

MARKERS AND SYMBOLS OF THE IDENTITY PHENOMENON WITHIN THE HELLENIC POPULATIONS COLONIZED IN NORTHERN GREECE

SEBASTIAN ȘTEFĂNUCĂ
(Independent researcher, Bucharest)

The population transfers and exchanges between the states from the Balkan Peninsula and Anatolia, in the first half of the 20th century, generated new identities. Even though, in order to analyze them, it is invariably done under the sign of ethnicity, the groups which they belong to are more accurately named not ethnic groups, but population categories within the nation they are a part of. Origin represents a central marker of these identities. Culturally speaking, the appearances of the identity phenomenon connected to a place of origin are noticeable in various categories of markers and symbols: oiconymic, spiritual, sportive, of song and popular dance, etc. The following paper focuses on the ethnographic illustration of these categories regarding the *Pontians* and the *Minor-Asians* in Greece. In dealing with the spiritual category, a visual anthropology application is presented, which refers to the custom of burning Judas in a Greek settlement at the border with The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. It is worth mentioning that such an identity phenomenon represents a wide and fertile area of anthropologic research in the regions mentioned.

Keywords: identity, origin, population category, symbols and markers, uprooting.

INTRODUCTION IN THE KEY OF CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

A great part of the Balkan Peninsula, as well as Anatolia, were witnesses of intense transfers and exchange of populations between the states in these areas in the first half of the 20th century. The peace Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (1919), the Convention and Treaty of Lausanne (1923), the Treaty of Craiova (1940) and other political agreements were the foundation of these events. It was believed that the ethnic uniformity of the nations¹ which resulted in the aftermath of World War I in this part of the world would have as an effect the dissolution of the conflict potential on ethnic grounds². The ethnic criterion for population exchange received a religious aspect in the exchange between Greece and Turkey. Thus, the Turkish

¹ Nations which were built according to what Anthony D. Smith refers to as “ethnic model” (*The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford and New York, 1987, p. 144–149).

² Something which succeeded, having as comparative markers the similar conflicts in the Western half of the Balkan Peninsula – less affected by the population exchange we are referring to – which happened after the fall of Communism.

Orthodox population would be moved to Greece, and the Greek Muslim population would be moved to Turkey. It is not the causes of these exchanges, nor their criteria that I intend to deal with in this text. These represent the object of historic research. The following study deals with the appearances of the identity phenomenon generated by the processes mentioned before, on the coordinates of cultural anthropology, applied to the two Greek populations, the *Pontic* and the *Minor-Asian*.

Both socio-humanistic sciences, history and (socio)cultural anthropology, with a dialogue from evolutionist times and with influences of anthropology on the history in the second half of the last century³ which seemed to mark their definitive connection, remain sciences with subjects, methods and cognitive intentions which are different. While history is usually preoccupied with the events of the past, cultural anthropology deals with the present, *directly observed* by the ethnographer⁴, namely the anthropologist in his first role. And, if anthropology is “the comparative study of common sense”⁵, this mainly refers to the social actors who bear – more often than not in a passive manner – history, than to those who behave as active agents of history. This study on an identity theme, having anthropological features, deals with present populations who were forced to bear, willingly or not, the effects of political decisions. Point in fact, the reference is to political decisions which were made a century ago. We are not sure to what extent these decisions, which sought for certain effects, anticipated a series of collateral consequences. In this case, *they generated new identities in the places where the populations were moved to*. However, by directly referring to the past, which is kept alive by countless symbols and identity markers, this anthropologic study also has a historical dimension.

The demographic status of the before mentioned populations, as well as the one belonging to other populations with a similar past, is that of “population categories”. This term was used with the same meaning by Geórgios V. Agelópoulos, but in the context of an intra-community analysis.⁶ We are talking about “exclusive and imperative status categories”⁷, which are associated with a large number of their own cultural traits, without it being the case to refer to separate and independent

³ A. Macfarlane, «Anthropology and History», in J. Cannon, W. Doyle and J.P. Greene (eds), *The Blackwell Dictionary of Historians*, New York, 1988.

⁴ E. Leach, 1989, «Tribal Ethnography: past, present, future», in E. Tonkin, M. McDonald and M. Chapman (eds), *History and Ethnicity*, London and New York, 1989, p. 34–47.

⁵ M. Herzfeld, 2001, *Anthropology. Theoretical Practice in Culture and Society*, Malden (USA) and Oxford, 2001, p. 14.

⁶ Γ.Β. Αγγελόπουλος, «Γαμήλιες ανταλλαγές σε πολιτισμικά μεικτές αγροτικές κοινότητες της Μακεδονίας. Η σημασία τους για ορισμό και τη διάκριση των πληθυσμιακών κατηγοριών», in Β.Κ. Γουνάρης, Ι. Δ. Μιχαηλίδης and Γ.Β. Αγγελόπουλος (eds), *Ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία*, 1997, p. 103–122 [G. V. Agelópoulos, “Changes in the marriage models in culturally mixed agrarian communities from Macedonia”, in V.K. Gounáris, I.D. Mihailídis and G.V. Agelópoulos (eds), *Macedonian Identities*].

