures of Peru.”⁹

Big-scale transhumance in the Balkans shared the same basic characteristics: seasonal migrations of enormous flocks of sheep; relatively longer distances; specialized shepherd associations, related both to the local and the international market; flourishing settlements and regions, marked by economic and social dynamics. Transhumance became one of the basic economic factors of social change in the European domains of the Ottoman Empire in the 18th-19th centuries. Among the new centers that emerged during

7 P. Garnsey, ‘Mountain Economies in Southern Europe, or: Thoughts on the Early History, Continuity and Individuality of Mediterranean Upland Pastoralism’, in: *Itinera. Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft in Berggebieten (Economies et sociétés de montagne)*, ed. M. Mattmuller, Hrsg. von der Allgemeinen Geschichtsforschenden Gesellschaft der Schweiz, fasc. 5/6 (1986), 7 - 29.

8 F. Braudel, 89-95.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 93.

this period, were the towns of Kotel, Koprivshtitsa, Panagiurishte, and Sliven, situated along the Balkan range in Bulgaria, and some areas in the Rhodopes, Western Macedonia, Southern Albania, Greece and other regions. Here, the old stock breeding traditions were combined with the manufacture production, trade, urban way of life, local versions of the new European ideas, fashion and education. That is how the first modern wool textile factory in European Turkey was founded in Sliven in 1834, under the personal protection of Sultan Mahmud II. It started as a manufacture, and soon Russian and English looms and other machines were introduced. Many of the pioneers of local capitalism were engaged in various activities related to transhumance on a large-scale, effectively eroding the specific legal, social and political conditions of the late Ottoman Empire. Thus, one of the most conservative and traditional ways of life, that of the transhumant shepherd, contributed to the creation of the economic conditions for major social change. The emergence of the new, Christian social elites marked the initial stage of formation of the local national movements.

Here, it is not possible to follow the contradictory process of evolution and transformation of the Ottoman *ancien régime* in detail. Not only part of the Christians, but also parts of the Muslim population played an active role in bringing about these gradual changes. Until 17th–18th centuries the existing traditional forms of pastoralism were included in the old, centralized system of taxation, sometimes combined with certain privileges in order to secure the supply of the army and the big cities, especially Istanbul, the capital of the empire.¹⁰ The changes in the land regime and the types of property during 17th–18th centuries, the development of the policy of state protectionism and the growing private interests were related not only to the empire’s market. They went hand in hand with developments related to export of grain, technical crops, wool, textile and cattle. This responded largely to the demands

10 F. Adanir, ‘Tradition and Rural Change in Southeastern Europe during the Ottoman Rule’, in: *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe: Economics and Politics from the Middle Ages until the Early Twentieth Century*, ed. D. Chirot (University of California Press, 1989), 143-154; B. Cvetkova, ‘Les celp et leur rôle dans la vie économique des Balkans a l’époque Ottomane (XV-XVIII s.)’, in: *Studies in the Economic history of the Middle East from the Rise of Islam to the Present Day*, ed. M. Cook (London, 1970), 172-192.

of powerful external factors, shaped by the demand and supply in European and global perspective.¹¹ In the given historical context one could observe the symptomatic appearance of “the conquering Balkan Orthodox merchants” (Slav, Greek, Vlach) outside the Ottoman borders – in Habsburg domains, Southern Russia and elsewhere.¹² The existing Orthodox “Greek” merchant nucleus attracted a lot of new Slavic and Romance speaking members and started to expand at the expense of other traditionally established groups of merchants – Muslims, Jews, Armenians and Ragusans.

Similar, although later in comparison to the Western Mediterranean, was the expansion of specialized big transhumant sheep breeding in the course of 18th and 19th centuries. Its peak coincided with the specific economic conjuncture in the late Ottoman Empire, and its end – with the radical political and economic perturbations, provoked by the emergence of nation-states in the region (beginning of the 19th – first decades of the 20th centuries). Transhumance declined mostly as a result of the loss of the imperial markets and the pressing competition of the West European textile industry. It proved to be quite vulnerable to the changes in economic conjuncture. Crucial were also the political changes and wars, which resulted in differentiation of national economies within the borders of the nation-states. This development created an effective barrier for transhumant seasonal migrations on a large scale.¹³

At the same time, a relatively numerous nomadic population survived the most disruptive period of the Balkan wars and WWI (1912-1918). Until the 1950s-1960s it was still possible to observe the seasonal migrations of thousands of men, women and children, and their large flocks of sheep, goats and horses. It was a spectacular demonstration of the persistence and

11 B. McGowen, *Economic life in Ottoman Europe. Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1981); M. Palaliret, *The Balkan Economies (circa 1800-1914). Evolution without Development* (Cambridge, 1997).

12 T. Stojanovich, ‘The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant’, in: *Journal of Economic History*, 20 (1960), 269-273.

13 U. Brunnbauer, *Gebirgsesellschaften auf dem Balkan. Wirtschaft und Familienstrukturen im Rhodopengebirge (19./20. Jahrhundert)* (Böhlau, Wien-Köln-Weimar, 2004), 196-214.

durability of this centuries old way of life in the region. Although the official statistic data is usually misleading about nomadic communities or their flocks in the Balkans, it is obvious, that their numbers were still significant in the first half of 20th century. In 1900s there were at least 3,000 nomadic Aromanians and probably several thousand Karakachans in Bulgaria, and around 25,000 semi-nomadic Yürüks in Ottoman Macedonia and the Rhodopes. According to the most reliable ethnographic surveys, only in Greece in 1950s-1960s there were 70,000-80,000 migrating Aromanians and between 70,000 and 110,000 nomadic Karakachans/Sarakatsani (10,000-12,000 families and 1,800,000 sheep and goats). During the same period there were also nomadic communities in Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania and Turkish Eastern Thrace, but there are no reliable statistics about them.¹⁴

Usually, *nomadism* is defined as a specific economic and cultural adaptation to the steppes, deserts, mountains, and coastal lowlands – places rather inaccessible or weakly affected by agriculture. Once again, there are different definitions and typologies of this complex phenomenon, various approaches and views. In general, this is a mobile way of life, based on a traditional, extensive form of (exclusively or predominantly) pastoral economy, adapted to, and largely dependent on, the natural environment. As a whole, nomadic communities share some similar characteristics: “own” zones (pastures, routes), sometimes defined as a specific “ecological niche” (where they could be the only inhabitants or they could share it with others); an autonomous economic and socio-cultural profile; seasonal migrations of the whole community (group) or the predominant part of it; temporary or portable dwellings (yurts, tents, huts). These are the most distinctive features of otherwise different groups, societies and cultures.¹⁵

Practically, “pure” nomadism does not exist. In the ideal variant the

14 A. Beuermann, 140, 154; G. Kavadias, *Pasteurs nomades méditerranéens. Les sarakatsans de Grèce* (Gautier-Villars, Paris, 1965), 20-21; J. Pimpireva, ‘The Sedentarization of the Karakachans in Bulgaria’, in: *Études Balkaniques*, 3 (1993).

15 A. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World* (Cambridge, 1983); Br. Spooner, *The Cultural Ecology of Pastoral Nomads* (Addison - Wesley Publishing Company, 1973); D. Johnson, *The Nature of Nomadism. A Comparative Study of Pastoral Migrations in Southwestern Asia and Northern Africa* (Chicago, 1969).

whole population (nomadic community) does not have permanent residence (settlements and houses) and makes continuous migrations with all its flocks and belongings. In reality, some nomadic groups migrate on long distances during the whole year; others possess or hire pastures near to their seasonal settlements. Different variations are possible according to the natural conditions, the composition of the flocks, productivity, and traditions of breeding. Of great importance are also the social stratification, relations of inequality, slavery, hired labor, cooperation and kinship. The organization of the labor depends to some extent on age, gender, and inner-group division. Important factors are the market opportunities and the combination of cattle breeding with other activities such as some crafts, hunting, etc. The human resources, however, are comparatively limited within the migrating group. This is also true for the maximal size of the herd.

An important key for understanding this way of life is its dependence on, and, at the same time – balance with, the available natural resources. One of the basic characteristics of nomadism is the traditional economic strategy, aiming at maintaining a definite optimal size of the herd, in different combinations regarding species and number. Opportunities for radical changes and innovations of the economic system, for creating and developing its specialized branches, are limited.¹⁶

This does not mean that nomadic cultural traditions, social and political structures do not develop or change. I will not refer here to certain widespread quasi-racist, colonialist or post-colonialist views of the “stagnating” character of the nomadic societies in the bosom of the nature, or the implied primordial aggression and the “parasitism” of the nomads.¹⁷ Of course, nomadism is based on traditional economic, social and cultural forms compared to more complex pre-modern and modern societies. On the other hand, who was more aggressive in the past, is rather relative. This is always a concrete historical issue or situation, despite the generalizations about “them, the nomads.” In

¹⁶ A. Khazanov, 16, 25-40, 69-81; Br. Spooner, 8-19; D. Johnson, 7-11.

¹⁷ A famous interpretation of nomadic “stagnation” belongs to A. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Abridgement of Volumes I-IV by D. C. Somervell, Oxford University Press, New York & London, 1947), 164-186.

another dimension – the cultural one, traditional art and folklore of many nomadic communities are a very complex phenomenon, belonging to the world’s cultural heritage.¹⁸

Besides some forms of nomadism, closer to the ideal “pure” model and situated in geographically isolated areas, such as deserts and steppes of the arid or semi-arid zones, there are other types, considered to be transitional, and tending towards partial or complete sedentarization. Usually, their economy involves agriculture and other subsidiary activities that could be practiced during the stages of the seasonal migration by the group as a whole or part of it. For many more or less similar cases it is acceptable to use the conditional, but historically and culturally correct term *semi-nomadism*. It could be a transitional situation, an indication of developing sedentarization, but could also be a model stable enough to keep the balance among the different activities, without breaking the frames of the concrete nomadic tradition or community.¹⁹

Furthermore, nomadism is being defined not only as adaptation towards the natural environment, but also to the “outside world”. This economic pattern is autonomous, but not autarcic. Trade, transport, war, and raids are important spheres of interaction with the sedentary population, which affect considerably the ideal “pure” type. They modify the predominantly pastoral economy, increasing its flexibility, but could at the same time be historical preconditions for social change and sedentarization. Often the main advantage of the nomads, their successful adaptation to the natural environment, turns into a disadvantage in the clash with the cultural influence and technological superiority of more complex, stratified or better organized societies, states and civilizations. Historically there are certain possible models of establishing statehood as a result of nomadic conquest and the following social evolution (or revolution). More often than not, the outcome is a complex social system where the nomads become gradually marginalized, integrated or destroyed

¹⁸ Dr. Antonijević, *Obredi i običaji balkanskih stočara*, Beograd, 1982 (*Posebna izdanja Balkanološkog instituta*, 16, Srpska Akademija Nauka Umetnosti,).

¹⁹ A. Khazanov, 19-21, 59-63; D. Johnson, 20-38, 170-173; Br. Spooner, p.19.

by the premodern states or empires, and dynasties originating from the same tribal milieu. The relations between the Ottomans and their nomadic subjects are among the classical examples of this historical change of the roles.²⁰

This is especially valid for the early modern and modern times everywhere in the Middle East, North Africa and Eurasia. In many regions the nomads were able to cope with the external pressure and were even adequate in military terms up to the end of the 17th century, the steppe Eurasian peoples – Tatars, Mongols, and Kazakhs – being the classical historical example. Since then the process of their defeat, social marginalization or sedentarization and assimilation, has developed gradually, but irreversibly.²¹

In Southeastern Europe there were two geographically and ecologically distinctive zones with nomadic presence in the course of history. The Lower Danube (present day Wallachia, Dobrudja, the Danubian plain) has been the area of migration and sedentarization of steppe nomads since ancient times. All the written evidence that we have about the Carpathians suggest that it was predominantly an area of transhumance. Here, the most famous case was that of the long distance migrations of Vlach shepherds from the mountain to the adjacent plains along the banks of the Danube.

