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MIGRATIONS OF MACEDONIAN MUSLIMS FROM THE SKOPJE TORBESHIIJA IN 1950S

Abstract: Based on numerous original archive materials, statistical data as well as ethnographic, anthropogeographic, anthropological and historiographic literature, the paper analyses the migration movement of the Muslim Torbesh population from the villages of Dolno Kolichani, Drzhilovo, Elovo, Pagarusha, Umovo and Cvetovo in the Skopje area of Torbeshija. The paper points out various demographic data used to monitor emigration, mainly towards Asia Minor, or more specifically Turkey, in the period of the Balkan Wars until early 1960s. The focus is on migration movements in the 1950s, when emigration was most massive. Through the specific example of migrations from the village of Umovo the paper presents the demographic, economic and educational consequences of emigration.

Key words: Skopje Torbeshija, Macedonian Muslims, Torbesh, population census, Turkey

South of Skopje, in the estuary of Markova Reka, several mountain villages are part of the area called Torbeshija. According to Jovan Trifunoski, this area comprised eighteen villages.¹ This area was part of the Karshijak (Karşiyaka Kolu) region, which until the Balkan Wars was a separate geographic-administrative unit in the frames of the Skopje kaza (Gjorgiev, Ilievski 2022: 55; Хаџи Васиљевић 1930: 182 - 183). According to the Ottoman census data from early 1830s, the villages in the Torbeshija area were mostly inhabited by Muslims, while a significant number of Christian citizens was found only in Patishka Reka,² in Pagarusha there were three households and in Malchishete one (Akin Zorba 2018: 27, 33 – 34).³

1 According to this author, the Torbeshija area is comprised of the following villages: Ramni Gaber, Vrtekica, Pagarusha, Dolno Kolichani, Drachevica, Gorno Kolichani, Kaldirec, Krusha, Umovo, Cvetovo, Malchishete, Drzhilovo, Gorogled, Elovo, Crn Vrv and Patishka Reka. (Trifunoski: 1958, 9).

2 About the demographic developments in the village of Patishka Reka in XIX century and the first decades of XX century, cf. (Filipović 1930: 163 - 174).

3 The Ottoman census registers from the 1830s mention migration from these villages. Two households from Pagarusha moved to Skopje in the 1832-1835 period. In 1832 and 1833 two households from the village of Elovo moved to the neighbouring village of Crn Vrv. (Sherif, Bislimi Ibraimi 2020:

Total number of inhabitants and religious structure of the population in the six villages in Skopje Torbeshija 1832/33.

Village	Muslim households	Registered male inhabitants	Estimated population	Christian households	Number of male inhabitants	Estimated population
D. Kolichani	60	138	276	/	/	/
Drzhilovo	41	132	264	/	/	/
Elovo	32	120	240	/	/	/
Pagarusha	33	100	200	3	7	14
Umovo	25	60	120	/	/	/
Cvetovo	36	85	190	/	/	/

Source: Bislimi, Sherif, Ibraimi (2020). Osmanliski dokumenti za istorijata na Makedonija, Popisi od XIX vek, Skopski sandzhak, Kaza Skopje, 1832/33. Skopje.

The region was given the name Torbeshija after some of its Torbesh inhabitants, who were local Muslims who spoke Macedonian. The predominant position in science is that this was a Slavic population that accepted Islam during the Ottoman Empire. Islamization was particularly widespread in the second half of XVI century (Ashtalkovska Gajtanoska 2024: 74, 78). In the numerous papers, depending on the time they were written, the author and the ideological context, various ethnonyms are used for this population: Macedonian Muslim, Islamized Macedonians, Torbesh, Mohammedan Bulgarians, Poturchanjaks, Muslim Serbs, etc. Even in the 1960s scientific ethnological literature defined the Muslim community speaking Macedonian as a separate subgroup. (Palikrusheva 2016).

