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**ON THE MIGRATION OF THE BALKAN MUSLIMS AND OF THE  
'NASHINCI' - THE TORBESH, POMAKS AND OTHER (TURKS) IN  
TURKEY**

*Abstract:* A large population of "Nashinci", Macedonians with Islamic faith that live abroad are located in Turkey. This diaspora was created out of economic and political reasons, especially in certain crisis periods, wars and expulsion from the territory of ethnic Macedonia in the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is disturbing that in the '50ties and '60ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the Socialistic Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, there was a huge migration of Macedonians with Islamic faith towards Turkey. Whole colonies of "Nashinci" can be found in cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa etc. as well as the smaller ones as Akisar, Manisa etc. They are still speaking their mother tongue and cherish their culture in a relatively close circle.

*Key words:* Macedonia, Turkey, Reka, Pijanec, builders, crafts, Nashinci, Torbeshi, Pomaci, Turks, Islamization, cultural identity

**ON THE WAY TO TURKEY VIA MACEDONIA**

I remember vividly when there were strange events in the center of Skopje in 1953-1955. I saw the kilometers long lines of man wearing old dark clothes, many of them with black sawn hats, that were standing, kneeling or sitting on the ground in front of the Turkish consulate that was located between the old building where my family lived<sup>1</sup> and the so called "Arab house" (currently hotel Jadran). Some of them even slept here. I knew that they were only 'some Turks' that were waiting for a permission to leave to Turkey. Skopje people did not know who these Turks are, i.e. their ethnic name was taken for granted. I watched these people every day, on the street, from the window and from my terrace with a childish curiosity. This image raised a non-defined feeling of 'meeting with the unknown', danger and fear, that are kept deep in my memory. It is clear that what I describe were in fact the mass migrations of Muslims from Yugoslavia. Local Muslims were the most numerous, they spoke Albanian, Turkish and Macedonian, and originated from Macedonia.

Although the problem of migration of Muslims at the Balkans has been examined by a number of authors from different aspects, and there are a number of sources, still it has not been covered completely, and there are some new data

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<sup>1</sup> The street was called VIII Brigade, n. 12. The building was ruined by the earthquake in 1963. There is a parking at this site today.

that emerge. One is sure: the migrations of Muslims are a part of mass movements in the 'dark parts' of Balkan history. The image is completed slowly due to the published investigations of certain researchers that, starting from the common moments of migration, focused upon following certain groups of Balkan population with Islamic faith that moved in the space in a synchronized way after the shrinking of the political map of the Turkish Empire, especially after 1878.<sup>2</sup>

On their way Muslims stayed in Macedonia for a shorter or longer period, and it had a function of a collective center of all Balkan Muslims. Part of them have never reached their goal to leave to Turkey and have stayed in Macedonia forever.

Migration of Balkan Muslims to Turkey and other countries of the Islamic world is a complex process that took place in times of war, torture and revenge of the 'winners' over the 'conquered' ones from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The author Safet Bandzovic described this situation quoting two sentences from the military report of L. Trocki: "The Christian allies in this war<sup>3</sup> appear as barbarians in comparison to the Turks. The proclaimed ideals that led them to war have soon turned into simple robbery, massacre of 'the people of the Crescent' in the interest of the 'culture' of the Cross".<sup>4</sup>

The whole process of incidental or periodical migration is approximately one and a half century. The "Nashinci"<sup>5</sup> were a part of the mass migrations after 1878 and 1912, that aimed towards Turkey<sup>6</sup> and other countries of the Islamic world. The following mass migrations are again related to wars (1918), as well as with the so called inter-state agreements for exchange of Muslim and Orthodox Christian population signed between Bulgaria, Greece

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<sup>2</sup> Марија Пандевска, Присилни миграции во Македонија 1875–1881, Мисла – ИНИ, Скопје 1993.

<sup>3</sup> It is referred to the First Balkan War from 1912.

<sup>4</sup> Safet Bandžović, Muslimani u Makedoniji i Prvi balkanski rat, Znakovi vremena, „Ibn Sina“, Naučno-istraživački institut, Sarajevo, 10 november 2006, 15, 16 (footnote 41 - Ratni izveštaj Lava Trockog – balkanski ratovi 1912–13, str. 174)

<sup>5</sup> Besides the local names, this population uses a general ethnic name as a non-verbal symbol of an ethnic and cultural proximity, which has most probably emerged as a feeling of cultural closeness between Macedonians of both confession, way before the creation of the Macedonian state. This ethnic name, "Nashinci" literally means 'our own'.

