

Research

BORDERS AND BORDER ZONES: DIFFERENCES AND EQUALITIES

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BOUNDARIES OF A ROMA GROUP: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract. The article presents a unique phenomenon in Bulgarian Roma culture: educated in military bands, Romany people from the small town of Zlataritsa, Veliko Tarnovo region, developed specific culture which formed a Roma subgroup. Spatial and social map of group members expanded. With the conversion in Bulgarian army and the collapse of military band orchestras (early 2000s) all of the musicians become unemployed and returned home. Recently most of musicians become temporary labor migrants in Spain. There they work as street musicians. The dynamics of social and geographical maps of the group and the mobility of group borders will be commented. Thus this paper addresses questions of transforming power relations, economic stratification, and the moral sense making that accompanies this as well as group and personal identities dynamics.

Keywords: identity, borders, minority, Roma group, mobility

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Veliko Tarnovo region, developed specific culture which formed a Roma subgroup. Spatial and social map of group members expanded. With the conversion in Bulgarian army and the collapse of military band orchestras (early 2000s) all of the musicians become unemployed and returned home. Recently most of musicians become temporary labor migrants in Spain. There they work as street musicians.

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General information

Area of study – small town of Zlataritsa, administrative center of Zlataritsa Municipality

Region – Central Northern Bulgaria

Short history: Some isolated archeological data show traces of several hamlets in this area (starting from early Bronze Epoch). The available Ottoman tax (*djizie*) register from 1479 shows that there were living 48 households and 4 households of widows; the *djizie* register from 1515-1516 counts 46 households. All of them were Eastern Orthodox Christians. The name of the village was Izlatarche (Goldsmith). For centuries it remains almost unchanged. At 1622 the village gained status of pass-keeper (*derbentjii*) which gave to the locals some privileges. Until the end of 19th century the population mainly consists of Bulgarian Christians developing strong local identity. There is no systematic academic research on history or culture of Zlataritsa, despite the prominent Bulgarian scholar – Prof. Vassil Zlatarski (1866-1935) researcher on Medieval Bulgarian history descended from Zlataritsa.

Political status – post communist period of democratization

Population – 2 124 (December 2014). The demographic secular shift started in local Bulgarian population about the end of 19th century. Main population characteristic is high mobility since the end of 19th century until nowadays; sizable internal emigration wave to the big cities at the 50s and early 90s; high emigration wave (temporary labor and permanent migration to EU) since late 1990s. Migration constitutes a key element in long-term economic and social development of Zlataritsa. It is not only emigration from the small town. New groups are coming and settling in search of relatively better opportunities there after 1989.

Ethnic and religious profile - almost 50% of local population are Bulgarians Eastern Orthodox Christians. For Bulgarians following five groups are “*Tzigani*” (Roma) despite their self-identification may differ: (1) *Starite Bulgari* (The Old Bulgarians) group had come there possibly earlier than late 19th century. The group member’s memory maintains they always have been Orthodox Christians. The men from this group are smiths and farriers. The other groups identify them as a special group – neither *Bulgarians* nor *Tzigani*. They were 10 persons at 2014; (2) *Vlasi* group has come there about late 80s of 19th century. The first notices in parochial registers (funerals and baptisms books) prove this. The old people remember that they came from the village of Rezach – a high mountain almost depopulated recently village in Zlataritsa municipality. The *Vlasi* group is practicing Orthodox Christianity despite that they are strong believers in bad eye and magic and perform related practices. Their “Real Christians” identity creates borders between the group and the “Others” (“Atheists” or not practicing Christians). Their recent considerable labor migrations flow to Greece supports their efforts of being “good Christians”. The other groups identify them as “*Vlashki Tzigani*” (Romanian Gypsies). They represent themselves as “*Vlasi*” (Romanians) or “*Kopanari*” (Spindle-makers). They are about 600 people at 2014; (3) *Muzikanti* (Musicians) group had come about first decade of 20th century from Kotel, a small town placed in the Eastern Balkan. They were Muslims. Despite the *Muzikanti* group members kept their Muslim names until forced renaming by communists

(1962) and the first official conversions into Christianity have started about 1993, because of activities of local priest, all of them had accepted local rituals in the time of settlement and act as Eastern Orthodox Christians for about a century. The general group's identification and their self-identification is *Tzigani* (Gypsies). Still they prefer to represent themselves just as *Muzikanti*. They are about 200 persons at 2014; (4) *Macedonski Vlasi* group came at 2004. To the question: Why do you call them "Macedonski" (Macedonian), the locals – Bulgarians and Gypsies answer: "*Because of their nasty temper!*". In the region the image of "Macedonians" (people populating Pirin Mountain Region in Bulgaria and citizens of FYROM) was shaped by media information about revolts and uprisings (early 20th century). The group image of those barely known people is of armed, bad temper man and women. I had no chance to talk to members of this group. All information comes from interviews with other groups members. They say that those *Vlasi* talk *Vlashki* but nobody knows where from they came. Because *Macedonski vlasi* keep only short-term relations (while buying food and goods) in the public space there is no reliable information about them. They do not interact with the *Vlasi* not in the everyday life nor in the field of religiosity. The other groups identify them generally as *Tzigani* (Gypsies). They were about 80 persons at 2014; (5) *Gradeshki Tzigani* group came first about 2000. They came from the village of Gradets near Kotel to work in forestry. The small and unstable group *Gradeshki Tzigani - Evangelists* does not develop group identity based on religion. Their group borders are connected to the place of origin and they present themselves as *Gradeshki* (meaning – from Gradets village). The other groups identify them just as *Tzigani*. They were about 30 people at 2011 but in pre-election period on 2012 the Mayor of Zlataritsa had invited about 250 newcomers from Gradets. They all voted for him to gain second mandate. Now the group is visible in public space.

