

RESISTANCE IN EVERYDAY LIFE
AND THE PERFORMATIVITY OF THE TURKISH MINORITY
IN BULGARIA (1946-1989)

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Onur CİDDİ, certify that,

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ABSTRACT

Resistance in Everyday Life

and the Performativity of the Turkish Minority in Bulgaria (1946–1989)

This thesis examines the passive and mild resistance developed by the Muslim Turkish minority, who lived in Bulgaria during the period of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, against assimilation policies, on the basis of personal identity, culture, and everyday life habits. The study focuses on the period between 1946 and 1989, an era which has been relatively neglected in terms of history writing. In this context, while revealing the long-term assimilation policy against the Muslim Turkish minority, it also sheds light on a special period in the history of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. The study ethnographically covers the villages of Buranlar, Kufallar, and Omranköy in Bulgaria. It examines the daily life practices and performances developed against the assimilation policies of the state as a kind of "passive resistance", through the recollections of the social and cultural experiences of those who still live in these villages and others who migrated to Turkey.

This study also reveals that, contrary to what has been put forward so far, the long-term assimilation policy in Bulgaria towards the Turkish Muslim minority began to form from the early years of the founding of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. In this context, this work is carried out to bring a new perspective to minority studies in Bulgaria.

ÖZET

Bulgaristan Halk Cumhuriyeti'nde Türk Azınlığın Gündelik Yaşamı ve Direniş Pratikleri (1946-1989)

Bu tez, Bulgaristan Halk Cumhuriyeti döneminde Bulgaristan'da yaşamış olan Müslüman Türk azınlığın asimilasyon politikalarına karşı geliştirdikleri pasif ve düşük yoğunluklu direniş benlik, kültür, ve gündelik yaşam adetleri üzerinden incelemektedir. Çalışma dönemsel olarak, tarih yazımı açısından daha az ele alınmış olan 1946 ve 1989 yılları arasındaki döneme odaklanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda Müslüman Türk azınlığa karşı uygulanan uzun vadeli asimilasyon politikasını ortaya koyarken Bulgaristan Halk Cumhuriyeti tarihinin özel bir dönemine de ışık tutar. Çalışma etnografik olarak Bulgaristan'ın Buranlar, Kufallar, ve Omranköy köylerini kapsar. Bu köylerde hala yaşamakta olan ve göçmen olarak Türkiye'ye yerleşmiş olanların sosyal ve kültürel deneyimleri üzerinden devletin asimilasyon politikalarına karşı geliştirilen gündelik hayat pratikleri ve gösterimlerini bir tür "pasif direniş" olarak inceler.

Bu çalışma, ayrıca, günümüze değin önesürüldüğünün aksine, Bulgaristan'da Türk Müslüman azınlığın maruz kaldığı uzun vadeli asimilasyon politikasının Bulgaristan Halk Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşunun ilk yıllarından itibaren oluşmaya başladığını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Bulgaristan'daki azınlık çalışmaları üzerine yeni bir bakış açısı kazandırma amacındadır.

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*To the dear memory of those who suffered from the assimilation policies in the
People's Republic of Bulgaria during 1946-1989*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study examines the daily life practices of the ethnic Turkish minority in the People's Republic of Bulgaria between the years 1946 and 1989. This is a rather complex period with different sociopolitical and socio-economic dynamics for the ethnic Turkish Muslim community. It focuses mainly on the villages of Buranlar, Kufallar, and Omranköy located near the city of Shumen and inhabited mainly by the ethnic Turkish Muslim minority.¹ Based on preliminary research, Radio Free Europe Records, and oral history narratives, it explores the social, economic, and cultural life of these villages in a historical framework.

The subject matter of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria has been studied simultaneously in Turkey and Bulgaria mainly as part of nationalist historiographies, as well as by independent historians of the Balkans and Eastern Europe as a modernization experience. In Turkey, the issue of the “Muslim minority in Bulgaria” generally evokes the memory of the forced emigration of 1989, rooted in the tragedies that occurred during the 1980s. The recent scholarship on Muslims in Bulgaria has also developed in Turkey along this line, where earlier historical experiences were hinted at yet the focus remained on contemporary conflicts.

¹ Those three villages' names were changed into Bulgarian with a official governmental decree in 1934. Thus, *Buranlar*, *Kufallar* and *Omranköy* were renamed as *Edinakovtsi*, *Razvigorovo* and *Trem* respectively within the same year. After this year, old official documents that include the previous names, Buranlar and Kufallar were renewed to novel names in Bulgarian. In addition to that, I recently find out Kufallar's name are originates from “Kulfallar” (there is an ‘l’ letter between letters ‘u’ and ‘f’) thanks to Professor Baki Tezcan. These names were present in regional registers in Ottoman Imperial Archive in Istanbul. However, I prefer to use the present name in use between living residents of the village.

The aim of this thesis is to explore more closely the earlier periods of an important history that the Turkish Muslim community has experienced over the years.

The scholarly literature has thoroughly explored the general history of Bulgaria, after its independence from the Ottoman Empire. Focusing on the villages of the three villages, Buranlar, Kufallar, and Omranköy, this study hopes to shed some light to the experience of the Turkish minority experience within the general historical processes that Bulgaria went through. This historical process mainly includes the inter-war era and the post-war communist period, where the ethnic Turkish minority went through a modernization process with its social, economic, and educational institutions. Adopting a focus on the everyday life of these three villages, this study tries to delineate and understand the social entropy that the ethnic Turkish minority has experienced over the last century. It has therefore developed a perspective, which tries to transcend the already noted range of events and approaches associated with that era and its people. Although the study primary focuses on a specific period of 1946-1989, it requires a comprehensive analysis of the interwar period in order to better understand the socio-political and demographical developments in the country, with regard to the state and minority relations.

By taking those villages as micro samples of the period under study, it aims to offer an in-depth perspective, based on local but wide-ranging fieldwork and archive research. Hence, this study also reveals that the long-term assimilation policy in Bulgaria towards the Turkish Muslim minority began to form from the early years of the foundation of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. In this context, this work hopes to bring a new perspective on minority studies in Bulgaria beyond what has

been so far put forward. These sources focus on Bulgaria's minority problem in transnational perspectives with an eye on their multi-dimensional aspects that emerged in the life experiences of ethnic Turkish communities. The study therefore takes everyday life as its center, exploring the strained interaction between the state's assimilation policies and the Muslim minority groups' passive resistance. The micro-historical and ethnographic studies on the ethnic Turkish community, reveal that everyday life practices require a more profound analysis within the given period, namely during 1946 and 1989. The analysis of these passive resistance dynamics of the minority groups against the Bulgarian state's assimilation policies points out to an important historiographical topic. Herein, this study claims that Bulgaria's assimilation campaign towards its Muslim subjects did not start with 1980s or directly after the state's 1956 April decisions, as various contemporary sources argue.² Not the campaign, but the assimilation notion dates back much earlier, to official establishment of the state in 1946. The Turkish minority started to cultivate passive resistance methods towards radical transformation in the socio-economic and cultural dynamics experienced in their daily life.

The study of the Muslim minority groups, both in Bulgaria and in Turkey, has been directly or indirectly grounded by the state institutions simultaneously. Among the extensive field studies that started to be conducted in the early 1950s and 1960s, one can cite in Bulgaria the works of historians and sociologists like Hristo Hristov and Ivan Snegarov from the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, who had carried

² In April 1956, the 8th Plenum of the Bulgarian Communist Party was held. The plenum is known as the meeting in which many 'integration' measurements were added to the agenda to be put into practice in the coming years. The plenum signified a significant breaking point for Muslim Minorities and the Bulgarian state. The period which began with the 1980s, is known as the last steps of the Rebirth Process that started to expose the Turkish Muslim minority in 1956.

valuable research on Muslim minority groups in Bulgaria.³ In this regard, some essential sociological and ethnographical studies focused on the Muslim minority of the country. For instance, Yaroslav Stefanov and his team's comprehensive research on Bulgarian Alevi in the Razgrad region in the early 1980s (*Bulgaristan Alevileri ve Demir Baba Tekkesi*) is a significant example of the valuable studies on the topic and community.

On the other hand, if the earlier meetings on integration policies of the Bulgarian Communist Party are taken into account, those studies on the Muslim minority groups living an isolated life in the countryside can be taken as field reports for preparing a detailed campaign plan for the 'modernization' of those groups. However, the state's research attempts would have transcended into another dimension by the 1970s, and sociology and social anthropology studies would have given way to historians to create a new scientific Bulgarian mythology and bring new approaches for the origins of Bulgarian society, including the minority groups. Those attempts were signaling the incoming of the national revival campaign.

Muslim minorities in Bulgaria have become a significant subject matter for the disciplines of history and sociology since the harsher implementations of the Rebirth campaign on the Muslim minority had become visible internationally in the mid-1980s. During the conflict, academic production generally continued through meta-narratives shaped around the nationalist agendas of both countries. The Bulgarian Academy of Science promoted the Bulgarian roots of the Pomaks and ethnic Turks in Bulgaria, presenting them as 'victims' of Ottoman colonization.⁴ In

³ See Hristov, Hristo and Veselin Nikolov (eds.), (1958). *Ot minaloto na bŭlgarskite myusyulmani v Rodopite*, Sofiya: Izdatelstvo na Bŭlgarskata akademiya na naukite; and Snegarov, Ivan (1958) *Ttursko upravlenie Pretska za kultovoto razvitie na bŭlgarskiya narod i balkansko priyatelstvo*, Sofiya: BAN.

⁴ Borden, "The Politics of Nationalism under Communism in Bulgaria," 325.

this regard, while the Bulgarian side was claiming a Bulgarian origin of not only Pomaks but also ethnic Turks in Bulgaria, the Turkish side was trying to defend the rights of Muslims in Bulgaria on the basis of their 'pure' and 'untouched' Turkish origin as the last representatives of the lost Ottoman heritage in the Balkans..

Alongside these constructed historical meta-narratives, there was also another significant point. The Muslim communities of Bulgaria were considered as single and unchanging social organisms. In this regard, their socio-cultural background, which varied from region to region, and village to village was ignored for many years. Pomaks, Roma and ethnic Turks have generally been taken as whole, stable, monolithic social forms in Bulgaria, one of the most significant countries in Europe where transculturation was grounded.

On the other side of the border, Turkey also initiated and funded some studies, especially after the winter of 1984, when the current social unrest appeared among Muslim societies against the Bulgarian politburo's hardening assimilation policies. These were mostly publications that aimed to offer counter narratives to those produced by the official Bulgarian historiography.⁵ In this regard, the Turkish Historical Society started a counter-attack against the nationalist, pseudo-academic attempts of Socialist Bulgaria with a similar tool, another nationalist historiography.⁶ Hence, the academic research on the Muslim minority turned into an international battleground between Bulgaria and Turkey. Both states' governments mobilized their state-sponsored institutions and historians close to each official agenda to support their national historical agendas on Muslims in Bulgaria. Those 'academic' conflicts between the two states continued during the 1980s until Zhivkov's resignation in

⁵ On the academic publication policy of Bulgarian Academy of Science on the case of official notion of Bulgarian historiography, see Hristov, Hristo (1980). *Bŭlgariya 1300 godini*, Sofia: Sofia Press

⁶ As an example, see, Alp, İ. (1990). *Belge ve fotoğraflarla Bulgar mezâlimi: (1877-1989)* (Vol. 1). Trakya Üniversitesi.

