

Research Section

BORDERS AND BORDER ZONES: DIFFERENCES AND EQUALITIES

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THE BORDERS OF "*SHOPLUK*" AND/OR *SHOPS* WITHOUT BORDERS

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Abstract. A historic and cultural region exists at the heart of the Balkans, known in geographic and ethnographic research as *Shopluk*. This is a region in which, over the last 150 years, state boundaries were moved several times as a result of 5 different wars. Today, the historic *Shopluk* is where the borders of three nations converge – Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Serbia and the Republic of Macedonia – and, during the last decade, the region was declared one of the “Euroregions” on the Balkans. Despite the historical similarities in traditional culture and language of this population, in the 19th century it became a subject of nationalist ambitions and a propaganda “wars” between the new national states of Serbia and Bulgaria. The joining of Bulgarian-inhabited parts of *Shopluk* (the regions of today’s Dimitrovgrad and Bosilegrad in Serbia) to the Kingdom of Serbs, Slovenes and Croats in 1919 cre-

ated a long-lasting tension between the two countries, some residues of which can be felt in everyday relations even today. On the other hand, it has been a century-long tradition for men in this region to take part in seasonal labour migrations all over the Balkan Peninsula, despite political borders. In this way, preserving their cultural and lingual specifics, the groups of seasonal workers – migrants from *Shopluk*, became a bridge for cultural interaction and exchange with other regions in the neighbour countries. Even though today the population of *Shopluk* exhibits different national identities, historical similarities in culture and language can turn the Euroregion between Nish, Sofia and Skopje from one of the poorest on the Balkans to one of the most integrated and prosperous.

Keywords: border, *shopluk*, labour migrations, *gurbet* culture, identity

As early as the second half of the 19th century the *shopski* (adjective from *Shop*) historical and cultural area, which is known in the Bulgarian ethnographic literature as *Shopluk/Shoplāk*¹⁾ has attracted attention from the point of view of the geographic distribution, the origins, the dialect and the cultural specifics of the local population of the scholars in Bulgaria and Serbia and, in the last two decades, also in the Republic of Macedonia which announced its independence. Although there is already a significant amount of literature on the etymology of the ethnographonym *Shop*²⁾ it is still difficult to delineate in strict scientific manner the borders, the dialect variability and the ethno-cultural specifics of the *Shopi* (plural of *Shop*) designated in the Bulgarian ethnology as an ethnographic group which is part of the whole Bulgarian nation (Вакарелски, 1942, pp. 236-258).

In my opinion, this fact results from the ambiguous historical fate of this ethno-culturally similar population (probably even kindred in the past) which inhabits the central mountainous part of the Balkan peninsula where

today the state borders of Republic of Bulgaria, Republic of Macedonia and Republic of Serbia gather together. In its turbulent history in the last 135 years this population has changed its state "affiliation" five times and some of the specifics of the dialect and the folk culture of the population which is today divided between the three Balkan states and identifies itself as part of the three modern nations have been used for propaganda and speculations in the various Balkan capitals as early as the 1870s (Hristov, 2002, pp. 65-80).

Although it speaks of the integrated "*Shopska* ethnographic group" as part of the Bulgarian nation, the Bulgarian ethnographic literature from the beginning of the 20th century distinguishes between a number of local groups with their own ethno-cultural specifics: *Shopi* (or the so called "*wooden shopi*") in the region of Sofia, *Graovtsi* in the regions of Pernik and Breznik, *Znepoltsi* in the region of Trăn, *Nishavtsi* in the region of Tsaribrod and Pirot, *Visochani* in the regions of Godech and Iskrets, *Mrakantsi* in the region of Radomir, *Kătsavtsi* in the region of Kyustendil and Bosilegrad, *Kekavtsi* in the region of Dupnitsa, *Kusatsi* in the region of Samokov, *Sharenodreshkovtsi* in the region of Novo selo etc. This is so because of its past and well-known pejorative connotation³⁾ the ethnographonym *Shopi* is used as self-determination and self-designation solely by the population from the villages in the vicinity of the Bulgarian capital city of Sofia. In the same manner in Macedonia only the population from some of the villages around Kriva Palanka and Kratovo as well as the migrants from these villages speak of themselves as *Shopi* (Малинов, 2001, pp. 21-39) and in Eastern Serbia the loci of the denominations *Torlatsi* and *Shopi* which are often confused (by the scholars!) are not clearly determined (Цвијић, 1922, p. 231; cf. Крстић, 2003, pp. 73-80).