<sup>6</sup> Мил. С. Филиповић, Етничке прилике у Јужној Србији, Споменица 25-годишњице ослобођења Јужне Србије 1912–1937, Скопље 1937, стр. 409; Александар Апостолов, Колонизација на мухаџирите во Македонија и растројството на чифчиските односи од крајот на XIX век до 1912 година, Гласник на ИНИ, IV, 1–2, Скопје 1960, стр. 113–138; Ејуп Мушовић, Југословенско исељеништво у Турској, Зборник радова Етнографског института САНУ, књ. 12, Београд 1981, стр. 65–76; Нина Сеферовић, Колонија херцеговачких муслимана у Кајзерију у Палестини. Зборник радова Етнографског института САНУ, књ. 12, Београд 1981, стр. 47–64.

and Turkey (Ney, 1919 and Lausanne, 1923). Based upon these agreements a number of Balkan Muslims were taken from their birth places and transferred as objects in other cultural areals, forced to start their life from scratch, if they survived at all. In this sense the result of the agreements presented a break of the continuity of the native Macedonian population with Orthodox Christian and Muslim faith at the territory of whole Macedonia, especially the Aegean and the Pirin part. The destiny of the Muslims from the Vardar region of Macedonia was no better. In the frames of the above mentioned inter-state agreements is the Agreement between the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and Turkey concerning "issues of mutual interest", signed in Ankara on the 28<sup>th</sup> of November 1933, as well as the similar agreement signed by the Governments of the two countries that referred to the migration of ethnic Turks and other so called Turks - i.e. Muslims from the territory of South Serbia or Vardar Macedonia.<sup>7</sup>

During the wars a number of Muslims from the Balkan have lost their property and their life, many of the moved towards the south of the Balkans, and not all of them succeeded in reaching Turkey as their promised land. In those wars all of ethnic Macedonia was a battle field, exposed to destruction by the armies of the nationalistic neighbors and their European mentors. Having in mind that the wars were in fact conquests, but were dishonestly presented as 'liberation', the Macedonian population from two major confessions suffered. At the same time, as a result of wars, the demographic image of the country was disrupted. According to a quoted newspaper article from 1913<sup>8</sup>: "...In Skopje the whole Albanian population which was pushed by the Serbian army, coming from the north, seeking its salvation in fact found its death". However, it is a fact that at the same time a major part of that population found salvation in Macedonia. In the following military years after the First WW, Macedonian Muslims - ethnic Turks and others that were identified with this ethnic name, especially the local Torbesh, were forced to new migrations and were forcefully taken out of their birth places, according to the nationalistic ideas of Greece, Bulgaria and the Kingdom of Yugoslavia for creation of "big and pure nation-states". This "nation-states" were created in a Balkan way, under the strong influence of the ex-millet system where confession in the case of the national Orthodox churches, have set the final tone to the national identity. During this period, according to the official numbers of the Serbian administration, 300.000-400.000 Muslims from Macedonia migrated from Macedonia that belonged to Serbia.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Hikmet Öksüz – Ülkü Köksal, Emigration from Yugoslavia to Turkey (1923–1960), Turkish Review of Balkan Studies, Annual 2004–9, pages 158, 159.

<sup>8</sup> Safet Bandžović, Muslimani u Makedoniji i Prvi balkanski rat, Znakovi vremena, „Ibn Sina“, Naučno-istraživački institut, Sarajevo, 10 november 2006, 15, 16. The text is contained under footnote 28: „Radničke novine“, br. 223, Beograd, 22 oktobar 1913.

<sup>9</sup> Hikmet Öksüz – Ülkü Köksal, Emigration from Yugoslavia to Turkey (1923–1960), Turkish Review of Balkan Studies, Annual 2004–9, p. 159.

Deplorably, in the 50-ties and 60-ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a state has emerged (Democratic Federative Macedonia/People's Republic of Macedonia) we can see a huge migration of Islamized Macedonian population towards Turkey. Contrary to some authors that write positively about the relation of the Macedonian authorities at that time towards those Muslims that migrated to Turkey, the ethnographic material, as well as other data that refer to this issue say the contrary. If the true lies on the side of folk telling, it would be difficult to forgive Macedonian authorities from that time that had the role of executor of the renewed 'old' agreements of the kingdom of Yugoslavia regarding the dislocation of Yugoslav Muslims - so called Turks, among which most numerous in Macedonia were the local Torbesh and Pomaks. This time the "tradition of expulsion of Muslims" was continued by the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia. The concrete Agreement on free emigration was signed between Yugoslavia and Turkey in 1952.<sup>10</sup> When it comes to Muslims from the other Yugoslav republics and regions, this migration was known as "muhadzirlak through a stay", while the 'station' was the People's Republic of Macedonia that had the role of a temporary place to stay. The very name of the Agreement ('free emigration') did not match the realistic situation that was not free at all, but instead contained a number of mechanisms for forceful expulsion. It is not difficult to answer the question why it was exactly Macedonia which became a transit center of the Muslim migration to Turkey, if one knows that the strings were pulled from Belgrade - the traditional location of the governance of this part of Macedonian land, secretly implemented through the party's chiefs that had high positions. A condition for receiving Turkish citizenship was to give up the Yugoslavian one. Macedonian administration has implemented the orders rigidly and in a servile way, which could be concluded from the interventions for stopping the migrations, that were undertaken by the party's functionaries that were Yugoslav Muslims. The answer that they received from the highest Macedonian party leaders was that they take away the Yugoslav citizenship only from the "real Turks", and nobody else!<sup>11</sup> From today's perspective, it is clear that this is a complete lie, well politically packed. In this sense it is difficult to believe that some of those Macedonian leaders were worried about the migration of the native Muslim population that spoke Macedonian, as some of the authors of articles dedicated to this topic tried to convince us.<sup>12</sup> This migration was intensified after 1958 as well, when the migration from other Republics and regions was complicated due to the pressure of the party's functionaries that

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<sup>10</sup> Idem, p. 172-173.