November 1989 and the People's Republic of Bulgaria's dissolution in 1990.

Nevertheless, the Muslim minority in Bulgaria suffered from these discursive battles, as is best expressed in the saying “grass gets crushed, while elephants fight on it.”

Various researchers and academics who have scrutinized the minority issue in Bulgaria. Nevertheless, the approach towards the Muslim communities has been mostly confined to seeing them as mere ‘statistics’ or ‘ingredients’ of the nationalist agendas of both Bulgaria and Turkey. Although one clearly observes that the nationalist historiography of the 1980s still prevails in contemporary research, there have also been estimable studies, which were conducted by a new generation of social scientists and historians. Bilal Şimşir’s *Turks of Bulgaria: 1878-1985* (1988) may be cited among such works. Şimşir’s book can be said to follow the mainstream historiography and official discourse, but it also presents a comprehensive and probably the most detailed analysis of the Muslim presence in Bulgaria.⁷

After 'the Great Excursion' in summer 1989 and the dissolution of socialist rule in Bulgaria by 1990, studies on Muslim minorities, especially the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria, started to acquire another dimension. With the post-communist era, there has been also a change in the Bulgarian Academy of Science, which gained a more autonomous structure. During that period, state-funded studies have generally come to an end, and they began to develop diverse perspectives and research approaches. Therefore, relatively impartial sociological and historical studies increased, with a focus on Bulgaria's minority problem. During that time, scholars like Rumen Daskalov and Krassimira Daskalova, Anastasija Pashova, Ivanichka Georgieva and Vera Mutafchieva who had also lived through the Rebirth Campaign in Bulgaria brought a new perspective to the ‘Ottoman experience’, and began to give works on

⁷ See Şimşir, “Bulgaristan Türkleri (1878-2008)”.

minority studies in Bulgaria.⁸ However, it should be also mentioned that those works were generally produced by scholars from sociology, ethnology and anthropology disciplines. After the 1990s, a statist tradition or convention in historiography among historians prevailed. Even though the nationalist agenda from the 1980s seemed to be left behind, most eminent Bulgarian historians did not publish on the topic, and preferred to remain silent.

Since the late 1970s, scholars from other countries have also been interested in topics like the Ottoman presence and Muslim minority groups in Bulgaria. Carol Silverman and Richard J. Crampton have closely followed the situation in the country and commented on everyday life and minority politics in Bulgaria.⁹ However, the actual boom in the field would come later.

Studies on the Muslim minority in Bulgaria had not evolved significantly through the 1990s and the early 2000s. European and American academia started to evaluate the topic from socio-cultural and socio-economic perspectives, with an eye on the minority's everyday life dynamics in Bulgaria. Mary Neuburger, Krissimira Daskalova, Maria Todorova, Ali Eminov and Kristen Ghodsee have been pioneering scholars who brought new perspectives to the topic.¹⁰

In Turkey, interest in the minority issue in Bulgaria continued throughout the 1990s, losing ground by the 2000s. Herein, studies that focus on the topic remained

⁸ See Todorova, "Identity (trans) formation Among Bulgarian Muslims"; Daskalova, *Voices of Their Wwn: Oral History Interviews of Women*"; Daskalov, "Debating the Past: Modern Bulgarian Historiography—From Stambolov to Zhivkov"; Pashova, "The Muslim Roma—An "Inconvenient" for the Communist Regime Minority." Mutafchieva, "The Notion of the "Other" in Bulgaria: The Turks. A Historical Study."

⁹ See Silverman, "Bulgarian Gypsies: Adaptation in a Socialist Context"; Crampton, R. J. (2007). *Bulgaria*. Oxford University Press; Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*, 49; Creed, "Masquerade and postsocialism: ritual and cultural dispossession in Bulgaria."

¹⁰ See Ballinger & Ghodsee, "Socialist Secularism: Religion, Modernity, and Muslim Women's Emancipation in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, 1945–1991"; Neuburger, "The orient within: Muslim minorities and the negotiation of nationhood in modern Bulgaria".

relatively limited. After the 1989 forced emigration, academic studies in Turkey generally concentrated on the name-changing campaign, the banning of Turkish in the public sphere, and the 1989 emigration. Therefore, most scholars examining the Muslim minority in Bulgaria limited their framework and perspectives to case and event-based studies.

On the other hand, much research and many studies were carried out on the integration process of ethnic Turks who were expelled or immigrated to Turkey in 1989 and afterwards. At this point, Ayşe Parla's studies thoroughly cover the post emigration and integration process of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria in Turkey.¹¹ One should also cite İbrahim Kamil's newly published comprehensive study based on Bulgarian state archives, *Bulgaristan Türkleri ve Göçler, Bulgaristan Komünist Partisi Gizli Belgeleri 1944-1989*, which also has an important place for state and minority studies in Turkey. After the 2010s, thanks to efforts of Mehmet Hacısalihoğlu ve Neriman Ersoy Hacısalihoğlu¹², Nurcan Baklacioğlu¹³, and Zeynep Zafer,¹⁴ studies on Muslim minority in Bulgaria academic interest increased in Turkey. In addition, with Mehmet and Neriman Hacısalihoğlu's initiative, the Center for Balkan and Black Sea Studies began to offer a fruitful home for academic studies on Bulgaria.

¹¹ See Parla, "Longing, belonging and locations of homeland among Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria. Southeast European and Black Sea Studies"; Parla, "Irregular workers or ethnic kin? Post-1990s labour migration from Bulgaria to Turkey"; Parla, "Remembering across the border: Postsocialist nostalgia among Turkish immigrants from Bulgaria"; Parla, "Labor migration, ethnic kinship, and the conundrum of citizenship in Turkey"; Parla, "Precarious hope: Migration and the limits of belonging in Turkey".

¹² See Hacısalihoğlu & Hacısalihoğlu, (eds.) "89 Göçü: Bulgaristan'da 1984-89 Azınlık Politikaları ve Türkiye'ye Zorunlu Göç".

¹³ See, Baklacioğlu, "Bulgaristan Göçmenlerinin Gündeminde Mülkiyet, Vatandaşlık, Sosyal Güvenlik Sorunları ve Siyasal Temsilin Önemi. *Geçmişten Günümüze Asimilasyon ve Zorunlu Göçü Anma Etkinlikleri*"; Baklacioğlu, "Between neo-Ottomanist kin policy in the Balkans and Transnational Kin Economics in the EU".

¹⁴ See, Zafer, "Bulgaristan Türklerinin 1984-1989 Eritme Politikasına Karşı Direnişi"; Zafer, "Bulgaristan'da Zorunlu Asimilasyona Karşı Mücadele ve Kadın.

These new studies began to give underscore the local sense of belonging and post-displacement traumatic experiences among Turks of Bulgaria. Interest in oral history and historical ethnographic studies increased, regarding the memory of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria. Oral history offered “more historical data”, which was further from official national agendas, and reflected a historical perspective from below. The earlier period of socialist rule in Bulgaria for example had been less covered, where oral history narratives, autobiographies, photographs and artifacts revealed important information related to this period. Within this sense, visual sources consisting of photographs, audio recordings, and written sources consisting of academic literature, official documents, personal diaries, and local stories constituted the primary sources of this research

In term of its methodology, this study benefited from both archival and library research as well as the oral history approach. Secondary sources consisted of a broad range of regional studies on the recent history of Southeastern Europe and the Balkans. As primary documents, the archival material consisted of records of Radio Free Europe and a series of periodicals. The documents of Radio Free Europe were intelligence reports, which documented autobiographies of witnesses from the Turkish Muslim communities from different parts of the country. Other primary documents also consisted of published personal memoirs and collected interview narratives on the era studied in this work. As written primary documentation, past and contemporary periodicals offer valuable information. Some of these periodicals were published by the urban Muslim intelligentsia during the interwar period. There have been current studies conducted by contemporary Bulgarian journalists as well, after the opening of the state archive in Bulgaria in 2000. However, contrary to other state archives in the post-socialist block members in the Balkans and Eastern Europe,

the Bulgarian State Archives opened its doors to research relatively late, in 2010. Even though some Bulgarian journalists had conducted research there by the early 2000s, the archives had remained closed or ‘semi-closed’ to researchers until the mid-2000s. The state archives offer also relatively limited sources, which documented a period until the late 1940s, especially regarding minority subjects living in the countryside of Bulgaria. There have been however numerous sociological and anthropological works on “economic development” in the countryside, which have covered the period until the late 1980s.

In this regard, a significant part of primary sources also came from memoirs and oral history. One important domain of information belonged to published memoirs. The personal memoirs on the interwar period are particularly valuable, as the only sources shedding light on the experience of the Turkish minority at that era. This study also relies on oral history interviews conducted with individuals who experienced and witnessed the interwar period in Bulgaria. The in-depth interviews I used in this thesis have been conducted with the village's current inhabitants, Buranlar, Kufallar, and Omranköy, along with natives of these towns who had immigrated to Turkey with the waves of migration from 1950 onwards and in 1989. In that regard, many of my interviewees reflected on their experience under the era of socialism in Bulgaria, allowing me to draw a frame from the perspective of the ethnic Turkish minority in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria rarely studied so far.

As the study aimed to spotlight a minority community's everyday life, interviews revealed many memories of education, and of the cultural forms of performances, including social and religious rituals. They also displayed a series of long-lasting, local passive resistance forms for cultural survival despite the state's enduring official integration policy. With a free-flow method, I was able to collect a

large diversity of accounts, where the informants took the lead in the interview, structured and constructed their narratives. At this point, I benefited greatly from Pierre Bourdieu's "sociological eye" approach, with an "active and methodological listening" method, which makes the interview interactive. This approach enables the interviewer to see how the oral history interview provides possibilities that result in a shift in methodology for a dynamic unfolding. The subject's viewpoint within the socio-historical context between the lines of narratives and their inner conflict must be considered during the interview process.¹⁵

This thesis' historical narrative follows a chronological line of incidents that have profoundly affected the minority's relatively stable and conventional way of living after 1946. It begins with the earlier institutional reforms of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, such as the radical regulations in the education system and the establishment of the collective farms as a significant turning point for changing daily rituals in the countryside. In the following years, these changes led to education and cultural reforms ranging from women's emancipation to educational projects to create a 'new socialist citizen' in the Bulgarian society. The reforms enforced alongside other changes in the daily life of the Muslim minorities, which this study examines as a "passive resistance." The community develops a long-lasting *silent endeavor* to sustain its heritage as a passive and in-depth form of resistance, which J.C. Scott calls the *everyday form of resistance*.¹⁶ There, rituals emerge as a dominant cultural form that enables community members to sustain their identity. Covering different traditions from birth rites to funeral practices, rituals offered a broad framework vis-à-vis the transformations that community members had been exposed

¹⁵ Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, L. Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses, *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, 23.