⁷ F. Barth, «Introduction», in F. Barth (ed), *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries. The Social Organization of Culture Difference*, Bergen – Oslo and London, 1969, p. 9–38. “Exclusive” and “imperative” are adjectives for “status”.

ethnic groups. As far as ethnicity is concerned – by association with the dialects of a language⁸ – these categories are in a *dialectal* relation with the largest ethnic group. Sometimes, as is the case of the Pontic category, the comparison with linguistics is not only metaphoric, because this category has its own dialect. Neither *emic* nor *etic* are they considered separate ethnic groups, by having, for example, a minority status. Every Pontian or Minor-Asian consider itself without restraint Greek, just as every Meglen-Vlach in Romania consider itself Romanian⁹. However, in order to conceptualize somehow the political status of such population categories, Christian Promitzer¹⁰ uses the term of “hidden minorities”. When the “hidden minority” builds its identity by continuously referring to a “homeland”¹¹ it starts to resemble a diaspora community (in accordance with the features of such a community which were put forward by Robin Cohen¹²).

To sum up, we are talking about large population categories which are considered (by others but by themselves as well) to be separate from other similar categories or from an alleged main ethnic groups, without, however, being socially equivalent to ethnic groups. As far as their identity is concerned, they are under the sign of *ethnicity*, but a concept of ethnicity which is structured into *degrees of ethnicity* and which takes into consideration phenomena of pre- or proto-ethnicity¹³. There is no way of knowing whether or not the identity of the population categories we are concerned with will evolve towards a mature ethnicity, nor does it make the subject of the present study. Probably not, since the studies from the last half of the century emphasizes intense interethnic mix-ups in the Balkan region^{14,15} a phenomenon compatible in the end with an “ethnicity without groups”^{16,17}. We are not talking

⁸ Irrespective of the fact that we are referring to the relation between dialects and the mother-tongue or the relations between dialects.

⁹ What is interesting is that the same thing does not occur with the Meglen-Vlachs who stayed in Greece. The term “Meglen-Vlach”, even though it is not used by either of the populations, I introduced it as an intermediary term which would probably be accepted by both populations.

¹⁰ K. Promicer [Promitzer], «(Ne-)vidljivost skrivenih manjina na Balkanu. Neka teorijska zapažanja», in B. Sikimić (ed), *Skrivene manjine na Balkanu*, Beograd, 2004, p. 11–24.

¹¹ By “place of origin” we are referring to the place/region where the ancestors of the population categories we are talking about were before the transfer.

¹² R. Cohen, *Global Diaspora. An Introduction* (Second edition), London and New York, 2008, p. 6.

¹³ S. Ștefănuță, «Ascendența etnică sub lupa analizei genetice. Sfârșitul etnicității?», in press in *Antropologie și genetică* (collection «Zilele Rainer»), Bucharest, 2019.

¹⁴ For example, Γ.Β. Αγγελόπουλος, «Γαμήλιες ανταλλαγές σε πολιτισμικά μεικτές αγροτικές κοινότητες της Μακεδονίας», p. 107; M. Constantin, «A cross-cultural review of interethnic marriage among ethnic groups in Romania and in Bulgaria», *Études Balkaniques*, Sofia, L (4), 2014, p. 98–114.

¹⁵ Although, according to Barth («Introduction», p. 24) the inter-ethnic mixes by marriage do not seem to represent a sufficient requirement for the identity change.

¹⁶ R. Brubaker, «Ethnicity without groups», *Archives européennes de sociologie*, XLIII, 2, 2002, p. 163–189.

¹⁷ Probably, one of the forms which an “end of ethnicity, as we know it today” may take (T. H. Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism. Anthropological Perspectives*, London and New York, 2010 [1994], p. 217, the Norwegian author also referring to interethnic marriages when speaking about a possible end of ethnicity).

about a group ethnicity, but an ethnicity activated by “grouping”¹⁸. For example, a person of mixed ancestry, both Pontic and Minor-Asian, can join and declare adhesion to one of the two categories as context, preferences or interest requires.

A THEORY OF IDENTITY FOR THE BALKAN POPULATION CATEGORIES WITH A HISTORY OF POPULATION EXCHANGE AND TRANSFER

The identity theory I will make a brief presentation¹⁹ of in this paragraph is not one born from hypotheses based on other theories. It has more of a *grounded theory*²⁰ aspect, as it is an inductive process where the theory is formed and modified together with the collected data. The methodology behind it is, mainly, participant observation, with an initial field period in northern Greece (Kilkis and Pélá regional units) marked by the “immersion”²¹ approach of seven and a half months, between the years 2011 and 2012. The initial period was followed by countless other shorter periods spent in the field, from a few days to a month and a half, in Greece, as well as in Romania and even Turkey, on a trip with Pontic Greek people to see the places their ancestors three or four generations ago were forced to leave. In the initial field period – conceived purely in a formative manner, in order to be confronted with and to undertake the challenges of being in the field for a long time – my attention was drawn by the recurrence with which, in different forms, the people who belonged to different categories marked by a history of population exchange were identifying themselves with the place their ancestors were forced to leave²². The relatives who stayed behind are added to the place of origin, even if we are talking about a *sublimate kinship*, a kind of “χαμένα μας αδέρφια” (“our lost brothers”), the way the Pontians who were converted to Islam and who stayed in Turkey are referred to by the ones in Greece. The identity which is connected to a place of origin has the features of a “cultural theme”²³, representing a principle of existential organization. But the importance of origin as a central ethnicity element is not the same for all the population categories studied. Thus, for the section of the research conducted by 2015, a hypothesis emerged with the variable of *origin* as a *central marker* in the identity of the population

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 167–168.