<sup>11</sup> Safet Bandžović, Bošnjački muhadžiri u Makedoniji krajem XIX i tokom XX stoljeća, Almanah, 21–22, Podgorica 2003, str. 193, 194.

<sup>12</sup> Борче Илиевски, Политички, економски и просветни аспекти на иселувањето на турско население од Македонија во педесеттите години на XX век, Историја, бр. 1–2, Скопје 2007, стр. 49–62; Глигор Тодоровски, Демографските процеси во Македонија предизвикани од иселувањето на Турци во педесеттите години, Гласник на ИНИ, год. 41, бр. 1–2, Скопје 1997, стр. 64.

were Yugoslav Muslims, as well as due to the complicated administrative procedures. Still, the "Macedonian door" remained open. The primary, stricter administrative procedures between the Macedonian authorities and the Turkish consulate were quickly replaced by other - more liberal. It was sufficient to arrive to Macedonia and to present a statement that they are "real Turks" as a condition for their Yugoslav citizenship to be erased and to leave for Turkey. This migration, with lower intensity, continued in the following years. One of the consequences of the migration of ethnic Turks, the Torbesh and other Muslims from Macedonia, in total of 127,000 persons<sup>13</sup>, was the important number, of 20,440 persons - migrants from Kosovo, Sandzak, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Monte Negro and Southern Serbia, of which many have given up their going to Turkey and stayed in the Macedonian villages and cities. From the total of 20,440 Muslims from other Republics and regions of the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia the majority were ethnic Albanians (10,643) and Bosnians from Sandzak (5,276). Besides this number of migrants, in Skopje and the Skopje region there were other 8,347 Muslims, according to data from the registry of the State Bureau for Internal Affairs of the People's Republic of Macedonia.<sup>14</sup> Together with them the total number of Muslims settled from Yugoslavia to Macedonia was 28,787. A smaller part of these persons however moved to Turkey, but this did not make the flow of Muslim migrants to Macedonia lower, since in the '50ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it only rose.<sup>15</sup> The migrants stayed in the half-empty or empty Turkish and Torbesh villages, as well as in the cities through out Republic of Macedonia.

No matter how the Nashinci and the ethnic Turks left Macedonia, whether it was voluntarily or forcefully, the ratio of ethnic communities has changed, for the worse of the Macedonian population that spoke Macedonian, from both confessions. In the censuses regarding this critical period, 1953-1971, these changes are visible when it comes to the members of the groups/communities that have Islamic faith. At the level of the whole country one could see how the number of Turks 'melted', although before that the number of Turks was enormous due to the fact that 'to be a real Turk' was a condition for migration. The statistical analysis according to municipalities, cities and inhabited places supports this phenomenon. As an example one could take the municipality of Bitola where in 1953 there were 13,938 Turks while in 1971 only 3,904.<sup>16</sup> Maybe the image given by the census is not realistic from an ethnological point of view, since during the same period there is a tendency for declaring a part of the ethnic Albanians, that previously declared themselves

<sup>13</sup> Idem, стр. 68.

<sup>14</sup> Idem, стр. 76.

<sup>15</sup> Idem.

<sup>16</sup> Census of the population and habitats, 1971. The population according to ethnicity in the Socialistic Republic of Macedonia - according to municipalities, cities and settlements. Статистички преглед 42, Републички завод за статистика, Скопје 1973, стр. 10.

Turks. The example of the municipality of Bitola could not present this fact in a satisfactory way, since at the same time (1953) the number of Albanians, 2,476, hasn't increased much until 1971, and at that time was 3,221. The municipality of Kumanovo is more interesting, where the number of Albanians from 5,416 in 1953 rose to 24,418 in 1971, while the number of Turks dropped from 19,487 in 1953 to 5,072 in 1971. Surely, in this particular case it is not only a matter of the change of the ethnic name, but also a matter of a mass immigration of Albanians from Kosovo in the period 1952-1970. This situation shows that one of the goals of Belgrade was that Serbia, especially its southern part, together with Kosovo, Metohija and Sandzak, as very important territories of the Serbian statehood, to be cleaned from Albanians and other Muslims in a way that they would be slowly directed towards Macedonia as a well known 'Balkan collective center'. However, the lesson regarding ethnic cleansing was promptly learned by the Albanians, so that others now can learn from them how an ethnic pure territory is created, using a palette of new and old, cruel or sophisticated techniques of extermination of the unwanted.