According to several researchers of the Skopje Valley, the Islamized Slavic population in the Markova Reka river basin moved from the Reka area during the XVIII century. In late XIX century Gjorche Petrov wrote that the Torbesh have settled in the villages on the right-hand side along Markova Reka. They earned their living by raising domestic animals and logging. Petrov explains that the Torbesh settled there gradually from Reka, because that area was passive and could not feed them. (Materiyali 1896: 515 - 522). At the start of XX century Vasil K'anchov noted that Torbesh lived in six villages in the Skopje kaza, south of Skopje. The author concludes: "The Skopje Torbesh are the same as those from Debar both in language and costume". Similar as Petrov, he also mentions the popular belief that the inhabitants in the village of Dolno Kolichani moved from Zhirovnica in Reka (Kanchov 1996: 46). In early XX century Jovan Hadji Vasiljevic visited Karshijak and noted the tradition that these inhabitants came from Zhirovnica, Galichnik and Radika,⁴ two hundred years before his research (i.e. early XVIII century). However, he estimated that they relocated in mid XVIII century. Hadji Vasiljevic makes

315 – 316, 357, 362). Such local migrations were typical for the other villages in Karshijak as well. Some of these villages were already overpopulated in agricultural terms in this period.

4 Torbesh population from Reka, or more specifically the Radika basin, particularly the village of Zhirovnica, also settled in the neighbouring Veles area, in the villages of Melnica and Gorno Vranovci. (Trifunoski 1977: 276). The majority of these people immigrated to Turkey in the 1950s.

the same mistake as K'nehov and does not mention the big village of Elovo.⁵ (Hadzi Vasiljević 1924: 25; Hadzi Vasiljević 1930: 241). Trifunoski, who researched this area in the middle of XX century, forty years after Hadji Vasiljevic, estimated that the beginning of the relocation was in the second half of XVIII century. In his opinion this migration lasted until the middle of XIX century. The majority of the settlers came from Dolna Reka. Trifunoski defined this Muslim population with the ethnonym Torbesh (Muslim Macedonians). (Trifunoski 1958: 55).

Historical-demographic overview

The societal and political changes that occurred after the Balkan wars impacted the lives of Macedonian Muslims in general. The defeat and the withdrawal of the Ottomans affected this population, same as the other Muslims, and a process of immigration to Asia Minor began. People were leaving these passive and mountain villages in the course of XIX century, and moving mainly to Skopje, as the seat of the kaza, and later as a vilayet centre. Field research shows that since mid XIX century part of the Torbesh population moved to Skopje and the neighbouring villages in the flat areas. In Gorno Lisiche there were immigrants from Pagarusha. In Batinci, a village that belongs to area whole of “Dolni sela”, there were immigrants from Dolno Kolichani and Cvetovo. (Trifunoski 1958: 101, 117). In the village of Butel near Skopje there were settlers from the village of Elovo. (Trifunoski 1955: 85). According to the data from the census conducted by the Serbian authorities in the spring of 1913, in the six abovementioned villages there were 4,649 inhabitants, (Vujčić 1914: 131 - 132), of which there were around fifteen Orthodox inhabitants in Pagarusha,⁶ while the rest were Muslim.

Total number of inhabitants according to official censuses in the 1913-1921 period

Village	1913	1916	1921
D. Kolichani	848	907	720
Drzhilovo	821	763	667
Elovo	827	762	632
Pagarusha	540	498	518

5 In the statistics tables in the well-known work by Vasil Kanchov *Makedonija etnografiya i statistika*, the author overlooked the village of Elovo, which is not included in the list. (Kanchov 1996: 209). The same oversight was repeated by other authors later.