¹⁶ For further information about passive resistance, see J. C. Scott, Everyday forms of resistance. *The Copenhagen journal of Asian studies*, 4, (1989).

to during the communist period. This analysis domain necessitates a focus on women and children of the community to understand and analyze the ‘process of socialization.’ While women constituted the community's identity stronghold, children from both sexes were breaking points of the society who would have played out the indoctrination of the Muslim community. In some cases, the mobility of a family under socialism, for instance, could affect domestic gender roles within the intergenerational transformation of economic, cultural, and social capital with going through this mobility.

Lastly, I would like to imply that neither society nor relatively smaller social groups that the community consisted of could be regarded as homogeneous, stable, and constant organisms. In that sense, while I was starting to study for the project, I kept that notion in mind and tried to be resilient as much as I could manage. Looking at a group, which experienced many traumas during a long period that ended up in a forced mass emigration has been a challenging task for a researcher with strong ties with that community, in maintaining a distance from the period to be studied along with its continual memory.

This thesis has been prepared with a broad perspective to shed light on a historical process that still needs further attention. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 tries to introduce the theoretical and methodological framework for the study of a long-neglected part of Bulgarian history regarding its Muslim minority. Giving reference to the literature produced by eminent scholars in recent Bulgarian studies, like Mary Neuburger and Ali Eminov, it shows how oral history and performance studies offer important methodological tools for the research of an undocumented communal experience. My own family memory of Bulgarian Muslim

community has been one key for the reflexivity frame that guided me through the research.

The concept of “Muslim minority” is delineated in Chapter 3, with a demographic review of Muslim minority groups, Roma, Pomaks, and ethnic Turks in Bulgaria. This chapter has a special focus on the analysis of the ethnic Turkish minority during the interwar period in Bulgaria. Chapter 4 highlights the significant turning points in state and minority relations after the establishment of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria from a multidimensional perspective. In this chapter, the earlier period of the socialist regime and its initial effects on daily life in cities and countryside are comprehensively examined within an eye to the issues of emigration, education, and socio-economic relations. Chapter 5 focuses on the collectivization issue, which had a radical transformative impact on the Turkish minority in Bulgaria during the 1950s to the 1970s. There, the issues of Muslim women's emancipation, education, and the community's indoctrination are explored, along with the earlier indications of the Bulgarian state's assimilation policy, which began to be apparent by the late 1960s and early 1970s. Chapter 6 begins with a brief historical analysis of nationalism in Bulgaria. It tries to better understand the harshening assimilation policies by the late 1970s and early 1980s. There the politics of circumcision had been imposed within the Rebirth Process and had strongly affected the ethnic Turkish minority's life in the region. The chapter also examines the infamous name-changing campaign between winter 1984 and spring 1985 through some micro examples from Kufallar and Omranköy. Lastly, the traumatic experience for the Muslim minority in Bulgaria, known as “Tombstone with No Name,” is recounted as a mandatory burial procedure after the name-changing campaign.

CHAPTER 2

TOWARDS A THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK: ON ORAL HISTORY AND PERFORMANCE STUDIES

I began to think about the memory of Bulgarian identity, as a child, when I came across passports given to my family, in the summer of 1998. I was aware that those were written in a ‘different language’ even though I was five and could not read yet. Starting from that time, I began to ask questions. The first literary work about minorities in Bulgaria that I read was, however, *Beyaz Lale* by the famous Turkish author Ömer Seyfettin, a Balkan War veteran. For those unfamiliar with the story, the book focuses on the Muslims' tragedy in Bulgaria during First Balkan War, through a postmortem rape of a young Turkish woman, *Lale*, by a Bulgarian army officer *Radko Balkaneski*. Unfortunately, I was nine years old when I read this brutal story. It was an incredible experience for me and has left a trace in my childhood. I would have noticed an allegory behind naming “Balkaneski” a rapist Bulgarian officer. Even though its writing date is unknown, the story was published in the Ottoman Navy's official magazine in 1914¹⁷. It seems Ömer Seyfettin ground out the story between 1912 and 1914. Ömer Seyfettin was probably aware of the pejorative meaning of “Balkan” and newly emerging relative terms on European media such as “balkanesque” and “balkanism” because of the atrocities that the Balkan states conducted against each other during the first and second wars.

¹⁷ Barış, “Türk Edebiyatına Yansıyan Yönleriyle Türk Savaş Tarihinin Kara Bir Sayfası: Balkan Savaşları”

2.1 Theoretical framework of the research

Instead of a strict relation between signifiers and signified, terms should be considered in a broader framework with multi-components in a *longue-durée*. The term “Balkan” should be regarded as beyond its geographic meaning because it was already embedded in its social and cultural layers. Herein, it expands its definition much beyond the expected and concrete.¹⁸

However, it does not mean that the meaning can be freed from the time. So, it should be considered an inseparable part of the period in which it finds its existence. Todorova criticizes Said; “His trans-historical orientalist discourse is ahistorical not only in the ordinary sense but is methodologically anti-Foucauldian, insofar as Foucault’s discourse is firmly grounded in European modernity.”¹⁹

In my research, the concept of balkanism is quite essential. Balkanism, an idea that could still broadly be accepted today, was initiated by Todorova in contemporary historiography after the 1990s. Even though Todorova drew a line between his notion of balkanism and Said's orientalism, she adopts another close, relative concept, *Nesting-Orientalisms*²⁰, introduced by Milica Bakić-Hayden earlier back in 1992. Through this concept, Bakić-Hayden takes the orientalism concept of Said and adapts it to the Balkans through identity building. According to the concept, each ethno-cultural group creates an *orientalized other*.²¹ Thus, the notion of the orient is being transitive within an endless loop. However, nesting orientalism is still too broad and ‘general’ for me because Bakić-Hayden does not associate the concept with a specific region and period. In this regard, *nesting-balkanisms*, the

¹⁸ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 21.

¹⁹ Todorova, 9.

²⁰ Bakić-Hayden and Hayden, “Orientalist Variations on the Theme” *Balkans*: Symbolic Geography in Recent Yugoslav Cultural Politics.”

²¹ Bakić-Hayden and Hayden.

concept indirectly introduced by Todorova to adopt the concept within one particular periodic and cultural framework, suits the research path better I would have liked to follow.²²

2.1.1 Reflexivity

In the study, concepts of balkanism and nesting-orientalisms have great importance. I have conducted trans-national research in both Bulgaria and Turkey. Moreover, I have carried on this research alongside my identity, being a member of an ethnic Turkish emigrant family from Bulgaria. Furthermore, I had been the only member who was born after emigration in Turkey. I grew in an atmosphere where people were found speaking about Bulgaria, especially the elderly. During those conversations, I occasionally found myself sitting next to them and listening. Sometimes, someone was asking me something about Bulgaria, and others would immediately intervene; “he knows nothing, he was born here [in Turkey].” Therefore, transnationalism and auto-ethnography have been essential concepts for this study.

My grandfather loved to take a walk around, and sometimes he took me with him. I have very little about those walks in my memory now, but I remember a day clearly. Towards evening, he took me for a walk again. I do not remember the exact date; maybe it was around 1997. While we were passing the police station, my grandfather and gate, guard had a short talk. After a while, the guard suddenly asked me, “where are you from?” and I answered, “Samsun” (a city on the central Black Sea coast of Turkey). I was quite a shy boy and used to look down all the time when a stranger tried to talk to me. Again, I looked down when I answered, but I remember

²² Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 53.

my grandfather's pause and the silence probably resulting from the shock of the unexpected answer of mine. After we returned home, he mentioned my brief dialog with the police officer. Unfortunately, I cannot remember the rest, but they may have realized that they have not said to me whom we are and where we are coming from yet. However, the silence of that moment might have been relatively short, but its meaning will have opened quite a long process for me.

This thesis is the product of a somehow auto-ethnography study and research. Through focusing on this topic, I wanted to follow the story behind the three passports I found in my brother's wardrobe in summer 1998. On those documents, there were black and white passport photographs of my big brothers and our parents. Those pictures were familiar to me. However, there was a faded lion stamp on the cover pages, and they were written with a different alphabet that was not quite similar to letters I had been taught some in kindergarten. When I asked my parents about the papers, they say those papers, and they replied they were from Bulgaria. However, I could not understand why they had it, and why does a person need such documents? I would have learned later that a passport was an indicator of a 'citizen' supplied by each country. That was the day I realized we are not from the country we were currently living in. Everyone in the family was an immigrant, and nobody except me was born in Turkey. Since that day, I have followed the past that was left in a foreign country. I could not have a long time with my grandfather. After a while, he had been diagnosed with cancer, and he could not beat the illness.

When I grew older, I started to ask my mother and grandmother questions about 'past times' in Bulgaria. In every situation I confronted within our daily life about the school, social environment, and hospitals where I was visiting quite often because of my mother's profession and my never-ending illnesses, I have always

followed a comparative questioning like; "... well how was it that in Bulgaria then?" I have continued examining the family's past through speaking with family, close relatives, and other acquaintances from Bulgaria. After a while, I have learned that my grandfather had been educated as an imam, but he ended up in the Turkish teacher-ship. He was a tough but loved and respected man in the village. I can still remember his past students' homage to him when they were confronted in the neighborhood where we were living. For a long time, nobody told me about his political affairs. I was in high school when I learned that he was a communist and a member of the Fatherland Front. How could a devoted man, an imam ended up as a communist? How could it have been possible? Nobody has been keen to speak about that. In this regard, it was a long and relatively hard process for going after the past lying in the shadow of the silence. However, that silence has urged me getting stick to the past, which my family had lived.

My parents were working, and my grandmother brought me up. Whenever she noticed the salaah²³, she would turn the radio or TV off and ran to the balcony or to the closest windows immediately to listen to it. If the deceased was 'one of ours,' she was wailing, and I could see the pain she fell into in those moments.

2.1.2 Studies of Ali Eminov

Regarding transnationalism and auto-ethnography, Ali Eminov and his studies, mainly *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria (1997)*, performs a transnational and, with some points, an auto-ethnographic analysis. Eminov is a dissident who left Bulgaria for Greece illegally. Then, he ended up in the USA and pursued a degree in anthropology. He continued his academic career there. Even

²³ Salaah is used for the daily prayers in Islam. Also, it is used for the announcements made from mosques after a Muslim's death.

though he took refuge in the USA, after receiving his citizenship, he was able to visit his hometown, Ardino (in Turkish, Egridere) in Southern Bulgaria, close to the Greece border. Eminov never lost contact with his relatives until the nationalist Rebirth Campaign became evident in Bulgaria. After the collapse of the communist regime in Bulgaria, he was able to continue his studies and in 1997 published the most inclusive study on ethno-religious minorities in Bulgaria.

In this work, Eminov begins with a relatively long socio-cultural and demographic history of minorities in Bulgaria since the sixteenth century when the Anatolian Turcoman tribes started to be settled in the country. However, his actual focus is after the Turco-Russo War of 1877 and 1878 and the Bulgarian Principdom's autonomy. Even though he conducts a classical, meta-narrative-based background reading, he focused on minority groups' tragic experience until WW2 for Bulgaria on September 9, 1944. Eminov touches upon developments in religious and educational institutions and the Muslim minority's socio-economical living through those times. Although he gives place to Pomaks, Tatars, and Muslim Roma, he focuses on the ethnic Turkish minority as the most populous and effective minority groups in Bulgaria.