There is some data, although scarce, about the relatively early presence of another type of nomads, whose seasonal migrations covered mostly the areas to the south of the Danube. They were oriented towards winter pastures along the Aegean, Adriatic and Black Sea coasts and summer pastures in the mountains of the Balkan Peninsula.²² This local version of nomadism appeared, and still appears to some researchers as something very archaic and almost organically belonging to the landscape of the Balkan range, Rhodopes, Rila, Pirin, the Dinaric and Pindus massifs, many mountains in Continental Greece, and the adjacent inner and coastal plains.²³ However,

20 R-P. Lindner, *Nomads and Ottomans in Medieval Anatolia* (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1983).

21 A. Khazanov, 3-12, 68-84, 198 ff.

22 T. J. Winnifrith, *The Vlachs. The History of a Balkan People* (St. Martin Press, New York, 1987), 57-122.

23 A. Poulianos, 'Sarakatsani: The Most Ancient People in Europe', in: *Physical*

the first precise written evidence of seasonal migrations including women and children, and comparable to the way of life of the nomadic groups recorded in 19th–20th centuries, dates back to the Byzantine times (1066 AD). In the work of the Byzantine writer Cecaumenus we find a fragment containing information about nomadic migrations of Romance speaking Vlachs from Thessaly to the mountains of present-day Macedonia (the Byzantine katepanate of Bulgaria):

“He [the local leader Nikoulitsa Delphina] was speaking to the Vlachs [from Thessaly] as well: “Where is your cattle and where are your women?” They replied: “In the mountains of Bulgaria.” For such is their custom, that the cattle of the Vlachs and their families stay at the top of the mountains and in the places most breezy until the month of September.”²⁴

In medieval and Ottoman times various groups (some of them Romance speaking) were called “Vlachs”.²⁵ These Eastern Orthodox pastoralists are considered to be the predecessors to the two main local nomadic and pastoral communities from 18th – 20th centuries – the Romance speaking Aromanians and the Greek speaking Sarakatsani/Karakachans. Since 1950s – 1970s both groups are completely sedentary and, being part of the region’s ethnic mosaics, do not differ in terms of modernization and social integration from the respective national majorities in several Balkan states.²⁶

During the Balkan Middle Ages and afterwards, the term “Vlachs” worked simultaneously on two different levels: social (legislative) and cultural. Moreover, it was one of the numerous pejorative names, marking the symbolic boundary between the “sedentary”/“civilized” and “nomadic”/“wild” local communities. “Vlachs” was a socially and culturally valid synonym of “wanderers,” “shepherds,” “nomads,” “vagrants” (“outsiders” – “neither rural nor townfolk”), etc.

Anthropology of European Populations (Mouton Publ., 1980), 175-182.

24 M. Gyoni, ‘La transhumance des vlaques balkaniques a Moyen Âge’, in: *Byzantinoslavica*, 12 (1957), 29-42.

25 M.Gyoni, ‘Le nom de ΒΛΑΧΟΙ dans l’Alexiade d’Anne Comnene’, in: *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 44 (1951), 249 - 251.

26 A. J. B. Wace, M. S. Thompson, *The Nomads of the Balkans. An Account of Life and Customs among the Vlachs of Northern Pindus* (Methuen & Co, London, 1914); J. K. Campbell, *Honour, Family and Patronage. A Study of Institutions and Moral Values in a Greek Mountain Community* (Oxford, New York and London, 1974); G.Weigand, *Romänen und Aromunen in Bulgarien* (Leipzig, 1907).

This was a distinctive, but multiple social (legislative) category including, on the one hand, shepherds of various origin, who were called “Vlachs”, and on the other hand, pastoral groups linguistically and culturally different from the sedentary population. The latter were relatively isolated communities in Bulgarian, Serbian, Dalmatian, Byzantine, and later Ottoman state contexts. They present a historical case of “dominated” and “regulated” pastoralists, subjects of medieval rulers, and multicultural empires. For instance, part of the “Vlachs” were organized and institutionalized in squads (auxiliary forces) in medieval Serbia, Croatia and Byzantium, and later in the Ottoman military system up to the end of the 16th century. They played certain, in some places very important roles in the food and fabrics supply, as well as in the local transport and in the caravan trade. The economy of the pastoralist “Vlachs” was based on their specific kind of cattle breeding, and on established bigger or smaller trade networks. The economic strategy was stable and deeply rooted in the tradition, but flexible enough to fit into their natural and social environment. In their constant search for favorable conditions they needed mostly two things: free pastures and free access to them. Even in the 19th-20th centuries the Balkans remained relatively less populated compared to other parts of Europe. Apart from the abundant subalpine pastures, there was still enough space in the plains, consisting of scarcely cultivated, wastelands and fallow.²⁷

During the Ottoman period (end of 14th century-beginning of the 20th century) a new, this time Turkish speaking and Muslim pastoralist community, was present in the Balkan region. These were the Yürüks, initially tribal and militarized Anatolian nomads. The larger part of them settled in the eastern and central areas of the peninsula (modern Bulgaria, Republic of Macedonia and Greece). Following the Ottoman conquest and the establishment of the imperial regime, they migrated from Asia Minor during the 15th-16th c., successfully displacing medieval Vlachs in many areas.²⁸ A Yürük auxiliary

27 T. Vukanović, ‘Les valaques, habitants autoctones des pays balkaniques’, in: *L’Ethnographie* (nouvelle série, 56), 1962, 24-41; A. Beuermann, 77-92, 120-196.

28 E. Werner, ‘Yürüken und Wlachen’, in: *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl Marx-Universität, Leipzig*, 15 (3, 1966), 471 - 478.

military organization and separate social category existed in European Turkey until the first half of the 19th century, when only smaller part of them were still nomadic or semi-nomadic shepherds.²⁹ They became an integral part not only of a distinct economic pattern, but also of a distinctive social and cultural phenomenon in the history of the Balkan Peninsula.³⁰ If we exclude the Lapps and some Tatar groups from the Pontic steppes, Vlachs, Karakachans and Yürüks were the only nomads in Europe in early modern and modern times. They practiced the so called “mountain nomadism,” sharing many familiar features with various more or less economically similar communities all over the Eastern Mediterranean.

From the first written evidence concerning nomads up to the final sedentarization of the last Karakachan groups in Bulgaria and Greece around the middle of the 20th century, this way of life appears to its researchers as more or less unchanged. Although different in terms of ethnicity, religion and language, local nomads migrated, replaced each other and occasionally settled in more or less the same zones, areas and locations. They were able to secure their “niche” both in surrounding societies and in the natural environment for centuries. The Byzantine chronicles, the Ottoman legislation and judicial reports, and the ethnographic surveys display strikingly similar products, attire, animal breeds, temporary dwellings and interests of these mountaineers. The oral tradition of the neighbouring Balkan peoples unmistakably distinguishes the “archetypal” elements of nomadism, considered to be something quite different from other forms of local pastoralism. The stereotypical image of the “tent-dwellers” was part of the symbolic, but effective cultural border separating the “sedentary” farmers and townsfolk from the “restless nomads.”³¹ For instance, the presence of “Yürüks,” “Vlachs” or “Karakachans” in an ethnographic survey of oral tradition or in a traveler’s account, is often quite confusing in terms of ethnicity. However, almost invariably, one

29 H. Inalcik, ‘The Yürüks: Their Origins, Expansion and Economic Role’, in: *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire. Essays on Economy and Society. Indiana University Turkish Studies and Turkish Ministry of Culture Joint Series*, 9 (Bloomington, 1993), 97-136; X. de Planhol, *De la plaine pamphylienne aux lacs pisidiens. Nomadisme et vie paysanne* (Paris, 1958); D. Bates, *Nomads and Farmers. A Study of the Yoruk of Southeastern Turkey*, University of Michigan, 1973 (Anthropological Papers, 52).

30 Quite expressively called “nomadisme par “vocation” by G. Kavadias, p. 20.

31 I. T. Sanders, ‘The Nomadic Peoples of Northern Greece: Ethnic Puzzle and Cultural Survival’, in: *Social Forces*, 33 (1954), 122 - 129.

could find descriptions of huge herds of sheep and horses, (sometimes even camels), fierce dogs, tents, huts, and caravans of armed men and their women and children, moving according to grass-withering in late summer and snow-melting in early spring. This was part of the everyday life in the region, but also a symbol of its ethnic diversity and “underdevelopment.”

Nevertheless, following the changes in the late Ottoman economic system, Balkan nomads were also attracted to the growing market opportunities for their traditional products (mainly cheese, wool and livestock). After the collapse of the local transhumance on a large scale, they found even more free pastureland, especially in the eastern and central parts of the region. This coincided with the end of the prolonged process of sedentarization of the Yürüks. Soon their return back to Asia Minor followed, together with a considerable part of the local Turks and other Muslims (1870s-1920s). Thus, the last nomadic migration took place, this time from the Western Balkans to free pasture lands in present-day Bulgaria, Northern Greece and Western Asia Minor.³² Nomadic Vlachs and Karakachans were able to adapt once again, this time to the emerging post-Ottoman economic and social conditions in the newly founded Balkan nation-states. However, the political upheavals in the region and the changing national borders marked the beginning of the end of their seasonal migrations.³³

Nowadays, the children and grandchildren of the former nomads have very different lifestyles in the once again rapidly changing Balkan economies and societies. Nomadism belongs to history, only occasionally being a symbol of the past, evoked or neglected by groups or individuals still preserving, loosing or re-inventing their Karakachan, Aromanian or Yürük identity.

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³² V. Marinov, *Prinos kam izuchavaneto na proizhoda, bita i kulturata na karakachanite v Bulgaria* (Sofia, 1964), 13, 29-30.

³³ A. Beuermann, 194-220; K. Kaser, 367-389; Pimpireva, J. *Karakachanite v Bulgaria* (Sofia, 1998), 131-145.

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V

HOW TO BE KARAKACHAN IN BULGARIA?

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– www.ceeol.com]

This text will focus on the identity of the Karakachans in Bulgaria – a former nomadic community forced to settle down in the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Karakachans are Orthodox Christians and speak a specific Greek dialect. That, together with their former way of life and cultural tradition, makes them different from both Greeks and Bulgarians. This particular group provides us with an opportunity to outline the constant mental mapping and re-mapping carried out under specific national and trans-border circumstances. The Karakachan case is in a way comparable to the “ethnic revivals” or “re-appearances” of other small Balkan ethnic groups on the social, economic and political landscape of a region in transformation.¹

Nowadays, the small ethnic (local, ethno-confessional) groups (Karakachans, Gagauzes, Gorani, Yürüks, Armenians and others) are not in the centre of the bitterest of Balkan conflicts. Some of them, the Vlachs/Aromanians for example, have occasionally been in the focus of international attention, however, gradual social integration, assimilation and emigration have reduced them in number and importance during and after the clashes of the “major” nationalisms. The very survival of some of the smaller Balkan ethnicities in the near future is questionable. Given the fact that many of the Bulgarian Karakachans – as well as quite a few authors – share this view, the present-day situation proves to be, as could be expected, much more complex and controversial.

The number of Karakachans in Bulgaria can only be roughly estimated in the past, but also in the present. The statistics have always given lower figures, both because of political considerations and because of the impossi-

1 Schwander-Sievers, S. Ethnicity in Transition: The Albanian Aromanians' Identity politics. – *Ethnologia Balkanica*, vol.2 (1998), 167 – 184.

bility to account for the nomads (“Vlachs”), or those who identify themselves as “Greeks”, “Bulgarians”, etc. The official Bulgarian census of 1956 gave the number 2,085. According to general estimations by Bulgarian and foreign ethnologists, during the 1960s their number was between 3,000 and 5,000. For the same period it was calculated that in Greece alone there were about 10-12,000 Karakachan families, or 80-100,000 persons and 1,800,000 sheep and goats.² The “Federation of the Karakachan Cultural and Educational Societies in Bulgaria” (founded in 1991) has calculated their number at approximately 18,000.³ According to the official census of 1992, 5,144 people identified themselves as Karakachans.⁴ Bulgarian sociologists and ethnographers give the number 12-15, 000, but the “mixed” marriages and questions related to identifying with “being” Karakachan and “belonging” to the Karakachan community make the figures problematic.

Their number is not insignificant indeed, especially in Greece. However, the last groups of stubborn nomads have already disappeared even there. After a few decades of uncertain prospects the Balkan nomadism now irreversibly belongs to history. Many of the basic elements of this tradition (the pastoral migratory way of life with its economic strategies, social and economic organization, traditional breeds, dress, textile and other manufacture, rites, superstitions, etc.) have completely disappeared or will soon disappear. The last, now old generation of ex-nomads will carry away with it the strictly observed wedding, childbirth, burial and calendar rituals. Perhaps the same future awaits the food and medicine recipes and the whole complex of aesthetic principles, notions, skills and practices, connected with the specific production of home-made textile. The specific features of traditional Karakachan art are quickly disappearing: the ornaments and colors of the various fabrics, the female traditional attire – quite different from the other Balkan traditional

2 Beuermann, A. *Fernweide Wirtschaft in Südosteuropa. Ein Beitrag zur Kulturgeographie des östlichen Mittelmeergebietes*. Braunschweig, Georg Westermann Verlag, 1967, p. 154.

3 Pimpireva, Zh. *Karakachanite v Bulgaria. Ot nomadstvo kam usednalost*. Sofia, IMIR, 1995, pp. 9-10.

4 *Natsionalen statisticheski institut. Rezultati ot prebrojavaneto na naselenieto. Vol. I. (Demografski karakteristiki)*. Sofia, 1994, p. 194.

costumes, the richly decorated ritual bread and fretwork. As it is, the future investigators of old traditions will have to rely increasingly on the compiled archival materials and museum collections instead of field research.