6 The last Orthodox households moved out of Pagarusha after the Second World War in 1946. Specific for this village is that the number of Orthodox households in the last eight decades of Ottoman rule did not change. In 1832/33 there were three Christian households registered in the village. (Шериф 2021: 357). Gjorche Petrov registered the same number of Christian households in the last decade of the XIX century. (Materiyali 1896: 520). The last Christian household was part of the Stojchev family. The Ottoman census from early 1830s recorded the household of Stojche, son of Spaso, age 35, in the middle tax category. His two underage sons Velko and Jovche were also recorded. (Sherif 2021: 357). The last Orthodox inhabitants of Pagarusha were most probably their descendants. Trifunoski's note that in the second half of the XIX century there were around ten Christian houses in Pagarusha (Trifunoski 1958: 162), does not correspond with the original Ottoman census records (Akin Zorba 2018: 33 – 34).

Umovo	725	870	615
Cvetovo	888	963	835
total	4.649	4.763	3.987

Source: Вујичић. Ант. Мил, Речник места у ослобођеној области Старе Србије по службеним податцима, Београд, 1914; Гаджанов Димитар Г., “Мјосјуманското население в новоосвободените земи”, *Научна ексџедиција Македонија и Поморавието, 1916 г.* съст. Петър Хр. Петров, София, 1993; *Definitivni rezultati popisa stanovništva 1921 godine*, Sarajevo, 1932; Речник места, Београд, 1925.

The immigration of the Torbesh population from these villages, which became more pronounced with the Balkan wars, is also confirmed by official statistical data or more specifically, the censuses conducted in the 1913-1921 period. The total number of Torbesh population in the six villages decreased by 14% in this period. This is double the reduction compared to that from the Skopje area, where the total number of the population was reduced by 7% between 1913 and 1921. (Илиевски 2017: 50).

According to anthropogeographic research after 1912, and particularly between the two world wars, around a hundred families have left these villages and moved to Turkey. Immigration was most massive from the village of Drzhilovo, where around 40 households have moved to Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s. They mainly settled in the area of Izmir. Thirty two households moved out of the village of Umovo between the two world wars, around 20 households from Elovo and 11 households moved out of Pagarusha. A smaller number of immigrants to Turkey were from the villages of Cvetovo and Dolno Kolichani. Because the area was passive and overpopulated in agrarian terms⁷ many households also moved to Skopje. (Трифуноски: 1950, 163, 165, 174, 176, 180, 182). It was noticeable that the Macedonian Muslims from the Skopje Torbeshija moved in much greater numbers to Turkey in the period between the wars compared to their neighbours, the Albanians, who also migrated, but at a much more moderate pace.⁸

Migrations in the 1950s

The early 1950s saw the start of a very strong process of immigration of the Turkish and other Muslim citizens from Macedonia to Turkey. The immigration culminated in the middle and the second half of the 1950s, after which the process deflated, but did not end. The migration from PR Macedonia and other parts of the then FPR Yugoslavia (Sandjak

⁷ These are hill and mountain side villages, at altitude between 500 and 1000 meters. The territories of the villages mainly consisted of pastures and forests, with insufficient arable land, (Панов 1998: 116, 121, 227), which is one of the reasons for the constant migrations from these villages in the course of XIX and XX centuries.

⁸ Immigration of Albanian population to Turkey in the period between the two world wars from the Karshijak area was registered from the villages of Morani, Crn Vrv, Patishka Reka, Batin-ci, Jabolci, Sveta Petka and Malchishte. (Трифуноски 1958: 66). There was similar migration from the neighbouring Albanian villages in the Kadina River basin, in Karshijak. (Трифуноски 1952: 42).

and Kosovo), in fact, began after the visit of the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Fuad Köprülü to Yugoslavia. After this visit there was a significant improvement in the bilateral relations between the two countries, which resulted in the signing of the Ankara Treaty in February 1953. The immigration process intensified after the visit of President Josip Broz Tito to Turkey in April 1954. (Pezo 2013: 117). The immigration of the Turkish and other Muslim inhabitants was, in fact, a continuation of the process which started with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire or more specifically, a continuation of the immigration waves that began with the Balkan wars.⁹