The *Turks* came at 1993 from different high mountain villages. They were 15 persons at 2014.

Displaced at mid-50s from the Rhodopes Mountain *Bulgarian Muslims* had settled at depopulated Turkish high mountain villages in the municipality. Despite the lack of educated *imams* and mosque they still perform as a group based on religious affiliation at Zlataritsa - the new place to settle at early 90s. Bulgarian Muslim women keep and demonstrate their Muslim identity respecting the rules of Islamic way of life (in terms of diet, garments, prayers etc.) The men of all ages are non-practicing Muslims and do not respect the prohibitions related to Islam (they are eating pork, drinking alcohol, they do not pray etc.). The other groups identify *Bulgarian Muslims* as *Pomaks* or *Turks* (because of religious affiliation) but the members of this group prefer to stress on their Bulgarian ethnic origin. They were 50 inhabitants at 2014.

Economy – Completed transition towards market economy. After 1989 local economy, previously based mostly on daily migrations to nearest city's factories and family based agriculture, had collapsed. Relatively specialized and mastered blue collars had rested unemployed. Since mid-90s most of the local people are working temporary in gray economy in the town, in the region or abroad (in construction, agriculture and services). Small-scale agriculture and cattle breeding is mainly associated with provision of foodstuffs to the households (meat, milk eggs and vegetables). In 2007 Zlataritsa municipality became one of the first five officially declared GMO-free regions in Bulgaria. A new strategy for market oriented agricultural production is emerging slowly. A few "European type" dairy farms started about 2003. Other sectors: trade and services; administration, primary education, forestry. Despite the development of country tourism has been declared as economic strategy of Zlataritsa Municipality no projects to develop the infrastructure have been realized. The river crossing the town – Burzitsa - entered the list of national ecological protected zones "Natura 2000" but still remains in disastrous situation because of different types of pollutions (from factories based in nearest town of Elena and from locals).

Being declared town (1974) and a center of Municipality Zlataritsa recently have characteristics of village in terms of business development and infrastructure. It entered the list of most abandoned and undeveloped rural places in Bulgaria. Despite local Bulgarians complain that the life and the possibilities in the town are in poor condition the intensification of internal immigrations since 1990 shows something else. New people come because there are relatively better opportunities for living. In all elements which construct the local ideology we can identify a positive cultural and functional (van Houtum & Lagendijk, 2001) identity of the small town in poor economic conditions.

It is indisputably that markets and mobility of goods and persons have changed crucially after the dissolution of the socialist system. The emergence of post socialist market oriented economy brings new types of encounters, risk taking and knowledge and new forms of relationships (Gille, 2002). The labor market and goods are differently accessed and distributed, sometimes requiring new routes and destinations. Already established networks, shared values and interests had to change dramatically. Exploration of the spatial linkages which have been affected by changes could be a key for understanding local (and group) economy development. We agree that the type and nature of such spatial linkages can influence the process of incorporation into larger-scale formations, e.g. whether the movement of goods and people becomes part of capitalist flows and the degree to which they become part of them. (Gille, 2002). It is of great importance to explore questions such as: to what degree are new types of knowledge necessary in newly emerging market economy? What sorts of values and norms are being created, reshaped or challenged through these new encounters? How completely changed labor market influences the group identity which is based on specific occupation? Whether new economic situation reshapes groups' boundaries?

Methods and methodology

The study took place over different periods of participant observation (from one week to one month) over the course of twenty three years (spring 1990 to summer 2013). It involved in-depth interviews and free conversations with the members of the Roma community *Muzikanti* and locals involved in long-term networks (neighbors, merchants and local authorities). Conversations took place in Bulgarian. All children born after group settled down in Zlataritsa were educated at least in Primary school.

The *Muzikanti* households living in Zlataritsa are total 65 and the community is composed of about 200 individuals. Although I happened to meet a considerable number of members of the group, this study is centered on a relatively small figure of people and families: about 20 people. Inside this group of people, it is possible to distinguish a core of 10 key informants representing different age-classes (from 15 to 65). Members of the observed community reside mostly in Zlataritsa, but as it will be commented they are typically involved in national and transnational networks that play a multi-purpose role in their social world. In a nutshell, these networks, linking Bulgaria with various places in Spain, Italy, Germany, and different Balkan States, provide members with different options, all of them viable depending on the needs and the moment. This is an important element in the variation in the number of people residing in the area; it also points to the process of community dynamics.