That's why, in my opinion it is better if we speak of the *Shopluk* as a key historical and cultural region in the central part of the Balkans whose population is known in the Balkan historical ethnography with another specific: because of the slender agrarian means of living in their home region, as

early as the first half of the 19th century the men from this area crowd in the neighbouring or more distant regions of the Ottoman Empire through the traditional *gurbetchiyski/pechalbarski* routes of labour migrations often without considering the artificial modern construction called "state political borders" (Hristov, 2008, pp. 215-230).

In the Balkan ethnologies there is no unambiguous opinion not only as regards the population defined as *Shopi* and its origins and ethnogenesis⁴⁾ but regarding the cultural **borders** of the *Shopluk* as well. In the Bulgarian ethnology Veselin Hadzhinikolov summarizes in the 1980s the various concepts about the geographic borders of the *Shopluk* as ethno-cultural region as follows:

"The authors examine them (the borders of 'Shopluk' – P.H.) in a quite broad sense of the word considering the population of the whole North-western Bulgaria to be *Shopi*. P. R. Slaveykov in his time draws the line between *Shopi* and the population from North-Eastern Bulgaria along the Vit River. L. Miletich puts it near the village of Mechka, between Pleven and Nikopol. Hristo Vakarelski thinks that the *Shopluk* in a broad sense is a territory with the following borders: the lower course of the Iskar River, the region of Botevgrad in the south, the Sofia Valley to the east, the whole region of Samokov, the region of Dupnitsa, the region of Kyustendil and Eastern Macedonia. Thus, the *Shopi* live not only in the region of Sofia (where the population identifies itself as 'Shopi' – P.H.) and the neighbouring regions but also to the north of the Balkan Mountains – in the region of Vidin, Vratsa, Berkovitsa and even Lom." (Хаджиниколов, 1984, pp. 11-12).⁵⁾

According to him the *Shopski* ethno-cultural region and the respective ethnographic group include the regions of Sofia, Pernik, Trăn, Breznik, Tsaribrod, Radomir, Dupnitsa, Kyustendil, Kratovo, Ovche pole, Kriva Palanka and partly the region of Kumanovo. This understanding of the *Shopluk* borders is also maintained in the textbooks of Ethnography of the Bulgarians:

as a "centre of the *Shopi*" are considered the regions of Sofia, Trăn, Breznik, Radomir, the western region of Kystendil, Bosilegrad, Kumanovo and Kratovo and in the popular sense and according to the traditional view there are *Shopi* as far as the Danube River by the mouth of the Iskar River, in the regions of Botevgrad and Samokov, across the Bulgarian-Serbian border to the west and to Belasitsa to the south" (Колев, 1987, pp. 73-74). All Bulgarian authors are united regarding the Bulgarian national character of the population of these regions and quote the famous conclusion made fifty years ago by the great Bulgarian ethnographer and comedy writer St. L. Kostov which says that "whatever the origins of the word 'shop' are, it is clear that this is not a racial name, that is to say related to the race and the origins of the *Shopi* which like all other Bulgarians are Slavs and speak pure Slavic language" (Костов, Петева, 1935, p. 28).

The concept of the *Shopluk* includes some regions in North-eastern Macedonia and South-eastern Serbia. The western border of the *Shopski* historical and cultural region was not clearly defined even in the past and according to Jovan Cvijić: "It is very hard, even impossible, to draw such a line because in many of their specifics the Serbians and the Bulgarians are the same people. In addition, between their main national cores there are large zones with transitional population"⁶⁾ (Цвијић, 1991, p. 209). As "the core of the *Shopi*" Cvijić considers the region from Ovče pole in Macedonia to the Visok valley in the region of Pirot with the "Old Serbian Šopluk" (this means the region of the Nišava River with the region of Pirot in Serbia and Tsaribrod and Trăn in Bulgaria – P.H.), and the regions of Sofia, Radomir and Breznik in Bulgaria (Цвијић, 1906, p. 180). The common view of the Serbian anthropogeography is that the west part of the *Shopluk* area begins from the regions of Bela Palanka, Vlasina River, Crna Trava and the villages from the region of Pčinja River in Serbia (cf. Николић, 1912, p. 223); it was recently contested by acad. Vlada Stoyančević according to who "the region of Nišava (so called

Ponišavlje – P.H.) and its population significantly differ ethnographically, historically, in its language and customs from the so called *Šopluk*", which according to him, spreads in the east, from Breznik and Radomir, covering the Sofia Valley, to Etropole, Zlatitsa, Pirdop and the springs of the Maritsa River in Bulgairia; even less accurate according to him is the designation *Torlak* for the region of Pirot (Јилић, 2000, p. 9).