The dynamic of the immigration from PR/SR Macedonia was undoubtedly influenced by the statement of Lazar Kolishevski¹⁰ for *Nova Makedonija* on 28 March 1954. In his interview Kolishevski underlined that he does not agree with the term immigration, because in this process the people who wanted to leave Yugoslavia were not forced to do so. Talking about the reasons why these people wanted to renounce their Yugoslavian citizenship in order to move to Turkey, Kolichevski said: “Regarding the reasons why they asked to renounce their citizenship, I can say that they are quite understandable. These are primarily family relations, then religious motives under the influence of the reaction to going to Turkey, and finally the feeling to which part of the Turkish minority saw our community as theirs, because that minority was Turkish, they belong to a nation, and the greater that feeling about our socialist community the less there would be tendencies for leaving it”. (Нова Македонија, 28.03.1954).

For some authors the religious fact also had a significant influence on the migration process, in some cases it was even more pronounced than the economic or the political one. The restrictions in the religious life were not accepted among many Muslims, while part of the Muslim population still considered Turkey as the cradle of Islam. (Janjetović, 2023: 517). The immigration in the 1950s, as well as during the entire period after the Balkan wars, was typical for all Muslim communities which directly linked their religion with the Turkish name and people, which is undoubtedly a remnant of the many centuries

9 Some researchers are of the opinion that some Turks were resisting the new political reality after the defeat of the Ottomans in the Balkan wars, which made them move to Asia Minor. Ethnologist Branislav Rusic wrote the following about the immigration of Turks and Torbesh from Debar Zhu-pa: “After the liberation from the Turks (1912) and the unification (1918) and the creation of the modern Turkish state, the reason for the immigration of the Turks was their wish to live in their own community, among compatriots who speak the same language and have the same faith.” Regarding the immigration of the Torbesh from the same area, Rusic wrote: “When faith supplanted or rooted out the feeling about the Macedonian origins among the majority of Torbesh, who changed and created their identity of Turks, the reasons for their relocation to Asia Minor are the same as those of the authentic Turks.” (Русић 1957: 38). Rusic’s arguments do not take into account the organized activities of the state, i.e., the Kingdom of SCS/Yugoslavia, which was trying in various ways to reduce the number of minorities it considered disloyal. This policy led to the signing of the “agreement for immigration of Turks and people of Turkish culture” between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Republic of Turkey in July 1938. This agreement was not implemented mainly because of the crisis in international relations and the recent start of the Second World War.

10 Lazar Kolishevski (1914 – 2000) was president of the Government of People’s Republic of Macedonia in the 1945-1953 period. Between 1953 and 1962 he chaired the Parliament of PRM. From 1963 to 1980 he had various positions at federal level. (Кљакиќ 1994: 250).

of the Ottoman Empire's rule in these territories. The reasons are multilayered, naturally, but these religious reasons coupled with the political situation at the time contributed the most to the massive immigration wave. (Тодоровски, 1997, 64; Светиева, 2009: 38 - 68).

The immigration made some citizens of PR Macedonia of Muslim faith but of different ethnicity to declare themselves as Turks at the 1953 census. (Ilievski, 2014: 278, 283 – 287). The number of Turks from 95,940 or 8.32% in 1948 increased to 203,938 or 15.6% in 1953. The census results show that in 1953 the number of Turks in PR Macedonia has increased by 108.000 or fantastic 112% in only five years.

The ethnic affiliation of the Muslim communities was without a doubt affected by the political situation. In 1953, the year the census was conducted, the Balkan Pact was signed, which made Turkey an ally to FPR Yugoslavia. In the meantime, the religious feelings or religious fanaticism among part of the Muslim population where Islam was deeply rooted, were affected by the adoption of the law that prohibited the wearing of veils and long coats. All of this undoubtedly influenced the ethnic affiliation among part of the Muslim population in PR Macedonia, which still had unstable national sentiments.

