

SUPPLEMENT

Digitizing Cultural Heritage in Bulgaria

A Survey of Intellectual Property-related Experiences and Practices

Prepared for the
World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)
by Vladia Borrissova

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----------|
| HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BULGARIA..... | 4 |
| I. BULGARIAN ETHNOGRAPHY | 4 |
| II. ETHNIC INFLUENCE ON THE BULGARIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE | 5 |
| III. FOLKLORE FESTIVALS | 6 |
| CULTURAL GROUPS IN BULGARIA..... | 9 |
| IV. BULGARIAN ETHNIC GROUPS | 9 |
| <i>Armenians</i> | 9 |
| <i>Turks</i> | 9 |
| <i>Pomacks</i> | 10 |
| <i>Gagaouz</i> | 11 |
| <i>Karakachans</i> | 12 |
| <i>Gypsies</i> | 13 |
| V. BULGARIAN ETHNOGRAPHIC GROUPS..... | 14 |
| <i>Shopps</i> | 14 |
| <i>Dobrudja people</i> | 15 |
| <i>Thracians</i> | 17 |
| <i>Polians, Hurtzoias and Erliis</i> | 19 |
| <i>Macedonians</i> | 20 |
| <i>Rupans</i> | 21 |
| <i>Balkan people</i> | 23 |

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF BULGARIA

I. BULGARIAN ETHNOGRAPHY

The Republic of Bulgaria was founded in 681, making it one of the oldest states in Europe. Although relatively small in geographical and demographical dimension, the country is divided into six socioeconomic regions and the majority of its people are Orthodox Christians.

Bulgaria has a rich and peculiar history and through this history, many ethnical groups have come to settle in the country. For instance, the Spanish Jews¹ came to settle in Bulgaria in the XV century and the Russian Cossacks with old traditions and customs in the XVII century. The ethnical groups in Bulgaria are very diverse and could be distinguished by their “identity” (Karakachan², Gagaouz³, Romany, Turkish, Jewish, Armenian or Romanian) or even “religion” (Catholic, Protestant, Islamic or Judean). Although they have increasingly considered themselves Bulgarian citizens, each of these groups has been able over time to maintain its own distinct customs, traditions and rituals. They are therefore linguistically, culturally and spiritually still related to their “communities of origin”, some of which are scattered around the world and others have their own sovereign countries.

Bulgarians themselves also live as a minority group in other countries, such as Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Albania and Turkey. Some have settled elsewhere⁴ for political or economic reasons in the period of the Ottoman Empire and others were displaced as result of wars⁵ and international treaties⁶.

In October 1992, Bulgaria established the State Agency for Bulgarians Abroad⁷ to serve its people abroad and through its services and activities, the Agency has increasingly been

¹ See http://www.omda.bg/bulg/narod/news/personal/evr_hist.htm

² The Karakachans communities are scattered around the world, but they mainly live in Bulgaria and Greece.

³ The Gagaouz mainly live in Moldova (the autonomous republic of the Gagaouz Eri), Bulgaria, Turkey, Romania, Greece and Ukraine, see further <http://www.omda.bg/bulg/narod/gagauzi.htm>

⁴ For instance, in the Romanian and Serbian Banat, Bessarabia, Moldova, Ukraine and Tavria.

⁵ These Bulgarians now live in Western Serbia and Yugoslavia.

⁶ For instance, during WWII, the territory of Bulgaria included Macedonia, Trakia in Aegean Sea and the Western outskirts, see further <http://www.omda.bg/bulg/narod/westpart.htm>

⁷ See <http://www.aba.government.bg/english/index.php>

perceived as indispensable. This institution has furthermore been managed by many famous scientists and intellectuals.

The Bulgarian government has also taken series of measures towards the integration of its ethnical groups into the Bulgarian society at large. The country has, for instance, established the National Council on Ethnic and Demographic Issues⁸ in December 1997. Members of this Council include representatives of the ethnical groups. Bulgaria has also ratified the European Council's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities⁹ in September 1999¹⁰.

The Bulgarian constitution has been amended to allow for the ethnical groups to exercise and express their own culture, beliefs and values. The national media has reflected this by airing and presenting shows on the National Radio and the news on the national television in, for instance, the Turkish language. The children of the ethnical groups are able to learn their native languages¹¹ in state and public schools. The Russian language, however, is an exception as this language has already had a presence and therefore been studied in the state and public schools.

With regards to measures against the discrimination of minorities/ethnical groups and while aiming to acknowledge and respect the rights of the minorities, the Bulgarian constitution has forbidden the creation of political parties based on a specific ethnical group or religion. As a result, papers written by political parties may not indicate that these were written from a specific ethnic or religious perspective and these parties may not refuse membership to any Bulgarian citizen based on his/her racial or religious background.

II. ETHNIC INFLUENCE ON THE BULGARIAN CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Bulgarian demography comprises several ethnographic and ethnic groups. Whilst the Bulgarian ethnic diversity has been largely formed by the Armenians, Turks, Pomacks, Gagaouz, Karakachans and Gypsies (Romany), the country's ethnographic groups are identified as the Shopps, Dobrudjas, Tracians, Polians. Hurtzoias and Erliis,

⁸ See <http://www.ncedi.government.bg/en/index.html> (and <http://lists.microlink.lv/pipermail/minelres/1999-January/000138.html>).

⁹ See <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/157.htm>

¹⁰ See <http://www.greekhelsinki.gr/pdf/FCNM-NGO-Guide.pdf>

¹¹ Such as Turkish, Romany, Armenian and Jewish, the Romanian language is now also being considered.

Macedonians, Rupans and the Balkans. Amongst these groups, the Turks and the Gypsies are both the largest ethnic groups whilst the Shopps is the biggest and the most wide-spread ethnographic group in Bulgaria. The ethnographic groups, in general, tend to be spread across the six socioeconomic regions.