Recently, in the Macedonian ethnology several studies appeared on the specifics of the dialect, the traditional costume and the village type of the population in North-eastern Macedonia referred to as "*Macedonian Shopi*". According to these studies the *Macedonian Shopluk* include the regions of Kozyačija, Sredorek, Kratovo, Kriva Palanka, Osogovija, Pijanec, Maleševo and parts of Zletovo and Gorna Pčinja. The most southerly point in Macedonia where the ethnographonym *Shopi* is used to designate the local population are the villages of Stinik, Badilen, Barbarevo and Bajkovo in the Ograzhden Mountain, in the eastern part of the Strumica Valley (detailed information in Малинов, 2001, p. 23, 29).

In fact, what unites the population of these regions in an ethno-cultural unit is the common name *Shopi* used by the other population groups in Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia. As it was already mentioned, because of its pejorative character the name is not used as a self-designation by the local population in the three states, except in some rare cases. The same is also valid for the various combinations of linguistic (dialect) and cultural markers by means of which the scholars (linguists, geographers, ethnographers and historians) try to identify as *Shopi* one or another ethnographic group in the central part of the Balkans – such uniform criteria covering all the regions in Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia which were mentioned do not exist. The attempts in the past to identify some of the specifics of the traditional culture as national markers and evidence for national affiliation (cf. for the family *zadruga* and the feast *slava* in Цвијић 1931: 151-152; the critique in Hristov, 2002, pp. 73-

75) as well as to substantiate the thesis invented in a political way for the existence of "*Shopska nationality*" different from Bulgarians and Serbians⁷⁾ do not sustain the serious scientific criticism.

In my opinion, scholars do not always make a difference between the bearers of the folk culture of a particular ethnographic area and the ethnographic group; it is the scholar who is grouping the population in ethnographic areas and these are classification groups defined from the outside on the basis of particular objective signs of the culture and the mentality. The self-identification and differentiation of the ethnographic groups reflects the standpoint of the groups themselves, i.e. it is made from the inside; the signs of differentiation, the designation and the self-designation are results of the subjective decision of the group (*cf.* Симеонова, 1993, pp. 142-143) in the concrete historical moment. The dynamic of the ethnic development is also neglected – regardless of the time of their origin the particular ethnographic groups go through typologically similar stages of development during the time of their existence, from the time of their appearance until their declination (from isolation and endogamy, through breach of the isolation until its complete disappearance). The examples of the groups of the so called "*Bezhanци*" (refugees mainly from Macedonia and Thrace) formed in Bulgaria after the First World War and the "*Priodanci*" formed after the industrialization and the forced urbanization in the decades of socialism (Христов, 2013, pp. 235-236) unambiguously prove the thesis that at every stage of its historical development the ethnical community actually exists through its interethnic division in ethnographic groups whose composition and specific rise are changeable in the course of time (Симеонова, 1993, p. 140, 145). This constant (in the course of time) division of the *ethnos* in ethnographic groups which however retain their self-awareness of being integral part of it proves to be a particular mechanism for self-enriching, compounding and variability of its culture, i.e. a mechanism for achieving cultural diversity. Even more interesting for the

scholars is the problem of how the variability of the folk culture including its function of a sign of local and regional (self-) identification (*cf.* Вълчинова, 1999, pp. 100-120) develops under the conditions of 'borderness' as in the case of the *Shopluk* as historical and cultural region.

After the seminal study of Fredrik Barth in ethnological perspective the concept of border could be interpreted on different levels – cultural, ethnical, political etc. (Barth, 1969, pp. 213-259). In this context *borderness* is both a state and a process whose ethnic (or rather ethno-cultural) dimensions interweave with social and economic factors and processes in the course of the particular historical development. The very concepts of 'nation' and 'cultural tradition' identified with it could be seen in the light of the propaganda construction, one of the research perspectives being the possibility of deconstructing the process of creating the "imagined" communities and "invented" traditions in the way of the analyses of B. Anderson and E. Hobsbawm (Anderson, 1998; Hobsbawm, 1983).