11

The absence of statistical and demographic logic in the increase of the Turkish population in PR Macedonia in the 1948-1953 period and the simultaneous decrease in the numbers of Albanians and Macedonian Muslims caused doubts among certain researchers about the reliability of the abovementioned statistical data. (Kočović 1998: 351). Yugoslavian anthropogeographer Jovan F. Trifunoski thought that the censuses carried out in FPRY/SFRY “do not give a completely realistic picture about ethnicity, because among the Muslim population in SR Macedonia – among Albanians, Torbesh, Turks and Roma – there are individuals and groups who are not clearly ethnically affiliated”. (Trifunoski 1988: 102 – 103).

The statistical analysis confirms without a doubt that in some areas such as Skopje, Kumanovo and Pelagonija, some Albanians declared as Turks.¹² Such tendencies were also present in settlements with Macedonian Muslims. According to the final results of the 1948 census, 37,096 Muslim who spoke Macedonian were registered as Macedonians. (*Konačni rezultati popisa stanovništva*, 1954: xvii). Already at the next census in 1953, the majority of Macedonian Muslims declared themselves as Turks, which is one of the reasons for the drastic increase in the number of Turks.

Among the Muslim population in the Skopje area there is also a large discrepancy in the ethnicity statements at the censuses in 1948, 1953 and 1961.¹³ A large number of Albanians from the Karshijak area declared themselves as Turks in 1953 and a more

11 This occurrence is not unknown in these areas. The national identity among the Christian and the Muslim communities in Macedonia in XIX and early XX centuries appears to be a pretty dynamic and changing category.

12 Unlike the abovementioned areas, in Kichevo, Struga as well as in the Polog villages the number of Albanians who declared themselves as Turks at the 1953 census was minimal.

13 This tendency in the Skopje region among part of the Muslim population continued at the 1965 census, carried out in the city of Skopje and the Skopje region in order to gain insight into the de-

modest number in 1961. Such a process, but on a much larger scale was also seen in the Skopje villages settled by Torbesh. In the six abovementioned villages in Skopje Torbeshija, there were a total of 4,607 inhabitants, 60 of which were registered as Turks, while the rest were Macedonians. In 1951 Trifunoski wrote: “The religious division between the Torbesh and the Orthodox Macedonians also led to differences in the national feelings at the time of the Turks: the entire Orthodox population during the Markova Reka course considered themselves Macedonians, while the Torbesh were “Turks” in ethnic terms, with very few undecided. Today only individual older Tobersh declare themselves “Turks”, while it is quite clear that the rest consider themselves Macedonian”. (Трифуноски 1951: 10).

This conclusion or maybe impression of Trifunoski’s will be debunked soon. As soon as 1953, out of 4,716 inhabitants in these villages, 4,408 declared themselves as Turks, or 93% of the total population. Only 273 inhabitants declared themselves as Macedonians. (Попис на населението во Скопје, 1967: 114 – 116). This process continued at the censuses that followed. Unlike the villages with Albanian population, where the number of declared Turks decreased as the immigration process to Turkey waned, this was not the case in the villages with Torbesh population.¹⁴ Immigration was massive until the mid-1960s. In 1961 a total of 2,585 inhabitants lived in those villages, 2,571 of which or 99% declared themselves as Turks. (*Naselenie po narodnost i naselbi vo SRM*, 1964: 46 – 52).

Some of the authors who wrote about the immigration of the Torbesh population in the 1950s do not discard social and socio-psychological reasons. The immigration of close relatives, friends, neighbours, gave rise to a chain reaction and the fear they would be left alone, so that many decided to move. (Тодоровски 2000: 320). At the local level there was a type of propaganda spread by the imams, and sometimes even by local officials or civil servants, that also influenced the immigration process. Ibrahim Muarem, a member of the municipal council in the village of Cvetovo, spoke publicly in this village and the neighbouring village of Elovo: “If you do not move out now, those who will remain will be made into Christians.”¹⁵

As a consequence of the immigration the villages of Drzhilovo, Elovo, Pagarusha, Umovo and Cvetovo had a significant reduction in the population in the 1953-1965 period

mographic changes which occurred after the catastrophic earthquake in 1963. Попис на населението во Скопје, 1 ноември 1965 година 1967: 161.