III. FOLKLORE FESTIVALS

Performing competitions¹² are part of the Bulgarian traditional customs. A performance used to take place anywhere in the field, the neighborhood or the main square of the village. Nowadays, a folkloric expression is more likely to be subject to an amateur or professional performance.

There is a growing interest in musical, dance and poetic folklore. Thousands of folkloric performers regularly gather together to celebrate the traditional culture. Simply participating in fairs is regarded as a type of tradition and a mean to pass the traditional culture to the next generation. The performance of young children at fairs is thereby considered to represent a connection between the past, present and future.

Bulgarians have thus always supported the organization of folk art fairs and festivals as these have formed part of their daily life¹³ and regarded as contemporary ways to preserve folklore and develop new adaptations thereof. These fairs and festivals also function as means to communicate the Bulgarian spirit to other cultures and to foreigners. The fairs are now being held on a periodical basis and each time they are accompanied with performing acts from different ethnographic regions.

The rise of mass folklore appearances basically began in the early 1960s with the initiative of the editor's office for folklore music at Radio Sofia, the Ministry of Culture and the Institute of Music of the BAS to organize a fair or competition in the Gramatikovo village in Stranja in 1960, which drew over 300 folkloric performers. That same year gave rise to the organization of a fair in Dobruja, which now enjoys the performances of ancient Dobruja dances and participation of more than 1400 artists.

¹² These could be in the form of song, play and music contests.

¹³ In the past, the fairs and festivals were literally part of the daily life of the Bulgarians, now these have become events being organized by cultural-educational institutes.

In 1961, a third fair or song festival was held on the Rozhen¹⁴ ridge in the glorious Rhodope mountain range, which drew the participation of 2000 performers. For the first time, Bulgarians enjoyed a unique orchestra of 100 soft bagpipes. In 1962, a fair close to Elhovo was organized, where hundreds of singers, players and dancers presented unknown masterpieces derived from Thracian¹⁵, the biggest Bulgarian region for musical folklore.

The interest shown in these national performing competitions resulted in the establishment of several other festivals and fairs, including the “*Pirin Is Singing*” fair in the Pirin region and the fair of the Shoppes in mid–west Bulgaria. In August 1965, the first National Festival of Bulgarian Folklore “*Koprivtshitsa*”¹⁶ took place, which deemed a great success and drew a large audience. Koprivtshitsa thereby became the leading folk art festival.

The last decade also saw a growing interest in the cultural traditions and folklore of the ethnic groups¹⁷ in Bulgaria, which inspired these groups to also present their culture to the public through festivals. The Romany community has particularly been active in the field of folklore as folklore stems from its cultural roots. It has, amongst others, launched a project related to the preservation and promotion of Romany culture in Central Bulgaria¹⁸ and organized the International Romany Festival “*Romafest*” in August in Stara Zagora, with the financial support of the Romany Culture Initiative of the Open Society Institute Budapest.

The traditional calendar also manifests an interesting phenomenon in the cultural life of Bulgarians. It outlines the Bulgarian holidays, which include the seasonal holiday customs and traditional customs and holidays. These holidays, rituals and customs shed light on the complex ethno cultural processes associated with their development. Although the ancient magic rituals and industrial motives therefor may have been forgotten, recent years have shown interest to revive and modernize the old folkloric customs and although these customs are no longer celebrated within the family circles, they have become part of amateur performance activities at numerous national and

¹⁴ See <http://sabor.mc.government.bg/rozhen/>

¹⁵ See <http://sabor.mc.government.bg/sabori/main.php>

¹⁶ See <http://sabor.mc.government.bg/koprivshitsa>, the Festival was held in the area of Voivodenec near the town of Koprivtshitsa.

¹⁷ Particularly the Turks, Gypsies, Armenians and Jews.

¹⁸ See <http://romaculture.cult.bg/>

**WIPO, Digitizing Cultural Heritage in Bulgaria:
A Survey of Intellectual Property-related Experiences and Practices
- Page 8 -**

International folk art festivals and fairs where Bulgarian folk art treasures are still being demonstrated.

Big international folklore festivals held in Bulgaria in 2007:

| | | |
|---|----------------|------------------|
| International Children Folklore Festival | Sliven | May 21-26 |
| The 7 th International Youth Festival | Bulgaria | June 20-25 |
| International Dance Festival “5 Continents Dance in Varna” | Varna | June 23-27 |
| The 10 th International Folklore Festival “Veliko Turnovo” | Veliko Turnovo | July 21-August 4 |
| The 16 th International Folklore Festival “Varna 2007” | Varna | August 5-9 |
| The 35 th International Folklore Festival “Bourgas” | Bourgas | August 21-25 |

CULTURAL GROUPS IN BULGARIA

IV. BULGARIAN ETHNIC GROUPS

Armenians

The Armenian community has resided in Bulgaria for many centuries and overtime both integrated itself as part of the Bulgarian society at large and preserved its own “identity”. The community has particularly been known for their traditional craftsmanship in the jewelry- and watch-making industry.

Armenians have also been amongst the well-known names that developed today’s Bulgarian culture and science. Their contribution has thereby stimulated the Bulgarian society at large to develop a keen interest in learning about the Armenian history and culture.

The political changes in 1989 made it even more possible for the Bulgarian society to learn and benefit from the Armenian cultural influence in the country as many Armenian organizations were gradually being established. These include the Armenian Charitable Society “*Parekordzaghan*”, the Armenian Charitable Association HOM, the scout organization “*Homanutmun*”, the “*Hamazkain*” union, the cultural-educational organization “*Erevan*” and other organizations. Schools in the big cities, such as Sofia, Plovdiv, and Varna, have also started teaching the Armenian language and where the Armenian community is in small-scale, “saturday schools” have been established. Traditional Armenian holidays, both historical and religious, are also being acknowledged.

Turks

The Turks are one of the largest ethnic groups in Bulgaria. This is mainly due to historical reasons. The Balkan Peninsula, including Bulgaria, was amongst the first territories to be conquered by the Ottoman Empire in the early XIV century. The Ottoman state politics and the Islam were thereby established as many Muslims from East Anadola started to settle in these territories.

