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**Loring Danforth and Riki Van Boeschoten, “*Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory*”, IOM, Skopje, 2012.**

“Children of the Greek Civil War: Refugees and the Politics of Memory”, a book by Loring Danforth and Riki Van Boeschoten, IOM, Skopje, was published in Macedonian in 2012. The English version of the book was published by the University of Chicago Press, in Chicago, 2011. It is notable that, to our great pleasure, this is one of the few anthropological studies published abroad that have become available to the Macedonian public in such a short time-span. The reasons for this, as the authors emphasize several times in the study itself, are the present importance and continuously collective national sensitivity that exists concerning the issue of interpreting the Greek Civil War, and especially the consequences it caused in the lives of hundreds of thousands people, in several tens of thousands of families, in the state politics of the countries in the regions, and finally, in the society and political milieu of Southeastern European countries, where most child refugees stayed.

The book brought about a lot of sympathies and appraisals among anthropological academic circles and experts on social issues of the Balkans in the United States. As Professor Michael Herzfeld stated, “Historically and ethnographically, this book tells a double story: from two authors, who write for two opposing sides, and study the changes that happened in two countries and two ethnic groups... The book *Children of the Greek Civil War* manages to wonderfully show the parallel between experiences in both sides, in a way that is moving, but also with analytical standing. Still, the strongest side of the book... lies in the theorization of children’s capacity to organize their present lives, and to understand their own past.”

Professor Marija Todorova, on her thoughts on the book, noted: “Successfully combining archival resources with extensive ethnographic field work, the book *Children of the Greek Civil War* is a first-class academic piece, based on original research and a sophisticated theoretical analysis, often emotional, considering that it moves from historical prose to deeply moving personal accounts. Taking in mind the emotionality of the topic of the book – an un-researched yet very important episode – it is both brave and enduring. It seems as though the time is ripe to begin a new process of reconciliation, and Danforth and Van Boeschoten’s piece will aid us in moving on that difficult road.”

## **On the authors**

**Loring Danforth** is a professor and manager at the Department of anthropology at Bates College, in Levinston, USA. In the 1970s, he was a guest professor at the Athenian college in Greece. His interest in ritual-religious phenomena of the antique Hellenic theatre and the anastenaries, the ritual walking on embers in honor of Sts. Helena and Con-

stantine, were poured into his Master's and Doctoral dissertations, soon after published as monographic editions and a number of scientific studies dedicated to the spiritual aspects of the southern Balkan culture.

Motivated by the nationalistic movements of the Greek and Macedonian Diaspora communities, which by the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s were strongly emphasized in Australia, USA, and Canada, he took on a long-term research challenge – an anthropological study and attempt to understand the complex issue known as *the Macedonian question*. As a result of his research activities, in 1995, his new book “The Macedonian Conflict. Ethnic Nationalism in the Transnational World” was published by Princeton University Press, and in 1996 was published in Macedonian, in 1999 in Greek, and in 2008 in Albanian in Macedonia. Actively following the events between the Republic of Macedonia and the Republic of Greece in the 1990s and the growing importance of the conflict surrounding the name, the use of antique heritage and other questions of identity, he published several papers in pieces dedicated to the anthropological demystification of the processes of state creation, as is, for example, his text “How a woman can give birth to a Macedonian and a Greek: Construction of national identity among immigrants in Australia from Northern Greece” in the book “Macedonia: Political Identities and Differences” edited by Jane Cowan, published in 2000. Another example is his text dedicated to church issues and nationalism among the Macedonian Diaspora in Australia.

In the meantime, he had begun to study oral histories and their reflection with and in some important socio-political events in the region that had been his research interest for more than 40 years. During the year 1998, he undertook a research stay in the Republic of Macedonia, working on the oral (hi)stories of child refugees from the Greek Civil War. In that period, he carried out extensive field research and interviews among child refugees who today live among the Diaspora in Australia, USA, and Canada. He also did field work in Greece, in 2001. During the period from 2000 to today, he has published more than 7 scientific studies dedicated to various aspects of the creation of collective memories of child refugees and of the Civil War in Greece, attempting every time to present both sides, to understand all problematic points in the official historiographies of both sides, both ideologies, both countries.

**Riki Van Boeschoten** is a professor in anthropology and oral history at the Department of History, Archaeology, and Social Anthropology at the University of Thessaly, Greece. Her research interests include oral histories, memories, the anthropology of violence, the anthropology of childhood, and socialism and post socialism.

Working on these issues, she focused her research interest on several important and open issues in the Greek public, such as the Civil War, the exodus of children in that war, collective memories connected to those events; she wrote a number of pieces, several of which are published in the previously mentioned books on the Macedonian question and identity. Using the method of research known as “microhistory” of a village and its surrounding region in Grevena, Northern Greece in the period between 1900 and 1950, she presents an especially interesting perspective of the civil war based on oral histories filled with dense descriptions. She is the author of the book “From Armatolik to People's Rule: Investigation into the Collective Memory of Rural Greece, 1750-1949.”