However, the remaining “Karakachan” still sustains a distinguishable ethnic identity. Following James Clifford, the Karakachans are still a vital community in spite of the non-recoverable extinction of a considerable part of their own cultural heritage, and of the “pure” culture associated with the nomadic tradition. There are different ways of searching for legitimacy of their difference and place in the Bulgarian society.

For several decades this community has been experiencing dramatic changes in terms of economic strategies, social organization, tradition and integration in Bulgarian society. The Communist state policy and the isolation from the Karakachan population in Greece that remained outside the Iron Curtain, have strongly influenced the process of shaping the present-day identity of the Karakachan ethnic minority. After the radical political and economic changes in post-1989 Bulgaria, the majority of Karakachans have had to adapt themselves to the new realities, to try to establish new economic and social contacts, as well as strategies for survival and social success. New factors and actors have appeared during the last decade. The Karakachans in Bulgaria have for the first time the opportunity to enjoy certain minority rights, the support of the Greek state, cultural associations and NGOs. Trans-border contacts with Greece, a whole spectrum of economic and cultural activities mark the new dynamic stage in constructing (or re-constructing) the identity of Bulgarian Karakachans.

1. The burden of the past

The history of the Karakachans is almost completely unknown and can be summed up in few words: seasonal migrations and settlement; searching for new pastures (“homelands”) and securing the traditional ones (since the end of the 17th century to the 1950s - 1970s). During those two decades the community was forced to settle down and search for new ways of economic, social and cultural adaptation, quite different from nomadism.

The Karakachans’ past is even more “non-eventful” than the history of

the Vlachs/Aromanians or the Yürüks (Muslim Turkish speaking semi-nomads), who had their considerable settled (urban or rural) subgroups, auxiliary military structures and social categories of specific status within the Ottoman system. The political importance of the Vlachs resulted in their recognition as a separate *millet* (1905). Rich “Tsintsar” merchants actively participated in the formation of the Balkan economic and cultural elites. Urban Vlachs, both in their “homeland” (Epirus, Thessaly, Southern Albania, Western Macedonia) and in the Diaspora (within and outside the region) were active agents of the development of the respective national revivals in the 18th - 20th century. They contributed with a number of prominent figures, especially for the Greek national cause, but also the Serbian, Rumanian, Bulgarian and, later - the Macedonian ones. The pastoral Yürüks and Vlachs/Aromanians gravitated predominantly towards their much more numerous, long ago settled, socially more integrated or ethnically assimilated fellow-people. The neighboring Balkan peoples were gradually but constantly, absorbing parts of them.

In sharp contrast to this, for two centuries or so, the Karakachans remained mainly isolated from the peninsula’s political dynamics. They seldom opted for, unless forced or “tempted”, other political causes besides theirs. Above all, they tried to secure the economic success and cultural survival of the migrant group living among “other” communities, nations, states, rival “propagandas”, guerillas and armies. For quite a long time they remained (or tried to remain) an economically and socially autonomous (but not autarkic). Accordingly, the Karakachans were seldom featured in the Balkan ethnographic-cartographic-linguistic games, or in the official statistics, until the beginning of the 20th century. Meanwhile, the last stage of migrations of Karakachan nomadic groups – from Northern Epirus and Thessaly to Peloponnesus and from Ottoman Macedonia and Thrace to Bulgaria, Southern Serbia and Western Anatolia – had been gradually developing before the two Balkan Wars broke them up.

As a result of this migration, Karakachans found themselves within the political borders of several Balkan countries/nations and became a classical example of a major question: representation of the pre-national Balkan communities (local, kinship, religious, linguistic, ethnic). In this particular case the

lack of their “own” written history and the predominant illiteracy (or very restricted literacy) among the pastoral nomads is very important. What was recorded from their oral history (local, group, individual) and from the folklore, is anchored in mythology and demonology.⁵ This does not facilitate any of the attempts made to reconstruct the Karakachan past before the 1820s.

In the decades during and after the Greek revolution (1821-1829) a number of proper and family names which are most probably Karakachan appeared in the turmoil of events in Epirus, Thessaly and Peloponnesus. The Karakachans themselves traditionally claim the captains Kachandonis and Theodoros Karaiskakis as their own. This is the second instance, after some indirect evidence from 1700s, where (again indirectly) this “mysterious” population appeared on the historical scene.⁶

The collective memory does not go back further than a few generations to those heroic times. Some relatively realistic stories, preserved in songs and legends, can be dated from the same period. However, beyond the days of Ali Pasha of Ioannina and the Greek struggle for liberation, all genres of the Karakachan oral tradition become lost in the realm of the mythology with their saints, *klephtes*, wood nymphs, demons, “Bulgarian” fields and “Vlach” mountains. Here the migration of the sheep flocks and people from the coastal plains to the alpine pastures is eternal. Time runs within the circle of seasons, with no beginning or end. Its pace is measured only by the constant alternation between St. George’s (6 May) and St. Demetrius’ Day (26 October). The rhythm of this cycle was determined by the necessity that the family, the community and the population as a whole, must keep on moving in order to exist and achieve success according to traditional nomadic values. Ever since their “emergence” until the 1960s-1970s, the Karakachans had been in constant search for pastures and water for their sheep and horses and secure shelter for their wives and children. No matter whether they came back to the same meadows year after year or traveled along roads unknown

⁵ Antonijević, Dr. *Obredi i običaji balkanskih stočara (Posebna izdanja Balkanološkog instituta, SANU, 16)*, Beograd, 1982, pp. 157-164.

⁶ XATZHMIXAΛH, A. ΣΑΡΑΚΑΤΣΑΝΟΙ. ΑΘΗΝΑ, 1957, Τ. Ι, Α., ης, ηθ, ρα, ρβ.

to their fathers and ancestors, their goal had always been a particular combination of natural conditions. Every country, region or place possessing those conditions might have been the “native land” of a nomadic community.

That is how, within the duration of about two centuries, the Karakachans, in their movement eastward, passed through the whole length of Greece, Central and Southwest Albania, Macedonia and East Serbia, and through Bulgaria and Thrace before reaching as far as West Asia Minor. This migration scattered them around the mountains of the Balkans and Western Anatolia, inhabited before them by the Yürüks and part of the Aromanians.⁷

Everywhere they went, they inhabited zones with similar ecological characteristics: the pastures in the subalpine belt above the tree line in summer and the seaboard plains in winter. The grass and the water, the woods and the herbs, the position of the pastures and the distances between them, the climate and many other factors were of vital importance. They kept constant the co-relation between the composition and the size of the flock. The sheep and the goats supplied food and clothing for a definite number of people, produced goods for the market as well as the financial means necessary to counter potential risks connected to their way of life.

The symbolic geography of the nomads encompassed a tripartite world: the mountain, the field and the roads between them. High in the mountain the Karakachans used to choose the most suitable place for a summer camp. For a few months a tiny piece of land was turned into a small economic center providing an output of dairy products, wool textile and clothing, dyes and drugs from various plants and minerals, wooden and leather utensils, implements and tools. Women were mainly responsible for this production. Men were periodically absent, tending the sheep on the surrounding ridges, while the horses usually grazed on their own. The mountain was considered by the nomads as their real home, while in the autumn it brought them back to the lowlands, which they saw as “alien”. The road occupied a central place in their everyday life, as well as in their mythology, demonology and magic. Sometimes the migration lasted as long as a month. The time was measured by

⁷ Marinov, V. *Prinos kam izuchavaneto na proishoda, bita i kulturata na karakachanite v Bulgaria*. Sofia, 1964, pp. 13, 29-30.

the distance between the temporary stops (“*konak*”). An unexpected death or childbirth often visited the black-tent camp or the strenuous caravan life.

The migratory routes of the Karakachans and their herds go from Pindus to the gulfs of Arta and Volos, from the Balkan Range, Rila and Pirin to Thessaloniki, from the Rhodopes to Drama, Kavala and Alexandroupolis. Those routes are the real counterpart of the mythical road, connecting the mountain and the sea, our world and the world beyond. Even when the seasonal migration was done in peacetime and according to law, passing by well-known partners or patrons from the settled population, it still retained the symbolism of the journey through “deserted”, “no-man’s lands”. Some rituals mirror the primal effort to exist in a wild and unfriendly world, as well as the constant subdued conflict with the settled farmers, seen as “antipodes”. A young woman in the traditional wedding attire, wearing her wedding jewelry usually led the caravan. She was both an “anthropomorphic” amulet against the evil eye and a symbolic victim, a ransom for the freedom to move.⁸ The urge for survival and success in the natural and socio-political surroundings, full of surprises, formed the basis of their collective experience and attitude towards life.

Unfortunately, much of what has been experienced by this previously illiterate population cannot be traced back any longer. The collective memories of the separate local groups, as well as the community as a whole, contain blank spaces. They are due to the shift of the generations, the distance, the national borders and the cultural shock, which accompanied the process of sedentarization. Many events have been forgotten without being registered either in legendary, or in semi-legendary form. Still, there is more to it. Oblivion is as important as the preserved oral tradition for this originally illiterate culture. The Karakachan community was for a long time sidelined by the personalities, the texts and the institutions that have constructed, “invented” and supported the historical memory of the Balkan nations.

Between the early 18th and 19th centuries the Karakachans were most likely concentrated mainly in Epirus. Most of the summer pastures and

8 Pimpireva, Zh. Op. cit., p. 33.

camp were situated in the region of Zagori. A vague memory is kept about the Karakachans’ subordinate position in relation to the local Aromanian communities, which possessed the best pastures at the beginning of 19th century.⁹ However, throughout the whole period from the end of the 10th century to the end of the 17th century, there is not even a shred of evidence pointing to the fact that any Karakachans were present in a definite historical moment or region. All existing written sources refer to the nomadic inhabitants of the Balkan with the common name of “Vlachs”. The ancestors of the Karakachans were “hidden” for centuries behind this old Indo-European ethnonym.¹⁰ During the Balkan Middle Ages and afterwards, in the Ottoman period, the term “Vlachs” was used in various social, as well as cultural contexts. Moreover, it was one of the numerous pejorative names, a synonym of “wanderers”, “shepherds”, “nomads”, “vagrants”, to mention only a few. “*Vlachos*”, “*Vlach*”, “*Vlachoula*” “*Vlachi*” were the names by which the Karakachan nomads referred to themselves. “*Karakachani*” (“*Sarakatsani*” in Greek) is a name most probably given by the Ottomans. Literally, it means “black fugitives”, “black nomads”. Its closest analogue is the Slavonic “*Chernovountsi*” (used in West Bulgaria and Serbia). Etymologically different, both names bear almost the same semantic meaning (people who breed black sheep and therefore have black clothes and tents; who belong to the wild, the alien, and therefore to the other, the next world). If the names of the peoples convey any information about them, the Karakachan “*Vlachos*” is different, even opposite in meaning to the name of the Aromanians (“*Armăn*” – “Roman”, “*Rhomaioi*”). In recent times the name “Vlachs” has been used as a self-appellation mainly among the Karakachans themselves. The Aromanians often reject it, especially in its derisive variant “*Koutzovlachs*” (i.e. “lame Vlachs”).¹¹

9 Beuermann, A. Op. cit., pp. 144-146, 162.

10 Ivanov, V., V. Toporov. K voprosu o proishozhdenii etnonima “Valahi”. – In: *Voprossy etnogeneza i etnicheskoi istorii slavjan i vostochnih romancev*. Moscow, 1976, pp. 61-84.

11 Weigand, G. *Die Aromunen. Ethnographisch - philologisch - historische Untersuchungen über das Volk der Sogenannten Makedo-Romanen oder Zinzaren*. Leipzig, Vol. I, 1895, pp. 273-278.

The “Vlachs” formed military squads (auxiliary troops) in medieval Serbia, Croatia and Byzantium. This was a multiple social category including not only the shepherds of various origins who were called “Vlachs”, but also semi-autonomous nomadic groups. They are considered to be the most direct ancestors of the present-day Aromanians and Karakachans.¹² They played certain, in some places very important role in the food, wool and fabrics supply, as well as in the transport. The economy of the nomadic “Vlachs” was based on a specific kind of stock-breeding, on trade, armed robbery etc. The skills of the warriors, the caravan leaders, the shepherds and the weavers passed down from generation to generation.

The economic strategy of the nomads was flexible enough. This is one of the main reasons for their survival in the region up to mid 20th century. In their constant search for favorable conditions they needed two basic conditions - free pastures and access to them. Both were found in the once vast uninhabited lands and islands of virgin nature where the nomads adapted themselves without inflicting drastic changes to the environment. Besides, they always made good use of the possibilities for economic symbiosis with the settled farmers. The contacts were regulated both by the civil and the common law. Traditionally and most usually, dairy products, fabrics and clothes were exchanged for bread and weapons, fallow fields and communal lands were rented for money or transport services; ideas and influences were exchanged too.