¹⁹ We are going to dedicate a special paper to this theory

²⁰ B.G. Glaser and A.L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*, New York, 1967.

²¹ J.P. Spradley, *Participant observation*, Belmont (USA), 1980, p. 145.

²² It can be said that the interest for such population categories and their identity was born from mere wonder, which is often the initial stimulus in anthropologic research (V. Mihăilescu, *Antropologie. Cinci introduceri*, Iași, 2007, p. 91).

²³ M.E. Opler, 1945, «Themes as dynamic forces in culture», *American Journal of Sociology*, 53, 1945, p. 198–206.

categories we are studying according to: a) *the number of relatives left behind*; b) *the distance to the place where the uprooting occurred*, and c) *the trauma caused by the uprooting*.²⁴ For example, one of the extremes is represented by the Pontic population category with a high identity relevance of the origin, with the highest per cent of variables “b” and “c”, but also of “a”, by taking into account a sublimate kinship. The other extreme is represented by the Arvanites in the village of Tycheró, in the Évros regional unit, in Greece, situated on the border with Turkey. They registered a low relevance of origin identity, with a low percentage of variables “b” and “c”, and a zero value of the “a” variable.

Verifying the hypothesis between the years 2015 and 2018, by increasing the number of population categories, led not only to confirming it, but also to the possibility of adding a new variable, namely *welfare* in the place of origin. However, I did not notice a direct connection between the identity importance of origin and the level of welfare in that place. A high level of welfare in the place of origin, as opposed to a low level at the destination in the time of the transfer, is meant to add to the trauma of uprooting. However, a low level of welfare in the place of origin does not significantly diminish the trauma, irrespective of the level of welfare found/achieved at the destination. Welfare seems to directly influence *the speed of taking roots* (the way it happened with the Meglen-Vlachs and Aromanian populations who migrated from Greece to the Romanian Cadrilater in 1926), but it does not affect uprooting.

IDENTITY SYMBOLS AND MARKERS OF ORIGIN FOR TWO GREEK POPULATION CATEGORIES

From a cultural point of view, the appearances of the identity phenomenon connected to a place of origin are noticeable in countless *identity symbols* and *markers*. Their main sense is of identity anchorage, but also mnemonic-technical, of preserving the memory of places and events which thus acquire the aura of founding myths. Their presence is the more frequent the better consolidated this identity is, the relationship being one of double implication. Therefore, we are expecting to see a higher frequency of it as far as the Pontic category are concerned, given as an example for which the origin has the highest identity relevance, but also in the case of the Minor-Asian category, which is in the vicinity of the Pontic one in a hypothetical hierarchy based on the theory mentioned in the previous paragraph. The very names preserve the memory of the regions the ancestors came from: *Pontus*, south of the Black Sea reaching to the base of the Caucasus Mountains, with the town of Trapezoúnda (today Trabzon) as the

²⁴ S. Ștefănuță, «Migrație și etnicitate în Balcani. Cazul câtorva categorii populaționale din Grecia și România (raport de cercetare)», *Anuarul Muzeului Județean de Istorie și Arheologie Prahova*, new series, nr. VII, Brăila, 2016, p. 93–106.

symbolic capital city, *Asia Minor*, respectively, in the east of The Aegean Sea, with Smíрни (today Izmir) as the equivalent of Trapezounda. I shall continue by mentioning a few categories of symbols and markers belonging to the before mentioned population categories.

A first category of markers is the *oikonymics* one. Someone who travels through the northern part of continental Greece – the regions of Macedonia and Thrace – cannot but feel the wander caused by the high frequency of settlement names preceded by the adjective “νέο/νέα“, “new” (for example, Νέα Πόδα, “New Wheel”, in the Halkidiki regional unit), or which have it as a prefix (for example, Νεοχώρι, “New Village”, in the Sérres regional unit). The inhabitants of these places are, in their majority, “προσφυγες”, “refugees” who came, mainly, from Pontus and Asia Minor. The term “refugees” was used to refer to all new-comers, irrespective of the manner in which they arrived, nearly a century ago, and it is still used to describe their descendants today. There are even settlements named “Nea Trapezounda”, in the Pieria regional unit, in the Grevena regional unit, or a suburb of Athens named “Nea Smirni”. The “refugees”, by using these names, founded again the places they were forced to leave. Placed one near the other, it is created not only the image of the uprooting and the re-founding of a certain settlement, but of the entire Pontus or Asia Minor. By doing this, the connections with the old regions are not severed, but, on the contrary, are made stronger. Thus, the names of the localities have a mnemonic-technical function, representing one of the guarantees of keeping these connections active. Taking root on Greek soil does not have as an effect uprooting from Pontus or Asia Minor earth, not even when the very bones of the ancestors are transplanted²⁵, bones representing an inevitable proof of the millennial rooting of the Greek element in the Pontic soil.

Another category of identity markers and symbols is the *spiritual* one. This time it is not about re-building a settlement, but re-building monasteries, with icons and holy relics brought from Pontus. All through the centuries, there were three monasteries which played the part of “Jerusalem” for Pontus. They are located in the Maçka Valley („Matsoúka”, in Greek) a valley which crosses the Pontic Mountains south of Trapezounda: Panaghia Soumelá, Saint George *Peristereóta* (the “pigeon”) and Saint John *Vazelónos*. The first one, Panaghia Soumelá, was restored and it is now a touristic and pilgrimage attraction for Christians and Muslims, especially on August 15th, when the Assumption is celebrated. This monastery was rebuilt in Greece in 1951, in the foothills of Vémio Mountains, Imathía regional unit.²⁶ The second one, Saint George *Peristereota*, was rebuilt in 1960 in the Rodohóri village, Náousa regional unit,²⁷ and the third one, Saint John *Vazelonos* is

²⁵ S. Ștefănuță, «Ascendența etnică sub lupa analizei genetice. Sfârșitul etnicității?».