After 1944, he closely follows nearly all significant socio-political developments in Bulgaria in the case of minority-state relations. Eminov had also lived through the early years of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in person until he escaped to Greece in 1960. Thus, he witnessed some top-down radical changes in the daily living of a minority in the countryside including, collectivization and the socio-cultural manner in Southern Bulgaria where he comes from. Furthermore, thanks to his visits throughout the 1970s and early 1980s, he could observe further first-hand developments under the socialist regime.

2.1.3 Mary Neuburger's Studies

Another essential source that has influenced my study deeply is Mary Neuburger's *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and The Making of Modern Bulgaria* (2012). In her marvelous book, Neuburger analyses Bulgaria's long-lasting modernization process through its agricultural facilities, especially tobacco farming, starting from the country's independence from the Ottoman Empire. Neuburger does not analyze the present superficial historical and economic background reading of the country. On the contrary, she conducts an interdisciplinary examination of the country in the end. Throughout the twentieth century, from a trans-periodic perspective, Neuburger's approach to Bulgarian modernization is quite eye opening because collectivization and the re-arrangement of public space were some of my major focal points during the study.

In Bulgarian, tobacco farming was generally associated with the countryside in Southern and Northeastern Bulgarian, regions densely populated by Muslim minority groups since imperial times.

Without a doubt, tobacco revenues played an important role in the larger modernization projects that accompanied Bulgaria's socialist transformation, one that had far-reaching implications not just for workers—many of whom were women—but also for Bulgaria's Muslim minority populations. The tobacco industry became increasingly dependent on Muslim growers, which encouraged a certain degree of integration of these populations into Bulgarian socialist society. On the other hand, the organization of the tobacco economy enabled a measure of social separation for Muslims, as it allowed (and even required) that they remain in their mountain hamlets, where they could retain distinct cultural attributes. Even as Muslim difference became anathema to the communist state, their potential emigration posed larger problems for Bulgaria's tobacco economy and hence the economy as a whole. In complex ways, then, tobacco was intimately involved in the "Muslim question," a perennial issue in Bulgarian communist politics.²⁴

²⁴ Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria*, 201.

With the collectivization of farming areas in Muslim-populated regions through the 1950s, a new phase opened for the Muslim minority, especially for the female members of those communities. Women were traditionally working in the tobacco farming lines, and the collectivization of land would have brought radical changes under communist Bulgaria. Those acts would shape public space and daily living notions of the Muslim community and even go as far as daring the unveiling of women in the villages in the near future.

2.2 The Concept of Performativity

In the case of the ethnic Turkish community in Bulgaria, it is not possible to mention a homogeneous structure and an absolute similarity across the country. However, the region surrounding Buranlar, Kufallar, and Omranköy villages, gives us a chance to observe a unified community constructed around a socio-cultural identity, with a common language and everyday life habits and traditions.

The notion of performativity stands at the center of how a certain sense of common identity is constructed and practiced. The community constructs its specific rituals as performances and creates opportunities for individuals to get organized under them, which can be defined as Victor Turner's concept, *communitas*.²⁵ *Communitas* is an intense point of a community. It brings the group to the next level and encourages the entire community to share shared experience, usually through a rite of passage. The Muslim Turkish community's example is closer to what Turner calls *existential communitas*²⁶. This allows them to experience an intensification of social identity through a densely symbolic and multi-dimensional bulk of meanings,

²⁵ Turner, "Liminality and Communitas," 130.

²⁶ Ibid., 132.

which is best manifested in everyday life practices both metaphysical and physical alike. There is not much knowledge on performativity of the Muslim minority during the era under study, as both primary and secondary sources on social, cultural, and economical of the Muslim minorities continue to be minimal, especially in the countryside.

On the other hand, within that commonality, rituals take the central place. As one of the oldest media for the community, rituals are not made up of mere structures and functions. In the words of Richard Schechner, “They are also among the most powerful experiences which life has to offer.”²⁷ In deep conflicts related to status, power, and sex, they are the free places that appear around a densely textured choreography in the semiotic framework shaped through the past. At this point, festive events seem to offer places where community members both feel and remember the past, and experience the present and future as best expressed in Turner’s notions of *pre-liminality*, *liminality*, and *post-liminality* developed within a continuous performance.²⁸ In this equation, time and space are not just absolute borders of accounts, and there is an ambiguous temporality, which abides in the subjectivity of the performance under the umbrella of what one calls “everyday life.” According to the notion of liminality, everyday life experience can include the idea of ritual and it can be regarded as a continuous performance that small communities practiced within their isolated habitus, namely in their villages.

In the context of everyday life, performativity comprehends ‘every gesture and sound of people’ under the umbrella of it. Because it is everywhere and everything is a part of it. It is starting from the relationship between a mother and a

²⁷ Schechner, “Performance in Everyday Life,” *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 206-211.

²⁸ Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” 1969, 95.

child, namely through the birth of humankind, every moment which had been lived as part of continuous performativity. In this regard, Turner (1969) also claims that the notion of the ritual begins by birth.²⁹ In addition to this, Schechner also delivers; performativity is not just a term to be studied ‘as’ a concept, but on the contrary, it is the thing to be focused only on it ‘is.’³⁰ Thus, it can be claimed that beginning from the social relations in the micro-framework to even macro-politics, all is closely connected to performativity. Taking performativity into history and social sciences may constitute a pivotal move in better understanding various cultural subjects' daily living performance within specific time and space periods. Moreover, focusing on performativity in history can open a phase to scrutinize past socio-politics events. By doing such a thing in methodology, re-analyzing the structure and evolution of folk dances is of great importance for ethnography and historical research in a micro-framework.

Throughout the thesis, I prefer to follow a chronological line of incidents that could profoundly affect the minority's relatively stable and conventional way of living after 1946. To do that, I begin with the earlier institutional reforms such as radical regulations in the education system and collective farms' establishment as a significant turning point for changing daily rituals in the countryside. Furthermore, it led the positioning of later education and cultural reforms from women's emancipation to educational projects to create the ‘new socialist man’ in Bulgaria.

Moreover, I primarily give points to rituals from birth to death in a broad framework and transformations they had been exposed during the communist period. Within this purpose, I also set the focal point on women and children of the

²⁹ Turner, “Liminality and Communitas,” 134.

³⁰ Schechner, “What is Performance,” *Performance Studies: An Introduction*, 28.

community to understand and analyze the community's 'process of socialization' into the so-called people's socialist brotherhood. Because while women constituted the community's identity stronghold, children from both sexes were breaking points of the society, in which they will have been transformed through them in the future.

2.3 Interdisciplinarity and Everyday Life

Interdisciplinarity in historical studies with a robust domestic tendency is crucial for understanding the geographies and communities' specific conditions within their particularities and retrospectives. To be focused on performativity can open a phase to focus on past social and political events. In this sense, everyday living's re-contextualization constitutes a significant place for historical ethnography to focus on people from below.

On the other hand, studying folklore means touching upon the politics of everyday life. As David E. Apter states, it is "playing the lead in their ways, acting out their political society at large, and its diverse cultural forms in a particular approach."³¹ It can be said that every time occurrences (as performance) were performed within the everyday living, the performance links the future and the past as a mode of communication, a way of inter-generational transmission like the oral tradition.

Most performances, predominantly festive forms, are public enactments in which a culture is encapsulated, enacted, placed on display for itself, and an outsider.³² There has still been an immense amount of untold and undiscovered past

³¹ Apter, "Politics as Theatre: An Alternative View on the Rationalities of Power" in Jeffrey C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen and Jason L. Mast (Eds), *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics and Ritual*. 218-256.

³² Stoeltje and Bauman, "The Semiotic of Cultural Performance," *The Semiotic Web*, ed. T.A. Sebeok and J. Umiker-Sebeok, 589.

that exists at the local level. I would go as far as to claim that, without involving the micro-level within its dynamics in which the community and their rituals and ceremonies were created and shaped throughout the past, it is impossible to understand their daily living completely.

Historical ethnography and particularly social performative studies, which concentrate on communities' rituals and ceremonies, have a significant ground in minority studies. In this sense, Arzu Öztürkmen suggests that; “a performance-centered approach can also be useful in our analysis of protests, boycotts, rebellions and even wars since all public spectacles are closely connected to our perception of historical events.”³³ The notion of ‘event’ can be broadened to daily life practices as a struggle to survive the harsh policies for cultural assimilation as a passive resistance mechanism. One could clearly observe this in the Turkish communities against the Bulgarian government's one-nation project.

During the field research that I conduct, I experienced a directly proportional trend in oral narratives. Namely, the so-called integration of minority policy of the Bulgarian Communist Party (hereafter as BCP) started to make itself evident, particularly after the mid-1950s. Since those periods, we see with the hardening effects of the ongoing assimilatory politics in the minority regions where all the informants of the study had lived. Hereby, daily rituals begin to give place to every day's resistance examples more often in the narratives.

2.4 Oral History and the Past in Shadow

This study is based mainly on an oral history project focused on an ethnoreligious minority community's previous life and cultural survival experience during the

³³ Faroqhi and Öztürkmen, *Celebration, Entertainment, and Theatre in the Ottoman World*, 16.

People's Republic of Bulgaria between 1946 and 1989. During the field research and interviews, I tried to ask comprehensive and open-ended questions. Question structure is supported mainly with probes and loaded questions to deepen the dialog and narratives without disrupting the interview's flow. In this sense, I tried to conduct flexible interviews as much as is possible. Moreover, searching for *thick dialogue*³⁴ against the myth of non-interference or 'semi-structured' interview had been on my priorities. Herein, I preferred to focus on all interviewees' personal and collective daily life experiences rather than directly going for specific or macro-level incidents in the past. Otherwise, it would not have been an oral history study rather than being just a conventional social history study that uses oral history only as a 'method.'

One should distinguish between oral history as an approach and as a methodology. Many social science and humanities discipline use oral history as a research tool, but as an approach this new historical field offers us a broader perspective including discourse analysis, subjectivity and reflexivity issues.

Oral history brings a fresh breath to ethnographic research through its transforming effect that can open various untouched issues and subjects that remained out of view of 'higher standpoints' in historiography. With this specialty, it goes through either an ordinary family past through their links with their social environments that could get along through capillaries of the community they are involved in and when they have lived. Oral history introduces 'new evidence' from the below in brief. In the interviews, I directed questions to interviewees' own experiences rather than depending on the shared information and meta-narratives,

³⁴ See Portelli, *Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories, The: Form and Meaning in Oral History*.

which may be shaped around it. Thus, this approach constitutes the backbone of the research phase.