## IMIGRATION TO TURKEY AND LIFE WITH MEMORIES OF MEMLEKET<sup>17</sup>

The Balkan Muslims that went to Turkey tried really hard to find their place 'under the sun' in the new motherland. All migrations, especially the last one, has created huge colonies of Islamized Macedonians, that still speak Macedonian and cherish their culture, even in closed circles. Such homogenous settlements from immigrants from Macedonia can be found in major cities such as Istanbul, Izmir, Bursa etc., as well as the smaller ones such as Akisar, Manisa etc.<sup>18</sup> When we talk about the cultural identity of the Nashinci<sup>19</sup> (Torbesh, Pomaks, and other Turks<sup>20</sup> that speak Macedonian as their mother tongue and

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<sup>17</sup> Abdulah Škaljić, *Turcizmi u srpskohrvatskom jeziku*, Sarajevo 1985, s.v. memlêce, memlêke, memlêket m (ar.) – (country, birth place).

<sup>18</sup> Own field research in Turkey, in the '80ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>19</sup> Macedonians from all over ethnic Macedonia and in the diaspora use the ethnic name NASHINCI to refer to themselves, no matter their confession. The term denotes a belonging to a certain group, people from a certain village, settlement, city, ethnic area, region or country, but always speak the same, Macedonian language, have the same or similar customs, view of life and similar folk culture.

<sup>20</sup> The domestic population that turned into Islam was identified with a number of synonyms and egsonyms most of them with pejorative connotation, aiming to emphasize the ethnic, religious and cultural borders between the neighboring endogamous and religious groups. The most acceptable ethnic name for the Islamized from Macedonia during the Turkish period and afterwards were Turk/Turks as a possibility for identification with the Turkish Muslim state or according to the folk stance that "Turk equals Muslim and vice versa". The same ethnic name was accepted by a number of Albanian Muslims from Macedonia, as well as Roma Muslims. It was at the same time a name given by their neighbors, the Orthodox Macedonians.

have Islamic faith), we have to mention those communities in the diaspora, their relation towards the new motherland Turkey and their ties with the virtual and real birth place in Macedonia.<sup>21</sup>

From the view-point of ethnology and socio-cultural anthropology, the individual vivid ethnographic statements of the participants, as well as the oral family and collective history of the migrants are crucial, the various forms of contemporary urban and rural folklore, with a special place dedicated to oral narration on events, crucial happenings or autobiographical memories. This ethnographic narration on the migrations in certain elements matches the data from literature and the sources, but at the same time a number of data seem autonomous and often speak contrary to some official archive data, and in this sense contrary to some scientific interpretation of events that are based upon those sources. One could conclude for sure that the migrations are still a priority topic in the stories of the Nashinci in Turkey although it is a matter of events that happened more than half a century ago.

One of the first questions that we posed to the Nashinci was the question of their reasons for migration. We got different answers. Most often: "...I don't know, everybody went do did we", then: "We were right for Lazo during the fight but were not right afterwards, he took away our live stock"<sup>22</sup>, or: "...women were forbidden to put golden coins on the folk costume", or: "...women were forced to take off their scarves"<sup>23</sup>, etc. The short and not so clear answers show that the question is quite unpleasant for them. Still, the short answers touched the key issue on the reasons for migration. According to direct and indirect data from literature and according to the telling of the informants from Macedonia and Turkey, one could conclude that there were few reasons, one of them being the relation of the people's governance at that time. By the behavior of the authorities one can conclude that the attitude of the recently constituted federative state of the People's Republic of Macedonia towards this expulsions of the population that were done without any reason, was quite vague, so that many of the migrants even today accuse the authorities of negligence and even forceful expulsion.

Contrary to the state archive documents that speak about free migration, the guaranteed rights of the ones that are different according to faith and nationality, the ethnographic materials show the situation in a different light. Thus, from both sides, the Macedonian and the Torbesh/Turkish side, it is confirmed that after the "liberation" of 1944/45, a mistrust slowly took place, although a number of Turks did fight as partisans, and some villages, like Gorno Vranovci, were important locations during the fight and for the administration after the liberation. The fact that the 'people's government' did not have a clear

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<sup>21</sup> They were subjects of my research in 1984 and 1987, and I am grateful for their warm welcome.

<sup>22</sup> "Lazar" refers to Lazar Kollishevski, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Macedonia at that time.

<sup>23</sup> Related to the ban of face and body covers for Muslim women.