The second half of the 20th century has being signed from a strengthened interest to the issues, related to the personal and group identities (ethnic, national, religious, social/political, belonging to certain culture/subculture, personal, etc.) from the scholars all over the world. The scholars from social sciences, belonging to different academic disciplines and followers of different methodological schools, permanently experiment different qualitative and quantitative methods to answer the questions, related to the way of formation

of the personal and group identities, to the factors that influence it, to mechanisms through which the identity functions and changes (Kymlicka, 1995; Gellner, 1983; Gossiaux, 2002; Бромлей, 1973; Appadurai, 1991; Barth, 1998; Anderson, 1991; Giddens, 1991). May be the only point that ultimately unites all the authors, elaborating on different aspects of identity questions, is the assertion that it is a complicated, complex category, functioning on different levels and appearing in different forms, according to variety of factors (with substantial or contextual character). As it was pointed the group in question developed specific identity related to the main occupation of men – musicians and this was common for various Roma groups in Bulgaria and on the Balkans. The only specific is that this identification emerges in 20th century and it is related to a modern and prestigious profession of well-educated people.

According to Meriam (1964), music is not primarily a sound object, but a culturally conditioned human activity, and therefore, when researching music, it is necessary to take into consideration

[h]uman and analytical evaluation ... relevant aspects of social sciences and the humanities and a variety of aspects of music - symbolic, esthetic, etc. (Meriam, 1964, p. 35).

Looking at it in that way our interest is concentrated on culture specifics developed by the group in question. It is a great challenge to explore mechanisms supporting preservation of group identity even when the main factor - music performing in the army structures (which meant: prosperity, relatively high and stable social status etc.), is not of strategic importance anymore. Identity preservation and development in a Roma group which does not play specific Roma music as it will be shown is a very particular case and poses many questions related to group boundaries.

The boundaries based on the complex category of identity can be expected to act in complex way. The study of a dynamic multicultural local community requires multiple approaches and implementation of multiple theoretical tools. Thus my choice is to work with a tool-kit of theories despite the need to look for a specific theory. This is because the complicated context requires complicated theoretical approaches.

Karjanen (2005) states that the job loss has affected the labor market significantly since 1989. Many of the service or professional occupations have shifted to the private sector, but the skills are not always transferable; thus many people with qualifications are facing increased job loss in the local economy. In the less skilled occupations primarily manual labor, some services, and agriculture positions have not been replaced by the private sector as readily as others. This is largely due to the shift in the composition of the economy from a large public sector to a smaller private one, but also due to the change in industry composition (Karjanen, 2005). In our case the market for brass band musicians had changed dramatically in the times of army conversion. What group strategies have been developed and how it corresponds with group boundaries was one of the main questions during ethnographical research.

Musicians by profession

“This Gypsy clan occupies only with music. Nobody can say anything sure on who we are. We are clan, family, and musicians. I do not know when the first families had settled in Zlataritsa”, said Mikhail.

The number of studies devoted to the role of music in the Roma societies is impressive (Beynon, 1936; Silverman, 1988; 1989; Stewart, 1989; Slobin, 1996; Пейчева, 1999). It is important to stress that most of these au-

thors deal with the role of music in the Balkan states Roma communities. By definition authors interest is directed to specific Roma music. Saitta¹⁾ states that the Western European ethnic and non-official music market has smaller dimensions, and it is spatially fragmented unlike Eastern-Europe, where the Roma music is quite popular despite the constant marginalization of Roma groups. In the case of *Muzikanti* group, we are facing different phenomenon. For years the group in question does not develop their own specific stile of Roma music. In their repertoire are dominating wedding and funeral marches, army marches, and waltz and tango etc. More recently they perform very popular Goran Bregovich's Roma music still keeping original arrangement.

The roots of this phenomenon are deep in Bulgarian history. During Ottoman times (14th-19th centuries) Roma musicians participated in military bands. Two processes were developed – Roma musicians mastered in army music and developed their own specific style of music highly influenced by local majorities' music. Because of the lack of relevant data we can only suppose that not all men from particular Roma groups were working for Ottoman army brass bands and the other musician's performances predominantly were limited to community events.

“They never accepted ours in the Turkish army! If yes my father could of being in the army. Still my uncles from both sides – my mothers and my fathers, all of them were in the army. But I am the first in the clan who have diploma of musician! Still may be some ancestors were in the Turkish army...”, said Mikhail.

The anthropological literature has largely highlighted the importance of music in the Roma's economy. Kodolanyi (reported by Beynon, 1936) argues that:

[T]he musician Gypsies are the aristocrats of their race. In the villages the artisan Gypsy often raises himself in the social scale by becoming a musician. He gives up making his wooden spoons and forms a small orchestra with some companions; then he goes from village to village and from fair to fair, educating himself little by little...All that he needs is the listener who will direct his efforts and impose the correct musical style upon him (Beynon, 1936).

Pietro Saitta¹⁾ claims that nothing has really changed since those words were written and a dynamic which pushes the young men in the communities to become musicians are the same. We can only suppose that specialization of *Muzicanti* group followed the same pattern.

[W]e are not basket-makers! Mitka is liar! [Mitka was local Roma activist reporting that in the past the group was producing baskets for the market] Combers! I never had heard this word! Do you know this word!? She might be confused it with woodcutters [In Bulgarian the two words sound very similar: Combers – Drandari; woodcutters – Darvari.- M.K.].