On the practical level, i.e. politically and socially, the access to pasture was achieved through a whole system of relations between the nomadic communities, on the one hand, and the medieval rulers and states (later with their successor, the Ottoman Empire), on the other. For centuries the Balkan nomads comprised a special social category. Within this legally acknowledged framework two tendencies always co-existed, determined by the concrete historical conditions. The first one was towards social evolution and changes, i.e. sedentarization and assimilation, while the other tended towards ethno

¹² Gyoni, M. La transhumance des Vlaques balkaniques au moyen age. – *Byzantinoslavica*, XII, 1951, pp. 27-42; Werner, E. Yürüken und Wlachen. – *Wissenschaftliche Zeitschrift der Karl Marx Universität, Leipzig*, (15), 1966, pp. 471-478.

- cultural self-isolation. Of course, this isolation was relative, conditional and selective, but quite effective in preserving the tradition within the mythological space and relative “timelessness” of a separate small world. It rarely participated in the dynamics of the larger one.

The Karakachans still experience the memory of their past in a specific way. Their origin, according to the most popular versions, is traced back to a certain region (usually Zagori) or even village (Sirakou in Epirus, etc.) They see themselves as fugitives from Ali Pasha’s estates, doomed to wander; exiles because of their uncompromising defense of honor and faith and because of their heroes, the *klephtes*, fighting for the Greek cause.¹³ That is exactly how the Asia Minor Yürüks used to convince the others (and perhaps themselves) that their ancestors had been citizens, inhabitants of the same ancient ruins around which their flocks spend the winter nowadays.¹⁴ The oral tradition about this exile contains symbolic topoi similar to biblical “Egypt”, “Canaan” and “Philistines” (here played out successfully by Epirus, the Bulgarian mountains and the Turks), and the Karakachan “Pharaoh” (personified in Ali Pasha). The “Karakachan” Christ and St. George coexist with legends from the times of the *klephtes*, *partisans* and *andartes*; memories of wars, coups and revolutions. Hard winters, calamities and wanderings alternate in their stories with periods and moments deeply engraved in their memory, demanding a drastic personal or collective choice. Their hostile attitude towards all kinds of official authority always went hand in hand with a traditional hospitality and support offered to outlaws (*haidouks*, *klephtes*), rebels and hermits. Through them or without them the Karakachans have been drawn into all Balkan conflicts, as well as into events decisive for particular countries.

The relations with the neighboring peoples, villages or individuals traditionally included mutual suspicion and alienation, although the two communities also enriched and complemented each other. Thefts, magical practices, superstitions, prejudices and pejorative names were an inseparable part

¹³ XATZHMIXAAH, A Op. cit., T. I, A., o - oα, ηε; Pimpireva, Zh. Op. cit., p. 21.

¹⁴ Benth, Th. The Yourouks of Asia Minor. – *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, 1890-1891, Vol. 22 (3), p. 276.

of the contact as well, which was carried out selectively on both sides of an invisible cultural border. It was characterized mainly by the almost strict endogamy that separated them from all other Balkan peoples. It also showed itself in the clashes - usually avoided, yet inevitable, over the damages on the crops inflicted by the thousands of moving sheep. To such conflicts we owe a considerable amount of evidence about the "Vlachs": from the chronicles and the codices dating from the 11th-16th centuries to the legislative decrees and the newspaper reports of the 20th century. During the times when the nomads had some privileges and power, they were able to effectively oppose the bandits and the bureaucratic arbitrariness. However, during the last two centuries, rather the contrary became the rule for the Karakachans – they were the ones who needed friends or patrons.¹⁵ But all this fits into the nomadic everyday life, into the smooth flow that turns the weeks into months, seasons into years, and years into centuries.

As a matter of fact, during the last two centuries, the Karakachan history has been a succession of interruptions in their traditionally established way of life. It is characterized by the strife for physical and cultural survival and for a place among the states and the nations that succeeded the Ottoman Empire. For example, in Ottoman Macedonia before the Balkan Wars (1912 - 1913), their age-old strategy of self-isolation, ethnic mimicry (after the official acknowledgement of the Vlach *millet*, ethno-religious community, in 1905, some Karakachans declared themselves Aromanian), as well as the practice of paying for their freedom, often failed.¹⁶ Here they lived among contesting national causes, rival educational and church institutions, official Ottoman and unofficial rebel authorities, each with their own supporters or agents. Showing more or less constant affinity towards the Greek community, the Karakachan groups in the region sometimes had to choose between different misfortunes. Their contact with politics almost always led to damage, ranging from obligation to feed squads of armed rebels of various kinds, down

¹⁵ Campbell, J. *Honour, Family and Patronage*. Oxford UP, 1965, pp. 213-262.

¹⁶ Surin, N. Karakachanski kolibi nad selo Rozhden, Morihovsko. – *Makedonski pregled*, 1929 (3), pp. 88-92.

to complete ruin or extermination.¹⁷

During the first half of the 20th century, the changing state boundaries limited the seasonal migrations and migrant movements. It predetermined the processes of gradual settlement (mainly for social and economic reasons in Greece) or forced sedentarization (as it was in Bulgaria for political, economic and social reasons). While the relatively smaller communities in Yugoslavia, Romania, Albania and Turkey were subjected to thorough assimilation or deportations, the Karakachans survived as a separate ethnic identity in Greece and Bulgaria. A number of uprisings around the turn of the 20th century, the front lines of the two Balkan and the two World Wars, as well as the Greek Civil War (1946-1949), swept over the Karakachan summer and winter pastures. Mobilizations, punitive expeditions and supply services of national, occupational and *partisan* (guerrilla) armies affected them severely. The constantly changing national borders cut through the once undivided space from Valona to Istanbul and Bergama, from Kopaonik to Parnon and Taygetus, from the Balkan Range to the Aegean and the Sea of Marmara. Customs duties and taxation policy, veterinary quarantine and marketing issues diverted the routes of the sheep towards the inland valleys and fields.

Until the end of World War II the state policy of the different countries for integrating the nomadic population belonged more to the sphere of ideas than to practice. Although not unhampered, during the 1930s and the 1940s, big Karakachan flocks and caravans were still able to cross the borders.¹⁸ However, after World War II, due to the new political reality in Europe, this was no longer possible. Many clans, even families, became separated for a long time. At the same time, although at a different pace, the industrialization and agriculture swallowed up the lands where the Karakachans used to find their "ecological niche". By the end of the 1960s industrial development, tourism and melioration projects had taken away a substantial part of the winter pastures.

¹⁷ Siljanov, Hr. *Osvoboditelnite borbi na Makedonija*. Vol. II, Sofia, 1983, pp. 175-177.

¹⁸ XATZHMIXAΛH, A Op. cit., T. I, A., λα - λβ; Marinov, V. Op. cit., pp. 29-47; Pimpireva, Zh. Op. cit., pp. 83-96.

Following a chosen or imposed direction of modernization, the Balkan societies went through a difficult transition towards new social and economic structures and relations. The transformation or destruction of the hitherto prevailing agricultural and stockbreeding traditions lay at the very base of this transformation. In socialist Bulgaria, Albania and Yugoslavia, it took an extremely dramatic turn.

The Karakachans in Bulgaria were obliged to supply commodities and forced to keep only very limited numbers of sheep. Measures were taken to register and settle the nomadic groups. The flocks were taken by force into the co-operative farms. Some of the sheep were slaughtered right away or died because of the drastic changes in breeding conditions. In some places the Karakachan horses were exterminated. All this predetermined and even speeded up the final result: the arbitrary destruction of the economic branch of mobile stockbreeding.¹⁹

In Greece the process of settling was relatively calmer but none the less irrevocable. From the 1920s until the late 1970s the local Karakachans passed through different transitional stages on their way to complete settlement. The steps towards it included: shortening of the travelling distance; reducing of the number of sheep and horses; changes in the flock composition (inclusion of local sheep breeds, increase of the number of goats, etc.). The interaction with the market through patronage, marriages or cooperation with the Greek villages and provincial towns, grew deeper day by day. The conic huts made of reed, bark or straw were changed for houses – rented seasonally or owned. The shepherds started to go alone up the mountain, leaving behind their elders, wives and children in the family house. Agriculture and many other new trades gradually made their way into the traditional Karakachan occupations. Many families managed to buy plots of land (mainly in the plains) and build houses. Technically equipped and economically prosperous Karakachan farms began to appear. Intellectuals, independent organizations, unions and folk groups started to appear within the community.²⁰ In

19 Marinov, V. Op. cit., p. 117-127; Pimpireva, Zh. Op. cit., pp. 86-98.

20 Antonijević, Dr. Sarakačani. – *Balkanica*, Vol. 6, Beograd, 1977, pp. 221-231.

present days this dynamic process of integration between this group and the complementary Greek nation is perfectly natural. The similarity between the Karakachan tongue and some Greek dialects, the East Orthodox religion and the common plight within the *Diaspora* provided other favorable conditions for this development.

This general tendency was irreversibly established in the 1950s - 1970s, despite the resistance of the last nomadic groups. They had no other choice, but to face the sudden collapse of their own inhabited world and their concept of the universe.

Seven years passed between the state decree for sedentarization of the Karakachans in Bulgaria (March 15, 1954) and the registered settling of the last wandering family.²¹ A little later, in 1963, the last Karakachan nomads in Yugoslavia (in the Federative Republic of Macedonia) left for Greece. Thus the northwestern part of the Karakachan territory was completely deserted.²² The Karakachan fate in Turkey (in Eastern Thrace and West Anatolia) remains unclear; the same is also true for Albania.

After the shock from the forced sedentarization, the Karakachans in Bulgaria somehow managed to adapt themselves to the new conditions. After the abrupt ending of their migrations, they were able to raise some money from selling off their flock and had additional money from their life-savings reserves. The state subsidized the building of family houses by providing land, materials, and funds. A campaign was launched for the liquidation of illiteracy among the adults and the education of the children.

The majority of the Bulgarian Karakachans settled in separate quarters, mostly in towns and surrounding villages near the mountains in the northwestern and southern parts of Bulgaria. Today there are more or less compact communities in Sliven (both town and region), the Burgas region, Kotel, Zheravna, Karlovo, Kazanlak (both town and region), Dupnitsa, Samokov, Montana, Vratsa, Berkovitsa, Varshets, etc.²³ Even now part of them are still

21 *Izvestija na Prezidiuma na Narodnoto Sabranie*, 1954, Vol. V., N 25, pp. 23; Marinov, V. Karakachani. – *Otechestvo*, 21, 1976, pp. 18-21.

22 Antonijević, Dr. Op. cit., p. 223.

23 Marinov, V. *Prinos...* pp. 14-15; Pimpireva, Zh. Op. cit., pp. 12-13; 17-18.

involved in sheep breeding and the production of woolen yarn and clothes. Some shepherds can still be met in the mountains, on the roads and pastures where their fathers and forefathers were born and died.

2. Balkan Ethnologists on the Ethnogenesis of the Karakachans

In the context of the disputes on the “historicity” [E. Hobsbawm] of the Balkan nations, the Karakachans might be named as a clear instance of a “non-historical” community. Until it was “discovered” by European and Balkan scholars, this community, which used to be almost entirely nomadic, and socially marginal, did not play a role in the argumentation of the rival national ideologies (incl. the Greek one) during the period 1880 – 1930.

Several classic books about the Karakachans, by Balkan and European philologists, sociologists and ethnologists, have been published since the 1920s. A massive amount of fieldwork material has been gathered. However, the question “Who are the Karakachans?” is still pressing, especially for the historians. The majority of casual observers during the last hundred odd years – travelers, military men or tourists – usually asked themselves “whom the Karakachans belonged to.” The same can be said about some of the professional researchers too. This question has been phrased in different ways and at different moments and it has inevitably predetermined the circle of possible answers. As a result, today many of the features of the Karakachan culture can be traced only through analogy. Some of them, mentioned only in vague or brief notes, are now lost forever without being at least partly documented. This is true, for instance, of the burial rites before the influx of local and common East Orthodox elements.²⁴

Nevertheless, traditional Karakachan culture is relatively well studied, despite its predominant representations as a “unique” and “antique” one. In a way it is relevant for an already bygone situation – of the small, socially and economically independent, relatively isolated, seasonally migrating community.

24 Ilkov, D. Ekскурzija po Kaloferskata planina. – *Periodichesko spisanie*, (52-53), 1896, pp. 678-679; Pimpireva, Zh. Op. cit., pp. 70-82.