14 In Gorno Kolichani in Torbeshija, settled by Albanians, 29 inhabitants declared themselves as Albanians in 1953, while as many as 835 as Turks. At the next census in 1961, 301 inhabitants declared themselves as Albanians and 413 as Turks. A similar process was observed in other Skopje areas. In the village of Rashche in Skopje Derven, settled by Albanians, in 1953, 575 inhabitants declared themselves as Albanians and 976 as Turks. However, in 1961, 884 declared themselves as Albanians and 552 as Turks. (*Naselenie po narodnost i naselbi vo SRM*, 1964: 46 - 52). The data about the ethnicity of the population in the Muslim communities in 1953 are quite unreliable.

15 Drzaven Arhiv na Republika Severna Makedonija (State Archive of the Republic of North Macedonia) (DARSM, oddelenie - regional unit Skopje), 6.13.28.237/639.

between censuses.¹⁶ Only in Dolno Kolichani there was a relatively small increase in the number of inhabitants. What is characteristic is that the migration to Turkey continued in the first half of the 1960s. At the 1965 census conducted in the Skopje region, out of a total of 1,985 inhabitants in the six villages, 1,964 (98.94%) declared themselves as Turks.¹⁷

Decline of the total number of population in the 1953-1965 period

Village	1953	1961	1965	1953 – 1965 %
D. Kolichani	827	818	912	+ 10.27 %
Drzhilovo	805	457	317	- 60.62 %
Elovo	876	436	110	- 87.44 %
Pagarusha	416	291	255	- 38.80 %
Umovo	825	64	15	- 98.18 %
Cvetovo	967	519	376	- 61.11 %
total	4,716	2,585	1,985	- 57.90 %

Source: *Naselenie po narodnost i naselbi vo SRM (spored administrativno – teritorijal-nata podelba od 9-II-1962 godina*. Skopje, 1964; Попис на населението во Скопје од 1 ноември 1965, Скопје, 1967.

About the scale of the immigration and the consequences it had we shall mention the example of Umovo, which clearly shows the impact immigration in 1950s had on certain micro environments.¹⁸ The village today is completely vacant as a result of the massive immigration of its inhabitants, mainly to Turkey, which started after the Balkan wars and reached its peak in the 1954-1959 period. Vasil K'nychov wrote that in late XIX century Umovo had 425 Muslim Bulgarians (Кънчов: 1996, 209). The real number of inhabitants in late XIX century was greater because in 1913 in the village, which was an administrative part of the municipality of Drzhilovo, had 725 registered inhabitants. (Вујичић: 1914, 132). According to the administrative calculations of the population by

16 According to some estimates in this period, mostly in the mid-1950s, between ten and eighteen thousand Macedonians of Muslim faith moved out of Macedonia. (Лиманоски, 1989: 99). The number of immigrated Torbesh population was greater. Just from the village of Gorno Vranovci, in Veles, around 800 households with more than 3,500 inhabitants moved out in the 1954-1965 period. (Trifunoski, 1977: 279).

17 A characteristic of the 1965 census is that not a single inhabitant of these villages has declared themselves as Macedonian. (Попис на населението во Скопје од 1 ноември 1965: 1967, 114 – 116).