## On the book

Danforth and Van Boeschoten's book is a theoretically supported study on one of the most controversial episodes in the history of modern Greece, which has greatly reflected on social currents in the wider region. It is based on an analysis of life histories told by child refugees of the Greek Civil War. This is the first scientific book that researches life histories told by child refugees of the Civil War in Greece, as well as being an important correction to previously published popular pieces on this topic, in most of which nationalistic, communistic and anti-communistic ideologies predominate.

This book also opens new horizons, because it applies a wider, more comparative approach than other pieces on this topic. This is the only study in the form of a book on child refugees from the Civil War in Greece that takes in account the experiences of both Greek and Macedonian child refugees.

In the theoretical sense, this study offers new perspectives on several theoretical questions which are still important topics for scientists who study the issue of refugees, the anthropology of children and the politics of memories. In the case of this book, the authors focused on the anthropological study of the category refugee - child refugees of the Civil War in Greece. This is one of the first anthropological studies on refugees re-located in the socialist states of the Soviet block and on refugees taken in general institutions whose goals were to transform them into respectable citizens. Leaving behind the discourse on speaking of child refugees as subjects, the authors, writing down the still vivid memories of the child refugees from several sides, are attempting to re-new the power and voice of those who for a long time were considered as "mute emissaries", children who had nothing to say.

This book also speaks of present theoretical preoccupations in the anthropology of children and childhood. In it, the authors bring to light the role of children as active subjects by analyzing their sayings on their childhood experiences. Instead of treating them as completely helpless victims, dependent on adults' actions, the authors show that they can at the same time be wounded and capable of acting independently.

Danforth and Van Boeschoten's research shows that a "universal" child does not exist and that the ideas of childhood are social constructs, all of which differ from one another. This book also gives theoretical insights on the influence that war and violence have on children.

In the field of studying collective memories, Danforth and Van Boeschoten's analysis is inspired not only by Maurice Halbwach's classic (1992), but also by newer pieces on commemorations, by the politics of memories and the process of individual and collective remembering.

In the last chapters of the book, there is an attempt to develop the concept of "communities of memories" in which individual memories of experiences are in mutual cooperation with official narrations of public memories.

During research on the field, one of the several possible techniques of ethnographic research is applied in several places, a strategy that Marcus sarcastically calls "life following", in which the ethnographer uses autobiographical narrations to follow the life paths of people in motion (Marcus 1998: 94).

In the interviews, the child refugees evoked memories of events that had marked their lives; they also reconstructed social relations and thoughts that formed their identi-

ties. Thus, the interviews give oral history a sole chance to engage in a “retrospective anthropology” (Passerini 1988: 58).

In order to include the child refugees’ narrations in the context of their original surrounding, the authors carried out research in a lot of villages from which the children were evacuated. They spent two weeks in Northern Greece, in Epirus and Macedonia, the summers of 2001 and 2006. Van Boeschoten spent another week in Thrace in 2001 and in places where child refugees live today. In 1999 and 2000, Van Boeschoten undertook research in Budapest with child refugees which continued to live in Hungary. In 2000, Danforth spent two weeks in Toronto interviewing child refugees, and in 2003 the two did a number of interviews there. During their whole research, Van Boeschoten kept regular contact with former child refugees in the city Volos, Greece, where she lives. In the end, they worked in Skopje on the two international meetings organized by the Association of Child Refugees from Aegean Macedonia, in memory of the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their first departure from Greece. Van Boeschoten attended the First meeting in 1988; Danforth attended the Second meeting in 1998.

During the research process for this book, they conducted interviews with 114 child refugees who departed their villages as part of an organized campaign on evacuation executed by the Greek communistic party and the Greek government. It is essential that the interviews were conducted after the Cold War and after the Republic of Macedonia had become an independent state.

## Structure and organization of the book

The text in this book is “polyphonic” and “mixed in genre” (Clifford 1988: 46; Marcus 1986: 188). It is divided into three parts: Histories, Stories, Ethnographies, and every segment is represented by a different voice. In the first part, Histories, a detailed account of the two programs of evacuation is present using archival and oral sources.

The second part, Stories, contains 12 life histories in which child refugees tell their experiences in their own words. The chosen accounts are emotionally rich and have historical, ethnographical and psychological meaning. Also, the chosen accounts present a balanced sample of a wider circle of experiences which are included in the life stories of child refugees.

In the fourth and fifth chapter, the life story accounts of 4 Greek and 4 Macedonian children that left for Eastern Europe are included; while the Sixth chapter includes accounts by three Greek children and one Macedonian child who departed for child dormitories in Greece.

In the third part, Ethnographies, the experiences of child refugees in the Civil War in Greece are interpreted through anthropological analysis, taking in account the most recent anthropological pieces on refugees, re-settlement and the meaning of the home.

In the eighth and ninth chapter attention is given to what is called “ethnographies of memories” with the aim to analyze different forms this conflict on the evacuation of children during the period of the Greek Civil War has taken in the present world order after the Cold War.

In the tenth chapter, common models of memories in the accounts of two experiencing communities of memories are set, one composed of child refugees evacuated in

Eastern Europe and the other of children brought up in child dormitories in Greece, concentrated on four topics which repeat themselves in the life histories of both groups: departure, material objects, powerlessness and emancipation.

Ljupcho S. Risteski

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