The Balkan ethnologists, philologists, physical anthropologists, historians, and even veterinarians usually summarize this phenomenon by following two main lines. The first one is related to the picturing of the “archaic life-style,” hence of one’s own idea of remote (even prehistoric) times and “wild” space (sparsely populated mountains or deserted coastal lowlands). The second one reflects the ethnogenetic, linguistic, territorial and geographical, cultural, and “civilization” standards established in the respective national historiographies. A relatively small and politically marginal group, having moved in and between the national states for a long time, is presented as a “living relic” of the ethnic ancestors of several modern nations. As a rule, in the “big” historical narratives, the Greek-speaking Karakachans and Romance-speaking Aromanians (Vlachs) are an example of the “most ancient” predecessors surviving up to present (after the scheme “Thracians” and “Illyrians” - Bulgarians; “Ancient Hellenes” - Greeks; “Turkic shepherds” - Turks).

Beginning with the pioneering book of the Danish linguist and ethnographer *Carsten Höeg* (1925-1926)²⁵, several systematic ethnological and anthropological studies in the 1950s - 1980s [*Angheliki Hatzimichali*, *Georgios Kavadias*, *Dragoslav Antonijevic*, *Arnold Beuermann*, *John Campbell*, *Vasil Marinov*, *Zhenya Pimpireva*] portray the tradition and the identity of the last nomadic generations on the eve of, or shortly after, their final sedentarization. Despite the different methodological approaches ranging from descriptive ethnography to cultural and social anthropology, these authors, together with some linguists, geographers, physical anthropologists and veterinarians studied, collected and represented the Karakachan tradition as a “unique,” “archaic” and “vanishing” one [the classical anthropological study of *J. Campbell* being a significant exception]. During that period it was already too late for some of the supposed “most archaic” features of the tradition to be observed, recorded or studied in the field (the distinctive dichotomy “Christianity” - “Paganism”, some rituals and magic practices, etc.). Since the 1970s the syncretism with bigger neighboring communities has gradually become an important subject of scholarly interest, predominantly as stories of survival,

25 Höeg, C. *Les Sarakatsans. Une tribu nomade grecque*. Vol. I - II, Paris, 1925, 1926.

adaptation, cultural loss, and assimilation.

On the one hand, the present state of the Karakachan cultural identity has been featured as a dynamic yet normal process of transformation, and on the other hand, as a gradual deterioration (or loss of many of its original/“aboriginal”, most typical elements). Although partially observed and studied, the Karakachans’ adaptation to the national environment and even their “revivals” during the “post-nomadic” period(s) still remain a less studied phenomenon compared to the representations of cultural integrity, homogeneity, exoticism, geographic (ecological) and social marginality of nomadic life. A concept of “sad mountains”, in analogy to *Claude Lévi-Strauss’s* “tristes tropiques,” comes to mind.

Almost all Balkan (and a number of Western) experts of Karakachan culture could not resist the “Idol of Origin” [*Marc Bloch*]. But it is hardly possible to support by very poorly documented (observed) migrations during the last two centuries, some heroes from the Karakachan oral tradition, and the vast (yet fragmentary) documentary corpus about “Vlachs” (“nomads”, “mountaineers”, “Romance-speakers”, “pastoralists”) dating from the Medieval and the Ottoman times.

Nevertheless, not only historians, but also ethnologists, anthropologists and even veterinarians have tried to cope with the necessity to furnish both the Karakachans and their respective nations with supposed “ancient” ancestors. The widespread notions of nomads as extremely conservative, “capsulated” [*Ernest Gellner*] economies, cultures and societies, have strongly influenced the portraying of the Karakachans as a “living relic.” A possible way is to resort to “fictions of the primitive” [*James Clifford*], “archaic,” “Oriental,” “ancient,” “pre-historic.”

Here the respective historiographical traditions and narratives, along with their established ethnogenetic schemes, selected components (ancestors) and continuities, more often predetermined the representation of the “living Balkan nomadic archaism” (until the 1950s - 1970s). Visions of national past, as well as of different epochs and of “pastoral” and “tribal” can be depicted. Historical essentialism and anthropological concepts of culture(s) sometimes co-exist (as it is in *Dragoslav Antonijević’s* texts). Still, the “overly

broad entities of race and civilization” [*James Clifford*] are more typical for the historical studies (Balkan and Western) of Vlachs and Karakachans (applying positivist, Marxist, Braudelian, or historical-anthropological methods and models).

Not surprisingly, in some cases, as it was during the times of nationalist rivalry and “propagandas” in Ottoman Macedonia before the Balkan Wars, Karakachans served as a suitable additional argument for territorial or other political claims (as “Vlachs” or “Greeks” together with the Aromanians).

The projections of the past through the prism of present and “the state of being in culture while looking at culture” [*James Clifford*] are inevitable, with or without ironic self-reflection. But in the Karakachan case the history seems too obscure and the present, or the near nomadic past, too “unique” and “archaic,” even in the context of the visions of “the ethnographic museum of Europe.”

Of course, there have always existed more or less convincingly articulated and grounded hypotheses about the origin of the Karakachans.²⁶ What I would tentatively call the “Greek” hypothesis, advanced by some of the most prominent scholars, is based upon the anthropological and linguistic similarities between the Karakachans and the Epirus Greek population: local nomads being isolated groups, taken for a “nucleus of the Epirus anthropological type”;²⁷ and speaking Greek dialect, formed before 14th century.²⁸ The striking similarities between the Karakachan ornamentation and the “geometric” style of pre-classical Hellas as well as some other common elements, generally considered as “prototypical” for the Greek culture, are proposed as arguments.²⁹ Last but not least comes the Karakachan ethno - religious and politi-

26 Pimpireva, Zh. Op. cit., pp. 19-22; Marinov, V. *Prinos...* pp. 11-15; Kavadias, G. *Pasteurs-nomades méditerranéens. Les sarakatsans de Grèce*. Paris, Gautier-Villars, 1965, pp. 6-14.

27 Poulianos, A. Sarakatsani: The Most Ancient People in Europe. – In: *Physical Anthropology of European Populations*. Mouton Publ., 1980, pp. 175-182.

28 Kavadias, G. Op. cit., p. 9.

29 XATZHMIXAΛH, A Op. cit., T. I, A., ρς - ρθ.

cal choice (in the cases or periods when they chose to make any). Sometimes evidence is drawn in support of the theory that the Karakachans once lived as settled (Greek) farmers who were later compelled to flee to the mountains and thus became nomads (i.e. the Karakachan lore is taken literally). It is supposed that they became nomads because of their isolation and as a result of an extreme situation.³⁰

The “Aromanian” hypothesis is usually based on the Karakachan lifestyle, the cultural proximity and some lexical parallels with the Romance-tongued Vlachs. The linguistic difference is usually attributed to a long process of Hellenization.³¹

There are some theories suggesting that the Karakachans could be descendants of some of the Thracian tribes. Basically, the “Thracian” hypothesis searches for arguments in the Karakachans isolation in the mountains; in the cultural and the historical analogies with the Aromanians, the Albanians and the Carpathian highlanders; and in the traces of a linguistic stratum that is older than the Greek, the Roman and the Slavonic ones. In this line of thought, the Karakachans are heirs of Hellenized Thracians or Illyrians, while the Aromanians – of such Romanized population respectively.³²

The fourth hypothesis can be broadly referred to as “Turkic”. It follows up on the obvious presence of a Turkish superstratum. It is found in the language (many Turkish words in the shepherding, horse-breeding, household and other specialized terminology). Part of the Slavonic words in the Karakachan dialect are attributed to the immigrant influx from the Russian steppes, but never to the influence of the Slavonic population, one of the main groups of the Epirus inhabitants in the Middle Ages, nor to the ethnic surroundings in Macedonia, Thrace and Bulgaria. Other arguments in support of this theory are the ethnonym “Karakachan” and some alleged physical-anthropological

features (a faint “Mongoloid streak”).³³ The elements of material life have also been brought forth as arguments (the conic huts, the tents, the milk-skins, the looms, the decorative art, etc.) as well as the burial and other rites. The ancestors (at least one of the main ethnogenetic components) are sought among the Turkic nomads, whose waves periodically flooded the Balkan Peninsula from north and east: Pechenegs, Uzes, Cumans, Türkmén and Yürüks.³⁴

Along with this, there are analogies with ancient nomadic peoples, the Old Testament Jews included, pointed out by the best authorities on the Karakachan religion, magic, mythology and demonology.³⁵ In the same way, the Aromanians are also pointed out as an example of “paleo-Mediterranean” and “Indo-European synthesis.” In fact, there were differences between Aromanian and Karakachan wedding and burial rituals as well as ornamentation patterns, clothing, etc.³⁶ Of course, many features of their tradition and especially the social model, the economy, the art, and the spirituality in general have in as much unique as universal dimensions.

The ancient roots of the nucleus of Karakachan tradition are presented through the presumably oldest linguistic substratum, a number of separate details or whole sets of customs and rites, the animal breeds, the dwellings, the female costume, the typology of the dairy products and some ways of preparing food (for instance, boiling by means of a heated stone). The attempts to relate it to a concrete ancient or medieval ancestor have been too exclusive. For instance, if we take the handy argument of ornamentation, it is “archaic” not necessarily because of its similarities with the art of pre-classical

30 Kavadias, G. Op. cit., pp. 9-10.

31 Capidan, Th. Sărahăčianii. Studiu asupra unei populațiuni românești grecizate. – *Dacoromania*, Vol. 4., 1924-1926, pp. 923-959.

32 Marinov, V. Op. cit., p. 12; Pimpireva, Zh. Op. cit., p. 20.

33 Boev, P. *Die Rassentypen der Balkanhalbinsel und Östägaischen Inselwelt und deren Bedeutung für die Herkunft ihrer Bevölkerung*. Sofia, 1972, pp. 211-212.

34 Guboglo, M. K voprosu o proishozhdenii Karakachan. – *Sovetskaja Etnografija*, 4, 1966, pp. 164-176; Eremeev, D. *Etnogenez turok*. Moscow, 1971, p. 68.

35 Antonijević, Dr. *Obredi i običaji...* pp. 52, 60, 75, 77.

36 XATZHMIKALH, A Op. cit., T. I, A, ξδ, ριβ - ριε, ρλ - ρλβ, ρθ; Antonijević, Dr. Op. cit., pp. 12-18; Caranica, N. *Les Aroumains: Recherches sur l'identité d'une ethnie* (These pour le Doctorat Nouveau Regime). Universite de Besançon, Departement des Science Humaines, 1990.

Hellas. Just as close analogues can be found in the geometric patterns of the Yürüks, the Kurds and many other peoples and tribes, the North American Indians included.³⁷

Given the predominant silence of the written sources from the Middle Ages and the Ottoman period before the 1820s, physical anthropology is quite often involved in historical reconstruction. For instance, the prominent Greek anthropologist *Aris Poulianos* rejects the alleged presence of “Mongoloid traits.” He considers the Karakachan “physical type” as the oldest in Europe (much older than those of the Basques and the Lapps) and finds its closest analogues in the Neolithic and even the Mesolithic Ages. Sometimes the attempted connection between certain features of the Karakachan tradition and such remote historical epochs seems quite similar to the presentation of functional peculiarities of their nomadic way of life as archaic. For instance, the lack of pottery does not necessarily mean a pre-ceramic Neolithic “relic.”

Different ethnogenetic constructs follow the respective methodologies, as well as the established techniques of ascription of “the Balkan archaic.” Furthermore, operations of “possessing” of the “common” or “own” ancestors and “heritages” of several modern nations are found: “Hellenes from the pre-classical Antiquity” (standing for “Greeks” or “Greekness”); “Pelagians”; “Thracians”; “Illyrians” (for “Bulgarians”, “Romanians” and “Vlachs”/“Aromanians”); Medieval and Ottoman “Vlachs”; Turkic/Eurasian steppe invaders (“Turks”); even “proto-Indo-Europeans” and “pre-historical nomads” (despite the fact that the first documentary evidences of “Vlach” nomadic migrations date from the 10th - 11th centuries).

Thus the “sub-” and “super strata” constructs, hypotheses of “nomadization” and “re-nomadization”, and visions of “Balkan patriarchy” and “tribalism” [*Karl Kaser*] have been projected from times immemorial to the late Byzantium and the Ottoman period. Inevitably, the argumentation has to be selected (or reduced) from the same recorded or studied social facts, nomadic way of life, “material culture”, traditional art, mythology, demonology and religion, language, the “physical type” (of a predominantly endoga-

mous population) and even the breeds of Karakachan sheep, dogs and horses. From ethnographic field researches these constructs penetrate the historical narratives and vice versa. Despite some structuralists (or others) suspicious of “origins,” ethnogenesis has remained an important way of portraying the Karakachan tradition, the “Homo Saracatsanus” [*Georgios Kavadias*], up to the 1990s.