Today's Bulgarian Turks have therefore been considered to be descendants of these settlers¹⁹. Some scholars however have also shown that some of these ethnic Turks descended from Bulgarian Christians²⁰, who converted themselves during the Ottoman period. The Ottoman ruling in Bulgaria had ultimately lasted until the Russian-Turkish war in 1877-1878. For other historical reasons, the Gagaouz and Pomack people (see further below) have, in some occasions, also been included as being part of today's ethnic Turks community.

At present, these ethnic Turks mainly live in two rural areas, in the Northeastern (Deliormana and Ludogorie) and Southeastern (Eastern Rhodopes) parts of Bulgaria²¹. They have established several organizations, including the Turan Union in 1926. This is a nationalistic organization for the "kemals" and functions as to unify all the Turkish cultural, sport and education communities and develop political activities. Another organization is the Turkish culture center "*The 21 century*".

*Pomacks*²²

The Pomacks of Bulgaria have been subject to a sort of an "identity crisis"²³ as there is no common opinion or position as to their "origin" or "socio-cultural formation"²⁴. They have often been referred to as "Bulgarian-speaking Muslims" or "Bulgarian Mohammedans"²⁵ and therefore historically been categorized as part of the overall Bulgarian Islamic society or the Turks (see above).

Generally speaking however, the Bulgarian Mohammedans from different parts of the Bulgarian ethnic territory belong to different Bulgarian ethnographic groups. Many researches have been conducted to specify the identity and self-determination of the Bulgarian Mohammedans. The Pomacks also took part in these researches and were asked, amongst others, the question of "who are you" in which they answered "we are Pomacks". This made scientists, such as Konstantinov, Alhaug and Igla, conclude that

¹⁹ See <http://www.minorityrights.org/2430/bulgaria/turks.html>

²⁰ Eminov (1997), p.26; Mollahuseyin (1984), p. 72; Simsir (1986), p. 2

²¹ Troebst (1994).

²² See <http://www.ecmi.de/jemie/download/2-2007-Eminov.pdf>

²³ See <http://www.joshuaproject.net/peopctry.php>

²⁴ The views expressed here are not intended to form a specific opinion on the Pomacks and/or their origin, but rather to outline the different types of information available on these people.

²⁵ See <http://www.minorityrights.org/?lid=2431>

the concepts “Pomack” and “Mohammedan” were equivalently referring to the same meaning²⁶. However, one should note that not all the Pomacks are “Muslim”.

It has furthermore been challenging to culturally unify these people into one ethnic group or refer them as a “Pomack ethnographic group”. According to their language and folklore, the Pomacks belong to different regional groups. Their language has been said to be a Bulgarian dialect, but which also contain Ancient Greek and/or Turkish words²⁷. The Pomacks themselves furthermore demonstrate different types of characteristics, namely those that could be related to the local Christian people or that have Muslim traits.

Unlike the Turks, the Pomacks do not have their own organizations to protect their cultural interests. These people therefore consider themselves as being a part of the Bulgarian society at large, or part of a minority group with Turkish ethnicity. Some have acknowledged themselves as being Bulgarian Turks.

Gagaouz

Like the Pomacks, the identity of the Gagaouz people has also been questioned from an ethnic point of view²⁸. For this reason, many Gagaouz people prefer to be identified simply as Bulgarians. On the other hand, the word “gagaouz” has, for centuries, been used to describe a specific cultural and linguistic community, namely, the “Oguz people”²⁹, an ancient Turkic tribe who has settled in the Balkans. It is believed that the Gagaouz people are their descendants. The Gagaouz folklore is therefore perceived to be a mixture of both Turkish and Bulgarian traditions.

The Gagaouz people have historically been known as cultivators and stock-breeders. They have also always been politically and socially active and regarded as a highly religious group. Their religious customs and practices have, amongst others, been influenced by the Greek Patriarchy at a certain point of time. This was because the Gagaouz people were mainly settled in the Southern part (Dobrudja) of Bulgaria, where the official language, prior to the Ottoman period, was Greek. In Dobrudja, the

²⁶ Troebst (1994).

²⁷ See <http://www.ecmi.de/jemie/download/2-2007-Eminov.pdf>, p. 8-9.

²⁸ It has been said that the Gagaouz people do not tend to have a “mono-ethnic identity”, see further http://www.ozturkler.com/data_english/0007/0007_17_03.htm

²⁹ See http://www.ozturkler.com/data_english/0007/0007_17_02.htm

“*Karamalin* literature” was being distributed. These were theological essays in Turkish with Greek letters.

In Bulgaria, the Gagaouz people do not have their own movement or cultural organizations. They have, however, a stronger influence in Moldova³⁰ where they are also more numerous as a group.

*Karakachans*³¹

It has been said that the Karakachans are one of the earliest people living in the Balkan Peninsula. A small number of Karakachans now live in Karnobat, Sliven, Karlovo, Sopot and other towns and villages in the South slopes of the Balkan mountain range. Their language has been classified as a northern dialect of Modern Greek³² whereas their religion is Orthodox Christian. They are known to be stock-breeders of mainly sheep, however, they also breed other animals.

Sheep wool is commonly used to trade and make, amongst others, their clothes, carpets and pillows through traditional styles of manufacturing and dyeing. This traditional way of manufacturing the wool is done in the form of a cluster by dragging, spinning and dyeing the wool and once that is done, the wool would be decorated with ornaments, laces, beads, gold and silver coins, embroideries that are colorful and pleasant to the eye.

The Karakachans have a unique lifestyle which is reflected in their clothing, rituals, traditions and holiday celebrations. They conduct their rituals mainly in Spring and Autumn, in particular, the Day of St. Dimitar and Easter, for the breeding and selling of the animals. The Karakachans furthermore place high values on the family, which in turn determine traditions in relation to wedding ceremonies, family structures and Monogamy. For the preservation of their folklore and traditions for future generations, they have established a Federation of the Bulgarian Karakachans.