18 Jovan Trifunoski's field research from 1950 is an excellent historical source about the village of Umovo, because soon after his research the inhabitants started moving out. In 1950 there were 14 families in the villages. The most numerous and oldest were the families of Jonuz, Aljkov, Skenderov, Aliov and others, who moved to the village in mid XVIII century. The majority of these immigrants in the period between the wars were from these families, as well as the first immigrants in the 1950s. (Трифуноски: 1958, 173 – 174).

the Bulgarian authorities in 1916, there were 870 Torbesh in Umovo. (Гаджанов: 1993, 251). In early 1920s there were 127 families with 615 inhabitants registered in Umovo. (Речник места: 1925, 291).

The passivity of the village resulted in a significant migration. Sixty-one families have moved out of Umovo in the period after the Balkan wars and early 1950s. Twenty-nine families moved to Skopje and 32 to Turkey (Трифунски: 1958, 174), in other words almost half of the registered families in early 1920s. However, the high birth rate and the population growth ensured that the migration from the village did not leave a significant demographic mark. In 1948 there were 783 inhabitants registered in the village, while in 1953 their number has risen to 825, of whom 815 were Turks, 6 Macedonians and 3 others.

The migration process that swept the Muslim population in Macedonia in the 1950s had a very strong impact on the village of Umovo. By reading the *Nova Makedonija* daily, which published the advertisements of the families who wanted to renounce their Yugoslavian citizenship, we can observe the process and the pace of immigration of the Umovo locals. The first applications by Umovo inhabitants for renouncing the Yugoslavian citizenship were published on 5 January 1954. (Нова Македонија: 5 јануари 1954). By the end of January 1954 8 other families, with 30 members of age, from Udovo requested to have their Yugoslavian citizenship renounced. These requests for renunciation of the Yugoslavian citizenship and the immigration from Umovo continued in the next period. From early 1954 to mid-1957, based on the advertisements published in *Nova Makedonija*.

Observing the process by years, 24 families renounced their citizenship in 1954, 23 families in 1955, while the number of applications was biggest in 1956 – 31 families and by 30 June 1957, 6 families. Due to the immigration, the population in Umovo declined rapidly. From 825 inhabitants in 1953, the number drastically reduced to 64 inhabitants in 1961 and to only 14 inhabitants in 1965. (Попис на населението во Скопје: 1967: 117).

The dynamic of the migration from the village in the 1950s can also be seen through the registers of the local authorities, which also give us insight into the social structure, or in other words the property owned by the immigrants from Umovo. From the start of the immigration wave in early 1954 until mid-1959, 132 families left Umovo, and they owned several hundred hectares of land. The majority of the households were with many family members, so that 13 households had more than 10 members. The largest family, that of Nasufovski Medjit, had 18 members. Most of the households owned property between 2 and 6 hectares. Most of the families had very little property. The most numerous household of 18 members had 5.8 hectares of land. A large portion of the land which the owners could not sell, was nationalized in a relatively short period.¹⁹ A report of the People's Board of the municipality of Rakotinci states that property owned by Turkish minority members who moved to Turkey without selling it could be found in the village of Umovo, 29 households, Elovo two households, Drzhilovo one and Chiflik two households.²⁰ At a session held on 20 July 1957 the People's Board of the municipality of Rakotinci adopted a decision that the agricultural cooperative in the village of Umovo

19 DARSM, odd. Skopje, 6.30.9.5/180 – 185.

20 DARSM, odd. Skopje, 6.30.04.05/44.

should stop functioning. The decision states: “The agricultural cooperative in the village of Umovo should be liquidated because there are no economic conditions for its operation.”

The immigration also affected the education process. In July 1961 the People’s Board of the municipality of Rakotinci proposed to the Executive Council of PR Macedonia to close the school in the village of Umovo. The justification was the following: “The number of children and inhabitants in the village of Umovo has declined so much in the last few years due to immigration to the Republic of Turkey, that any teaching in this school is impossible because of the small number of pupils. The immigration from the village continues, further reducing the number of students, and this number would most probably significantly drop by the end of the year.”²¹ The number of students in the other villages with Torbesh population in the municipality of Rakotinci also declined significantly. In five school years the number of pupils in the primary school in the village of Drzhilovo decreased by 42.30%, while in the village of Elovo by 47.80%.