²⁶ T. Κοντογιαννίδης, «Η Μόνη Παναγία Σουμελά στο Βέρμιο και η ιστορία της», *Pontosnews*, 2015 [T. Kondoianidis, «The Panaghia Soumela Monastery in Vemio and its history», *Pontosnews*] (<http://www.pontos-news.gr/article/139093/i-moni-panagias-soymela-sto-vermio-kai-i-istoria-tis>, accessed on January 4th 2019).

²⁷ M.B. Γιαννακοβίτου., Ροδοχώρι. «Ένα δάκρυ του Πόντου», p. 30–32 [M.V. Iannakovítou, Rodohori. «A tear of Pontus»].

being finished in the village of Ághios Dimítrios, Kozáni regional unit²⁸. The importance of their symbolic identity is augmented by the presence of icons, holy relics or worship objects brought from Pontus, in different ways. Out of all of them, the icon of Virgin Mary the Athiniotissa has the highest symbolic value and the most obvious identity connotations. It was painted, according to tradition, by Luke the Evangelist and brought through a miracle from Athens to the Panaghia Soumela Monastery in Pontus, then kept from 1931 for more than 60 years in The Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens, so that it finally was brought to the monastery in the foothills of the Vermio Mountains. Before the new Panaghia Soumela Monastery was built, because they did not possess the icon which was turned from a worship object into a museum exhibit, the Pontians were “orphans”, as an old woman in Kalamariá said. This metaphor was taken on for its emotional impact in *Pontosnews*²⁹. Of course, August 15th represents a great day of pilgrimage for the Pontians, who go to the Panaghia Soumela Monastery in Vermio.

Sports markers and symbols represent a third category. To be more exact, the reference is made to the sports clubs. In order to present them, I shall put forth a fragment from an interview with Harálambos Volovótsis from Tycheró, Evros regional unit, one of the key-informants from the Hellenic field time (August, 2018):

PAOK is a Thessaloniki team. The initials stand for “Pan-Thessalonian Athletic Club of Constantinopolitans” (Πανθεσσαλονικιός Αθλητικός Όμιλος Κωνσταντινοπολιτών). It was founded by refugees who came from Constantinople in 1926. There was a team in the City, in Constantinople I mean (...) named Ermís. They wanted to found a team here [in Thessaloniki], but they did not want to name it Ermís, the way it was called back there, in the City, in the Besiktas district, in Pera (...) the Pera-Besiktas region; they wanted to give it another name. At first, they wanted to name it Constantinopolitans’ Sports Club. But a few of the people who wanted to found this team went down to Athens because they did not find fertile soil. (...) These ones (...) created AEK³⁰, “Athletic Union of Constantinople” (Αθλητική Ένωση Κωνσταντινοπολιτών). AEK belongs today to Athens, as we all know. The people who stayed in Thessaloniki created PAOK and named it “Pan-Thessalonian Athletic Club of Constantinopolitans”, because they were all refugees from Constantinople.

We are not talking only about founding some sports clubs. As the Greek interviewee continues...

In Thessaloniki, there were, at that time, the Aris team and the Iraklís team. Aris was the city’s elite team (...) PAOK and Aris came often into conflict. They

²⁸ «Άγιος Ιωάννης Βαζελόνος», *Pontosnews*, 2014 [«Saint John Vazelonos», *Pontosnews*] (<http://www.pontos-news.gr/pontic-article/100257/agios-ioannis-vazelonos>, accessed on January 5th 2019).

²⁹ Τ. Κοντογιαννίδης, «Η Μόνη Παναγίας Σουμελά στο Βέρμιο και η ιστορία της».

³⁰ Whose football stadium is called “Hagia Sophia”, the name of the great cathedral built by the Byzantine emperor Justinian I in Constantinople, the 6th century, today turned into a mosque.

contested each other from the beginning, because one was the team of the city, the other was the team of the refugees. Slowly, the years went by, and after 1970 PAOK had a good team (...) which played in the Greek championship, and they were mistreated by the Athenian teams, especially by Olimpiakós. It was then that the entire northern Greece gathered around PAOK, as far as football was concerned, I mean (...) Greece became separated in two, when it comes to football, northern Greece and southern Greece (...) All of northern Greece supported the team, because almost all of it is made up of refugees. Some of them come from Eastern Rumelia, in northern Thrace, while others came from southern Thrace, or Pontus, or Asia Minor (...).