³⁰ In December 1994, Moldova has enacted the Law on the Special Legal Status of Gagauzia, which gave the Gagaouz people there autonomy, see the law in English at <http://www.regione.taa.it/biblioteca/minoranze/gagauziaen.pdf>

³¹ See <http://www.imir-bg.org/imir/books/karakachans.pdf>

³² See <http://www.imir-bg.org/imir/books/karakachans.pdf>, p.2.

Gypsies

The Bulgarian Gypsies are, with the Turks, the largest ethnic group residing in Bulgaria. As they have been known for their “nomadic” style of living, they live dispersed all over the country and seem to have strong historical ties to ethnic Gypsy groups living in other European countries³³. The Gypsies are therefore quite diverse and do not have a unified culture as they tend to live in subgroups. In Bulgaria alone, there are the Bulgarian Gypsies, the Turkish Gypsies and the Romany (or Romanian) Gypsies³⁴. For these reasons, their origin and identity remain undetermined even though some research and documentation on Romany culture and folklore have already been done in the XIX century.

In the late XX century, more researches were being conducted and these were mainly led by the Romany organization “*Amalipe*”³⁵ and the University of Veliko Turnovo “*St. Cyril and Methodius*”. The “*Roma Culture Program*” was consequently established for children to learn about the Romany folklore in school³⁶. This program is now being offered in 172 schools in Bulgaria and more than 5000 children are participating in it³⁷.

Many of the Gypsy’s traditional holidays correspond to those of the Muslims or Christians in Bulgaria, however, there are still certain peculiarities in some of the celebrations. For instance, the Gypsies have their own wedding ceremonies and “*meshere*” (Gypsy courts), which are part of their common folklore.

After the political changes in 1989, the Bulgarian Gypsies have begun establishing their own organizations, which merely have a political flavor and thereby include the democratic union “*Roma*” (1990), A Movement for the Social and Culture Development of the Gypsies (1992), United Romany Union (1992), A Confederation of the Romany people in Bulgaria (1993), the political movement “*Euroroma*” (1998) and the political party “*Roma*” (2001). The Bulgarian Gypsies are thus playing an active role in Bulgarian politics.

³³ See <http://www.everyculture.com/Europe/Bulgarian-Gypsies-Orientation.html>

³⁴ See http://www.photius.com/countries/bulgaria/society/bulgaria_society_gypsies.html

³⁵ This term means “friendship” in Veliko Turnovo.

³⁶ See <http://amalipe.com/en/index.php?nav=program&id=24>

³⁷ See <http://www.ncedi.government.bg>

V. BULGARIAN ETHNOGRAPHIC GROUPS

The Bulgarian ethnographic groups live as either closed³⁸ or open communities. Some groups may have certain similarities in their folklore and customs. The main differences lie in their way of dressing, practicing their traditions and performing their rituals. They also differ in terms of their music and arts.

Shopps

The Shopps are a regional ethnographic group living in the areas of Western Bulgaria, Eastern Serbia³⁹ and Northwestern Macedonia. These areas are mainly called *Shoplyk*, *Shopluk* or simply the Shoppian regions⁴⁰. Ethnographers tend to divide the regions into a “big”⁴¹ and “small”⁴² Shoplyk, whilst others divide these into a “white” and “black” Shoplyk.

Although the Shopps have, in general, adopted the national self-awareness of Bulgaria, Serbia or Macedonia, they still share many similar cultural characteristics and folklore across the regions, whilst overtime, have also developed certain distinct features in each of the regions. For instance, they have a different name⁴³ in each region. The Bulgarian Shopps speak the Shopp-Graovian dialect, whilst the Shopps living in the Western part of the Shoplyk, speak the Torlashian dialect and in Tzaribrod, another “Shopp language”⁴⁴ is used in theatre performances held at the local community center.

Shoppian folkloric expressions, which are typical in a certain region, include the ancient folkloric dress from the Elin Pelin region and the unique chain dance⁴⁵ from the Sofia

³⁸ Closed ethnographic communities can be distinguished as organizations with a specific demand, religious orientation of the members of the group and their self-awareness of belonging to a different socio-cultural race.

³⁹ In Serbia, the Shopps have historically experienced a strong “serbization” but are now recognized as the Shoppian or Torlacian minority group.

⁴⁰ The Shoplyk is not specifically defined by geographic boundaries, but merely by the presence or absence of the Shoppian self-awareness.

⁴¹ The Big Shoplyk covers the Iskur, Botevgrad, Sofia, Ihtiman, Samokov, Dupnitsa, Kiustendil regions of Bulgaria, the Palanechko and Kumanovsko regions of Macedonia and the Vransko, Leskovsko, Pirotsko, Niche (the Pomoravie), Gourgousovsko, Zaicharsko (Timok region) and Vidin regions of Serbia.

⁴² The Small Shoplyk, also called the “original Shoplyk”, covers the Sofia, Elin Pelin, Samokov, Svoge, Godech, Sliven, Tzaribrod, Trun, Breznik, Pernik and Radomir regions of Bulgaria.

⁴³ They are called: “*Polians*” in the Sofia region; “*Znepolians*” in Trun and surroundings; “*Graovians*” in the Pernik and Breznik regions; “*mrachanians*” in Radomir; “*nichavians*” in the Pomoravie region; “*torlacians*” in both parts of the Balkans and “*sharenodresbkovcians*” in Northwestern Macedonia.

⁴⁴ This is a Serbian version of the local dialect.

⁴⁵ This chain dance namely goes fast and has a strange “sudden body movement”, which gives it a temperamental and unique character.

region. The Sofia region has also inherited another quite peculiar folklore, which involves the people living in Sofia. These people are namely often called “Shopp” by Bulgarians living outside Sofia albeit only a small portion of the real Shopp actually live in the capital⁴⁶ as they usually live in the surrounding areas⁴⁷.