During the field research and afterwards, Alessandro Portelli's approach to oral history has guided me with its focus on the meanings rather than events.³⁵ Richard Bauman reminds us however how "events are obstructions from narrative."³⁶ To focus on the ways that everyday life experience was remembered, I benefited from Michael Frisch's notions of "more history" and "anti-history." These concepts were useful in examining the undocumented or untold past of the people, beyond the officially constructed, inherited stories.³⁷ As Walter Ong said, "Narrative is fundamentally retrospective and creative activity is already a nostalgic phenomenon."³⁸

During the thesis' research and interpretation process, I also tried to follow Sheftel and Zembrzycki's *sharing authority* approach, stating, "oral history is not just about studying people, it is also about valuing them."³⁹ In this sense, each interview became a performance in which reciprocity and intersubjectivity have been the definite essentials of the process. Both were created within the unique collaboration between the researcher and the interviewee.⁴⁰ Family photograph albums also helped me to comprehend the interviewees' notion of time and space, providing me with an understanding of the meanings assigned to festive events or rituals. Their narratives often connected to remembrances from everyday life performances. As Stuart Hall states, "Memory of one's biography is not a simple psychological capacity, but is organized through rituals of storytelling, supported by

³⁵ Portelli, "What Makes Oral History Different," 63-74.

³⁶ Bauman, Story, "Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies of Oral Narrative," 5.

³⁷ Öztürkmen and Bornat, "Oral History," 433-435.

³⁸ Ong, "Oral Remembering and Narrative Structures", 12-24.

³⁹ Sheftel and Zembrzycki, *Oral History off the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice*, 16.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 4-16.

artefacts such as photograph albums and so forth.⁴¹ One other important issue relates to the ethical stance of the researcher. For instance, a photograph that may be a research source may trigger the informants' memory in a traumatic direction. One needs therefore to approach very carefully such material, and explore it after a previous background search.

2.5 Analysis of Narratives and Performativity of Gender

The analysis of hermeneutic and thematic field analysis of the narrators' autobiographical construction in the entire series of interviews allows me to classify terms and see the inner dynamics among the minority. It allows domestic case research to take place and to make sense of the phenomena through interpretations. This allows not merely developing hypotheses but giving a chance for a better understanding of the community within the scope of new interpretative perspectives. To avoid any misunderstanding and not lead to false interpretations, the deconstructive narrative analyses can be put side by side with thematic field analysis and hermeneutic analysis of interviews.⁴²

Nevertheless, I have not prioritized female interviewees to have a clear dominance in numbers. However, it does not constitute a kind of balance problem between gender perspectives for the study. On the contrary, this distribution of sex directly enriched the narratives and study results in total. It is also important to say that I do not design two-pole segregation of time and space in daily living. However, I prefer to follow the borderline created by governmental tools between two biological sex groups, male and female. I must also state that I am glad about the

⁴¹ Hall and Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 143.

⁴² Rosenthal, "Reconstruction of Life Stories : Principles of Selection in Generating Stories for Narrative Biographical Interviews," 66-70.

number of female interviewees because females may be much more suitable for an interview because they have a different notion of the past. By saying this, I do not aim to go with any binary approach to gender and sexuality. As a social being in the ethnic Turkish minority group, I dare to say that the woman may not have invisible boundaries of the past. Men in the group may have with their notion individual and collective past. In other words, women may opt to cross the inner boundaries of gender roles created and exposed by the society's internal dynamics more often and more efficiently than males. At such a point, women may provide new perspectives on the past.⁴³ Especially in farm communities in which I have studied, interviews with women from the minority community may build narratives that involve their family and outer social dynamics with the environment within. In such interviews, I described them as confrontations as each unique performance cannot be done the second time. It is highly possible to confront an inter-generational narrative that can give crucial details about family and communities' daily living. I found female interviewees much more prone to provide connections between their past and their children (if they have any) relatives and the local community.

Furthermore, in this way, they could make recalling much more inclusive than men's narratives because women's narratives were generally linked with other multiple components like relatives and neighbors, like strawberries' roots. However, this situation can be quite hard to leave aside. Because of such complexity in narratives, understanding the narrative during the interview gets more complicated to analyze for the researcher.

Nearly all female interviewees (except only one) come from farmer families that have been integrated into the countryside for multiple generations. Their answers

⁴³ Jones and Osterud, "Breaking New Ground: Oral History and Agricultural History," 553-554.

had always been in ‘plural phrases’ because of this notion of collective leaving. That is why they generally took the question that I asked not for themselves specifically but also for their family and community in which they are embedded. Furthermore, most of them had been timid in general while answering questions on the ‘negative things’ that they were exposed to vis-à-vis male informants’ narratives. Their connection with the soil in which they were grown up and their life in this relation had been rigid.

Herein, Judith Butler’s methodology is also crucial to understanding segregated sociability and their performance sites in a socio-historical and socio-geographical framework. Moreover, these examples were to be augmented through specific examples of women and men's gathering places as a part of ongoing daily performativity. Within this issue, Butler says, “the construction of gendered identity is achieved through a stylized repetition of acts.”⁴⁴ The groups’ relation with the environment constitutes its *external milieu* and consciousness, moderating and governing its evolution through its life. In this manner, because of the roles and places they have had during their daily living, women were the closer family member to the soil, both literal and implicit. That is why women had always been at the center of the assimilation campaign in Bulgaria.

Another issue that needs to be considered is that memory is not a passive depository of the past but a never-ending process of active creation of meaning embedded within the social and political contexts⁴⁵. I have mainly tried to be aware of any possible bias and distortions in narratives and their interpretations as another member of the community, which I focused on.

⁴⁴ Butler, “Performative acts and gender constitution,” 97-110.

⁴⁵ Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli, and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*, 52.

Since assimilation politics started to become more and more evident by the late 1960s and early 1970s, with hardening effects of the ongoing politics in the countryside, every day's resistance examples began to flourish smoothly among the community, starting from the women. Its clear signs are visible in the narratives in this sense.

CHAPTER 3

DELINEATING THE COMPOSITION OF THE MUSLIM MINORITY IN BULGARIA: TURKS, POMAKS, ROMA

Martin Baldwin-Edwards, Riki van Boeschoten, and Hans Vermeulen begin their book *Migration in the Southern Balkans*, with an assertion about the complexity of studying the nation-states of the post-Ottoman era: “The frequent migrations during the Ottoman period contributed to the heterogeneity of the Southern Balkans in terms of language, religion and the origin of its inhabitants.”⁴⁶ The movement of populations, forced or voluntary, left behind demographically complex societies in the newly founded nation-states. The national narratives have often adopted a narrow focus in identifying trans-regional bonds from Ottoman times. Nevertheless, they underline the fact that the seasonal movements of agricultural laborers or shepherds and the circulation of artisans and traders were part of everyday experience in the region. One should remember here that Bulgaria's demographic composition displays diversity even within the Muslim minority. This chapter will try to delineate the different layers and dimensions of how the ethnic Turks, Pomaks, and Roma people perceive themselves and how state authorities have approached them through different historical periods of Bulgaria.

The primary challenge in the analysis of Muslim minority groups in Bulgaria is to make sense of the terminology of related identities. One may begin by distinguishing between the terms ‘Turkish’ and ‘Muslim’, both controversial terms that invoke vulnerability for nationalist manipulations. This is a crucial point to start

⁴⁶ Vermeulen, Baldwin-Edwards, and van Boeschoten, *Migration in the Southern Balkans: From Ottoman Territory to Globalized Nation States*, 3.

with as how these terms are defined and approached closely affect the scholarship to be produced about them.

In her seminal book *Identity (Trans) formation among Bulgarian Muslims*, Maria Todorova underlines the connotations of these terms:

The use of the term Muslim in the Bulgarian context needs precise elaboration. It is used as an ascriptive concept, comprising religious Muslims and the large group of secular individuals recognizable as “Muslim” through names, kinship ties, rituals, etc. In terms of ethnolinguistic groups, the largest group of ethnic Turks, followed by Bulgarian-speaking Muslims and Muslim gypsies. There are also some confessional nuances between the dominant Sunni majority and a small Shi’ite (Kizilbas) minority.⁴⁷

The range of non-Bulgarian ethnoreligious minority groups has indeed a wider scope. Muslim ethnic Turks, Muslim and Christian Roma groups, along with Muslim Pomaks, the Bulgarian/Slavic-speaking Muslim communities, all constitute separate minority communities. Given this ethno-religious diversity, to avoid terminological confusion, this study will use the terms ‘Ethnic Turk’ or ‘Turkish’ in this study. Concordantly, it uses the term ‘Pomak’ for the Slavic-speaking Muslim groups since Islam is a significant element of their identity and culture. Lastly, the Roma in Bulgaria is generally defined as “Muslim/Turkish Gypsies” or “Christian/Bulgarian Gypsies.” The ethno-religious characterization of Gypsy communities has long been based on their faith and linguistic subordination. Ethnologist Magdalena Slavkova reminds us how the term “Turkish” could refer to that of “Muslim”, a matter dating back to the Ottoman times:

Gypsy community in Bulgaria, called [as] “Turkish Gypsies” by the surrounding population. This name had existed ever since the times of the Ottoman Empire when it was used to mean “Muslims,” and it used to reflect the mixing and interchangeability of religion and ethnicity. Turkish Gypsies have a differentiated self-consciousness varying between Gypsy and Turkish identity. At times they would define themselves as Xoraxane Roma (e.g., “Turkish Gypsies”); at other times as the Gypsy group to which they belong; and very often they would define themselves as “Turks”; not rarely would

⁴⁷ Todorova, *Identity (Trans)Formation among Bulgarian Muslims*, 301.

they use the name “Millet” (e.g. “a people” as an ethnically neutral category or as a separate community). Their language is different too; a part of them use Romanes (Gypsy language); others are Turkish-speaking; the third use[s] Romanes with a lot of Turkish borrowings and influences.⁴⁸

In his historical demographic analysis, Ömer Turan states that by 1944, people in Bulgaria did not declare themselves as “ethnic Bulgarians.” In today’s Bulgaria territory, in the population census, Eastern Rumelia and the Bulgarian Principedom in 1880 and 1881 revealed that 32 percent (904,551) of the total population (2,813,618) was titled as non-Bulgarians.⁴⁹ Before delving into a historical review of ethnic Turkish communities, let us first consider the two other Muslim minorities, the Pomaks and the Roma.

3.1 Challenges of Identity: A Brief Review of the Muslim Minority in Bulgaria

This chapter will explain the general socio-demographical conditions of different ethnic groups within the Muslim minority, Muslim Roma and Pomaks. Even though my study is focused on directly ethnic Turkish minorities through a micro perspective, both ethnoreligious groups are included in the narrative, especially in minority-state socio-politics. That is why I would like to mention them very briefly, at least.

3.1.1 Roma

The Roma’s existence in Balkans was described in official and non-official written sources from the time of the Byzantine and Ottoman empires’ domination in

⁴⁸ Slavkova, “The ‘Turkish Gypsies’ in Bulgaria and Their New Religious Identity,” 87.

⁴⁹ Turan, *The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria (1878-1908)*, 98-99. Those numbers have been subject to change, because of the century-long migration of Muslim minorities first for the Ottoman Empire, and later Republic of Turkey.