Number of students in the village of Drzhilovo.

School year	Number of students
1956/1957	52
1957/1958	46
1958/1959	45
1959/1960	35
1960/1961	30

(Source: DARSM, Odd. Skopje, 06.30.08.01/109 – 172)

Number of students in the village of Elovo

School year	Number of students
1956/1957	92
1957/1958	80
1958/1959	63
1959/1960	57
1960/1961	48

(source: DARSM, Odd. Skopje, 06.30.08.01/249 – 318).

In their analyses and reports the local authorities define the Muslim inhabitants of these villages as a minority, or more specifically, as part of the Turkish ethnic minority. A report about the discussions held as part of the *Socialist Union of the Working People* on the territory of municipality of Rakotinci in 1958, that included the villages of Drzhilovo, Elovo, Cvetovo and Umovo in administrative terms, analyzes “some problems among the Shqiptar and Turk ethnic minority in the municipality of Rakotinci.” Regarding education, the report states the following: “In our municipality there are only four villages settled by Turkish ethnic minority who speak Macedonian – Torbesh. Because the Turkish language in these villages is old and unknown, classes are held in Macedonian...” The same report later concludes: “In the schools in the villages of Drzhilovo, Elovo, Cvetovo and Umovo

21 DARSM, odd. Skopje 6.30.03.17/181.

classes are held in Macedonian language, because the inhabitants do not know Turkish, even though their ethnicity is Turkish (Torbesh)”²²

The quoted original archive material very clearly describes the attitude of the state and party authorities at local level towards the Torbesh population in late 1950s and early 1960s. The local party administration usually considered them as part of the Turkish ethnic minority. This position of the local party administration, more specifically at the municipality of Rakotinci at the time does not deviate from the general policies towards this population. Only in the 1970s the state bodies at the level of the republic tried to influence the ethnic affiliation of the Torbesh. They also formed a State association of cultural and scientific events of Muslim Macedonians. The aim of this organization was emancipation and ethnic awakening of this population and its integration in the Macedonian people. (Стојановски 2008: 143 – 147; Ашталковска Гајтаноска 2024: 82). However, judging by the results of the censuses held in the 1980s and 1990s, the influence of the state players was insignificant.

Conclusion

The migration of the Turkish and other Muslim population from PR Macedonia during the 1950s had significant demographic and socio-economic consequences. This process left visible demographic and economic consequences for one passive micro environment, such as the Skopje Torbeshija. Immigration from this area was nothing new. After the Balkan wars part of the Muslim population that spoke Macedonian or more precisely the Torbesh started moving to Asia Minor and later to the modern Turkish republic.

The immigration between the two world wars from the six villages (Dolno Kolichani, Drzhilovo, Elovo, Pagarusha, Umovo and Cvetovo) in Skopje Torbeshija inhabited by Torbesh population did not leave any significant demographic consequences, unlike the migration which started in mid-1950s. The new state order, i.e., the socialist ideology, completely foreign to the patriarchal spirit and the strongly rooted Islam among this population undoubtedly contributed to the massive migration. In the 1953-1965 period the number of inhabitants in the abovementioned villages declined by 58%. The majority of the immigrants went to R. Turkey. The most drastic example is that of the village of Umovo, since almost all of its inhabitants moved to Turkey in one decade.

The Torbesh from this area in all censuses in PRM/SRM (with the exception of the 1948 census), mainly declared themselves as Turks. In the 1950s and 1960s in their international documents and analyses the local authorities defined the Muslim population as a Turkish minority. Since the 1970s the state institutions tried, unsuccessfully, to influence the ethnic affiliation of the population.

22 DARSM, Odd Skopje, 06.30.5.1/1 -14.

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