From such point of view the population of the historical and cultural region of the *Shopluk* and its particular local (self-)identification is of special interest. This paper shall present only part of the ethnographic materials related to the traditional male *gurbetchiystvo* of the population from the mountainous regions of the *Shopluk* representing one of the significant historical variants of cross-border labour migration exchange in the Balkans. These materials are scattered in various regional collections and are the result of the efforts of a number of authors from Bulgaria, Serbia and Macedonia.

The seasonal craftsmen's migrations out of the home region ("*po chuzhbina*" – 'abroad, in a foreign country'⁸⁾) have been evidenced by the historical documents as traditional *pechalbarstvo* as early as the middle of the 19th century: according to the report of von Martrit, Austrian vice-consul in Sofia, published in Vienna in 1853, the Christian citizens of 'kaza Iznebol' (that is to say *Znepole* in Bulgaria) "are so poor that they can hardly pay their taxes; that is

why the majority of them leave their home places in spring in order to look for earnings in Istanbul and even in Asia Minor from where they come back in winter or even after a longer period" (cited according to Михов, 1943, pp. 331-332). The people from the region of Trăn told Konstantin Jireček that "during the Turkish period there were 5000 men who used to go regularly in summer in Serbia as masons". And he adds: "Here (in the region of Trăn – P.H.) as well as in the northern part of the region of Radomir and in Kraishte there are suburbs with nomad masons who work mostly organized in bands of 40 to 50 people..." (Иречек, 1976, p. 559). This moving of labour forces from the mountains (areas marked according to Fernand Braudel "by archaism and deficiency") towards the rich plains and river valleys and more recently towards the towns as well fits naturally in the processes characteristic for the entire Balkan-Mediterranean area (Бродел, 1998, pp. 30, 40-43, 51).

For decades every spring the *tayfi* or *tayvi* (bands) of the *pechalbari* bear their heavy cross of *gurbet* (seasonal labour migration) along the dusty roads on the peninsula, from "*Stambula do Belgrada*" (from Istanbul to Belgrade); like the migratory birds they go back home only at the beginning of winter. There are legends about the skills of these people who are able to "*shoe the flea and to split in nine the sole-leather*" (Цвијић, 1906, p. 194). There are stories how the master-masons (*dun'geri*) from the villages of the region of Crna Trava in Serbia built Beograd and the entire Šumadija and those from the region of Trăn in Bulgaria – the capital city of Sofia.

The seasonal labour migrations of the *pechalbari* which are well documented in the period after the Crimean War are mostly related to the prosecution of the masonry (*dun'gerstvo*) and the pottery-making: men travel all over the Balkans as *dun'geri* (masons), *tsiglari* (tile-makers), *kalyavtsi* (potters) and *tsrepari* (those who make *tsrepnji* – flat earthen baking dishes) and those from some particular villages – as stone-cutters. Despite the existing standpoints according to which the tradition of the masons' temporary labour

migration (*gurbetchiystvo*) in these regions has its roots in the construction of roads and in the fortification in which the local population was engaged within the frames of the Ottoman Empire, in accordance with its status of *voynuks* (tax-exempt non-Muslim citizens who provided military service in periods of war) and *dervendzii* (pass guards) (cf. Миронова-Панова, 1971, p. 64) it is more likely that the seasonal migration of the male population of these mountainous regions is a subsequent phenomenon, from the beginning of the 19th century (Тодоров, 1940, p. 462). The origins of the *gurbetchiystvo* could be found in the decline of the well-developed sheep-breeding (Cvijić points out the same cause for Western Macedonia – Цвијић, 1931, pp. 134, 162, 169-170, 199) organized and stimulated by the Empire in the first centuries of the Ottoman rule with a view to the needs of the army. In contrast to other regions of the Balkans (for example neighbouring *Šumadija* in Serbia) where the later economic progress is related to the pig-breeding and export to Habsburg Empire, in the central part of the peninsula even in the early Ottoman period (15-17th century) the Ottoman inventories register a well-developed network of *dzelepkeshani* (sheep-breeders) who supply the state, the army and the capital city of Istanbul (detailed information in Атанасов, 1987, pp. 27-34).