Bulgaria, approximately by the fourteenth century⁵⁰ according to William Lockwood. However, the Roma population's arrival and settling in the region are still unknown. It was probably especially after the gradual Ottoman conquest of the peninsula through the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁵¹

By the sixteenth century, as the region was consolidated in terms of its social and economic conditions under *Pax-Ottomanica*,⁵² the area hosted populous Turkic tribal groups from Asian Minor under the Ottoman Empire's relatively strict control. It seems that the Muslim population of the region started to increase drastically through that period. The incoming emigrants were generally routed to settle down in agricultural lands of especially Western Thrace and Northeastern Bulgaria, a region that would later be called *Deliorman* by the newcomers. The ethno-religious dynamics of the region has therefore gradually changed in favor of Turcomans and Islam.

Based on the scholarship cited above, it is estimated that the Roma population started to adapt to the new dominant and governmental language and religion in the region. As mentioned before, the Roma population in the region has always been 'on the move' through the Balkans. They used to live in temporary settlements around settlements from small villages to relatively big towns in parallel with their occupations, including blacksmiths, tinsmiths, musicians, and horse caregivers. Their moving population is one of the reasons why it is not possible to detect the exact number of Roma population in the region. One should also remember that throughout the pre-modern era, the imperial land registers included only male

⁵⁰ Lockwood, "An Introduction to Balkan Gypsies."

⁵¹ Kenrick and Puxon, *Destiny of Europe's Gypsies*, 15.

⁵² For further information see, E. K Shaw, *The Ottoman Aspects of Pax Ottomanica. Tolerance and Movements of Religious Dissent in Eastern Europe*, ed. Béla K. Király (New York, 1975).

members of the households, as the taxpaying landlords. Furthermore, Muslim Roma were registered and counted as full members of the Muslim Millet.

However, such an overarching umbrella term is dangerous for groups like the Roma, which can be regarded as ‘underlying reality’⁵³ with reference to Yaron Matras who is one of the leading scholars who produced some major works on history of the Roma in the Europe. According to Matras, the Roma are already known and accepted as a separate group in Europe in general, but their reality tended to be suppressed into some kind of underlying reality with their shaded representations. Thus, they could be ignored or passed over in silence. That is another reason there is no specific number about their exact population under Ottoman administration. In such a classification, community groups were segregated not according to their ethnicity or cultural belonging, but their religious links.

In addition, the Gypsy population had some tribal and religion-based division within their own community at large. They could adopt any dominant religion and language of the region where they were moving or settled whether those were Turkish and Islam. For instance, most essential cities in Bulgaria, like Plovdiv, Sofia, and Ruse were heavily populated with the Muslim populations, including soldiers, officials, and other Muslim urban groups. There were many regions where Orthodox Christian faith and South Slavic languages (mostly Bulgarian) sustained their undeniable dominance. In such areas, many Christian Roma groups had adopted Bulgarian language. Those Christian Roma groups were regarded as members of the Eastern Orthodox Christianity, which was under the control of the Orthodox Patriarchate in Constantinople. In the final analysis, the exact population number of

⁵³ Matras, *The Role of Language in Mystifying and Demystifying Gypsy Identity*, 98.

the Roma community at large has been far from a realistic estimation, given its segregated position between two major religions.

When it comes to semi-autonomy Bulgaria and the establishment of Bulgarian Principedom, the Roma had continued to count under the title of major ethnic and religious groups. While Christian Roma subjects were included in the Orthodox Christian Bulgarian population, Muslim Gypsies were included in the number of the major Muslim ethnicity, Turks with the other populous Muslim group, Pomaks. However, there are no reliable post-war demographic figures for Roma in Bulgaria, because it is almost impossible to assemble them because virtually no census data on ethnic groups have been published during the People's Republic of Bulgaria.⁵⁴ Only population data would have been available only after the resolution of the socialist regime in 1989.

3.1.2 Pomaks

Pomaks constituted the other populous Muslim group in Bulgaria and the Balkan Peninsula. Nevertheless, there is an ongoing debate on their origin among historians, and contradictory views regarding their stance in different Balkan countries, mainly Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey.⁵⁵ Many Bulgarian scholars like T. Monov and H. Hristov have been used to describe Pomaks as part of the Bulgarian national identity. Since the beginning of academic historiography in Bulgaria, in the late 1950s, a

⁵⁴ Silverman, "Bulgarian Gypsies," 51.

⁵⁵ See Mario Apostolov, *Religious Minorities, Nation States and Security: Five Cases from the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean*; Richard J. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, 97–100; Boriana Panayotova, "Bilgari-Mohamedani i Hristiyani v Tsentralnite Rodopi, Pogled Vîrhy Tehnite Vzaimootnosheniya"; Sacit Kutlu, "Bulgar kolektif bellek inşasında bir 'hatırlama ve unutmaya yeri'" 33-39; Kechriotis, Vangelis: "History as a Public Claim and the Role of the Historian: Two Recent Debates Regarding the Ottoman Past in Greece and Bulgaria," E. Ginio ve K. Kaser (ed.), *Ottoman Legacies in the Contemporary Mediterranean, the Balkans and the Middle East Compared*, Jerusalem: The European Forum at the Hebrew University, 2013, s. 287-310.

special commission was set up to research the history, culture and customs of the Pomaks living in the Rodhope Mountains.⁵⁶

On the other hand, various scholars from Turkey have been developing a similar claim based on socio-cultural and linguistic similarities. In this regard, we can see the interpretation, “Pomak Türkleri” (the Pomak Turks) in many academic writings like the works of H. Çavuşoğlu and Ç. Halim in Turkey, back in the 1980s and early 1990s.

Given the fact that each country has its own national-agenda, a considerable part of that literature comes from historians close to official-national circles. Nationalist scholarship on ‘the true origin’ of Pomaks constitutes a century-long debate, which continues today.

Pomaks have predominantly been a social group living in the Rhodope Mountains and Western Thrace. Their population, however, is spread on an axis from Eastern Macedonia to Northeastern Bulgaria. In his book *Religious Minorities, Nation States and Security*, Mario Apostolov asserts that Pomaks started to adopt Sunni Islam by the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries under Ottoman rule.⁵⁷ Although they embraced Islam, a significant amount of Pomaks kept their mother tongue, a South-Slavic dialect, very close to Bulgarian.

Because of the religion based-classification of Ottoman millet system, it is not possible to trace the exact number of the Pomaks, who were categorized under the general Muslim majority. There were a few population censuses done under both Ottoman administration and Bulgarian Princedom in the nineteenth century. In his

⁵⁶ Borden, “The Politics of Nationalism under Communism in Bulgaria,” 318. For further, see Rodopski Sbornik, (Sofia: Izdatelstvo na Bulgarskata Akademia na Naukite, 1976), vol. IV.

⁵⁷ Apostolov, *Religious Minorities, Nation States and Security: Five Cases from the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean*.

historical review of Bulgaria, Richard J. Crampton reminds that by 1886, with the annexation of Western Thrace to Bulgarian Princedom, many Muslim groups also had passed to the princedom's administration.⁵⁸ Boriana Panayotova states that these groups were first registered as 'Pomaks' in the census of 1905 that was done shortly before the independence of the Bulgarian Princedom in 1908.⁵⁹

Sacit Kutlu's research pointed out to the Bulgarian state's attempts convert these populations to Christianity. During the First Balkan War, it was reported and documented that Muslim Pomaks were forcibly baptized under the Bulgarian Army. Following the defeat and retreat of the Bulgarian Army during the Second Balkan War, the signed Istanbul Agreement granted 'freedom of belief for Muslims under the rule of Bulgarian Tsardom.'⁶⁰

3.1.3 Ethnic Turks

In the composition of Muslims in Bulgaria, ethnic Turks constitute the major group, who also will be this thesis' subject matter.⁶¹ Jonathan P. Stein states that ethnic Turks started to settle down into Bulgaria by the early fifteenth century and reached a significant demographic element since the sixteenth century.⁶² Its size increased through both continuous migrant waves of semi-nomadic and nomadic Turcoman

⁵⁸ Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria*, 97–100.

⁵⁹ Panayotova, "Bilgari-Mohamedani i Hristiyani v Tsentralnite Rodopi, Pogled Virhy Tehnite Vzaimootnosheniya," 38.

⁶⁰ Kutlu, "Bulgar kolektif bellek inşasında bir "hatırlama ve unutmaya yeri,"" 33-39.

⁶¹ See J. P. Stein, *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-communist Europe: State-building, Democracy, and Ethnic Mobilization*. (ME Sharpe); Richard J. Crampton, *A concise history of Bulgaria*. (Cambridge University Press, 2000); Hooper, "Forced Population Transfers in Early Ottoman Imperial Strategy: A Comparative Approach," 10-29; Karpat, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State 1789-1908," 257; Shaw, *The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914*, 325; Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

⁶² For further, see J. P. Stein, *The Politics of National Minority Participation in Post-communist Europe: State-building, Democracy, and Ethnic Mobilization*. (ME Sharpe). and R. J. Crampton, *A concise history of Bulgaria*. (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

tribes from Asian Minor and assimilation of local non-Muslim subjects into them under the shadow of the empire's dominant, ruling religion, Islam.

Following the consolidation of the Pax-Ottomanica in the peninsula, the socio-economical system had gradually clicked into place. This led many administrative and economic centers to develop significantly during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Paul Lovell Hooper reminds us that a Muslim Turkish majority heavily habituated those centers and their close peripheries.⁶³ With the positive effects of those centers, the empire could make its power in the region understood, primarily through the increasing number of Muslim populations in the area under Ottoman administration.

In a similar vein, the evolution of the Muslim population's demographic statistics in the region has not been evident beyond land registrars. The first population census was completed in 1831 during the reign of Mahmud the II. This was the first detailed population statistics that were collected throughout the empire, during its early modernization process.⁶⁴ Nevertheless, this census registered only adult male members, in order to determine the 'able population' for potential army service in the future. The Ottoman millet system did however record its subjects according to their religious belonging, primarily for taxation purposes. Ottoman taxation under the millet system did not therefore record ethnic information for a long time. In his analysis of Ottoman demographics, Kemal Karpat informs us that ethnicity had not been a matter in the case of demographic registrars for the high administration until the third and fourth quarters of the nineteenth century.⁶⁵ After the

⁶³ Hooper, "Forced Population Transfers in Early Ottoman Imperial Strategy: A Comparative Approach," 10-29.

⁶⁴ See Karpat, "The Transformation of the Ottoman State 1789-1908," 257; and Shaw, *The Ottoman Census System and Population, 1831-1914*, 325.

⁶⁵ For further information, see Kemal Karpat, *Ottoman Population, 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics*, (University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

semi-autonomy of Bulgaria and Bulgarian Principedom's establishment in 1878, early population censuses showed that the Muslim population in Bulgaria was nearly one million, and it was equal the almost a quarter of the total population.⁶⁶

At this point, it must be taken into regard that during the early population censuses, Muslim Roma and Pomaks were included in the entire Muslim community in the country. They were generally named and registered merely as 'Turks.' These sources show how it is impossible to determine an exact population statistics based on ethnic background at the turn of the nineteenth century, leaving demographic estimation on suspense for the region.