Typical Shoppian songs begin with a dilemma and end with a happy ending. There is a certain melody, the so-called “Markov” melody, which is common throughout the regions and used in many different songs. Examples include *“Sorrowful Bulgaria Writes Complaints”*, *“Tanina Mountain Is On Fire”*, *“A Grandmother Has Put A Stake At The Door”* and *“Marko Is Mowing A Field Of Clovers”*. The two-voice singing is also quite common and well preserved by the Shopp. In the village of Bistritsa, a group of women called the *“Grandmothers of Bistritsa”* has thereby created a three-voice form of singing, which became very well-known internationally⁴⁸.

The following quotes are also commonly said: i) “there is nothing higher than Vitosha, nothing deeper than Iskur, nothing bigger than Sofia and no person more beautiful and nicer than the shopp” and ii) “hold on, a shopp is passing by”.

Dobrudja people

The Dobrudja region in Bulgaria had been called after the Dobrudja people living there⁴⁹. Among these people were the old native population⁵⁰, the Bulgarians living in Moldavia and Ukraine, the Balkans⁵¹ and the Thracian people⁵². These people all shared similar agricultural traditions and as the region roughly covered “steppes” and agricultural lands, they mainly produced grain, grow vines and breed cattle⁵³.

The Dobrudja people had a consistent lifestyle, which was comparatively noticeable by their humble homes, farmlands and carts⁵⁴. It was also well portrayed by the writer Mr. Yordan Yovkov as his works namely reflected the agricultural life of these people and the

⁴⁶ This is mainly due to the high urbanization and internal migration of the city.

⁴⁷ These include the Elin Pelin and Kostinbrod regions, Vladaia, Musachevo and the neighborhoods of Simeonovo, Dragalevci and Boyana.

⁴⁸ See for more information Part I, section V of this Survey.

⁴⁹ This includes the former Tutrakan, Silistra, Dobrich and Balchic regions.

⁵⁰ This population consists of a group of Polians that mainly live in northern parts of Silistra and Tutrakan.

⁵¹ The Balkan people mainly live in the Eastern part of Dobrudja, which include the regions Elena, Turnovo and Gabrovo. See further below in the section “Balkan people”.

⁵² The Thracian people moved to the region in the period of end-XVIII to mid-XIX century.

⁵³ Cattle breeding were mainly done in the past and the tools for conducting agricultural works have considerably been modernized after the Liberation.

infrastructure they lived in. One of his works entitled “*the Song of the Wheels*” even specifically referred to their carts.

Despite the difference in and influence of their original background⁵⁵, the Dobrudja people have overtime developed common traditions, customs, folklore and musical instruments⁵⁶. This also includes their folkloric costumes. For instance, the Dobrudja men costumes comprised black clothes and tall cylindrical fur caps whereas the women costumes usually comprised home-made color fabric dresses or petticoats and blouses⁵⁷. The women also used to wear an apron⁵⁸ and cover their head with a kerchief⁵⁹.

Nonetheless, the Thracian background has still been highly influential in, amongst others, the carol songs⁶⁰, chain dances, symbols, holiday celebrations⁶¹ and even private group structures of the Dobrudja people⁶². One typical example is the St. Lazar Day, which is a holiday celebrated (as part of the Easter Fasting tradition) with ritual songs and dances performed by young girls in the main square of the villages⁶³. As many other spring traditions in Bulgaria, St. Lazar Day is a symbolic holiday for potential weddings. On this day, the girls⁶⁴ (or brides to be) would, amongst others, perform a circle chain dance and sing the “*Kralio-Portalio*” song. They would also go house to house, dressed in their Easter clothing⁶⁵, to sing and perform the “*boenets*”⁶⁶ dance. The exact number of songs to sing must correspond to the number of people in a family⁶⁷ so that each song has a

⁵⁴ They namely had a modern iron cart, which was often creatively painted and had tinkling wheels.

⁵⁵ There therefore exist some different versions of a tradition, custom or folklore in certain villages. One of such example is the mummer’s games.

⁵⁶ The musical instruments of the Dobrudja people include the rebec, the shepherd’s pipe and the bagpipe.

⁵⁷ The petticoats and blouses have overtime become more common.

⁵⁸ The apron comes in small sizes and has one color (usually black, blue or red). They are embroidered and women with big colorful geometric patterns, which are typical for certain regions, such as the regions of Sliven and Iambol.

⁵⁹ This is a large shawl made of wool or silk, which is tied by passing the two ends under the chin and then on top of the head.

⁶⁰ Including the older “*haidouk*” songs.

⁶¹ Including the “*sourvak*” tradition on New Year’s Day. See further below in the section “Thracian people”.

⁶² It has to be noted that the Dobrudja people have a slightly different structure than the Thracians. See further below in the section “Thracian people”.

⁶³ During the entire fasting period, they would sing and perform an unconnected dance.

⁶⁴ The girls range from the age of 12 to 16. They would form groups of 7-8 to 15 girls (of similar age) with the tallest and oldest one leading the group and the shortest and youngest (“*kairuche*”) following as the tail. This type of formation also functions as the sequence of who would marry first.

⁶⁵ The girls all wear the same petticoats, blouses and kerchiefs, which include many ornaments and are specifically used for young brides to be.

⁶⁶ This is an unconnected zigzag chain dance where the girls are not allowed to jump. Each should only make little steps corresponding to the rhythm of the song.

⁶⁷ This is similar to performing Christmas carols.

specific meaning for each family member. At the end of each performance, the lady of the house would give them flour and money.