The decay of the agrarian system in the Ottoman Empire in the late 18th century leads to decrease in the pastures and the uncultivated lands in the mountainous regions and to population growth and prolongation of the cycle of complexity in the family-kin households (*zadruga*). These processes give Maria Todorova a reason to back with arguments her thesis that the *zadruga* as a form of complexity of the family household is a late phenomenon which emerged as a new (or cyclic) answer to the specifics of the Ottoman Empire development after the 18th century in connection with the expansion of the *chiflishko* ('farm landowning') and of the specific ecologic niches of the pastoral and mixed (stock-breeding and agricultural) regions in the Balkans; and the "geographic frequency of its dissemination always follows the curved line

of the mountainous regions of the Balkans ignoring the ethnic boundaries" (Тодорова, 2002, pp. 146, 156). In my opinion, the subsequent expansion of the male seasonal labour mobility (*gurbetchiystvo*) in the central part of the peninsula after the first quarter of the 19th century has its roots precisely in this specific development of the socio-economic conditions in the Ottoman Empire. The seasonal migration of the mountainous male population "*u pechalbu*" or "*u rabotu*" (to earn/ to work) in the other regions of the Balkans contributes in its turn to the stability of the complex households (*zadruga*) in the course of time and to the proverbial solidity of the family-kin networks in these regions.

The directions, routes and character of the seasonal labour of the groups of male *gurbetchii* change several times in the 19th and the first decades of the 20th century in conformity with the variable and ambiguous historical fate of this part of the Balkans (Манолова-Николова, 1997, pp. 159-173). Until the liberation from Ottoman rule (1878) the main centres of attraction for the *pechalbarski tayfi* (the bands of the temporary labour migrants) from the regions of Crna Trava, Trăn, Tsaribrod, Pirot, Leskovac, Vranja and Lužnica are the free principalities of Serbia and Wallachia and the region of *Zagore* (the region of Vidin and Lom in North-western Bulgaria), Dobrudzha and the capital city of Istanbul in the frames of the Ottoman Empire. The main stream of the masons set out for *Stambul* (Istanbul) on some of the big spring feasts – *Mladentsi* (the Holy Fourty), *Dzhurdzhovdăn* (St. George's Day), and from the region of Trăn – on *Chist ponedelnik* (the first Monday of Long Lent) after *Pokladi* (the first Sunday before Lent); by the feast of *Sveti tsar Kostadin* (Saints Constantine and Helena feast) they are already "*u rabotu*" (at work) (Петровић, 1920, p. 14). Before leaving for "*Vlashko*" (Wallachia) the labour migrants gather in Godech and after passing through the Petrohan pass, the town of Lom and the ports of Turnu Severin and Chetatya on the Romanian coast of the Danube River they reach the villages of Southern Romania.

There they build the famous "*bienitsi*" – houses made of tamped earth particularly popular among the local Wallachian population (Миронова-Панова, 1971, pp. 69-70). In numerous villages in the regions of *Timok*, *Zaglavak*, *Visok* (Николић, 1910, p. 28), Caribrod and Godech in the end of the 19th century the male population is fluent in Romanian language which they learnt while on *gurbet* (while working out of their home region).

Before 1878 the meeting points in Serbia are Smederevo, Paraćin, Jagodina and Ćuprija from where the *dun'geri* (masons) form groups and scatter all over *Šumadija*. In *Znepole* the *pechalbari* from the region of Trăn who work in free Serbia are called "*shumadintsi*" (people working in *Šumadija*) in contrast to the "*stamboldzhii*" (people working in *Stambol*) who work in the villages in the vicinity of Istanbul (Петричев, 1940, p. 150). One of the first big building contractors in Serbia and in the capital city of Beograd come from the villages of Crna Trava (today in Serbia) and Znepole (the region of Trăn, today in Bulgaria) (cf. Петровић, 1920, p. 14). The legendary master-mason Grozdan Iliev Nasalevski (called "*kapetan Grozdan*" – 'captain Grozdan' after the wars of liberation), born in the village of Nasalevtsi in the region of Trăn, every year lead to Serbia *tayvi* (groups of masons) consisting of 500 to 1000 *dun'geri* (masons). Many of these masters and their groups actively participate in the national-liberation struggles of the local population: it is in Ćuprija where in 1862, right after the formation of the First Bulgarian Legion, Grozdan Nasalevski asked by G. S. Rakovski forms three Bulgarian voluntary detachments consisting of masons from the region of Trăn which should participate in the forthcoming Serbian-Turkish war (Петричев, 1940, p. 140). Some of the leaders of these *pechalbarski tayfi* (groups of temporary labour migrants) obtain military ranks in the Serbian army by actively participating in the Serbian-Turkish War of 1876-1877 as volunteers in the corps of the Russian general M. Chernyaev. Precisely the local masons-*pechalbari* are the main motive power of the *Shopsko* (or *Trănsko*, of the region of Trăn)

uprising lead by another man from the region of Trăn, Simo Sokolov (Петричев, 1940, pp. 163-171), which leads to the liberation of their home region in 1878.⁹⁾ They actively participate in the protest *Kresna-Razlog* uprising which breaks after the unjust Congress of Berlin (1978) in the Bulgarian regions which remain in the Ottoman Empire (Илиев, 2000, pp. 94-114).