attitude on the Nashinci/Turks is confirmed by elements from the speech of Lazar Kolishevski in relation to the migrations, in 1954, where he says: "...lastly the feeling that a part of the Turkish minority has understood our community as their own, since this minority is still Turkish, they are members of certain nation...". This is how the initial small stone started to roll and the future migration commenced, that increased year by year. The mistrust was a reason due to which Macedonian Muslims with Macedonian mother tongue have accepted the motto "All Turks in Turkey". Simultaneously with the manifest and hidden pressures that were made in relation to the expulsion of Muslims, there were also personal motifs, so that the reasons were obviously complex and a result of a number of factors. The ethnographic statements show that the key factors for the migrations changed depending on the angle of individual interpretation of the events. In this sense, it seems that the economic factors for migration are not well analyzed. For example, one older informant that remembers the migrations well<sup>24</sup>, says that in the background of the ethnic conflict that was created during the 1950-ties were material interests of individuals, that secretly made fortune from buying and selling the property of the Muslims and the ethnic Turks. Namely, an important number of ethnic Turks and 'Nashinci' sold their property hastily and cheaply. Others were forced to leave their houses without any money for it. The sales was done to private persons so that the participation of the 'zadrugas' and the state up to 1956 was none or minimal.<sup>25</sup> In such conditions individuals could attain valuable movable and mobile and immobile property through buying or exchange of gold for foreign currency. At the same time there were strict customs controls for the migrants and they could not transfer foreign currency, gold or jewelry across the border above the legally prescribed limit. Informants recall how they found ways to transfer to Turkey at least a part of the non-declared goods, like golden coins, through sawing them in domestically made objects. For example women would incorporate the dollars into the rag-carpets, while the golden coins were hidden in domestic soaps and the wooden shoes' hills. They tell about a Turk from Pijanec near Delchevo, who filled the cow's stomach with golden coins and transferred it over the border. Since the politics of the communism (i.e. pseudo-communism) was generally against the 'rich', the buyers freed themselves from the 'excess' property by re-selling it, and then they turned/washed the money into "invisible richness", or legal investments. The informant says that the main source of the Turks' misery were exactly these traders that ignited ethnic and religious intolerance among the population. It started spreading without any control that resulted with individual incidents. It seems that no one thought about the source of evil, how, why and when it all started. The participants in the

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<sup>24</sup> Mudzaid Asimov, professor of Turkish language at the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, ethnic Turk from Bitola, now retired.

<sup>25</sup> Борче Илиевски, Политички, економски и просветни аспекти на иселувањето на турско население од Македонија во педесеттите години на XX век, Историја, бр. 1–2, Скопје 2007, стр. 57.

incidents forgot their good relation with their neighbors, the mutual cooperation in the bazaar, in the village, the cities' ethnically mixed mahalas, the baklava and the red Easter eggs, the common children plays etc. The violent beatings among children and youth in Macedonian cities and Turkish mahalas in almost all Macedonian cities started. Special ways of dealing with Turkish kids were invented. For example, when the Turks came at the "City circus" in Skopje to buy tickets, the children from Debar maalo boosted that they don't buy tickets, but they enter through secret holes. After persuading them they would lead them to secret places and would beat them. A witness of such an extreme situation was a child from Skopje<sup>26</sup> who together with the children from the Debar maalo in Skopje went to gather newspapers at the City stadium.<sup>27</sup> There was a fight with the young Turks from the settlements over the river Vardar that arrived before them and already gathered the newspapers. There was running and chasing, and all young Turks have escaped except for one. He was severely beaten and molested.<sup>28</sup> At that moment an older man passed by and asked them why the child was beaten. When he heard that he was a Turk he said - "If that's so, then kill him!". Surely this did not happen, but severe beating was more than enough. Still, based upon this example we cannot generalize that the incidents of this type were every-day events in Macedonia, since there were also contrary examples. Thus, in Pijanec (Delchevo area)<sup>29</sup>, the Pomaks/Turks left on their own free will. They sold their property cheaply to immigrants, Macedonian Christians from the mountain villages, some even gave them away to neighbors or friends - Macedonians or just left.<sup>30</sup> The new Christian owners of the ex-Pomak/Turkish property in return, besides their family name, added the name or the nick-name of the Turk from whom they bought/received/taken the property. There are numerous examples of the above mentioned, such as Karasmanec Boris<sup>31</sup>, a number of persons from the village of Virche<sup>32</sup> (Blazzo Karagjozo, Odzogliite, Kosta Odzata, Koste Jasharo<sup>33</sup>) etc. Until today friendships are maintained both at the birth places of these people and among their decedents in Turkey. They visit and respect each other.

Besides the more recent migrations of the '50ties and the '60ties of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a part which is intrinsically linked to this 'migration saga' are the previous migrations, starting from the volunteer individual and family ones from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, until the forced ones after 1878, the Balkan wars and the First

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<sup>26</sup> Blagoja Levajkovic, born in the village of Marino 1941, lives in Skopje, retired.

<sup>27</sup> Newspapers were sold cheaply to the shopkeepers for packing products, since after the war there was no special paper for this purpose.

<sup>28</sup> The witness of this event was the youngest in the group and stood scared observing the event from aside.

<sup>29</sup> Own field research in Pijanec, 1996.

<sup>30</sup> Idem, 1996.

<sup>31</sup> Village nick-name of Milchevski Boris from the village of Stamer.

<sup>32</sup> According to Dimitar Uzunski, teacher from the village of Trabatovishte (1996).

<sup>33</sup> Kiro Ilievski from the village of Virche.

world war. During our visit of the 'Nashinci' in Turkey, in 1984 and 1987, there were still living old people from both genders that survived the migrations from 1924-1936 and told their stories about those times. Only the oldest migrations from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century remain a mystery. However, soon it was clear that those events were orally transmitted and remained vivid in the memory of the migrants, in a number of family, group, individual, rural and urban biographical and ethnographic narrations. One of the most important parts of the old migrants were their pioneering mission in the Torbesh immigration to Turkey, as well as their preparedness to accept the new immigrants and to alleviate the crisis transfer from the old homeland to the new one. They were the basis for the new immigrants.