The identity implications of the “conflict” between PAOK, the “refugee” team and other “local” teams, are obvious. They show, in fact, on a symbolic level, the conflict, which can be felt to this day, between the “refugees” and the local populations when the former came to Greece. The reason of the conflict was the fact that the land abandoned by the Muslim population transferred to Turkey had to be divided, and the locals considered they were entitled to it.³¹ Not only did this not happen, but the locals also had to bear the demographic pressure of the immigrants, as their number was much higher than the one of the Muslim immigrants. What is interesting is the fact that PAOK becomes the team that all the population categories which resulted in the population exchange³² identify themselves with. It becomes a meeting point of similar destinies, which does not occur, on a spiritual level, with the new Panaghia Soumela monastery, which is a symbol only for the Pontic category. Born at the initiative of some “refugees” who arrived from the City, a symbolic center of all Hellenic populations, PAOK had, from the start, great chances for such image. It is as if, a member of the City or not, “Ἡ Πόλις θα σε ακολουθεῖ / The City will follow you”, according to the famous verse of the poet Κωνσταντῖνος Καβάφης / Konstantinos Kaváfis (1863-1933). Maybe building a new Hagia Sophia church in Greece, a replica of the one in Istanbul/Constantinople provides a symbolic representation for all the population categories of the “refugees”. In this context, Giórgos Savvídis’s gesture – he is of Pontic descent, the son of the current owner of PAOK, Iván Savvídis – of washing the players’ cars after the two to one victory against Aris in a football match in the autumn of 2018, portrayed merely as an outrageous gesture in the media³³, has a completely different meaning.

³¹ I. Δ. Μηαηλίδης, «Σλαβόφωνοι και Πρόσφυγες: Πολιτικές συνιστώσες μιας οικονομικής διαμάχης», in B. K. Γουνάρης, I. Δ. Μηαηλίδης and Γ. Β. Αγγελόπουλος (eds), *Ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία*, 1997, p. 123–141 [I. Δ. Mihailídis, «Slavik speaking people and refugees: The political components of an economic conflict», in V. K. Gounáris, I. D. Mihailídis and G. V. Agelópoulos (eds), *Identities in Macedonia*].

³² Every time I speak on the phone with Haralambos Volovotsis, of a partially Arvanite descent, I am also informed of how well the PAOK team is doing in the Greek championship: “Ο PAOK είναι πρώτος! / PAOK is first!”. I am also reminded of its coach, the Romanian Răzvan Lucescu. I often wonder if maybe Haralambos’s affection towards me has something to do with the fact that Răzvan Lucescu and I have the same nationality.

³³ For example, «Lucescu își continuă marșul în Grecia. Victoria cu Aris l-a făcut pe fiul patronului să le spele mașinile jucătorilor», 2018, *DIGI sport* (<https://www.digisport.ro/fotbal/fotbal-international/lucescu->

The *song* and *popular dance* complex represents another category of the identity markers and symbols, the last one I am referring to in this study. The *pondiaká* (“Pontic”) songs, with *tik* and *omál* as representative genres, can be understood without exception as nostalgic and full of longing for the lost *πατρίδα* (“country”), as far as the melody and the lyrics are concerned. The songs mention and mourn a glorious past, in whose lyrics the pride of the mighty *ακρίτες* (“guards”) at the Pontic borders of the Byzantine Empire reaches to us. A paradisiac land, with clear and cold waters is a recurring image in the Pontic songs. The pain of losing it is augmented by the perpetual state of being without a country in the land where they were forced to move, as we hear in the lyrics in a Pontic dialect of a song which has an *omal* rhythm: “Πέντε σπίτια έχτησα κι ασ’ όλα ξεσπιτούμαι / Πρόσφυγας εμ’ ασο κούνι μ’, Θε παλαλούμαι. / Πατρίδα μ αραεύω σε αμόν καταραμένος / Σα ξένα είμαι Έλληνας και σην Ελλάδα ξένος.” (“I’ve built five houses and I was thrown out from all of them / I’m a refugee from my birth, my God I will become crazy / I’m looking for you my homeland like damned / I am a Greek abroad and at Greece I am a foreigner”).³⁴ However, the Pontic song is not the final expression of an immovable fate, towards which resignation is the only solution. The Pontic soldier is still ready to fight, and his war-like attitude, as well as his movements, is meant to impress the audience when performing such a manly dance as *kótsari*. The male traditional Pontic costume is, in fact, a military uniform. As far as the Pontic singer is concerned, it seems that it is his duty to sing, playing the *kementzés* lyre in the same time, only *pondiaká* songs, as Maria from the village of Nótia, in the Pella regional unit, believes. Thus, the talented performers of Pontic descent Mathéos and Konstandínos Tsahourídís, famous around the world for their musical experiments, where musical traditions of different peoples are brought together by the endless possibilities of the *kementzés* lyre, and in whose songs the traditions and modern life dwell together, can never be *αληθινοί πόντιοι* (“true Pontians”).

The traditional costume, the food, the journeys to the place of origin, the onomastics, the jokes and anecdotes etc., all represent other categories of markers and symbols where identity phenomenon in connection to a specific place of origin and a certain past appears for both the Pontic and Minor-Asian categories; not only for these two categories, but for other as well, in proportion with the identity relevance of the place of origin. The City on the banks of Bosphorus has the significance of a symbolic quintessence of all these places/regions, so that the general identity of “refugee” has great chances to become crystalized around some cultural markers which come from / and remind of / this place. I mentioned in this context the sports club PAOK from Thessaloniki. Although the categories of markers and symbols mentioned before are just as relevant, I believe that inductively the categories dealt

isi-continua-marsul-in-grecia-victoria-cu-aris-l-a-facut-pe-fiul-patronului-sa-le-spele-masinile-jucatorilor-543853, accessed on January 5th 2019).