The annual journeys of the male *pechalbari* from the central part of the Balkans further the development through the decades of special features of the festive-ritual system and the folklore of the population in these regions. Along with the concentration of the most important family-kin feasts (of the type of the *svetăc*) in the period between *Dimitrovdën/ Mitrovdăn* (St. Demetrius' Day) and *Ivanovden/Yovanovndăn* (St. John the Baptist's Day) with ritual and sacred peak on *Randjelovdăn* (St. Michael the Archangel's Day), *Nikuldăn* (St. Nicholas' Day) and *Bozhich* (Christmas) (Пешева, 1960, p. 739; Hristov, 2001, pp. 187-199) and with the concentration of the weddings in the winter calendar cycle the local popular tradition shows a steady "*gurbet*" ritual complex which is related to the seeing-off and the welcoming of the masons' groups (*tayfi*) of the men-*pechalbari*.¹⁰⁾ The women see off their husbands and sons to places far from the village – those from *Znepole* even to the place of *Dăschan kladănăts* (Миронова-Панова, 1971, pp. 65-67) where the old Serbian-Turkish border passes until 1878. The origin of the old name of the *Kurbetska* Mountain which divides the region of Nišava River (*Ponišavlje*) and the valley of the Morava River is probably related to the traditional routes of the *gurbetchii* from the region of the *Shopluk* and to the rituals of seeing-off/welcoming – something for which writes Konstantin Jireček (detailed information in Иречек, 1978, p. 48).

After the Liberation of Bulgaria (1878) the newly-proclaimed capital city of Sofia which is located in the central part of the historical and cultural region of the *Shopluk* quickly becomes a centre of attraction for the masons-*pechalbari* from the regions of Trăn and Tsaribrod (at that time in Bulgaria),

Crna Trava and Pirot (in Serbia) and from the regions of North-eastern Macedonia which remain in the frames of the Ottoman Empire. According to calculations in the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century (before 1912) approximately 8000 people annually move in Sofia from Serbia from which about 2000 people are only from the district of Pirot (Петровић, 1920, p. 28). In numerous villages of South-eastern Serbia up to ¼ of the male population was "*u pechalbu*" (at work) in Bulgaria, mainly in Sofia. For the extent of the *pechabarstvo* in these regions we could judge by the interesting fact that in the first decade of the 20th century (after 1905) in the villages of the region of Pirot the Bulgarian and the Serbian currencies are both in circulation (Петровић, 1920, p. 27)¹¹⁾ The Bulgarian capital is "flooded" by the masters from the region of Trăn and by *dun'geri* from the bordering mountainous regions; the great Serbian politician Nikola Pašić together with Tsvetko Radkov from Tran works in Sofia as a building contractor during the years of his forced exile after the *Zaječarska buna* ('the Zaječar rebellion') (Христов, 2003, pp. 113-120).

Beside those from the region of Trăn the most famous masters and building constructors in Sofia in the late 19th and the first decade of the 20th century are those from Macedonia (Петровић, 1920, p. 23). The road from Kriva Palanka to Sofia is rightly called at that time "*pechalbarski drum*" (temporary labour migrants' road) since every spring more than 10 000 men from Macedonia bear their heavy cross of *gurbet* towards the capital of Bulgaria (Цвијић, 1906, p. 197); only from the villages of Kriva Palanka there are about 3000 men (Петров, 1896, p. 593). The *pechalbari* and the migrants from Eastern Macedonia are engaged not only in building but in other crafts as well – bread-making, *boza*-making, *khalva*-making, inn-keeping (Цвијић, 1931, p. 136) while those from the mountainous regions of Western Macedonia (the regions of Tetovo, Dobar, Kichevo, Kostur) are oriented mainly towards Serbia rather than Bulgaria (Петров, 1896, pp. 416, 477). From the

beginning of the two Balkan Wars and during the First World War many of the *pechalbari* from the central regions of the Balkans emigrate to America in order to avoid military service; part of the "Americans" go back to their home places in the 1920s but many stay in America as emigrants.