Another traditional holiday celebration is the Eniov Day, which is celebrated in the Cheshma Varoita village in Bessarabia. On Eniov eve, young girls would namely get together near the well situated in the main square of the village, where they would walk around it three times, perform a chain dance and sing songs. One of the girls would be carrying a 2-3 year old girl on her shoulder, which would be wearing a red cloth on her face. This girl is also referred to as the “*ianiu*”⁶⁸. On Eniov Day itself, the girls would redo the ritual several times and fill up a caldron with water and put rings and flowers in it. The *ianiu* would then reach for the caldron to take out the rings one by one whilst the other girls sing mantic songs. Once all the rings have been taken out, the girls would perform a large chain dance and bring the *ianiu* to her home where her mother would prepare a vegetarian meal for them. Once back at the well in the square, the girls would sing mythological songs.

Thracians

The Thracians occupied most of the Balkan Peninsula⁶⁹. As this region was particularly fertile for agricultural productions, the Thracians produced, amongst others, grain⁷⁰ and rice. They also grew vine⁷¹ and other plants, such as vegetables, oleaginous rose, and certain contemporary oil-bearing and industrial plants. The villages of the Thracians were quite similar in their form and structure⁷². The homes and farm buildings were typically grounded and covered with tiles⁷³.

The Thracians spoke an Eastern Bulgarian dialect, which sounded quite poetic. Nowadays there are only a few ancient native Thracians and they live very scattered across the region. This is because Thracians have overtime become an ethnographic group consisting of the Turks and people from the Strandja Mountain, the Balkan, the

⁶⁸ This means “bride”.

⁶⁹ This includes the Strandja mountain range and a considerable part of the Middle Wood mountain range.

⁷⁰ The Thracians used to be known for producing the famous “*zagaria*” wheat.

⁷¹ Rice is mainly produced in the Pazardjik, Plovdiv, Chirpan regions whereas vine is grown in the Pazardjik, Asenovgrad, Plovdiv, Old Zagora, Sliven and other regions.

⁷² They usually had large yards and gardens.

⁷³ In the past, these were covered with straw. It should also be noted that only in the Middle Wood Mountain regions however were the houses in the form of huts and two-floor buildings. Another type of house seen there was the Strandja talpen-house.

Rhodopes mountain range, the Middle Wood Mountain and certain other mountain places.

The folkloric costumes of the Thracians were very colorful. The women wore folkloric dresses and sleeveless tunics made of colored woven materials and richly ornamented with embroidery. These were always tightened with colorful waist-bands and aprons, which also had ornaments embroidered on them. In each region, the women wore a unique type of tunic/folkloric dress. The male costumes consisted of naturally red wide breeches and waist-bands, colorful sleeveless jackets with cords and fur caps.

The Thracians had many traditions but were particularly known for their Christmas traditions. Their Christmas carols⁷⁴ had a very rich repertoire of songs, which were mainly performed by groups of 10-12 unmarried Thracians called “*kydi*”, “*bands*” or “*stakes*”. These groups of people, dressed in their holiday outfits, would go house to house on Christmas Eve to sing a song to each family member after which the leader of each group would read a “prayer” or “blessing” to the whole family who would then provide the singers with presents. These presents were usually sold and the profit used to help the ones in need.

Other traditions celebrated by the Thracians included the *sourvak* tradition on New Year’s Day, which was considered part of the Christmas tradition and St. Lazar’s Day⁷⁵. The Thracians were furthermore known for their carnival games⁷⁶, which they held in early spring for the purpose of having good harvest in the summer to come. This tradition was very theatrically performed and everyone was wearing artistically made costumes and masks. Chain dancing⁷⁷ and fire dancing were also popular traditions among the Thracians⁷⁸. The latter however is nowadays slowly disappearing.

The Thracians furthermore had folkloric brigands who have been depicted in many art works and songs. These were Indje voivode, Hadji Dimitar, Dobri voivode, Angel Voivode, the brothers Nanio and Genyo voivodes, Vulchan voivode, Rusi voivode, capt.

⁷⁴ There exist over 80 Thracian Christmas carols. These are songs to be sung to each family member but also include songs for the entire household.

⁷⁵ See also above in the section “Dobrudja People”. In some villages in the Bourgas region, the Thracians also held a similar tradition, which was called “*Mara lishanka*”.

⁷⁶ These games had different names, which included, amongst others, mummies, babougers, baboushars, monks, old men, dervishes and araps.

⁷⁷ The Thracians’ chain dances were characterized by their clam and slow velocity.

Petko (Kiriakov) vojvode, Dimitar Kailuchliata, Peio Brukliata, Zlatio Kokarchoolu and many others. Like the Dobrudja people and the Balkans, the Thracians also played the musical instruments rebec, shepherd's pipe and bagpipe.

Polians, Hurtzoias and Erliis

The Polians, Hurtzoias and Erliis are a group of old local people from the villages in the Silistra and Tutrakan regions, the surt villages in the Novi Pazar and Provadia regions and the “*kapantsi*” in the Razgrad region⁷⁹. The local people from the South, also called the “*shikovtsi*”, usually have a different lifestyle from the other locals, the so-called “*grebentsi*”. The local people from West⁸⁰ also tend to be different from their Eastern fellows.

Despite these differences, they still have certain common elements as part of their culture. One of which is their folkloric costumes. The female dresses have two aprons and lots of embroideries whereas the male costumes are black in color⁸¹. Another element includes the homes of the locals, which were built on loess soil⁸².

The Polians, on the other hand, are quite similar to the Dobrudja people⁸³ and therefore have more specific traditions that are rather “German” styled. One example is the “*Rusals*” games, which are held in the times of drought. These games are played by experienced crafty men and led by a “*vataff*”. This leading position, however, can only be obtained through inheritance. The Rusals usually play in odd numbers⁸⁴ and in their usual costumes. The games usually begin on the day of Spas in which the players start walking around from village to village and return on St. Trinity Day, which is about 10 days later. The players are beforehand being provided with medicinal herbs in their fur caps⁸⁵.

Other traditions of the Polians include the mummer traditions, which are held on the first week of Lent. Although these traditions are generally similar to the

⁷⁸ This tradition was particularly popular in many villages in the Strandja mountain range until 1912. Presently it is only held in the village of Bulgari, Small Turnovo.