There is no consensus in it! We are musicians' Gypsies! If those crafts were existing at least one person would develop it until nowadays. *Or a family name would appear!*" angrily said Mikhail. His reaction was provoked by recent publications of Veliko Tarnovo based Roma activist who maintained that previous occupation and group name of *Muzikanti* were related to basket production and trade. I argue that identification with very prestigious group of high positioned (in the army) job of artist had erased very fast (in two or three generations) the group memories of previous occupation evaluated as pre-modern and not prestigious.

We are facing entire community of professional musicians and music fulfills an important role in the life of the group. Parties without musicians cannot even be conceived. Celebrations and parties were frequent almost until 90s: marriages, religious festivities and public events provided opportunity for musicians to perform. The birth and mortality rates in these communities guarantee steady flow of marriages and funerals. The market for Roma music was expanding to different degrees facing local or regional majorities' needs of entertainment. For this reason, music represents one of highest form of entrepreneurial behavior among the Roma who were not involved in Army brass bands.

After the fall of Ottoman Empire (1878) the new established Bulgarian army inherited this professional group. Roma musicians were the mainstay of military bands. They continue to develop army music in the modern times. To be musician and to be military band orchestrate in the town in question become a sustainable family job traditionally transmitted from father to son. The ethnography makes this ascertainment more precise:

[M]y father was born in Zlataritsa in 1927. He was playing clarinet. Every father trains up his boy. Our Gypsy fellows, in this clan they teach only boys. Recently they started to teach girls too but not the brass, no clarinet, no trumpet, and no baritone. Boys are starting to perform on wedding parties and the girls are entering opera... The boy is choosing its instrument. My mother said: "You have to learn this!" She urged me to choose clarinet. At the age of 7-8 I started with drum and accordion.

In the times of coming in Zlataritsa musicians found an empty economical niche in entertainment market. Mastering in musical fashion they very soon started to play important role in local weddings, private parties and

public celebrations. Data available have shown that there was well established temporal and spatial system of covering needs for music in Zlataritsa region. Brass bands were dividing territory of nearest villages and were ready to perform on private and public parties all year long. Almost until 70s-80s of 20th century, musicians were working temporarily with traveling Circuses too (АНГЪЧЕВ, 2004, p. 15). We cannot find exact data when the tradition of Roma brass band playing on Orthodox Christians funerals was invented. “We always used to do it”, said Mikhail (52). The process of acceptance was not easily developed. “The drum is Turkish instrument and I do not want it to be on my funeral”, said Maria (born in Zlataritsa 1900, record – July 1991), “They had invented it in mid 20s. Bulgarian music does not fit to drum”. To Maria and to the other Bulgarians the combination between Roma musicians, new genre of music and new instrument was strange and not easily acceptable.

We agree with Silverman’s (1986) statement that under socialism, Roma did manage to ameliorate their conditions through autonomous cultural and economic activity and through taking advantage of the welfare benefits of the state. The economic realm was an important arena of autonomous activity among Bulgarian Roma. Although all Bulgarians were forced to have state assured jobs, Roma creatively fashioned second jobs in the gray market, dealing in building products, clothing, gold, metal-working, and music (Silverman, 1986; Stewart, 1993). Due to obligation every member of society to be employed in state controlled businesses we cannot identify single self-employed musician in Zlataritsa during totalitarian period (1944-1989). But the kids in the families who were not working in the army report their parents or grandparents only as musicians:

[M]y father raised us playing clarinet on parties, weddings and celebrations. People loved to have live music. Now it diminishes. People have no money.

Ethnographic data had shown that necessity to perform in group of at least three musicians was limiting possibilities for single musician to perform and to gain enough money for living. In Zlataritsa which recently has very high rate of unemployment, people remember with nostalgia socialist times when *Militzia* compelled people to go working. It means that musicians' wives were working and bringing money home too. Relatively high income had changed standard of living of *Musicians* group which had influenced positively their group identity. Following narrative is an example on how the messages strengthening positive personal and group identity are interrelated when a person is in a situation to express his/herself.

[I] worked as a driver until 1988-89 and then I returned [after school years] to the army in Zvezdets on Bulgarian-Turkish border. I was Musician sergeant-major. Our spouses had job positions assured by default. My wife started as cleaning personnel in a kindergarten. We had not to pay for accommodations; the salary was very good counting the bonuses because we were living in a border zone. Army gave us so many things – culture, education, and mentality... a lot of things... Gypsies, Bulgarians, Turks, Pomaks we lived very well together!

What is important to be mentioned is the feeling of social equality in terms of ethnicity which was guaranteed by professionalism of the artists.

Since mid-60s a fashionable restaurant with beautiful garden was opened in the center of Zlataritsa. Locals named it “*Dansinga*” (dancing-hall). A brass band of 7 or 9 would perform every night during the summer and people were dancing on the open air tango, waltz and “modern” dances (Twist, Hully Gully etc.). It was not appropriate to play and dance traditional dances like *Horo* or *Ratchenitsa* there. The *Dansinga* was accepted as “more

civilized” and “modern” place. It indisputable influenced *Muzikanti* identity and self-esteem. They felt they act as “civilizers” of local Roma community as well as of Bulgarian majority. The brass band become popular and very often different restaurants in the region would invite the musicians to amuse special clients. The brass band have had mixed in terms of sustainability structure. Some of musicians were working in the town (a postmen, fanner etc.). Others were army musicians visiting Zlataritsa when going on furlough.