Another critical point to remember is the conventional sectarian distinction within the ethnic Turkish Muslim community as *Qizilbash*, *Bektashi*, and *Sunni* groups. However, it does not mean that there have been only these two groups. They branch off into some sub branches, also like *Bedreddinis*, followers of Sheikh Bedreddin⁶⁷ as a sub branch of Bektashis. Even though Sunnites have constituted the vast majority in the minority group, Qizilbashes have also sustained their cultural existence until the modern era.⁶⁸ That sectarian distinction is generally limited to the villages. For instance, all groups settled down in homogeneous villages and towns. So to say, some settlements, especially those inhabited by sects in the minority, were known by their denominational status. The link between villages from different sects had been generally limited due to religious and cultural differences. Inter-marriages among different sects were rare.

⁶⁶ Karpat, 51.

⁶⁷ Sheikh Bedreddin (1359-1420) was an religious figure, mystic and scholar well known for his and his followers revolutionary acts against the present Ottoman administration in Balkans and Western Anatolia. For further, see

⁶⁸ Sözer, "Managing Invisibility: Dissimulation and Identity Maintenance among Alevi Bulgarian Turks."

In the case of the other sects in the Muslim minority, even though some researches have known to be conducted both during the socialist and post-socialist period, information has still been quite limited.⁶⁹ As mentioned previously, the villages this study will focus are inhabited by Sunnites, with no surrounding villages from other sects. Minority institutions included in the study are also of Sunni Islam tradition.

3.2 An Overview of the Ethnic Turkish Minority during the Interwar Period in Bulgaria

3.2.1 General Situation of the Minority in Bulgaria after WWI

Historians Muzaffer Erendil and İbrahim Kamil give us a historical review of the break of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire. After the Balkan Wars, the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire signed a peace treaty, Istanbul Agreement, with a detailed minority rights-related part in 1913.⁷⁰ According to the agreement, Muslim minorities were granted the same legal and political rights as full citizens of the country. Moreover, the office of Mufti was accepted as the legal organ over Muslim minorities. Thus, it has a wide range of socio-cultural and educational minority rights, including pious foundations, congregations, and community schools.⁷¹

Shortly after the treaty, WWI erupted by the end of 1914, and by 1915 Bulgaria got into the same alliance with the Ottoman Empire along with Germany and Austria-Hungary. There were not any significant issues between Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire during those times, regarding the Muslim minority in Bulgaria.

⁶⁹ For further information, see Y. Stefanov. *Bulgaristan Alevileri ve Demir Baba Tekkesi*. Önsöz ve Tercüm Türker Acaroğlu. İstanbul: Kaynak Yayınları, 1985.

⁷⁰ Erendil, *Tarihte Türk-Bulgar İlişkileri*, 76.

⁷¹ Kamil, *Bulgaristan'daki Türklerin Hakları*, 24.

Change came however, during the interwar period between 1919 and 1923, under the premiership of Aleksandar Stamboliyski, offering Muslim minority groups a relatively moderate period with proper minority rights.⁷² During his short administration, Muslim minority groups enjoyed a positive approach financially for their semi-autonomous educational and religious institutions. However, a coup d'état took place against the Agrarian Party government under the leadership of Stamboliyski, which ended up with his brutal murder in 1923. The coup initiated tougher times for minority groups. They gradually began to be identified as non-Bulgarian and non-Christian subjects of the country, generally framed as 'leftovers of the Ottoman domination.' Following the coup and Stamboliyski's assassination, administrative reforms regarding the minorities slowed down. The governments between 1923 and 1931 imposed sanctions on inner minority politics, which enabled them to keep the minority under the control of the state. The nationalism movement started with those years, the nationalist government in Bulgaria began to feel discomfort with current developments in Muslim minority groups' domestic affairs.

In her analysis of the Turkish Minority under Communist Bulgaria, Milena Mahon elaborates on the politics of ethnicity and power. She calls attention to the administrative reforms of Damian Velchev-Kimon Georgiev's government, including the far-reaching policy of changing the Turkish names of settlements. In 1934, nearly all place's names, generally in Turkish, were altered with 'new names in Bulgarian.'⁷³ Hence, hundreds of towns and villages densely populated with Turkish

⁷² See Myuhtar-May, *Identity, Nationalism, and Cultural Heritage under Siege: Five Narratives of Pomak Heritage—From Forced Renaming to Weddings*, 96. And Şimşir, *Bulgaristan Türkleri (1878-2008)*, 65.

⁷³ Mahon, "The Turkish Minority under Communist Bulgaria—Politics of Ethnicity and Power," 154. The information about the name changing campaign in 1934. Mahon also suggests Petur Koledarov and Nikolai Michev, *Promeni v imenata i slatula na selistata v Bulgaria: 1872-1972*, Nauka I Izkustvo, Sofia, 1973. As the original source about the topic.

speaking populations adopted new names that had not existed previously and were ‘invented’ by Bulgarian regional administrations. This implementation seems to be executed directly from above, without any notice for the inhabitants of the town or village. This issue came out during the oral history research as well. My ethnography in Kufallar also revealed certain relics related to this period. In a desolated old primary school archive, I found a diploma prepared for a former student in 1933. In the document, the village's previous Turkish name was written both with Latin and Cyrillic characters. It shows that the name of the village was changed by 1934.

3.2.2 Cultural Life and Education

There had been important changes in the cultural domain of Muslims in Bulgaria, particularly during the interwar era. The Istanbul Agreement of 1913, which was signed between the Kingdom of Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire after the Second Balkan War, had granted cultural and religious autonomy to the Muslim minority through the Muftiate system, along with a right to “publish their own books, newspapers and journals and various cultural activities for its members,” says Eminov.⁷⁴ In this regard, as each ethno-religious community, the Muslim community had also continued to provide education for its members within their own curriculums. Every ethnic Turkish village had a primary school where locals were being taught. Some Turkish high schools were generally located in administrative places like towns and cities.⁷⁵ Şumnu Muallim Mektebi (the pedagogical school for teachers), a vital institution which aimed to meet teacher deficit in Muslim minority schools in Bulgaria, had been opened in 1919. However, with the military coup and

⁷⁴ Eminov, *The Elimination of Turkish Language Instruction in Bulgaria*, 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 4.

the murder of Stamboliyski in 1923, the moderate socio-political climate for the minority rapidly changed. Ali Eminov summarizes this change as follows:

The overthrow of Stambolijki on 8-9 June 1923 ushered in a period of oppression against the Muslim minority. Its situation worsened under the leadership of a military junta that came to power in 1934. Between 1934 and 1944, large numbers of Turkish schools were closed, and *vakif* properties were expropriated; many Turkish-language newspapers and periodicals were banned; Turkish intellectuals were exiled, and Muslims came under intense Christian missionary pressure.⁷⁶

The school did not live long, and it was closed permanently in 1928.⁷⁷ The Turkish Teacher's Society, an organization that had worked for the continuity of the autonomous education system of Muslim minority groups since their first congress in 1906, also closed down by the government five years later in 1933.⁷⁸

Next to the teachers' school in Shumen, another school, Medresetü'n Nüvvab, was established in 1922⁷⁹. In those years, the school was the most important educational institution of the Turkish and the Muslim community in Bulgaria, especially after the closing down of the Teacher's School in Shumen. There were *rüştiyes* (junior high school) of the Muslim minority as a graduate photograph shown in *Figure 1*; however, Medresetü'n Nüvvab was a school with both junior high school and high school (*tali* and *ali* departments respectively). Educational institutions in the Kingdom of Bulgaria were under the tutelage of the Grand

⁷⁶ Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*, 49.

⁷⁷ Ertürk, Eminoğlu, and İhsanoğlu, *Bulgaristan'da Türk-İslam Eğitimi ve Kültür Müesseseleri ve Medresetü'n-Nüvvab*, 18.

⁷⁸ Ertürk, Eminoğlu, and İhsanoğlu, 19; *Bulgaristan'da Türkler: Tarih ve Kültür*, 48:99–100.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 20.

government. Thus, they were organized quickly and prepared a new alphabet in Latin for Bulgaria's Turkish schools.⁸¹ Furthermore, two newspapers, *Yenilik* and *Turan*, began their publication in Latin letters by the end of 1928.⁸² Six more newspapers followed the reform, transforming their publication to the new Turkish alphabet. Nevertheless, the new letters pended partially because the new alphabet could only be used for four years until 1934. In that year, another military and pro-fascist coup took place, suspended the constitution of 1879, and closed the parliament.⁸³

The studies of Bilal Şimşir and Bülent Yıldırım inform us regarding the responses to the Turkey's alphabet reform among the Muslim community in Bulgaria. After the Alphabet Reform in Turkey, schools that gave Turkish language education in Bulgaria underwent a re-education in the Arabic script. This backlash was related to a political move. During these changes, the Chief Mufti's Office in Sofia was not elected but directly appointed by the Bulgarian government and administered by a district governor.⁸⁴ Thus, the Bulgarian government, which took political power by a coup, intervened in the close relationship of the Muslim minority in Bulgaria with the Turkish Republic and began to apply pressure for turning back to the Arabic alphabet in Muslim minority schools 1934/1935 school year.⁸⁵ This situation continued until April 1938. With the Turkish ambassador's initiative in Sofia, Şevki Berber, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education, was obliged to approve the use of the Latin alphabet in Turkish minority schools.⁸⁶ After this 're-transformation' or cancelation of the transformation, the Arabic Alphabet was kept

⁸¹ Memişoğlu, *Geçmişten Günümüze Bulgaristan'da Türk Eğitim Tarihi*, 172–73.

⁸² Şimşir, *Bulgaristan Türkleri (1878-2008)*, 138.

⁸³ Memişoğlu, 206.

⁸⁴ Yıldırım, "Bulgaristan'daki Türk Okullarında Latin Harflerinin Uygulanma Süreci ve Sonrasında Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin Desteği," 141.

⁸⁵ Şimşir, 160-164.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 161-163.

unofficially until 1947, when the People's Republic of Bulgaria officially declared its establishment.⁸⁷ Yaşar Nabi Nayır draws attention to how a certain segregation also prevailed among the minority. The approach of the intellectuals, and those in the countryside brought about duality in education. This situation continued until new regulations were put in practice until the post-war years, when the Muslim Minority groups had more autonomy. Yaşar Nabi Nayır details:

Besides, the transition to old writing was mostly applied in villages, and education in Latin letters continued in cities and towns. Thus, an unprecedented contrast was experienced, such as the members of the same nation living in a country writing and reading with two different alphabets. For this reason, another cause of conflict has been revealed among the Muslim Turkish minority.⁸⁸

The study of this segregation within the minority groups in those times, required oral history research. One of the interviewees, who witnessed that era, was a past student of the Medresetü'n Nüvvab in the late 1930s and had graduated in 1941, according to the school's registrars, Yusuf Hoca⁸⁹. He was born in 1924 in the countryside of Shumen and educated in the school between the years 1936 and 1942. When I interviewed him in 2016, he was 92 years old. Unfortunately, he passed away a year later in 2017. Although we could not have a long formal interview because of his health conditions, we were able to have a short dialogue. At the near end of our talk, he suddenly began singing those sentences:

[...] Duman almış,
[...] Durmaz akar,
Güneş ufuktan [şimdi] doğar,
Yürüyelim arkadaşlar,
[...] Yer, gök, su dinlesin,
Sert adımlarla her yer inlesin! (Interviewee 1, Appendix B,1)

⁸⁷ The exact date of transformation from Arabic Alphabet to Latin alphabet in Turkish education in Bulgaria is still a controversial domain. A Turkish 'life sciences' course book printed with Arabic letters in 1947, shows that education with Arabic Alphabet still continued in countryside.