⁷⁹ Many surts and kapantsi have actually moved to the Dobrudja region in the last centuries.

⁸⁰ This include the Ruse, Svishtov, Nikopol and Oriahovo regions.

⁸¹ However in the beginning of the XIX century, the male costumes used to be white in color.

⁸² This was especially the case at the time of the Liberation in the Ruse region.

⁸³ They have, for instance, the same natural conditions in the region as the Dobrudja people. They also do agricultural work, although few of them are fishermen near the coast of Danube.

⁸⁴ Such as in groups of three, five, seven, nine or eleven men.

Thracian/Dobrudja ones, there exists a difference in the structure. For instance, the Thracian traditions normally have a male leader, whereas the Polians ones are led by a partnerless “grandmother”. The zoomorphism⁸⁶ is also a typical but ancient element in the Polian traditions.

Macedonians

The Macedonians were cultivators⁸⁷, although many also took on other occupations, such as carpentry, tar production, masonry, smith work, tinkle job and *samardjia* job. The lodging business, trade⁸⁸ and seasonal works⁸⁹ were also quite popular among the Macedonians. Like the Rupans and Balkans (see further below), these people were continuously migrating for their occupation.

The Macedonians lived in villages⁹⁰. They usually had two floor houses⁹¹, of which the first floor was used for their cattle or agriculture. Like the Shopps, the Macedonians did not place a high emphasis on the looks of their houses. This changed however during the time of the revival when art formed part of the overall architecture of the houses, particularly in villages such as Bansko, Razlog, Iakoruda, Gotse Delchev and Petrich.

The folkloric costumes of the Macedonians were for the men usually black with breeches⁹², whilst the women wore short sleeveless black sheds with colorful aprons⁹³ and long sleeved “*zabun*”. These women clothing however can nowadays only be found in Blagoevgrad⁹⁴.

⁸⁵ The vataff also carries a white flag with herbs embroidered on it.

⁸⁶ This term refers to the participation of animals, such as the goat or the “*karakonche*” (foal) in the traditions.

⁸⁷ Although this occupation has been preserved, the agricultural methods and tools used were actually too ancient and primitive. An example of such ancient tool is the “*tsap*”.

⁸⁸ The Macedonians were carrying commercial goods using mules and horses from Solun, Siar, and Kavala up to Vienna.

⁸⁹ Seasonal works included collecting and processing cotton and tobacco.

⁹⁰ Depending on the land the villages were built on, these villages either took the shape of neighborhoods or long market villages in the mountain and mountain passages.

⁹¹ In some parts of the Razlog region (not in the villages however), the Macedonians used to build wooden buildings that had a large attic and two roofs.

⁹² The Macedonian men living in the Eastern part however had slightly different clothing as their costumes had straighter breeches.

⁹³ These aprons were quite typical for the Macedonians as these were woven using ornaments of geometrical shapes, which made the aprons look like small carpets.

⁹⁴ In Velingrad, these clothing ceased to exist from 1912.

The Macedonians had a considerably conservative culture⁹⁵, which were quite similar to the ones of the Shoppis. These two groups, in particular, shared similar epic⁹⁶ mythological and heroic songs. These songs were performed vocally⁹⁷ and accompanied by a rebec or shepherd's pipe. These instruments however have overtime been replaced by the mandolin (the so-called "*drunkia*"). Another musical instrument played by the Macedonians was the drum.

The folklore of the Macedonians generally contained lots of themes depicting the violence and oppression of the Turks that they had experienced. With regards to their traditions, however, they were particularly known for their family boiled mutton tradition. On the other hand, unlike the Thracians and Rupans, the Christmas⁹⁸, St. Lazar's Day and carnival traditions of the Macedonians were quite underdeveloped.

Rupans

The Rupans mainly occupied the central part of the Rhodope mountain range⁹⁹. This part consisted of a pure natural environment, which was difficult to access as there were no roads. Mules and horses were therefore used for transportation¹⁰⁰. The natural environment had quite an impact on the lifestyle and culture of the Rupans. It also kept their agricultural livelihood to a minimum. The wooden plough carried by the horses was hardly used and certain fields were cultivated by hand or using mattocks. In 1912, the Rupans started doing fire agriculture in Madan and other regions.

Nonetheless, the Rupans had a tradition-old "shepherd's trade", which consisted of diary farming and the trading and breeding of cattle. Diary farming in the Rhodope mountain range was quite different in terms of structure and conduct. The shepherd usually wore a long red scarf¹⁰¹ and used many different bell tunes. The Rupans were also taking on fishing and crafts works¹⁰², such as the packsaddle job, coppersmith, masonry and homespun manufacturing. The livelihood of the Rupans was thus rather unstable. There

⁹⁵ The Macedonians placed, amongst others, an importance on the family unity.

⁹⁶ The epic tradition was considerably popular in Razlog, where a music school was eventually established.

⁹⁷ The vocal music of the Macedonians also included the rich diaphonia, which was typical in the western Rhodope mountain range, Western Middle Wood Mountain, the Pazardjik and Shoplyk regions and southern region of the Balkan.

⁹⁸ The Christmas traditions were performed by little boys, like with the Rupans.

⁹⁹ This includes the Chepelare, Smolian, Raikovo, Ustovo, Madan and Zlatograd regions.

¹⁰⁰ In some cases also camels were used.

¹⁰¹ Such scarf was also commonly used by shepherds in the Apennine and Perinea regions.

was also another group of Rupans, which were mainly Bulgarian Mohammedans. This group however did minor agricultural and cattle-breeding¹⁰³ works.

The villages in the Rhodope mountain range were often quite large and had a unique amphitheatrical view. The houses were mostly built on steep grounds and had at least two floors, of which the first floor was used for the agriculture. The interior of the houses had a sophisticated architecture but was very organized as each item had its proper place.