Here we are obliged to draw a gross tableau of others Roma groups’ situation: As Silverman states from the early 1970's, all music specifically identified as Roma was prohibited from media and public performance. This ban included the playing and dancing of *kjuchek*, identified as Turkish dance. The *zurna* (keyless oboe) was prohibited in both private and public settings (Silverman, 1986; 1996). In fact, the Bulgarian musical genre "wedding music," in which Roma were primary performers, became a countercultural youth movement in the 1970's and 1980's. Wedding musicians were fined, jailed, harassed, and regulated in the 1980's, but they continued to perform profitably and their young fans grew by the thousands. *Muzikanti* group did not experience such tensions and prohibitions first because of their high positioned status in the Army and second because they were playing and developing specific brass band repertoire nothing to do with *kjuchek*. *Zurna* is not popular instrument in the region of Veliko Tarnovo either.

As army officers, musicians had special status in terms of retirement. “18 years in the Army brass band and you can retire”, proudly said Dimitar. Just retired relatively young men (about their 50s) preferred to return to Zlataritsa and to join local brass band. With the conversion in Bulgarian army and the collapse of military brass band orchestras (early 2000) all of the musicians became unemployed. “They reduced orchestras in 2001. From 36 they left 28. Then they lessened. We were 40 musicians in the brass band and the salaries were miserable”. The former military brass band musicians returned to their

native places. An additional consequence of Army conversion was the rending of informal networks, often developed in the workplace or along kin lines. The informal networks have been partly transformed by the conversion process. This phenomenon had affected all group members. Old friends and relatives developing strong networks during their service in the Army Brass bands were unemployed. The loss of social support networks had a clear atomizing effect on many unemployed or otherwise economically dislocated men (Karjanen, 2005). Spread all over the country in different army units *Muzicians* and their nuclear families reacted differently. Most of them returned to the home town. Several families tried to settle in the big cities (predominantly in the Capital) but in a short period they were discouraged because of new characteristics of labor market which offered low income jobs, open racism and running high prices of home rent. It have to be mentioned that losing previous social status and being labeled just “Gypsy” was very motivating factor for them to return back to Zlataritsa. Being together with the fellows and kin, being included in their habitual social networks was strong pool factor. And this is not unique for the group in question. With the start of invention of market oriented economy, growing unemployment and loss of social security, with the first open racist actions after 1989 many Romany groups acted similarly.

Although social support networks clearly provide avenues for the flow of goods, services, and information, they also provide critical structures for sociality and social integration in an already solicitous social environment (Karjanen, 2005). When Army brass bands began to re-structure, the effects on social networks were direct. Narratives did not tell us stories about tensions among close friends and/ or relatives. In other industries the problems were particularly acute when friends or relatives were faced with direct labor market competition. The competition for the small number of jobs strained friendships and kinship relations (Karjanen, 2005). In our case the direct economic hardship was softened by networks support and still available market for free-

lance musicians. We can speculate on the second economic safe net based on gray economy activities of group members. Still we have not enough ethnographic data to reconstruct a precise picture of economies in the start of post-socialist Transition. Army's brass bands destruction produced new areas of sociality and spontaneous interaction or trust, and has not generated socially atomizing effects. In fact, an increasing option for men in Zlataritsa has been outmigration of the highly skilled musicians precisely those with high levels of social capital (Karjanen, 2005) as it will be explored.

Despite the "military band labor market" is not an option any more the musicians keep the tradition of home (and community) based musical education of boys. They perform occasionally as small free-lance brass bands at weddings, funerals and public events in the region. That's how and why their specific orchestration, style and mixed (military marches and dance music) repertoire is still preserved. Any analysis of the economic aspects of the music would be incomplete without noticing the role of new technologies and the industry that has developed around it.¹⁾ Newly invented keyboards have replaced the bands composed of three or more musicians, making playing an ever more individual activity. Famous musicians have the chance to play even solo all over Bulgaria (predominantly its Northern part, but in the Capital Sofia too) and also abroad, mostly in Spain.

The development of technologies and coming cheaper and easier to produce records (CD, DVD) together with growing multiculturalist movements in post socialist countries after 90s are factors for popularity of specific Roma music. As a result, this particular ethnic music market has become so crowded that it is as hard for musicians to gain fame, popularity, and money.¹⁾ The Zlatarishki *Muzikanti* group's case differs. They are not developing or mastering in ethnic music but very popular Goran Bregovich's soundtracks. It makes them more competitive on larger market. I have in-depth interviews with members of "Reporterite" musician's band formed mostly from ex-army mu-

sicians and their followers. This band varies in number (from 5 to 8 musicians). Their performances are mainly at funerals and small-scale parties. The money gained this way are not of critical importance for their households economy (they count mostly on pensions) but they are supporting sustainability of *Musikanti* identity. In the year 2010 “Reporterite” brass band started to arrange concerts in Sofia clubs. Their dreams are to establish local school for education of Roma and Bulgarian students in their specific orchestration, style and mixed (military and dance music) repertoire. Four years ago a young Bulgarian man living in the nearest town of Gorna Oryahovitsa was invited and he is the first Bulgarian to perform in this Roma orchestra.