The information of "Nashinci" (the Torbesh, Pomaks and other Turks) proves that they migrated mainly due to economic and political reasons. The oldest individual and family migrations resulted from poverty and insecurity in the homeland. In this sense, a part of the old migrations from the 19<sup>th</sup> century are a result of the seasonal stay in Turkey due to economic migration, which in time turned into a lasting stay. There is a vivid story that the ancestors of today's Turks in Macedonia arrived on foot in Turkey to work during winter from St. Dimitar to St. George, since the climate was mild. The trip included two phases: first they went to work in Drama and Kavala and from there they went to Istanbul. From Istanbul they continued to Izmir, Manisa, Akisar, Bursa etc., as far as Anatolia. The economic migrants from Western Macedonia and the Veles area worked mainly as construction workers. It was common that they remain in Turkey five, ten and more than ten years.<sup>34</sup> There are family stories that it was common before leaving for work in Turkey to borrow a golden Turkish lira from the richest person in the village, giving a word that the year after he would be returned two golden liras. But this was not so simple and many did not keep the promise. The economic migrants returned to their birth places after long stays in Turkey until the Balkan wars (1912-1913). Afterwards the reasons for their migration were more of political than of economic nature. After the Balkan wars the borders of the new Balkan states were marked and the free movement was complicated. During this period a certain number of economic migrants invited their families to Turkey and they settled there.

The 'Nashinci' that migrated to Turkey worked mainly in the construction business, since they traditionally knew this craft and have worked in construction as seasonal economic migrants.<sup>35</sup> Ali Osman Kuprulu<sup>36</sup> from

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<sup>34</sup> Own field research in Izmir, Manisa and Akisar, Republic of Turkey, 1984, and 1987, in the frames of the International project "Folklore of the Juruks in Macedonia and of the migrants from the Socialistic Republic of Macedonia in Turkey". Partners: Institute of Folklore "Marko Cepenkov", Skopje and Milli Folklor Arařtırma Dairesi, Ankara.

<sup>35</sup> Анета Светиева, Реканско-дебарската и велешката градежна традиција на иселениците од СР Македонија во Турција, manuscripts, 19 pgs., a part of the complete manuscript of the a/m project, prepared for print in 1998 but never published.

Vodovrati, Veles area, speaks on the good sides of this craft: "One of the three *madzirs* that came in 1928 from the village of Vodovrati asked: 'What did you do in Vodovrati?', I told him: 'I was a construction worker, I made houses, but nobody knows me here..' - 'If you are a construction worker you have a golden bracelet on your arm', he said". The migrants were helped mostly by their relatives in friends that were already known in Turkey as good construction workers. The ones that did not know the language and did not have their own people in Turkey started as assistants. From the autobiographical narration of Islam Aksu<sup>37</sup> we understand that although he had mastered the craft started as an assistant in Turkey that carried the plaster, since he did not know the Turkish language. In one moment, when the main mason and the others around noon went to the usual prayer, Aksu finished the wall alone, using stones and bricks. The main mason was surprised by his work and said "take the hammer and build"! The knowledge of the construction craft helped them to provide housing. The migrants helped each other through collective work. When someone would gather money, 5-6 masons from the same village gathered and built the house in one day. The second and the third day the roof and the plastering took place etc. Together with the migrant Muslims from Bulgaria, they constructed illegal houses for their families. They started building the house at midnight and by the morning they would finish the phase where people could move in and started living in it. This construction method, known as 'gedze konu'<sup>38</sup>, was specific since the whole work was done at night, so that the masons could only rely on their feeling of touch and space. They also used a thread and a measuring device and kept track of the measurements. Even in such conditions they succeeded in building straight walls. During the first years after the settlement they did not let women out of their houses, but in time this rule faded and women started working in the near-by manufactures and factories.

In the past but also today the 'Nashinci' cherish their ties to the homeland. This reffers to old migrants and their ancestors born in Turkey, while the word *memleket* is pronounced with high emotions. *Memleket* is reflected in the landscapes and names of places from the stories that they tell and the songs that they sing. In spite of the fact that they arrived in Turkey aiming to become 'real' Turks some inner forces tied them to their birth places. If one takes into account that in the new environment they were pressed by Turkish culture, it can be concluded that they instinctively developed cultural resistance or on the contrary there was preparedness for accepting elements of Turkish culture. In this gap between two cultures a lot of cultural values of the Nashinci

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<sup>36</sup> Ali Osman Kuprulu (old family name Aliov Amitov), born 1919 in the village of Vodovrati, Veles area, migrated in 1956. Lives in Manisa. Profession: mason. Data from Manisa, 1987.

<sup>37</sup> Islam Aksu (old family name Seljami), born 1919 in the village of Zirovnica, moved 1957. Lives in Manisa. Profession: mason and construction bussinessman. Data from Manisa, 1987.