³⁴ The lyrics can be read, and the song can be listened to here: <https://lyricstranslate.com/en/patrida-m-araevo-sepatrida-m-araeu-se-im-looking-you-my-homeland.html> (accessed on February 26th 2019).

with *in extenso* are enough. It could have as easily been the other way around, dealing more with the categories which were only mentioned, and leaving suspended the categories which I insisted upon. Put together, these categories set and are set by a cultural pattern and they represent the content of certain identities, for whom uprooting, with everything it implies, seems to be permanently fixed in history.

ETHNOGRAPHIC APPLICATION IN THE SUBFIELD OF VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY: THE BURNING OF JUDAS IN FANOS

Fanos (photo 1) is a village in the sunny hills in the foothills of Mount Páiko, near the border with the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. From an administrative point of view, it is in the Kilkis regional unit, in the Central Macedonia administrative region. Around one hundred people, mostly elderly, permanently live in this village. Their pension is the main income, but other revenues are added to this, mainly from selling wine and *tsipouro*, the famous Greek brandy; both beverages are very much appreciated in the region for their quality. The younger population categories prefer to live in cities, especially in Thessaloniki, in search for jobs and better living conditions. At the week-end, on holidays or vacations, the young people come back to Fanos. Their ancestors from three or four generations ago came here in 1922, forced to leave Asia Minor. They came, in their majority, from Ikonion (Konya province in Turkey today) and from the vicinity of Brusa (today Bursa province).³⁵ They lived for a while with the Turkish locals who, in their turn, were waiting to be moved to Turkey. The village had a Turkish name at that time; it was “Mayadağ”³⁶.

A number of field campaigns in the region and in this village prepared the research and the filming in the Holy Week of 2017 of the short documentary (of 20 minutes) *Fanos. The Memory of a Distant Past*, directed by Anișoara Ștefănuță.³⁷ One of the campaigns, the one during the Holy Week of 2013, led to obtaining a first version of the mini-documentary, called *The Fire of Judas in Fanos*. The

³⁵ X. Δ. Παυλακούδης, *Φανός που τρεμοσβήνει*, Θεσσαλονίκη, 2009, p. 1 [H. D. Pavlakoúdis, *The Village of Fanos fades away*].

³⁶ *Ibidem*. “The Yeast Hill”, a literal translation from Turkish.

³⁷ The film was presented and projected during the conference “Uses of the Past in Eastern and Southeastern Europe in Modern and Contemporary Period”, organised in Bucharest, held at the Institute of South-Eastern European Studies of the Romanian Academy, in collaboration with The Ethnographic Institute and Museum of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and The Archaeology and Ethnology Institute of the Polish Academy of Sciences, on June 12th 2018. Publishing a volume with the texts which resulted in the wake of conference is a good opportunity for me to give all the details of the context of the film, which were presented in the previous paragraphs. From lack of time, these details could not be offered during the projection of the documentary. The film can be found, on DVD, attached to the third cover of the *Yearbook of Prahova County Society for General Anthropology*, no 4/2018, Ploiesti, Mythos Publishing of the Prahova County Cultural Center. We would like to thank the organisers for the invitation to the conference; a special thanks to Stelu Șerban.

experience of 2013 was later used in the field campaign in 2017. For both versions of the documentary I participated as researcher, interviewer, interpreter and photographer.

The title of the film makes a reference both to the distance in time and space, of a rich material and spiritual past in the land of Asia Minor. At the end of this prolific period, what was later called the “Asia Minor catastrophe”, namely the defeat of the Greek army by the Kemalist troops in its attempt to march into the heart of Anatolia, would “rapidly and unequivocally bring to an end the millennial history of Hellenism in Ionia”.³⁸ (Τσουνάκος/Tsunákos, 2010 [1992]: 42). It is said that approximately one million Greek people were forced to leave Turkey as a result of the Kemalist policy of ethnic cleansing³⁹, before or after the Treaty of Lausanne, “refugees” who settled once and for all in Greece. The title of the film can also have another meaning: if the events which took place a century ago possess an aura of a founding myth for a certain identity, then “the distant past”, with an insignificant drift from a historical point of view, becomes the equivalent of the indefinite past of the myth.

The film concentrates on one custom on Good Friday, according to which the hanged Judas is set on fire immediately after the epitaph procession (photo 3). The hanged Judas – in fact, a human shaped mascot, filled with straws and suspended at the edge of the main market, *πλατεία*, by the tip of a wooden or metal mast above a pyre made of dry kindling and cedar branches (photo 2) – is set on fire immediately after the epitaph procession (photo 3). The procession begins after the Lamentation of the Tomb, and follows a circular route on a few streets near the church, which represents making a circle around the whole village. Not only the epitaph, but the entire tomb of Saviour also, symbolized by a canopy table, is borne in the procession (photo 4). The whole procession is accompanied by the sound of drums and blowing instruments.