3. Social change, ethnic policy and cultural survival

The present day situation of the Karakachan “post-nomadic” generations could be studied and represented not only within the widely shared visions or feelings of “endangered/lost authenticity.” It is also a dynamic, syncretic process of developing “forms that prefigure an inventive future” [*James Clifford*]. After half a century of adaptation to socialist state centralized economy, ideology and policy, the Karakachans in Bulgaria “re-appeared” in the official statistics as part of the existing, yet hidden or denied complex ethnic and religious picture of the country. After the political changes that marked the autumn of 1989, the community and its intellectual and political representatives were not any more semi-anonymous. The formulations of the “Karakachanness” appeared in the public space immediately after the political changes. Until now silent, representatives of the Karakachan intelligentsia, newly elected leaders of the multiplying cultural societies, and the activists of the Federation of the Karakachans, addressed the Bulgarian media and the Annual informational list of the Karakachan federation, “Flamboura.” Since 1990s the “we” discourse has been developed under the strong influence of the newly established economic and political contacts with Greece and the Greek Karakachans/Sarakatsani. New actors and factors have become crucial in the process of a relative and contradictory “ethnic revival.” The Bulgarian Karakachans live in a country, which is once again undergoing radical changes, but are not any more passive witnesses to the next turn of history.

The intellectual representatives of the community are offering their own reconstructions of the past in order to find the Karachans’ place amongst the big nations, especially Greeks and Bulgarians. The interviewing of representatives of different generations and localities, professions (from older

³⁷ Kavadias, G. Op. cit., p. 8.

ex-nomads to intellectuals, businessmen and political leaders) has revealed a spectrum of formulations/registers about the nomadic past in the context of rapid changes. In the present day situation of different trans-border opportunities and contacts, generation gaps and expanding “mixed” marriages, very selective and politically and socially determined concepts of “own history” are appearing. The determining factors are the level of education, the profession, the bilingualism, and the acquired specifics of the already distinctive group of Bulgarian Karakachans. Their re-established individual or family relations with the Greek Sarakatsani and other employers or partners across the Bulgarian-Greek border are becoming more important as time passes.

On the other hand, some leaders, intellectuals and businessmen, try to centralize the “we” discourse. The activities of the leaders, intellectuals and organizations range from supporting the first large exposition of Karakachan traditional art at the National Ethnographic Museum in Sofia (2001 - 2003) to demands addressed to different post-1989 governments for compensation for the herds nationalized by the Communist regime. These also include organizing education in Greek, theatrical/visual representations of what is being considered/selected as “living” and “authentic” tradition (the annual Karakachan rally in the mountains near Sliven, in the region of the Balkan range), etc. This particular event demonstrates and commemorates the very existence of a small community as “old” and even as “the most ancient one,” and serves as a typical example of borrowing historical concepts and choosing “own” symbols. Until recently the main sources have been some academic and popular writings, patterns and ideas developed by Greek Karakachan societies. The “invented” images, symbols and concepts have become no less significant than the language, family tradition and endogamy. The economic and political support from Greece, the cultural contacts and the privileged access to education, seasonal work and “business” have facilitated and influenced the “re-discovering” of the Karakachan “Greekness”. However, there is some tension between different necessities: the desire to stress the fact that Karakachans are “real Greeks” and the awareness of the different cultural tradition; the Bulgarian nationality and the status of an ethnic minority; the old customs and the EU passports held by many of them. This, together with the

“Karakachan ID cards” was very important for Karakachans’ seasonal trips, especially before the opening of the EU borders for Bulgarian citizens, and still facilitates the opportunity to work legally in Greece. But the conjuncture is once again changing with the integration of Bulgaria in EU.

The results of my fieldwork among the two principal kinds of Karakachan local communities - the relatively compact and more numerous ones in the area of Sliven, Kotel, Zheravna and Berkovitsa (in the eastern and north-western parts of the Balkan range), and a smaller group in Maglizh (Northern Thrace) has revealed a variety of “native ethnographer’s” statements. They appear to be directly or indirectly influenced by written texts of different kind (books, articles, booklets or rumors about something written, said or filmed), but also by the attempts at organizational centralization of certain aspects of the community life (such as commemorations, feasts, exhibitions, education in Greek, economic and other possibilities/choices).

In this particular case, there appears to be a gradual overcoming of the old “nomadic” complex (of the “uneducated”, “marginal”, “wandering” community). The attitude towards the nomadic past and to the more remote, mythical or historical, times is contradictory. It combines “modern” identifications that are usually opposed to the former “uncivilized” way of life. However, there exists an opposite point of view, that of idealizing the nomadic past, i.e. Karakachan versions of searching for and finding ancient ancestors. There is no doubt that this is borrowed not only from the stories of the older generations, but also from the schools, texts and media of the “others,” rephrased through Karakachan selection and arguments.

Several decades have passed since the sedentarization of the nomadic groups. New strategies, ideas and concepts have been developed. What the Karakachans consider “their own” today is formulated in different ways, especially when an outside observer is involved. The stress on the difference from the “others” goes side by side with education, professions, political and social concepts shared with the Bulgarian society and nation. At the same time, their native Greek dialect, the concept of “land of origin” (Pindus, some areas and settlements in Northern Greece), kinship, seasonal work and trade in Greece have increasingly influenced the community after 1989.

The main results of the research reflect the dynamic, mixed and insecure character of any ethnic identity. However, the pursuit of authenticity and valid concepts of “our own” history and culture requires more than just “inventing of the tradition.” The rapid disappearance of the “pure” material and folklore “relics” has proven to be only one of the existing problems.

The Karakachan identity policy and the next “post-nomadic” generation (between 50 and 60) have to face some quite new social phenomena. On the one hand, endogamy and conservatism have failed to secure the future of the community. On the other hand, the growing modernization of everyday life and the emancipation of the younger generations are becoming considerable obstacles for the attempts at cultural monopolism, economic dependence or clientelism, or imposing political, social or ethnic choices.

Today, many Karakachan families and (often relatively young) individuals enjoy considerable economic success (by general Bulgarian standards). This is mainly a result of years of seasonal work in Greece and various opportunities to capitalize (on different social levels) on the possibilities created by the official Greek policy of protecting and supporting Greek speaking and Orthodox Karakachans. This relative success is also related to the traditional family solidarity and some “inherited” strategies dating from the Communist period.

The predominant economic strategy of many families is to save money as a result of seasonal agricultural or other work in Greece. Some of the wealthier Karakachans have established trans-border “business contacts” and cooperation with their Greek counterparts. However, in most cases, what is earned is brought to Bulgaria and invested in the common family budget, education, housing and/or privately owned companies (even factories), cafeterias, hotels, etc. The fact that many of the Bulgarian Karakachans prefer this new “migratory” way of life in order to secure their future in Bulgaria is obvious: until now there has not been permanent emigration to Greece on a large scale.

The identity policy of mobilizing the symbolic cultural capital now faces not only the “existing among fragments” [James Clifford] and the deficiency of “own” history. The new economic activities have resulted in a relative eman-

ipation of the younger generations from the family authority and conservatism. Traditional economic roles determined by age, gender and ownership have changed. This is why the “mixed” marriages with Bulgarians are rapidly becoming a norm rather than an exception, in sharp contrast to other “less acceptable,” “more distant other” (and predominantly endogamous) groups such as Bulgarian Turks and Muslims. In this context, resorting to different options in different situations and conjunctures marks the present-day dynamics of the Karakachan identity in Bulgaria. The sense of belonging to a distinctive community, “archaic” and “exotic,” exists and is being constructed on different identity levels, but even the Greek one is not necessarily opposed to the civic and national Bulgarian. To be a Karakachan in Bulgaria means to be part of a small minority group, and to choose among three possible “prestigious” identifications - Greek, Bulgarian and Karakachan, or to combine them.

The diverging individual options and choices are justly considered as threatening the community with gradual extinction. Given the different attitudes, discourses and registers (complementary civic, “Bulgarian-Karakachan”, “Karakachan-Greek,” “Bulgarian-Greek”), there is a still a chance for a “Karakachan,” local Bulgarian and trans-border (Bulgarian-Greek) community to survive.

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VI

OFFICIAL HISTORY AND LOCAL INTERPRETATIONS

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In this paper, I will try to examine the results of the field study on *Topoi of Historical Memory* in Bulgaria as reference points for different “minority” interpretations of the past. Needless to say, any attempt to speak for “another” community is to some extent bound to be subjective and vulnerable to criticism, both from “the inside”, i.e. from the representatives of the respective group, and from “the outside” – from the researchers of particular cultures and identities. It is also influenced by the speaker’s professional experience and methodological preferences. On the other hand, any collective identity is a dynamic process of constant change and “rediscovery” or of “invention”, in the words of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger.¹ It is full of common and specific tensions in concrete national (but also global, regional, and local) contexts, and marked by public and discreet signs of expression and manifestation.² Furthermore, there are always individual, generational, and local overlaps and discrepancies with history as taught in school and presented in the media, with its myths and clichés, as well as with its iconic images and monuments. Some of them can be gleaned from the general results of the study; others can be surmised indirectly.

I fully agree with the only partially surprising conclusions about the continuing existence of “memory communities” (whose end was proclaimed some time ago by Pierre Nora) and about the still significant relative weight of

1 Hobsbawm, E., T. Ranger (eds.). *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge University Press, 1987, 1-14.

2 Clifford, J. *The Predicament of Culture. Twentieth-Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art*. Harvard University Press, 1988; James, W. (ed.) *The Pursuit of Certainty. Religious and Cultural Formulations*. Routledge, London-New York, 1995.

references to the official generators of memory, especially when history is at the centre of the research hypothesis. The spectrum of responses of members of different groups (Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Bulgarians, Muslim Bulgarians/Pomaks, Turks, Roma, Armenians, Jews, Karakachans, Russians, Vlachs, Aromanians, Gagauzes, Tatars, Greeks, and Arabs) delineates common and different lines of mental mapping. Here I will try to trace some of them within and outside of the framework of the “surprisingly” still valid “grand narrative” of Bulgarian history (see the analyses by Evgenia Ivanova and Alexander Nikolov in this book).

The sample of minority (religious, linguistic, ethnic) responses, which garnered more than 3% of the total when the respondents were asked to identify the major sites, events, actors in Bulgarian (in a comparative perspective with Balkan and European) history that are formative for the identity of present-day Bulgarian citizens, shows – according to the book from which this paper is excerpted – amazing similarities in most of them with those of the Orthodox Christian Bulgarian majority with regard to the major sites and persons, and especially with regard to the triad “Mount Shipka, the Liberation, and Vasil Levski”.³ The same similarities are found in the responses of Catholic Bulgarians, but not in those of the Protestant Bulgarians who identified themselves as religious. There is also a significant similarity in the prevalent choice of political events and figures (heroic, traumatic, “state” events and figures), and in the ratios between world historical, national, and local (communally and/or individually, intimately “own”) persons and sites. Both the one and the other general result of the study can be interpreted in the context of the “correct”, “expected” response closely linked to the sources identified or presented as the most legitimate and common sources: history and literature textbooks, other textbook texts, popular writers, the school as a whole. In the Bulgarian context they have obviously not lost their validity even against the background of the passions and unofficial discourses that are rampant on the internet. I believe that, in addition to the inertia of the previous state monopoly over memory (vis-à-vis which the strategy of

³ That is, the site of one of the decisive battles in the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War, the establishment of the Bulgarian state after five centuries of Ottoman rule in 1878 (Liberation Day, March 3), and the most iconic Bulgarian national hero.

“minority mimicry” is applied), what we are truly witnessing here is a zone of consensus. The place of Vasil Levski as an exceptional hero is confirmed in twelve of all sixteen groups covered in the study (with the exception of Arabs, Russians, Tatars, and Protestant Bulgarians), probably also because of the phenomenon defined by Maria Todorova as “the orchestration of a grassroots *cultus*”.⁴ Mount Shipka and the Liberation are both sacralized and habitual sites/events associated with Bulgaria’s biggest national holiday – 3 March, the day of Bulgaria’s liberation from Ottoman rule (1878) – despite the recurrent media debates as to whether precisely 3 March was the right choice as National Day “at the dawn of democracy” instead of, say, 22 September, the day of the country’s formal declaration of independence from the Ottoman Empire (1908). In the concrete sample, more than twenty years after 9 September (the date of the 1944 coup d’état that led to the establishment of the communist regime) was revoked as Bulgaria’s National Day, the Liberation and the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War prevail over the other options among the members of nine groups – and, at that, the larger ones.