<sup>38</sup> It means 'overnight' - explanation given by Mudzaid Asimov.

disappeared, but in a wonderful way a lot of the folk culture, beliefs, customs, music folklore and oral folklore from the old homeland remained. If we also take into account that no one from the state of Macedonia was interested in them, a question is posed if they stayed tied to their culture and their identity, or their identity stayed tied to them. Fatma Dalgch from Melnica<sup>39</sup> speaks about this situation on positioning of two cultures. Speaking about the wedding ritual of putting on the folk costume of the old homeland she says: "The population here laughs at us. You will put on everything, and the coat above..". It was surely not easy to be laughed at, but they still did it their own way. The fact that there was an awareness regarding the uniqueness of the people and folk culture of Reka is proven by the statement of another informant, originating from the village of Boletin<sup>40</sup>, who said: "People here thought that we would be their servants, but it turned the other way round!... Today our people, from our motherland Reka - Zirovnica, Rostushe, Boletin, Vidushe, Trebishte, Janche, Velebrdo, Skudrinja - are specialists stone masons..".

In a strange way their homeland lives in their names or family names. It is told that when they arrived they had to change their old family names with new ones, and thus choose abstract, geographical or other similar terms that would sound 'Turkish'. If they could not choose themselves, the officials would do that for them. But many have chosen family names related to their old homes. Such are: Balkan, Kuprulu (from Veles), Uskupli (from Skopje), Aksu (location Bela Voda in the village of Zirovnica<sup>41</sup>), Shar<sup>42</sup> (family names of Torbesh-Gorans), Debrelj (for the ones that came from Debar or Debar area), Vardar (along the river Vardar)<sup>43</sup>, and many, many others.

The vitality of Macedonian language is also fascinating, in homes and on the street, in the settlements of the migrants from Macedonia. The Nashinci/Turks tell that when they arrived in Turkey they faced the problem of complete ignorance of Turkish language, which resulted with misunderstandings and comic situations. They make jokes on their own account and tell anecdotes in the sense of "He is Turkish, but he cannot speak Turkish". The above mentioned informant from the village of Boletin tells: "A Turk says to me: 'You should speak Turkish'. 'Why - I say - why is that bothering you?' 'I am not bothered - he says - but the children are'. 'OK I say, I understand, but would you answer me how is it possible that children from a house where no Turkish language was used are now studying at the University?'"

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<sup>39</sup> Old family name Maloska. Recorded in Akisar, 05.04.1987.

<sup>40</sup> Haki Balkan (old family name Mahmudi), born 1915 in the village of Boletin, Western Macedonia. Recorded in Manisa, Turkey, March 1987.

<sup>41</sup> Zernonica is the original name of the village. Today's name Zirovnica dates from the time of Serbian administration in Macedonia (1912-1940).

<sup>42</sup> From the name of Shara mountain.

<sup>43</sup> Dzevad Dzulioski, from Debar, has noted a number of such family names of 'Nashinci' in Turkey in 1986.

On the other hand not everybody is as self-assured and proud as the 'people from Reka'. Some are still doubting and still wondering who they are, although they live in Turkey where no one officially questions their Turkish identity. There is a wide-spread story that their ancestors were "real Turks" when they arrived ("as conquerors") in Macedonia, but there they forgot the Turkish language and could not transfer it to their children. This story could be also heard in Macedonia, with the Islamized that declare themselves Turkish, for example in the village of Debreshte (Prilep area), Plasnica (Lower Kichevo)<sup>44</sup>, in Skopska Torbeshija and other places. This folk legend is also present in an article on the relation religion-national identity, where the accent is put on the will of those who prefer to be Turks, but at the same times there are no data on the ones that declare themselves Torbesh or Macedonians with Islamic faith and Macedonian language.<sup>45</sup>

Still, a question remains opened, who are the 'Nashinci' in Turkey, and if they have an awareness of themselves as a separate cultural and ethnic identity. At the moment when you think that the answer has been grasped, something appears that brings you back to the beginning. This is the doubt that lingers, "who we are, what we are?". Isn't that doubt a historical fact, deliberately produced when Macedonians are in question? The answer is yes, but the consequences that arise contain all possibilities for manipulation. In this sense, the conversations with the Nashinci in Turkey are even more confusing. We thought that they left since as Muslims they could not be anything else but Turks. At first glance it seems that they didn't have any dilemmas regarding this issue. The legislation of Turkey that did not recognize any minorities also 'cemented' this feeling. Almost all of our colleagues, ethnic Turks - academic citizens from Ankara, that cooperated with us during field research, openly mocked the policy of our state for recognition of minorities. The official state attitude towards minorities in Turkey is strict even today, which is confirmed by the fact that 80% of the population is Turks.<sup>46</sup> The difference between the attitude of Turkey and some other Balkan states (Greece, Bulgaria) that lead aggressive politicks and intolerance towards anyone that is different, is that the Turkish immigration policy supports good attitude towards the one that have migrated into Turkey, since after their arrival in time they might become 'real Turks', and if this does not happen in one generation then it will happen in the next one. In Turkey no one forbade the Nashinci to speak their own language and practice their cultural traditions, but here the story ends since each attempt

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<sup>44</sup> Newspaper article by Panta Dzambazovski - We are Turks but we don't speak Turkish. Plasnica and Preglovo on the crossroad (II), Nova Makedonija, 9<sup>th</sup> of July 1994, Saturday, pg. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Baskin Oran, Religious and National Identity Among the Balkan Muslims: A Comparative Study on Greece, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Kosovo.