The folkloric costumes of the Christian Rupans were quite similar to the Bulgarian Mohammedan Rupans. The male costumes were namely black and had breeches whilst the women wore long tunics, richly embroidered skirts, colorful “*saiak*” folklore dresses, aprons and white kerchiefs¹⁰⁴.

Like the Thracians and Balkans, the Rupans spoke an Eastern Bulgarian dialect. The Rupan dialect, however, included ancient Bulgarian words, which cannot be found in contemporary dictionaries. The Rupans, furthermore, had a peculiar pronunciation.

Like any other ethnographic group, the Rupans had their traditions and folklore¹⁰⁵. Although their traditions were quite similar to the Thracians, there were significant differences. For instance, the Rupan Christmas carols¹⁰⁶ were performed by little boys carrying one stick¹⁰⁷. Whilst these boys would also go house to house, they would not sing any songs. The *sourvak* tradition on New Year’s Day¹⁰⁸, the mummer traditions and the St. Lazar’s Day tradition were all performed quite differently.

Typical Rupan traditions were the Shrovetide fire tradition¹⁰⁹ and St. George Day. Particularly the latter was quite an important holiday for the Rupans, which was celebrated with chain dances and competitions. On this day, the shepherds would also kill a few lambs to make boiled mutton and thereafter leave for the mountain. St.

¹⁰² The Rupans took on crafts works particularly in Ustovo and Zlatograd and other villages in the Rhodope mountain range, but also near the Asia Minor and Aegean Sea where fishing was also done.

¹⁰³ This included the so-called “*koliaks*” and rugs (fleecy rugs) trade.

¹⁰⁴ The aprons had big colored squares on them whilst the long white kerchiefs were home made and also called *testemels* or *mubriams*.

¹⁰⁵ The Rupan folklore mainly consists of lyrical songs, which are quite tender.

¹⁰⁶ Also the type of Rupan Christmas carols sung could determine the place where the Rupans were living (i.e. in the north or east of the Rhodope mountain range).

¹⁰⁷ The Christmas tradition of the Rupans was thus more to connected to their herd occupation.

¹⁰⁸ The Thracians usually used a *sourvak* stick to give their New Year’s greetings and wishes, whilst the Rupans used a heavy rock.

George Day is followed by another holiday to welcome the shepherds back from their trip. This holiday takes place 3-4 days before St. Konstantine Day (May 21). After these feasts, the villagers start preparing their dairy farms for the summer. This is then followed by the “*predoy*” tradition, which consists of measuring the milk levels of the sheeps. Another big holiday tradition for the Rupans is *Ilinden*, which is celebrated with big fairs¹¹⁰, big chain dances, lots of songs and music.

The Rupans were furthermore known for their vocal tradition. Performances were done by both men and women and in groups. Musical instruments played were the big “*kaba*” bagpipe and shepherd’s pipes.

Balkan people

The Balkan people lived in big villages and towns where they built their typical two floor houses¹¹¹. They were quite spread from the Balkan mountain range to the Teteven, Danube and Dobrudja regions¹¹². This was because they have continuously been migrating and thereby have not acquired a single occupation, although the lands they lived in were favorable for agriculture and cattle breeding. Their main specialization, however, was in producing and trading craft works¹¹³, of which many were overtime taken over by the Bulgarian factories.

The Balkans were perceived as quite discreet and practical. The men typically wore black costumes whilst the women wore tunics¹¹⁴ of simple dark colors. The women also wore (white) kerchiefs with rich embroidery¹¹⁵. Their calendar had many holidays, which consisted mostly of rural and urban meetings¹¹⁶ and like the Thracians, the Balkans spoke an Eastern Bulgarian dialect.

¹⁰⁹ These were also called “*tnikane*”, “*chilkane*” or “*changji*” and were performed in the Spring.

¹¹⁰ These fairs were also popular with the “*pechermio*” (roasted lambs on a breech) of the Rhodope region.

¹¹¹ These houses were similar to the ones in the mountain regions and most had slated roofs and white walls in the front.

¹¹² Particularly in the northern regions, they managed to influence the lifestyle of the Polians.

¹¹³ Such as turnery, carpet, wood-carving, iron craft, iconography, goldsmith’s trade, copper trade and many others. The Balkans used to trade their crafts works nationally.

¹¹⁴ As said before, wherever the Balkans migrated, they tend to have an influence on the lifestyle of the local people. For this reason, the local women were also seen wearing tunics in the Danube region.

¹¹⁵ Such head coverage was believed to give the women a noble appearance, particularly in the regions of Gabrovo, Triavna and Turnovo.

¹¹⁶ The Balkans held these meetings to trade particularly in the late springs. This tradition started in the regions of Gabrovo, Triavna and Troian.

The Balkans were furthermore known for their peculiar folkloric songs, which had a lyrical and epic character. Among these were the haidoek songs¹¹⁷, classical heroic songs¹¹⁸ and songs about mythical figures¹¹⁹. Songs about the harvest were also quite popular amongst the Balkans, especially for those that worked in the wide grain fields in the Tracian, Danube and Dobrudja regions¹²⁰. Like the Thracians and Dobrudja people, the Balkans played the musical instruments rebeck, shepherd's pipe and bagpipe to complement their songs.

¹¹⁷ These songs were mostly dedicated to the Balkan people that fought against the Turkish slavery. Among these people were Chavdar and Lalo, voivode Radan, Vulko, voivode Dimo, voivode Voin, and voivodes and haidouks named Stoian, Kara Tanas, Voivode Damian, voivode Trifon, voivode Manusch, voivode Bosol, voivode Nencho, captain grandfather Nikola and many others.

¹¹⁸ These include folkloric songs about the creators and heroes of the so-called "*Rumania*" from the XVIII, XIX and XX centuries.

¹¹⁹ Among the mythical figures were fairies, wood-nymphs and dragons.

¹²⁰ These songs about the harvest also reflected the difficulties, violence and indifferent attitudes of the farm owners that the Balkans had experienced.