The *pechalbarski tayfi* (groups of temporary labour migrants) organized by kinship and/or village principle develop their own specific subculture in the big city (Istanbul, Beograd, Sofia). There they become "Shopi" whose specifics of the traditional costume (in the more distant past – traditional white – *belodreshno* – clothing), the cultural stereotypes and the dialect separate them as a closed community with its own characteristics and specific folklore. The *pechalbari* have their regular meeting spots and places of socialization (like the famous "Znepole" hotel and "Razlog" restaurant in Sofia) and the specifics of their dialect make it their language marker (and a "secret" craft language) in Bulgaria as well as in Serbia (cf. Цвијић, 1922, p. 219). The neighbouring population on both sides of the border perceive the groups of masons as part of a specific closed community – the *crnotravci* (those from Crna Trava) in Serbia as well as *trānchani* (those from Tran) in Bulgaria are traditionally referred to as "*kārkavtsi*" (a dialect word for cranes) (Николић, 1912, p. 231; Миронова-Панова, 1971, p. 65) and their seasonally moving groups ("from early spring to late autumn") are compared to the flights of the migratory birds. These male craft communities are traditionally closed in their specific professional subculture – the penetration of masons from other regions in their building groups is a huge exception even in the 1940s; it is well-known that one could only "steal" the craft from the people of Trān.

The wars of the late 19th century and first decades of the 20th century between the Balkan states cause the migration of the *pechalbari* and their families from their home region of *Shopluk* divided by the new political borders towards the big towns and the interior parts; there is an interesting interdependence between the dominant routes of temporary labour migration and the

directions of the refugees-migrants: initially after the liberation of Bulgairia (1878) Trăn/Tsaribrod and Pirot exchange population with pro-Serbian or pro-Bulgarian orientation (Hristov, 2002, pp. 72-73), later the people from the regions of Kumanovo and Skopje in Macedonia migrate mainly towards Serbia and those from the regions of Kratovo, Kriva Palanka and Maleshevo – towards Bulgaria (Цвијић, 1906, p. 197). The *pechalbari* from these regions who migrated to the big city preserve the specifics of their regional subculture for a long time and gradually develop a proverbially effective kinship-village network of mutual aid. In most cases they even settle compactly – as early as in the beginning of the 19th century the refugees from Niš, Vranje and Pirot form the so-called *Torlaški* villages of Banica, Jaince, Rakovica and Mokri Lug in the vicinity of Beograd; the migrants from the region of Trăn ("from the Bulgarian part of the Shopluk region" according to Cvijić) form the same closed community in the district of Smederevo (in Serbia) (Цвијић, 1922, pp. 175, 219). In Bulgairia, the census of 1920 in Sofia shows that the main mass of migrants/refugees (24 076 people in total) are from Aegean (32,8%) and Vardar (48,9%) Macedonia; like the people from Trăn they also settle compactly: in the residential district of 'Razsadnika' – from the regions of Veles and Prilep, in the residential district of 'Banishora' – from the region of Strumica and the Maleshevo, on Pirotska Street and in the residential district of "Tsaribrod" – from the regions of Pirot and Tsaribrod, and in the residential districts of 'Krasno selo', 'Nadezhda' and 'Zaharna fabrika' – from the region of Trăn (Георгиев, 1983, pp. 74, 90).

Gradually, especially after the big changes in the Balkans from the middle of the 20th century, after the "impetuous" socialist industrialization and urbanization, the processes of integration of the population groups from the *Shopluk* as historical and cultural area which (probably) was once united, intensify and these groups become an integral part of the respective present national communities. Thus, although divided in political and state aspect by the

historically varying borders of the Balkan states for centuries the region of *Shopluk* "pours out" population from the heart of the Balkans which in the beginning of the new 21st century (and millennium) from a ground of conflict gradually becomes a cross-border bridge between the kindred South Slavic peoples (today even states). Today the century-old traditions of cross-border communication and labour migrations of the population between Niš, Sofia and Skopje give hope for the transformation of the *Shopluk* from one of the poorest regions in the Balkans into a prosperous and integrated "Euroregion".

NOTES

1. The transliteration of the South Slavic names from Cyrillic to Latin is according the official standard in the respective country and Slavic language.