<http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemot/text18/oran18.pdf> (4.12.2008).

<http://www.ceri-sciencespo.com/publica/cemot/text18/oran18.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tu/html> (2. 10. 2008).

for ethnic differentiation would be crashed by Turkish legislation. Up till now we haven't heard of such an attempt, since the Torbesh, Pomaks and others left Macedonia on their own will to become Turks and think that they have achieved that goal. But we have just read that at least a part of them still says: "our people, from our homeland, Reka!". What is the conclusion? In history and in the present many Macedonians have lived through the same thing and were torn between what has been ascribed to them as identity by other states, and their personal feeling which sent them other signals. This makes us so vulnerable, prone to manipulations and politization when it comes to ethnic identity. In this sense the Nashinci with Islamic faith are also prone to temptations, in their country<sup>47</sup> but also in the neighboring countries<sup>48</sup> and in the diaspora.

For us, as researchers from Macedonia, it was fascinating that in certain locants<sup>49</sup> in the suburbs of certain Turkish cities we could meet middle-aged and young man drinking tea, coffee and play shesh-besh speaking in pure Macedonian language. Macedonian can be heard in cities' settlements, since when they arrived they collectively settled, according to their birth place. Our colleagues from Ankara have also faced another, different Turkish culture, where group life and contacts with the homeland have weakened the process of assimilation.<sup>50</sup> During the first decades after the immigration they were still endogamous. Maybe there was no other way since on the other side the Turks showed resistance towards the language and culture of the migrants. Slowly the process of 'Turkeyzation' began and introducing Turkish language as a parallel one in the family and in the group. New generations, descendants of the

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<sup>47</sup> Анега Светиева, Политизација на етничкиот идентитет на Торбешите („нашинците“). In: Огледало за „потчинетите“ и „понижените“ на Балканот, ЕтноАнтропозум, 4, ИЕА, Скопје 2004, стр. 50–74.

<sup>48</sup> An ethnic group of Nashinci/Torbesh, so called Gorans from the Shara mountain area of Gora, separated with a state border between Albania and Serbia (now Kosovo), in Albania they are Albanians, while in Serbia they were (or part of them still are) Serbs. Another (bigger) part of this ethnic group of Nashinci/Golobrdci from the area of Golo brdo, in Albania, are Albanians. Both mentioned groups (Gorans and Golobrdci) use Macedonian language and have Islamic faith, and use the alternative ethnic name 'Nashinci'.

<sup>49</sup> Restaurants of the traditional, oriental type.

<sup>50</sup> This is maybe the reason why the joint Turkish-Macedonian project was not published although it was ready to be published. As if there was insecurity from the Turkish side in relation to the political effects of its content. On the side of the Institute of Folklore, as a representative from the Macedonian side, this situation was accepted silently, which could be interpreted in the sense that due to some reasons (most probably political ones) it suited them. Only few articles stemmed from this project, as well as participations at scientific conferences which cannot reflect the richness of the field material collected during the research from both sides and from few scientific areas such as ethnology, ethnomusicology, folk literature and conversations on a number of topics, as well as a rich photo and audio material, now in the Archive of the Institute of Folklore Marko Cepenkov, Skopje.

migrants, have trouble speaking Macedonian, although many of them understand it. These facts show that the process of assimilation is active. Galaba Palikruseva has arrived to similar conclusions when researching ethnic processes of the Pomaks and other "Nashinci" in Turkey. She says: "...based upon the results of our research we can conclude that the processes of ethnic integration of the Torbesh with the Turkish ethnos has started, but it is far from being a process of assimilation".<sup>51</sup> Lately there is even an action for attaining a double citizenship - a Macedonian one besides the Turkish citizenship. This initiative is at the moment 'quietly stopped' by both sides, but it is not clear how it will continue.<sup>52</sup>

The analysis of the ethnic culture and the status of the "Nashinci", named or self-named as Turks in the Turkish society shows that the ethnic processes should never be taken for granted, since they do not always follow the prescribed programs and policies.

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<sup>51</sup> Галаба Паликрушева, Процесите на етничките реструктурирања на Торбешите, помаците и другите во Република Турција како модел на реструктурирање на некои етнички заедници на Балканот, Zbornik referata međunarodnog simpozijuma „Bosna i Hercegovina u tokovima istorijskih i kulturnih kretanja u jugoistočnoj Evropi“, Zemaljski muzej Bosne i Hercegovine, Sarajevo, 7 oktobar 1988, стр. 131–135. The author was the leader and member of the research team from Macedonian side during the a/m research in 1984 and 1987.

<sup>52</sup> Dnevnik daily newspaper, <http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/default.aspx?pbroj=2811&stID=59004>, 27.11.2008.