The attempt of explaining the significance of the custom of burning Judas makes, invariably, a reference to Asia Minor, as it is a custom which the people there also had and which was brought to the land where they were moved. This custom was not the only thing that was brought, and among others, there was also the icon of Saint John (photo 5), on whose frame are written the names of some families who came here from Asia Minor. The icon is now fixed on an iconostasis on the left side of the church *pronaos* from *πλατεία*. The church is a former mosque. The route the refugees traveled, bearing the icon as if in a procession, is pictured in a naïve painting exhibited in the only tavern in Fanos (photo 6). The tavern’s sign has inscribed on it the name of the village and a Turk’s head, as an iconic symbol, a reference to the past as well. Both the custom of burning Judas and the icon of Saint John are markers of a maximum concentration of identity energies. However, during the holy Week, because of its importance in the community, burning Judas becomes a priority. The custom is one of the rare moments expected, prepared⁴⁰

³⁸ Ο. Τσουνάκος, «Η Μεγάλη Ελλάδα και η Μικρασιατική Εκστρατεία», *Ελληνική ιστορία. Α' και Β' παγκόσμιος πόλεμος. Εμφύλιος Πόλεμος*, Αθήνα, 2010 [1992], p. 19–42 [Ο. Tsounákos, «The Great Hellada and the Asia Minor Campaign», *The History of Greece. The First and the Second World War. The Civil War*].

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 42.

⁴⁰ As can be noticed in the film, the hanged Judas and the bonfire are prepared by a few young people. However, they express the will of the entire community.

and commented upon by the entire population of Fanos. The direct bond with the ancestors in Asia Minor, by way of this custom, is evident beyond any doubt in those film sequences when Spiros Karkóglou⁴¹, one of the people who were interviewed as a key-informant in the film, states the fact that the custom has never ceased. The advanced age of the interviewee, who allows him to be the bearer of the entire social memory of the settlement in the foothills of Mount Paiko, is a guarantee to the authenticity of the information. Especially since the man does not remember – from his experience or from what his parents told him – any another custom of lighting the fire, at the Birth of Saint John, when young people jump over the fire, to be brought from Asia Minor and to be held in Fanos every year.

The *emic* approach – in the spirit of anthropology nonetheless – unveils a *purification* ritual. As Christ's traitor, Judas becomes a symbol of evil, which the community takes its revenge on not only by casting him out, but by erasing every trace of him, distancing itself from him completely. Out of the material processes that man can command, fire is the only one with purging qualities corresponding to the evil which needs to be removed. It does not happen by chance that this custom takes place during Holy Week, which is marked by a series of purification rituals (in the film, other two rituals are mentioned, namely *fasting* and *cleaning* the houses and yards) performed waiting for the Resurrection of Christ. The *etic* approach could interpret Judas, who is about to be burnt, as a symbol of the Turkish enemy⁴², because of whom the "refugees", as well as the next generations, had to suffer (a part of the refugees' suffering was recalled by Spiros Karkoglou). In accordance with the anthropologic methodology and perspective, I will not go any further (yet) – and neither does the film – with such an interpretation.

The field research has shown that the religious rituals which happen during the Holy Week cannot be separated from the markers, symbols and behaviors which provide content to the Fanos idiom of Minor-Asian identity. The person watching the short documentary is given the same impression at the end of the film. Judas is both the traitor of Christ and the direct link to the previous generations. Anthropologically speaking, one of the obvious conclusions is that we are finding ourselves before a case of Christian-Orthodox *ethnic spirituality*.

CLOSING OFF IN THE KEY OF SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

The markers and symbols dealt with as far as the the Pontic and Minor-Asian categories are concerned, not only the ones simply mentioned, but others as well – the phenotypic aspect, of a more biological and less cultural nature, can be included here – represent as many appearances of the identity phenomenon

⁴¹ Special thanks for the kind collaboration. We would also like to thank Father Andréas Theodoridis, Eleni Grompanopoúlou, Katerína Paitzidou, Thomás Mavridis, Periklis Papadóoulos, Grigórios Lióndas and the entire community of Fanos.

⁴² As it was suggested in the comments about the film during the conference before mentioned.

connected to a place of origin and the uprooting from it, and a certain past which the uprooting ended. Also, they represent the content of some true *cultural complexes*⁴³, grouped around the origin. Although in the present text, the issue of these markers and symbols was dealt with on *cultural* bases⁴⁴, the fact that they are the expression and content of population categories identities makes it possible to be dealt with also on *social* bases; thus, placing it in the area often named *social anthropology*. I would say it is inevitable, since the “social structure” represents one of the central concepts of cultural anthropology⁴⁵, and “cultural anthropology and social anthropology cover exactly the same ground”, starting, however, from opposite sides.⁴⁶ From this point of view, it can be noticeable that all these markers and symbols represent the cultural content of “ethnic boundaries”⁴⁷. These boundaries set apart a number of *ethnomorphosis* processes generated by the population exchange and transfer in the decades of the first half of last century. It cannot be known if they are also *ethnogenesis* processes⁴⁸. With the reference to the inter-ethnic mix I made in the introduction, I expressed the skepticism as far as the evolution towards a mature ethnicity is concerned. But also in the case of the population categories themselves, the observations and field data lead to the same conclusion. For example, an ad hoc measurement of the tendency towards a mature ethnicity when it comes to the Pontians, the category with the highest attachment to the place of origin, confirms the skepticism. Thus, considering one of the indicators the desire of returning to Pontus, in the eventuality of a hypothetical independence of this land, I noticed the fact that it did not exist among the Pontic travellers to Pontus on a trip in the summer of 2018, a trip I took part of as researcher. “All these have only *συναισθηματική αξία* (a sentimental value)”, in the opinion of Thodoros Tsidaridis from Kozani. For the moment, the ethnic dynamics is surer to deal with in the context of “anthropology of nostalgia”⁴⁹. Although important, the Pontic identity is just one in a “thick portfolio of identities”⁵⁰, beside the national, regional, familial etc. identities, maybe as well or even more important.