2. According to the anonymous author of the manuscript history of the Hilandar Monastery (made after 1826) the name *Shopi* (plural of *Shop*) derives from the Turkish word *sopa* (cudgel). J. Šafárik and M. Drinov search the origins of the name *Shopi* in the name of the old Thracian tribe *Sapei* and P. R. Slaveykov related it to the word *sop* (jug, water-conduit) which is pronounced in the region of Sofia as 'shopka'. V. Doburski, D. Tekela and Y. Ivanov draw *Shopi* from the name of the Pechenegian tribe *Tsopon* (τζοπον) which settled in these regions in the 11th century. V. Grigorovich and Y. Trifonov relate the name of the local population to the language of the Transylvanian Saxon miners colonized in the region in the Middle Ages – from *Shvabi*, or from the German words for forelock (*shopf*) or cabin (*shopen/shupen*), i.e. as a name for 'cottagers'. There is still no approved opinion in science for the (self-)designation *Shopi* (cf. Хаджиниколов, 1984, p. 15; Сефтерски, 1984, pp. 55-56).

3. As early as the end of 19th century Petko R. Slaveykov (Славейков, 1884, p. 122), Konstantin Jireček (Иречек, 1899, p. 67) as well as Jovan Cvijić (Цвијић, 1906, p. 180) write about the denomination *Shop* which has attained pejorative meaning and about the insulting name *Torlak* related to it.

4. The existing theories differ in the number and the importance of the various ethnic elements which took part in the ethnogenesis of the local population –

Romanized local ancient population, Slavs, Pechenegs and according to the latest theories even proto-Bulgarians (*cf.* Сефтерски, 1984, pp. 55-65). However, no one contests the Slavic character of the folk culture and dialects of the population in the *Shopluk* as historical and cultural region.

5. Hadzhinikolov made this generalization (1984, p. 11) on the basis of the following literature: Славейков, П.Р. Няколко думи за шопите. – *Периодическо списание на БКН,Д-во*. Кн. 9, 1884, с.106-123; Милетич, Л. *Старото българско население в Североизточна България*. София, 1902, с.26; Трифонов, Ю. По произхода на името “шоп”. – *Списание на БАН*, Кн. 22, 1921, с. 133-134; Костов, Ст. Л., Петева, Е. *Селски бит и изкуство в Софийско*. София, 1935, с. 12-13. *cf.* also Вакарелски, Хр. 1942: 236-258.

6. J. Cvijić as a chairman of the Historical and Ethnographic Department of the Paris Peace Conference in 1918 suggests dividing the *Shopluk* in "three zones": with Serbian population, with mixed population and with population "close to the Bulgarians" (Цвијић, 1989, p. 213). The model of dividing of Macedonia before the Balkan wars in the beginning of 20th century was the same.

7. The newest attempts along these lines *cf.* in Kolev, 2001, pp. 168-177.

8. *Cf.* the Arabo-Turkish word "*gurbet*" = "*chuzhbina*" ('foreign country') in Bulgarian; from this according to Nayden Gerov "*shte ide na gurbet*" ('he will go on *gurbet*') = "*shte ide v chizhbina*" ('he will go in a foreign country') and "*gurbetchiya*" = "foreigner" – *cf.* Геров, Н. *Речник на българския език*. Ч. 1, София, 1975 (Пловдив 1895), с. 260; *Допълнение на българския речник от Н. Геров*. София, 1978 (Пловдив 1908), с.83; Младенов, С. *Етимологически и правописен речник на българския книжовен език*. София, 1941, с. 114.

9. Simo Sokolov was born in 1848 in the village of Groznatovtsi in the region of Trăn which is today in Serbia (until 1919 it is in Bulgaria). In the course of the Russian-Turkish War the revolutionary detachments lead by him and operating in compliance with the Russian as well as the Serbian army consecutively liberate in 1877-1878 the regions of Trăn (today in Bulgaria), Vranje (today in Serbia) and North-eastern Macedonia to the Vranje-Kriva Palanka-Kratovo line.

10. Seeing off the temporary labour migrants *u rabotu* (to work) has the following form: the oldest woman of the house sprinkles on both sides of the home gate

through which the men should go embers from the hearth with apotropaic aim (Миронова-Панова, 1971, p. 181); this is done the same way as on the traditional wedding in this region the matchmakers (*oglednitsi*) on bridegroom's side are being seen off to take the bride and her *ruha* (dowry).

11. This provides ground for active administrative measures on the part of the Serbian administrative authorities in the region (Петровић, 1920, p. 27).

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