Being freelance musician is not so profitable, as calculates one of recent migrant to Spain:

[F]rom time to time I am playing with the others here. It is not like in former times still people are inviting us to wedding parties. We are closing a bargain 50 leva (approximately 25 €) per person. It is up to money we are performing 6-7 or 8 musicians on a wedding party. On funerals we are performing 5 to 7 musicians on a rate 10 leva (approximately 5 €) per person.

With regard to their structural characteristics and role, the activities of musicians and their families have a very limited impact on the official economy. As Saitta¹⁾ mentioned they do not create mutual forms of dependency and do not intersect each other by influencing the cost of labor and the price of the goods. The only possibility to gain some money from time to time are to gather herbs, mushrooms or forest fruits which they sale door to door and some of them (male and female) do temporary work in agriculture for elderly Bulgarians.

Group markers

Old photographs have shown that about early 40s of 20th century *Muzikanti* group does not differ considerably from majority in terms of appearance in the way most Roma group did (poor, strange dressed, shoeless etc.). More than this, men from this group wearing costumes and white shirts differed from agrarian majority. They looked close to local elite than to average people. Ethnographic data does not show any difference in terms of diet too.

In the introductory part it was mentioned that in the times of coming to Zlataritsa *Muzikanti* group started rapid process of conversion from Islam into Eastern Orthodox Christianity on the level of daily practices. Gradually involved and getting familiar with beliefs and practices of neighboring Orthodox Christian majority (ritual year and family celebrations) they started to perform them in the group. It is important to explore religious affiliation because of its strong group differentiation power preserved on the Balkans until nowadays and builds visible borders between groups. I agree with Comaroff & Comaroff (1991, pp. 250-251) that the conversion cannot be seen as analytical category because it always is a part of broader historical transformations. As it was observed in other cases

[the] religious change entailed first and foremost a change in practices and that knowledge, or "belief," was acquired gradually as part of a wider universe of meanings (Grosz-Ngaté, 2002, p. 6).

This pattern can be clearly seen in the case of *Muzikanti* group and starts to occur recently in *Bulgarian Muslims* group. The local priest, very active and supported in his efforts by national Church officials, plays important role in this process. Thus in the field of religious affiliation it seems to be witnessing a process of homogenization (slow going process of conversion)

in a relatively high secularized environment. But still this process does not mean that the group borders are annihilated or that the conversion is irreversible. Until early 60s *Tzigani Muzikanti* have had separate (Muslim) cemetery. There is a location named “*Tzigansko grobishte*” [Roma cemetery] in Zlataritsa surroundings. We have no reliable data to prove if this cemetery was created on ethnic or on religious base. Collective memories do not keep any information on that cemetery. Because of assimilatory strategy of Communist regime the Muslim cemetery was closed about early 60s and since then there is only one shared cemetery. “*Our cemetery looks like a sandwich*”, says Father Ivan (45), the local priest, “*Tzigani, Bulgarians, Vlasi*– they are all together”.

The ethnic group of Gypsies is bilingual. Young generations are fluent in Bulgarian. They prefer to talk Bulgarian between themselves and they use their group language rarely at home – to communicate with elderly people. In the interviews with large mixed groups I had registered situational code switching and I agree with Woolard (1999) that this creates relation between two systems in a linguistic repertoire, and between two corresponding social situations. The statement of Mayers-Scotton (1993, p. 122): “Code switching itself becomes unmarked choice for making salient simultaneously two or more positively valued identities” is applicable to the case of *Muzikanti* group. The group members have been taught at their mothers tongue and it is still a principal criteria in creating group identity (and borders) but this language becomes less and less important in groups strategies because it is exclusive on local, national (Bulgarian dominated nation state) and international levels.

There were three traditional ethnic zones (*mahali*) in Zlataritsa until almost early 50s – *Bulgarian (Gorna and Dolnamahala), Vlashkamahala* and *Tziganska (Muzikanti) mahala*. Nomadism was not a cultural trait of this group. They remember that even in the town of Kotel (memories are going as far as late 19th century) their ancestors used to live in solid houses. This is

something that had positive consequences on their self-esteem and identity, and it should be important for the analysis. The houses in *Tsiganska mahala* are relatively small but good furnished and kept in a good condition. A nice glade was the favorite place for social life since 50s. The territorial boundaries become to break about this time with first big wave of migration to the big cities and with relatively increasing incomes of the whole local population – first slowly than on regular basis. Both *Tzigani* groups (*Vlasi* and *Muzikanti*) had started to buy abandoned houses of Bulgarians. But until nowadays they prefer the new houses to be situated relatively close to the old neighborhood. The *Muzikanti* prefer to buy houses in *Gornata mahala*. In terms of spacing the group tends to expand. It explains their dominating identity related mostly to the town than to the neighborhood.