To sum up, it is noticeable that the identity phenomenon⁵¹ in the Balkan population categories subject to the population transfer and exchange processes in

⁴³ C. Wissler, *Man and Culture*, New York, 1965 [1923], p. 51–52.

⁴⁴ I am referring to a privilege of the descriptive-ethnographic aspects.

⁴⁵ G. Geană, *Antropologia culturală. Un profil epistemologic*, București, 2005, p. 156–170.

⁴⁶ C. Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, New York, 1963, p. 357, translated from French by Claire Jacobson and Brooke Grundfest Schoepf.

⁴⁷ F. Barth, «Introduction».

⁴⁸ As a study “by the major coordinates (and apparently irreconcilable)” (p. 9) of ethnogenesis and ethnomorphosis the volume *Apartenența etno-culturală din România în contextul globalizării. Criterii antropologice ale etnogenezei și etnomorfozei*, by Marin Constantin (Bucharest, 2013), can be consulted.

⁴⁹ A. Olivia and D. Berliner, «Introduction: Anthropology of Nostalgia – Anthropology as Nostalgia», in A. Olivia and D. Berliner (eds), *Anthropology and Nostalgia*, New York and Oxford, 2016, p. 1–15.

⁵⁰ I. Bellér-Hann and C. Hann, *Turkish Region. State, Market & Social Identities on the East Black Sea Coast*, Oxford and Santa Fe, 2001, p. 211.

⁵¹ According to this study, an identity phenomenon where origin is to be found, one way or another, as one of its elements.

the first half of the 20th century represents a fertile and vast soil of anthropologic research. An entire generation of anthropologists – formed or not in the spirit of a “Balkan anthropology”⁵² – can link their names to this type of studies, which did not necessarily have the identity as a topic; however, identity remained on a meta-thematic level of any theme. For the moment, I have identified a small number of studies from a cultural anthropology point of view⁵³, even in Greece, where the phenomenon has the largest range of action and the most intense manifestation. The studies on historic topics are in greater number.⁵⁴ According to a piece of information I received from Dīmītra Louka from Athens (one of the participants in the trip I mentioned before, with a PhD in Social Anthropology at the University of the Aegean, Department of Social Anthropology and History in Mytilene, Lesbos Island), there is no such interest in these topics in Greece. She did not mention the reasons; however, in *at home* anthropology, it is known that, for an anthropologist, the study of those cultural and/or social phenomena he is most accustomed with represents a great challenge. At a first glance, those phenomena seem the most ordinary, thus unworthy of being researched.⁵⁵ On the coordinates of either the *at home* or *abroad* anthropology, the theme of the identity markers and symbols that I dealt with in the present text is in itself quite promising for the understanding of the identity phenomenon mentioned and, comparatively, for the understanding of the behaviors of individuals, groups or populations which find themselves in similar situations with the population categories we have dealt with.*

seb_filozof@yahoo.com

⁵² S. Ștefănuță, 2018, «Thoughts regarding a possible Balkan anthropology», *Annuaire Roumain d'Anthropologie*, tome 55, Bucarest, 2018, p. 141–162.

⁵³ For example, referring to the Aromanians in Romania, S. Serban, «Hidden Identities in Southeast Europe; Aromanians in Romania», in P. Hristov, A. Kasabova, E. Troeva and D. Demski (eds), *Contextualizing Changes: Migrations, Shifting Borders and New Identities in Eastern Europe*, Sofia, 2015, p. 455–476; referring to the ones in Bulgaria, S. Rakshieva, „Roots. On Ethnic Identity of Arumanian in Bulgaria”, in *Proiect Avdhela. Biblioteca culturii aromâne*, București, p. 1–14 (http://www.proiectavdhela.ro/pdf/svetla_rashkieva_roots_on_ethnic_identity_of_arumanians_in_bulgaria.pdf, accessed on January 12th 2019); referring to the Minor-Asians in Greece, R. Hirschon, *Heirs of the Greek Catastrophe. The Social Life of Asia Minor Refugees in Piræus*, New York and Oxford, foreword by Michael Herzfeld, 1998 [1989] etc.

⁵⁴ Although, the situation is not too good in this case either. Referring to The Lausanne Convention between Greece and Turkey, Renée Hirschon observes that “[S]urprisingly enough, however, the multiple and far-reaching effects of the Convention on the two countries have been only partially studied” (R. Hirschon, 2008 [2003], «Preface», in R. Hirschon [ed], *Crossing the Aegean. An Appraisal of the 1923 Compulsory Population Exchange between Greece and Turkey*, New York and Oxford, 2008 [2003], p. XIV–XVII).

⁵⁵ V. Mihăilescu, «Introducere», in V. Mihăilescu (ed), *Etnografii urbane. Cotidianul văzut de aproape*, Iași, 2009, p. 7–29.

* Many thanks for the observations and suggestions to the initial version of the text to: Anișoara Ștefănuță (who participated with me in the conference mentioned above), Gheorghîță Geană and Stelu Șerban.



Photo 1. The village of Fanos, ilkis regional unit, Greece.



Photo 2. The mast where Judas will be hanged from in *πλατεια* in Fanos.



Photo 3. Judas hanged while being set on fire.



Photo 4. Procession during the Holy Week in Fanos.



Photo 5. The icon of Saint John in the pronaos of the church in Fanos.



Photo 6. Naive painting of Minor-Asian refugees on the road of exile in a tavern in Fanos.