For entirely explicable reasons, Arabs give priority to the end of colonialism, Jews to the establishment of the State of Israel, and Russians to the Second World War. Probably because of the inevitably small number of respondents from the following groups covered by the study, major sites and persons cannot be identified among the Tatars, where we might expect the “Green Island” (i. e., the Crimea) to appear as a topos.⁵ Hazret-i Ali is ahead of Mohammed among the Arabs, and Peshtera⁶ among the Aromanians/Vlachs. Also very interesting is a particular spectrum of individual responses suggesting different in-group reference points – be they intimate or in public circulation – which, however, do not have the same definitive importance as Mount Shipka, Veliko Tarnovo, the Madara Horseman, Levski or Khan Asparuh. Here we find Pitu Guli and the Krushevo Republic among the Aromanians, Kachandonis

⁴ Todorova, M. *Bones of Contention: the Living Archive of Vasil Levski and the Making of Bulgaria’s National Hero*. Central European University Press, Budapest-New York, 2009, pp. 429-439.

⁵ Антонов, Ст. *Татарите в България*. Добрич, 2004; Williams, B. *The Crimean Tatars. The Diaspora Experience and the Forging of a Nation*. Brill, 2001.

⁶ A town in the Rhodope Mountains with a relatively compact Aromanian community. Mentioned here as one of many cases of “local” and “neutral” answers.

among the Karakachans, “the extermination of the Gypsies by the fascists”, the Palestinian Question among the Arabs, “weddings and Bayrams” among the Muslims, “Yuri Gagarin’s first space flight” among the Russians, and others (noted by Evgenia Ivanova). If for the Karakachans, Kachandonis turns out to be the greatest, the one and only “own” hero, the archetypal folkloric figure of the *haidut*-protector and fighter for freedom (who, however, is unknown to the Bulgarians and other communities), Pitu Guli and the “Krushevo Republic” are at least better known. The hero of the Ilinden uprising and the town in Macedonia where a temporary revolutionary government was established in 1903, are officially recognized and commemorated both in Bulgaria and in the Republic of Macedonia. Pitu Guli (because of his Vlach origin) and the active participation of the Aromanians in the “Krushevo Republic” are perceived as “own” symbols by the Aromanians in Bulgaria too, but in the Republic of Macedonia and its far larger Aromanian community they occupy the most central place. The case of the Aromanians in Albania, characterized by politicization and intense symbolic cleavages, is most likely to be completely opposite to the Bulgarian one in many respects.⁷

Bulgaria’s “ethnic landscape” is usually interpreted in terms of different legacies and states of modernity – as relatively more traditional, and therefore involving selective differentiation and a greater role of generational and religious authority, as well as of the folkloric way of thinking. Ever since the time of the “bourgeois state”, access to education and its quality (in Bulgaria, abroad or parallel – in mother tongue, culture, religion in different variants) have been a factor determining the dynamic of the respective group identities. Here there are different continuities and discontinuities during and after socialism. Nowadays this dynamic is also largely determined by the radically new information environment. Paradoxically, the internet may have a significant traditionalist effect – for instance, by enabling contact with global Islamist networks – while the Bulgarian media, including Bulgarian National Television, may promote an anachronistic, primitive discourse about “the ancient ethnogenesis of the Bulgarians” which, through the metaphors

7 Schwandner-Siewers, S. Ethnicity in Transition: The Albanian Aromanians’ Identity Politics. – *Ethnologia Balkanica*, Vol. 2 (1998), 167-184.

of blood, explicitly or implicitly rejects the model of common civic identity. This understanding, which was carried to the absurd in the propaganda discourse during the so-called “Revival Process” (the campaign carried out by the communist authorities in 1984-1989, aimed at complete assimilation of Bulgarian Turks by means of a forced name change and subsequent mass expulsions to Turkey), nowadays is not part of the official “grand narrative”. However, if we judge from the reactions on the internet as well as from the circulation rates and proliferation of various quasi-scientific and popular writings, it is widespread and shared.

The ethnic Bulgarian majority⁸ continues to perceive the nation primarily as an ethnic community – this is a proposition that hardly needs to be substantiated in detail, both culturally and historically. The other communities in Bulgaria are very clearly, and in some cases painfully, aware of this attitude. Throughout the world, minority memories are in a marginal position being, at best, insufficiently well-known, and at worst, contested and regarded as “inconvenient” and “incorrect”. Thus, for example, the mentions of Bulgarian Turks make up a negligible part of history textbooks.⁹ This is one of the factors for the widespread negative stereotypes and arbitrary associations between the Ottoman period and later times, despite the gradual change in the tone and content of the syllabus.¹⁰ The everyday construction and experience of the minority as a social fact¹¹ continues to be guided by the following formula: “The Turks are bad because they were bad in the past, but my friends, neighbours, acquaintances are the best, honest and hard-working people” (not infrequently, “better than us” in the context of idealization of and nostalgia for traditional values).

In a historical perspective, some groups such as the Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks were the last groups to be subjected to radical campaigns aimed at

8 As is the officially adopted, legal and statistical term in a minority-majority context.

9 Исов, М. Една нация ли сме? – www.anamnesis.info/M-Isov_statiya_br_1-2_2011.pdf

10 Исов, М. *Най-различният съсед. Образът на османците (турците) и Османската империя (Турция) в българските учебници по история през втората половина на XX век.* МЦИМКВ, С., 2005.

11 Грекова, М. *Малцинство: социално конструиране и преживяване.* „Критика и хуманизъм”, С., 2001.

complete assimilation which proved to be totally counter-productive; others, such as the Russians, Armenians, Jews, Vlachs/Romanians in Northwestern Bulgaria, Aromanians, and Karakachans, were regarded as relatively small in size, well-integrated, and unproblematic. The Russians (the interviewed descendants of White Russian emigrants and immigrants from the Soviet Union and new Russia), Armenians and Jews have not only their own schools, cultural and educational organizations, clubs, and so on, but also an “external national homeland” (a term introduced by Rogers Brubaker¹²); they are former model, “exemplary” minorities.¹³ Their memories were controlled, for example, when it came to the imperial past, Dashnaktsutyun, and the State of Israel, but unlike other groups – especially the Bulgarian Turks and the Pomaks, and those who identified themselves as Macedonians in the national sense – they were not entirely “appropriated” or negated.

The overall liberalization in this sphere contributed to the “rediscovery” and stabilization of separate ethnicities in some cases, and to the deepening of differences within one and the same community in others. The diverse processes and tendencies, the realized and potential inclinations, may be interpreted both in the context of the postmodern “multiplicity” of roles and identities, and as a hierarchy of the separate levels and components, one of which is national identity.¹⁴ A good illustration of this are the post-1989 censuses in Bulgaria. The self-identification of part of the Pomaks, Gagauzes, Karakachans, Gypsies/Roma, Vlachs and other groups with the ethnic Bulgarian majority; of some Tatars, Muslim Roma and Pomak subgroups with the Turks; and of quite a few Karakachans with the Greeks, indicate inclinations towards voluntary integration for various reasons, as well as situational manifestations of a common national or minority identity. The choice of one identity in the census questionnaire does not necessarily mean that the other is rejected.¹⁵

12 Brubaker, R. *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and the National Question in the New Europe*. Cambridge University Press, New York, 1996, pp. 5, 55-76.

13 Бюксеншюц, У. *Малцинствената политика в България. Политиката на БКП към евреи, роми, помаци и турци, 1944-1989*. МЦПМКВ, С., 2000.

14 Груев, М., А. Калъонски. „Възродителният процес“. *Мюсюлманските общности и комунистическият режим: политики, реакции и последици*. СІЕІА, С., 2008, 95-105.

15 For the diverse spectrum of groups and situations, see Кръстева, А. (съст. и ред.). *Общности и идентичности в България*. „Петекстон“, С., 1998 / Krasteva, A. (ed.).

In the final analysis, against the background of many others, the Bulgarian national context continues to stand out for its low level of mobilization and conflict based on ethnic and religious lines. It is not the purpose of this paper to examine the reasons for that – from the common and specific legacies of the socialist state’s integration and modernization policies to the not less controversial development of the new Bulgarian society of the transition. Both the coexistence and the potential conflict zones of the different ethnic groups in Bulgaria have been the subject of political and media generalizations, idealizations, and exaggeration. Let us recall the constant appeals to, and formulations of, “the unique Bulgarian ethnic model” in the 1990s and the latest provocations outside Sofia’s Banya Bashi mosque (when members of the ultranationalist Ataka party attacked Muslims who had congregated for Friday prayer in May 2011). But regardless of whether we were historically lucky in precisely this respect or whether we are in the next phase of a rather defensive and weak nationalism,¹⁶ the changes in Bulgaria were not accompanied by a continuation of the sharp conflict that became obvious in the tumultuous summer of 1989, the last year of the “Revival Process”. Different interpretations are possible – of Western and Eastern European, rational and irrational, civic and organic models of nationalism – and by extent, of coexistence or conflict.¹⁷ Maria Todorova has good reason to doubt that they are heuristically productive and to raise the question of the different intensity of nationalisms, depending on their concrete genesis and historical development.

After 1989 there appeared a wave of specialized studies on the minorities in Bulgaria, which filled the until-then conspicuous void on this subject. Some of the first interpretations focused primarily on the organic (the traditional *komshuluk* – good neighbourliness, the widely shared concept of cohabitation and mutual solidarity among the different religious and ethnic communities), gradually giving way to the civic model (as ideal, optimal, insufficiently realized, and so on). To my mind, this is a symptom not just of the change of methodology but also of consideration for ongoing

Communities and Identities in Bulgaria. Longo Editore, Ravenna, 1998.

16 Todorova, M. Op. cit., 506-513.

17 Ibid., 508-509.

processes and tendencies, in addition to all inherited and new problems. In our case, a visible indicator is the predominant tendency to opt for “correct”, “unprovocative” responses, or to avoid responses in the zone of “cultural intimacy” that are considered to be foreign, unknown or unimportant to the interviewer.¹⁸ Although it is not immediately obvious, even the Arabs as “non-locals” take into account the concrete national context, identifying themselves as “Arabs”; in other contexts, they would most likely have identified themselves as Syrians, Lebanese or Iraqis, Sunni or Shia. In the same way, part of the Russians, the third largest minority in Bulgaria after the Turks and the Roma, might turn out to be Ukrainians or Belorussians. On the other hand, it is possible that even upon initial contact, Alevites will point out first – in addition to Bulgarian and Turkish national symbols – Hazret-i Ali, Hussein, and Khorasan as their mythical homeland, while Russian Old Believers will point out ataman Ignat Nekrasov, the Schism with the official Russian Orthodox Church, and Jerusalem along with Peter the Great and the Second World War.¹⁹ One wonders how respondents from the Chinese community in Bulgaria would respond if asked to identify important sites, persons, and events. On the other hand, identifying sites, persons, and events that are of personal importance only (places of birth, relatives, acquaintances, weddings, and so on) and making most general statements, such as the one about the importance of “having employment opportunities”, may be a sign of diffidence or reluctance to respond truthfully, opting for the comfort of “polite conversation”. Probably part of the responses should be interpreted as simultaneously neutral, as highlighting the common, and as local, such as Mount Shipka in the case of the local Karakachans, Sozopol for the Greeks, Cape Kaliakra for the Gagauzes and the Tatars, the Baba Vida Fortress for the Vlachs, or Perperikon in the nearby Turkish village.

Consent to respond establishes a consensus between interviewer and respondent which, if the contact between the two is one-off and brief, naturally determines one of the individual situational roles. In the case under

¹⁸ Herzfeld, M. *Cultural Intimacy: Social Poetics in the Nation-State*. Routledge, New York-London, 1997.

¹⁹ Анастасова, Е. А. *Старообрядците в България. Мит – история – идентичност*. Академично издателство „проф. Марин Дринов”, С., 1998.

study, regardless of the level of sincerity and automaticity of the response, this role presupposes pointing out and associating oneself with the national symbols. Depending on the levels and states of integration, assimilation, self-isolation, or even anomie (among the most marginal part of the Roma), this mode of civic identity may be in full harmony or relatively non-conflicting with the ethnic/religious/cultural identity, but it may also conceal specific frustrations and tensions.

These last become a public fact in situations of ethnic mobilization – in Bulgarian society, such situations are most common, most politicized, and constantly discussed in the case of the Bulgarian Turks and Pomaks. They, however, are not accompanied by ultranationalist, xenophobic rhetoric and widespread mass manifestations such as those of the populist-nationalist Ataka party and its supporters. On the other hand, the DPS (the Bulgarian acronym for the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, widely regarded as an “ethnic Turkish party”), which some say is Ataka’s mirror image, publicly maintains an entirely moderate, “nationally responsible” discourse. At the same time, along with all other policies as a party represented in parliament, Bulgaria’s only officially registered “minority party” sends manipulatively-mobilizing, in essence self-insulating, electoral messages and uses an intimate discourse regarding the traumatic legacy of the “Revival Process”. This unique social experience of Muslims in Bulgaria has an important place in the memory of the immediately affected and next generations, but it is interpreted and evaluated in different ways by different individuals, as well as situated in different local cases. The DPS’s almost invariable good performance in elections in the last two decades does not preclude an entirely realistic, critical attitude – which is actually quite widespread but is admitted only confidentially – towards the “own” local and higher-level political elite.