Each ethnic group in Zlataritsa tends to arrange a meeting point and place to socialize located at the edge of their relatively preserved neighborhood. This strategy shows tend for controlled openness of the group. Those meeting points range from benches situated in front of the houses where neighbors communicate in the evenings and children play around, to the space in front of some store or pub. The *Muzikanti* predominantly gather around a pub in *Gornata Mahala*. They had abandoned the meadow which was their favorite place in times when the group was relatively closed (early years of settlement).

The marriage market (the balance between males and females in marriageable age) in Zlataritsa passed through several crises in 20th century. The biggest one happened at late 40s in the process of fast urbanization, industrialization and nationalization of the arable lands. The flow of young migrants to the big cities left the proportions of village youngsters misbalanced. The lack of potential marriage partners was partly fulfilled via marriages with girls from the places where the young Zlataritsa's Bulgarians held their army services and via chain migrations after the first maiden from certain remote vil-

lage comes. The temporary lack of boys was partly compensated via marriages with soldiers working on the construction of railway Zlataritsa – Elena (1960-1968). Those were the times that put the end of local endogamous circle. Almost until 60s there is no reliable data about mixed marriages in terms of ethnic or religious affiliation. But the possibility to have marriages between Roma and Bulgarians was known far before the first mixed marriages had happened. People were talking about *Melalii* – a group constructed by offspring of Gypsy-Bulgarians marriages. Even today some locals confuse “*Starite Bulgari*” with *Melalii* in attempt to explain why those obviously Roma people are so deep integrated into Bulgarian society. At the end of 50s and 60s we can register fast transition in the social and educational status of *Muzikanti* group. The specialized education in Army Brass Band Schools had opened new possibilities for Roma boys. Studying far from home (and far from the relatively closed until than group) in mixed school, working for the Army and enjoying all privileges and prestige of it, moving with their families from town to town because of Army politics – those were some of the factors which shaped completely new generation of well educated, well paid, good integrated musicians. Thus they become possible matches for Bulgarian girls which families stood in Zlataritsa and having low incomes working in socialist cooperatives. Nowadays the number of mixed marriages between Roma and Bulgarians became so common, that the collective memory does not keep any trace about the first couple to do this. Except the marriage of a girl from Sofia to *Muzikanti* boy in mid 60s in which case the stress was on moving from the Capital to the village (evaluated as personal regress), nobody remembers any tensions because of ethnically mixed marriage. I find that the mixed marriages are the main indicator for plausibility of group boundaries. The mixed (in terms of ethnic or religious affiliation) marriages create temporary micro intermediate groups which strategy is generally directed to integration in Bulgarian macro society. Because of still preserved social prestige of

Muzikanti group the identification of children in mixed marriages often tends to be related to Gypsy origin.

From mid 90s a local Roma activist gained support from Euro Roma party. Since then there are at least two representatives of *Muzikanti* group elected in the City Council. One of representatives recently is a Bulgarian married to Gypsy husband. Because the activist had left Zlataritsa at 2007 and the others are not politically related to ethnic defined party I observed that for the next elections no Euro Roma member of the council was elected. As many Roma groups all over Bulgaria *Muzikanti* group gives its support to the powerful politicians who work close to them in pre-election period.

Those times (mid-90s) main musicians organized “*Reporteri*” brass band. This small orchestra which constantly changes the number of artists gained popularity in pretty wide region. Still the regularity of performances is not enough to assure stable incomes for musicians. We can state that “*Reporteri*” brass band serves to keep group dignity and music related identity.

The group boundaries constructed on ethnic or religious belonging are constantly reshaping up to group strategies. The review of main indicators for construction of group boundaries shows that we can call *Muzikanti* group in Zlataritsa a dynamic “open” local community with pervious group borders. People there are spatially and socially close.

Migrations, mobility

The movement of people and goods across borders is linked to the production and assertion of new identities and changed group boundaries. The important questions to solve are how these new encounters and opportunities for travel, mobility and trade affect the creation of new identities. Migration and mobility are processes which change people’s perceptions, orientations and social worlds throughout the period of seeking and performing jobs abroad.

The standard of living for most Bulgarians and especially for minority groups' members today is significantly lower than that in 1989. These economic hardships, combined with the newly gained right to travel have precipitated a wave of Bulgarian emigration (Ghodsee, 2002). But the cut in standard of living per se is not sufficient to explain migrations of *Musikanti*. The possibilities to exercise their profession, to develop their skills and – to perform in public - those are very important push-factors for them too. Their socialist times identity as army musicians was taken away and their anticipated capitalist identity as famous artists (retired or free-lance) is almost unavailable. With its newly-found independence from the state and with new struggles for resources and viable economic future, the *Muzikanti* group faced choices that are far more complicated (Gille, 2002) than could have been explained by simple push-pool theories.

During the fieldwork I discovered a recently formed phenomenon: Because of unemployment and difficulties to find job and to develop their musical culture, most of musicians from Zlataritzta become temporary labor migrants in Spain. The process started about the new Millennium. Until 2007 when Bulgaria becomes a member of EU they were working as street musicians on three month basis (with respect to visa regime). I had the unique chance to interview the most prominent ex-military band musician from Zlatariza – Mikhail Demirev during his visit for holydays at home.

[M]y brother in law went there in 2003. He told me: Come to play and we can make money!" We were together in Momchilgrad and Pleven [during army brass bans service], now we are together in Spain.