Identity by no means has to be maintained, always and everywhere, through an active, dominant in-group debate on the nationwide and “own” past: its markers are usually taken for granted. The collective public experience of an “own” past occurs outside of everyday life, and on the personal level it is assigned different symbolic meanings. Official celebrations and rituals coexist with various minority manifestations of memory – from (to one extent or

another) politicized rallies commemorating the “Revival Process” to national and “own” folk festivals, calendar holidays, and so on.

Among some communities, there are no narratives about an “own” political history, or they are not commonly accepted, known and accessible. This holds for those among the Muslim Bulgarians/Pomaks who are keen on preserving their traditional religious identity (instead of choosing, or putting the emphasis on, the secular national, or even Christian Bulgarian, or Turkish options), the Gagauzes, and the Karakachans, but most particularly for the Gypsies/Roma. Despite all similarities with the ethnic Bulgarian majority, in the case of the Roma one finds a specific form of responses underlining universally or nationally recognizable values or symbols – for example, proselytizing (“the [Protestant] Church”, “Jesus Christ”, “the Resurrection of Christ”) and patriotic (“Bulgaria”, just as among many other groups which, however, are very likely to be aware of the existence of a European or global diaspora). The most marginal minority is also characterized by the poorest education indicators, including that of access to information (the internet, and so on). Although here, too, there are potential “pan-sources” (to paraphrase James Clifford’s “pan-Indian” [native American] sources and symbols of identity²⁰), this is the community with the greatest linguistic, dialect, religious, and local (subgroup) diversity against the background of drastic social contrasts.²¹ Although this community is treated “from the outside” as a single whole (by the majority but also by the other minorities, the state, international factors), there are different opinions among members of the Roma intelligentsia as to the directions of identity construction “from the inside”. The possibilities for selectively borrowing from a parallel “grand national narrative” are also strongly limited, and the Roma’s “own” eminent persons would most likely be in the sphere of culture, in the present rather than the past. When there is such a possibility (since there is Turkey, Armenia, Greece, Russia, Israel, even the autonomous Gagauz Yeri in Moldova, but there is no Roma state),

20 Clifford, J. Op. cit., p. 288.

21 Марушиакова, Е., В. Попов. *Циганите в България*. „Клуб ’90”, С., 1993; Томова, И. *Циганите в преходния период*. МЦПМКВ, С., 1995; Грекова, М., В. Димитрова, Н. Германова, Д. Кюранов, Я. Маркова. *Ромите в София: от изолация към интеграция?* „Изток-Запад”, С., 2008.

its realization is a matter of individual choice, influence or absence of specific religious and secular education, diaspora, organizations and activism.

The study under review used entirely open-ended questions, but just like many other studies, it also found a zone of traumatic memory about the “Revival Process” in the responses of the Muslims. But can one interpret the reluctance to fill in the questionnaire, shown more frequently by Bulgarian Turks, as a certain sign of self-insulation, and the results regarding the April 1876 Uprising, Mount Shipka, and the Liberation more as mimicry (although there was just a single negative evaluation of the Liberation)? Here I exclude Vasil Levski – a response we most likely have no reason to suspect is insincere. There is no way we can know for certain which individual responses were completely unbiased, and which were influenced by the suspicion that even the most generally formulated questions which, however, refer to history, may have another, hidden subtext. This uncertainty, often found during field studies, is undoubtedly the result of the instrumentalization of the “Revival Process” version of the “grand narrative”, accompanied by the explicit and implicit messages of the propaganda in the 1980s accusing the Turkish minority of disloyalty, anti-Bulgarian nationalist conspiracies and threats. In addition to everything else, it is precisely this propaganda and its “softer” or indirect, but likewise worrying, media continuations, official and unofficial discourses among the majority, that have firmly reinforced the notion that history is by no means something innocuous and safe. Here the sensitive issues continue to be the Ottoman era (the negatively stereotyped and Orientalizing Bulgarian version of “dark centuries”/“obscurantist belated Middle Ages”) and the origin of Muslims in Bulgaria that was contested by the propaganda campaigns of the 1980s. There are different strategies and modes, which have been studied specially or can be surmised: of displacement and forgetting, relativization and alternative interpretations, including on the basis of official sources such as history textbooks. I have often come across initial reactions that there’s no point in “delving into the past”, or at least into certain periods. This may probably explain the singling out of more neutral sites such as Veliko Tarnovo/Tsarevets Hill, the Madara Horseman or Pliska, of events such as the establishment of the Bulgarian state (681) or the Unification of the autonomous

Principality of Bulgaria and the then-Ottoman province of Eastern Rumelia (1885), of persons such as Khan Asparuh, Ivan Vazov or even Hristo Botev, as well as the references to a wider historical/geographical context (the Second World War, Rome).

Self-identification with the *Umma*, and by extent, with Mecca, Medina and Mohammed, is naturally more important for that part of the Muslim Bulgarians/Pomaks for whom religion and the preservation of the conservative tradition are the main marker of difference. When the question of origin is touched upon in one form or another, the Bulgarian language (the main argument for the forced name change of the Pomaks) is called just “ours” in some places. The appearance of Islam in the Rhodope Mountains is explained through a legitimating “ancient past” – for example, with legends about the *peygambers* (prophets) who are believed to have come to Bulgaria even before its Christianization, the “Arab roots”, and other local myths invented by the “vernacular academy” as a sort of alternative to the official one.²² In the 1980s the majority, and even some of the initiators and propagators of the “Revival Process”, were not entirely convinced of the “Bulgarian ethnic roots” of the Turks, therefore this particular theory was gradually abandoned. Here it seems that what has become more important and offensive to the Turkish community is the range of negative stereotypes and suspicions which are regarded as untrue and unfair from a more distant or more close historical perspective, but above all from a personal perspective – as immediate personal experience. Not infrequently, it is precisely this last that motivates the search for deeper reasons that will explain, for example, the lack of solidarity, the unexpected resentment and rejection on the part of the until-then good neighbours, co-workers, friends during the name change itself and the subsequent humiliations and misfortunes, especially during the so-called “Big Excursion” (the forced exodus of Bulgarian Turks to Turkey). So far, at least, I have not heard accusations against the Bulgarians as a whole; the campaign itself is entirely soberly defined as a crime or a pointless act of violence, as a mistake, reckless venture or folly on the part of the communist

22 Konstantinov, Y. Strategies for Sustaining a Vulnerable Identity: The Case of the Bulgarian Pomaks. – In: H. Poulton, S. Taji-Farouki (eds.). *Muslim Identity and the Balkan State*. Hurst & Co., London, 1997, p. 36.

regime. Against this background, Kemal Atatürk’s modern Turkey, whose birth was heralded by the heroic defence of the Dardanelles (the symbolic topoi of Çanakkale and Gallipoli), is an almost unproblematic alternative to the more distant Ottoman past. The latter, however, is also subject to relativization and division into contexts: for example, the distinction between the Ottoman elite, and the ordinary Bulgarians and Turks who shared, in *komshuluk*, a common homeland, values and life as *reaya* (this is probably influenced also by the Marxist social interpretation that found continuation in a number of textbooks after 1989). One will also find comparatively frequently the idealization of the Ottoman Empire itself as an example of tolerance and a common state of many nations and religions – an old alternative in-group discourse not necessarily influenced by the specific “Neo-Ottomanism” of Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s Turkey. The Bulgarian Turks are carefully following the biggest current dilemma of Turkey as personified by Kemal Atatürk. In addition to being a sharp dispute over identity and legacy, it immediately affects many relatives and acquaintances from the big emigrant community. But for the time being at least, one cannot see a strong polarization along those lines, similar to the debate between “modernizers” and “traditionalists” among the Muslims in Bulgaria in the first half of the twentieth century. It is interesting that in the results of the field study the Turkish responses have a distinctly secular profile, although a series of ethnological studies and statistical data show relatively higher levels of religiosity among this group as compared with the Orthodox Christian Bulgarians, as well as generational and local differences (between towns and villages, and so on). Nowadays one can see in the homes of some Bulgarian Turks clocks and other souvenirs with Ottoman *tugras* and verses from the Koran, along with the portrait of Kemal Pasha, the Eiffel Tower, calendars with Bulgarian national symbols and even with the photo of Boyko Borisov. We can ask ourselves, for instance, are all young Bulgarians who wear T-shirts with the face of Che Guevara, now a pop-culture icon, necessarily devout communists or anarchists? In the same way, DPS leader Ahmed Dogan is still a symbol of the Bulgarian Muslims’ and Turks’ rights restored in the course of the transition, his qualities as a politician are not questioned, but his image may prove to be quite tarnished against the

background of the controversial assessments, suspicions or disappointments among the Turkish community, which are in fact similar to those among the Bulgarian citizens in general about other leading figures of the transition.

Either way, the traumatic consequences of the “Revival Process” are a fact, and only a single Bulgarian Turk has evaluated it positively (who may have done so insincerely). Taking into account the different possible motives and inclinations, including self-isolation and unwillingness for contact, we should not underrate the recognition or simply the sense of the complex, controversial profile of historical periods and events. Since it is impossible to make such distinctions solely on the basis of the field study under review here, I believe we should assume that Mount Shipka and the 1877-1878 Russo-Turkish War, for instance, are perceived, at the least, ambiguously as national symbols by the Muslims who have singled them out. These are probably the responses characterized by the greatest degree of automaticity and mimicry, by a desire not to offend the interviewers and by a “minority conformism” which, in itself, is not a sign of self-isolation but often of the opposite inclination (underlining the common even when it is very difficult to accept it as one’s “own”).

Part of the interviewed ethnic Bulgarians and (as an in-group percentage) a significant part of the responses of Turks, Pomaks, Aromanians, and Greeks, point out the advent of democracy/10 November 1989 as a major event. It is hardly necessary to interpret this result of the field study regarding the event that ensured the very possibility for free and public expression and manifestation of minority identities, and in the case of the Muslims, for restoring grossly violated human rights. Much more telling are the absence of such a response among the Roma, some of whom chose 9 September 1944, and the appearance of communism and of former state and communist party leader Todor Zhivkov in the responses of Roma, ethnic Bulgarians, Pomaks, and Turks. Among the members of the last two groups, Todor Zhivkov is second after Vasil Levski, enjoying universal approval among the interviewed Muslims, including among the subgroup of the so-called Turkish Gypsies. Various comments regarding the motives for this range of responses suggest there is a nostalgia for the period before 10 November 1989, obviously against the background of the acute problems and gloomy

present of the transition. Here I will not dwell in detail on the phenomenon of “socialist nostalgia” that is widespread, along with the egalitarian attitudes – both in traditional and transformed form – which are a specific legacy of the previous state, society and ideology. The Roma responses definitely reflect most vividly the main contradiction of the radical changes after 1989: overall democratization and liberalization parallel with the loss of a series of previous social benefits, minimal as some of them might have been. In the case of the Roma, this is tantamount to a true catastrophe that has caused even greater marginalization, at times leading to an impossibility for real or full-fledged exercise of civil rights. In purely generational terms, similarly to a not insignificant number of Bulgarians, for the Bulgarian Turks and the Pomaks the memory of socialism has the important autobiographical dimension of normalcy, of the passed life-path with all its vicissitudes, good and bad sides, memories of youth, and so on.²³ This is also one of the lines for overcoming the traumatic experiences during the “Revival Process” which is identified as an extreme crisis situation compared to other years and decades that are remembered as having been relatively more peaceful. The gradual escalation of pressure and restrictions, the earlier name change of the Pomaks, were neither seen then nor are evaluated now as predetermining the surprising all-out attack against the Turkish minority. Todor Zhivkov’s personal and complete renunciation of the principles of internationalism, despite all periodic contradictions between propaganda formulas and the actual state of affairs, remains perplexing to this very day. One of the common relativizing explanations is that Zhivkov, as well as the other Bulgarian Communist Party leaders, had not planned the “Revival Process” on their own; they had acted under Soviet pressure. In this way, the communist leader remains a symbolic figure from the recent past, especially when it is nostalgically perceived as more “own” than the present.

The conducted field study on Bulgarian historical memory and, I hope, the conclusions and comments offered in this paper raise, *inter alia*, the important question about the self-construction of the different ethnic and

23 Колева, Д. *Биография и нормалност*. „Лик”, С., 2002.

religious identities in Bulgaria. Let us hope that there will be more studies focusing not just on the dynamic changes in the respective traditions but also on the concurrent in-group discourses.

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