This case illustrates the core characteristics of the group in question – professional and kin networks are almost identic. Most of contemporary scholars would conceptualize these networks in terms of a “transnational so-

cial field.” I agree that “the Roma’s experience is perhaps the most ancient and developed in the field of transnationalism.”¹⁾

The members of *Muzikanti* group estimated the merits of keyboard instruments which give them freedom to perform solo. It made the decision for migration more easy as it became a question of personal choice. Performing on the street as informal and autonomous job affects the identity of these immigrants positively. “We are well accepted in Bilbao. We play partly their music. There is my cousin, pensioner after his service in the army brass band. We perform together or solo. I brought my trumpet and clarinet. They love music!”

Despite all *Muzikanti* declare that it is temporary labor migration immigrants’ strategies are directed toward integration in wider society which is the only way to provide social groups with equal chances of insertion. Like other immigrants *Muzikanti* are looking for mediators who are capable to support them: “Caritas [Internationalis] helps immigrants. When you learn Spanish you can find a job. My wife advertised for job in their office. They arranged for her position of house keeper very soon. She cleans and they are pampering and respecting her”. It is not surprising that low skilled wife managed to enter labor market very soon. The prominent place of Roma women in the economic sphere can be more fully understood by examining a longer historical trajectory. For more than a century, Roma women have worked outside the home among non-Roma population as seasonal agricultural workers, traders, fortune tellers, singers or dancers (And, 1976). Housekeeping and babysitting are traditional women immigrants jobs in which Bulgarian women gained good reputation in Spain.

Finding good job positions, managing their job permissions and documents to allow them stay longer and calculating advantages immigrants are starting chain migrations by inviting their relatives:

[M]y daughter and her husband came. They would spend four months and went back to Bulgaria. The son in law did not like to stay. They are young... Our granddaughter went to the kindergarten. She started to learn Basques. The Basques are very good people. The supervisor of my wife said: "You are jobless immigrants. The kid will go to kindergarten without any payment!" and she arranged everything. But the son in law does not like it. He was drummer. My daughter was working with my wife cleaning houses. R. (the wife) works 25 hours weekly.

A newly discovered pride of well informed and highly positioned well accepted professionals can be seen in following statement:

Spaniards are posing questions about Bulgaria. They do not know about our country. When we declare we were working for the army, people show respect. I was interviewed for a newspaper. Tourists take many pictures with us. Who knows where around the globe our pictures are placed in rich houses.

Very important reason to develop strategy for long term stay in Spain is the lack of bad experiences related to their ethnicity:

[T]here is no discrimination in Spain! Hitanos haven't been separated because they are talented actors, musicians. If there is a stranger they do not call him Gypsy even if his skin is very dark. We have not met their Gypsies. One cannot recognize who is who. There is no discrimination there that is why!

More than this, *Muzikanti* discovered newly emerging solidarity between Bulgarian citizens migrating to Spain:

[W]e had met other Bulgarians. Hearing that we talk Bulgarian they are coming and asking “Where from you are?” And we celebrate together different feasts, no body counts that we are Gypsies.

This brief review of recent *Muzikanti* migrations to Spain requires their strategies to be mentioned. All of interviewed musicians declare that their mobility is only for collecting extra money to assure better life in home town:

[N]ow we are starting to collect money. I want to restore my little house in Zlataritsa. To make my garden more pretty, to have facilities. You tell me is it temporary labor migration? We are not migrants!

Conclusion

Starting with internal migration from Kotel to Zlataritsa in the end of 19th century the Roma group in question started to redraw its spatial and social map, to move its boundaries. Highly adaptive Roma people fulfilled an empty economic niche – they started mastering in Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox majorities’ folk and modern music. Entering army brass bands assured for men new social positions and it was gradually changing the status of the group. Ethnographic data cannot give us reliable information when exactly the group accepted the name *Muzikanti*. I can testify only that in 60s this name was wide spread. Working in army brass bands enlarged the geographical map of this group and changed its social status. Families were living for years in distant towns meeting new people, networking beyond the professional circle but still preserving kin networks. Many borders (social, ethnic, religious) were crossed. The one which in-

dicates the new situation is regular crossing the border of endogamy as early as about 60s. Facing challenges of Bulgarian transition urged *Muzikanti* to develop new strategies aiming to preserve their living standard. Networks based on kinship appeared to be a very useful tool for developing successful strategies. Thus *Muzikanti* managed to be represented in city Council as well as to develop profitable mobility to Spain, keeping their not so profitable but still respected positions on music market in the region.

Starting their temporary labor migrations in Spain as street musicians *Muzikanti* does not feel they are breaking the law. They are positive that self-employed street musician cannot be subjected to extradition. They appreciate their education in army brass bands which allows them to enter wider music market. Thus successful labor migration to Spain and performances in the region are the main factors to preserve specific group identity both – crossing many social and state borders and keeping the most important one – that of ethnic origin. Development of their own brass band “Reporteri” is the thread keeping the net based on music performance stout. This way the group in questions manages to keep its group identity and open and permeable but still strong group boundaries.

NOTES

1. <http://old.terrelibere.org/doc/roma-in-sicily-informal-economy-and-social-advancement>

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