⁸⁸ Nabi, *Balkanlar ve Türklük*, 168.

⁸⁹ Hoca is title generally used for a person with religious education, simply an imam or schoolteacher.

It was not a song; it was an anthem, the *Gençlik Marşı*⁹⁰, the famous pastoral-nationalist youth anthem, prepared for the fifteenth Anniversary of the republic in 1938.⁹¹ It was one of the most symbolic signifiers of the Kemalist republicans at that time. Yusuf Hoca said they were singing it when they were schoolboys. Once I understood the lyrics, I was taken by surprise, as the institution had a modern structure, yet also known for its conservatist approach to education at the same time. After all, Nüvvab had been a religious, parochial school under the control of the Grand Muftiate, which had stood aloof from increasing secularist movements of Turkey at that period. However, it quite evident that the official attitude of the müftiate was not widely approved. Yusuf Hoca said that their teachers taught them the anthem in school. Ismail Cambazov reminds us that there were some dissidents or non-conservative teachers and students in the school.⁹² The school's inner dynamics changed after the establishment of the socialist regime in Bulgaria, a matter that will be explored in the following chapter.

3.2.3 Socio-Economy in the Countryside

As the thesis will focus on three villages, it is important to lay out the social, economic and cultural framework of the Bulgarian countryside during the interwar era. To begin with, one should remember how the economy of nearly all minority villages had an agricultural dairy farming structure. Households had their own

⁹⁰ Gençlik Marşı, (The Youth Anthem in English) is an anthem prepared for a specific national festival, May 19 the Commemoration of Atatürk, Youth and Sports Day, signifies the beginning of Turkish resistance in Anatolia. The anthem became integrated with Turkish national identity via strong references to Turkish War of Liberation between years 1919 and 1922. For further, see C. Hakan. Çuhadar. "Türkiye'de Ulusalçılığın Değişmeyen Simgesi: Onuncu Yıl Marşı". *Anadolu University Journal of Social Sciences* 9(2). 2009.

⁹¹ Örnek and Üngör, *Turkey in the Cold War*, 205.

⁹² For further information, see Ismail Cambazov, *Medresetü'n Nüvvab: Anılar – Belgeler*, Ahmet Davudoğlu Dostluk ve Kardeşlik Vakfı Yayınları, 2005.

private land on hills around these villages. They also had fenced gardens where they grew their own vegetables and fruits, to meet their families' annual necessities. The distribution of property was varying. Distribution of income was to be determined according to land in a very conventional and pre-modern way because of the villages' socio-economic isolation. In such isolation, currency almost did not exist, and nearly every daily trade between people was working through a barter economy in the first two quarters of the twentieth century.

Furthermore, the farming system in the villages depended on wheat and tobacco products, as it had been nearly all over Bulgaria with some minor differences. The country was a significant tobacco producer since the Ottoman era.⁹³ Moreover, large and small ruminant breeding was available in Buranlar, Kufallar, and Omranköy villages. Some households were generally in better financial conditions, which leaders were regarded as “*aga*”, a term typically used for wealthy and respected people in the region. Although the local income gap was not that high, many families earned their living by working as farm laborers on other farmers' lands or with their animals.

Those villages of the study present an excellent example of the living conditions in this regard. Before establishing the People's Republic of Bulgaria, people of Buranlar, Kufallar, and Omranköy villages were leading a very conventional life. They were organized as households in which every household settled in a common garden of their own. An extended family structure had been prevalent. Different generations of families were generally living in the same or closely constructed houses that typically share a common roof in the same garden

⁹³ Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria*, 44–45.

named *yasak*, a private space that belongs to households used by single or multiple families.

An average Turkish village house in northeastern Bulgaria was generally surrounded by two separated yards named *haremlık* and *selamlık*, in the form of two different semi-spheres. This was typical in all traditional Muslim households in Bulgaria. At the same time, *selamlık* is the public part of a house to a degree where generally males are daily living. *Haremlık* is the household's private spot in the real meaning where the foreigners, especially the males, could not enter without a permit. Therefore, females of the house generally do their daily jobs there as being far from the eyes. Those physical settlements were albeit determining the living way in the villages.

Furthermore, the physical structure of those constructions was varying depending on the financial condition of the family. This situation also brings other effects, of course, not only economic dimensions, but also religious, cultural, and other social habits. For instance, while households were having separated parts with some hedge or fence or directly with stonewalls, gender segregation prevailed, and continues to be a crucial topic to be analyzed. This daily style of living, along with cultural and religious rituals continued until the mid-1950s. There had been sharp public space segregation in the community. Separation of living spaces had an inevitable effect on the daily life of the villages.

In addition, especially after adolescence, boys and girls were taken into that cycle as well, and they hardly saw each other in everyday life. It should also be said that, as they passed through adolescence, young girls started to veil themselves with

*yaşmak*⁹⁴ and *ferace*⁹⁵ in a traditional way. They were taken more under their families' control. Moreover, starting from that time, a social space border appeared automatically between young girls and boys of the villages. Therefore, it is almost impossible for a young female and male to talk in public because of these invisible borders, particularly if they were not related. It should also be underlined that kin or cross cousin marriages were strictly forbidden within the community. This tradition made inter-gender relations among relatives much easier.

The distribution of work constituted an important aspect of everyday life in the countryside. Collectivity had in fact a wide variety of socio-cultural components, mostly related to the unique conditions of the place and social group. The interviews revealed that self-help based, voluntary-collective work practices were also very common in the village. That type of collectivity has been known as *imece*⁹⁶, and during the time of harvest for specific products, villagers were used to working collectively according to a schedule.

People have had multiple roles in their everyday life as well. These roles changed according to season, ritual time, or other concurrent situations. Daily routine cycles were usually determined by socio-cultural rules, namely the conventional customs. Domestic space was an intimate place, but it also emerged as a private domain for the imagined public. In many cases, households were *gendered space*, because nearly everything regarding life, including the divisions of roles and their implementation both in the family and society was organized on a gender basis.

⁹⁴ *Yaşmak* (yashmak) is a 'Turkish type' of veil that was being worn by Muslim women to cover their face in public places.

⁹⁵ *Ferace* is a kind of robe or top with long sleeves, in black or dusky colored. It was being worn by Muslim women in public places in previous Balkan and Anatolia territories of Ottoman Empire.

⁹⁶ *Imece* is a name given for conventional village-scale communal work method. In this context, the collaboration can be for nearly everything occurred in the village or any other village-scale settlement. Objectives are often distributed to experience of attendants and works are to be done without any central authority in collective principles.

Those spaces also had a hierarchical structure headed by the household's oldest women who still held the domestic power. The term, *hierarchy* does not mean here that men and women had strictly divided domestic provision spaces. Men had usually a complete dominance over the women of the traditional household. However, women were chiefs of the household in the domains of kitchen and food stocking, which was central to the functioning of the household, while male members were generally engaged in some other works outside the house, like harvesting and the marketplace. Harvesting fields were done by collective force, shifting from one parcel to another. However, gender and space segregation were still evident in publicly done collective works. Women's collective collaboration often referred as "women's work" also included young girls. For example, "*erişte kesme*" (making pasta), "*salça kaynatma*" (cooking gravy) or "*yün eğirme*" (slivering), were some works done collectively by women. On the other hand, men generally tended to involve more 'virile' or 'manly' works like collective construction works of the village, such as building a house for someone or repairing one or cleaning the waterway of the village annually out of dirt and keep it working were an example of male-type collectivity.

One should also remember that women were also involved in public field works. Harvesting often required much more than what men of the villages could handle, necessitating women also go to the fields. During such compulsory situations, women's labor was also needed to harvest in a semi-mix gender collectivity. In time, a more 'modern' example of 'new' participation of work and duties came forward, changing the traditional patterns of everyday life experienced by both men and women in the village, a matter that will be analyzed in the next chapters.

3.2.4 Education in the Countryside

As mentioned before, education was a complicated domain for the Muslim minority in Bulgaria, whose memory remained more in oral history than written documents. The issue of schooling came out in many narratives that I was able to collect during my research. These narratives revealed in fact the memory of different generations. Saime, for instance, was from the village of Omranköy, next to Kufallar and Buranlar villages in the countryside of Shumen. She was born in Omranköy in 1933 as the first daughter of a local couple. Her father was taught in one of the madrassas in Shumen, according to her narrative. He had worked as a schoolteacher in the infants' school of Omranköy for a short period. Starting from the age of six, Saime was sent to the same school in the village, and she was educated there up until the 4th class. She described the education in the school as follows; “we were taught Arabic and we learned to read the Koran primarily. We were taught in Turkish only; I did not study Bulgarian in the school.” (Interviewee 3)

After completing the 4th class, she did not continue because, at those times, there had been only traditional primary schools in countryside villages, and the primary education in Bulgaria school system was four years. Students usually moved to the town centers afterwards for secondary education. That option was closed for girls, in the Muslim minority's schooling system. Medresas were only located in big towns and city centers (the closest one was on the Shumen, 20 km far from the village), and they were only for boys. Mixed education would be available for girls from the Muslim Minority only after the new revolutionary education act started to be implied by the socialist government after 1946.

3.2.5 The Effect of the War

Like the rest of the country, Muslim minorities also experienced the impact of the World War II era in the region. The German army occupied Bulgaria from March 1941 to September 1944, until the involvement of the Red Army. However, both written documents and oral narratives that I collected during my research, point to the fact that there had not been an active military presence of the German army in the region. Ali Osman, a former construction worker from village Buranlar, had worked in sites for more than a half-century in Bulgaria and USSR. He recalled the days of the war as follows:

About the days of the war, he says:

I remember the aircraft flying like a flock (he shapes his arms, like the letter 'v' to describe their flying formation). When I saw them, I hide in the crops in the field. They were flying over us, heading to Romania. (Interviewee 2, Appendix B, 2)

When the Soviet Army penetrated the Bulgarian border by crossing the Danube River in autumn 1944, they quickly invaded the country. They started a countrywide hunt for remaining German soldiers in the country. In those times, they were patrolling everywhere, including the countryside in Northeastern Bulgaria:

We heard that Russian were coming towards the village (Omranköy Village). They gathered unmarried young girls and hid into attics. I was a little girl but also insisted on going with them. So, they took me to the attic, too. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 4)

Pillaging and sexual offense rumors about Red Army soldiers came out extensively as far as it could be heard in a remote area.⁹⁷ This led to uneasiness among villagers in the isolated countryside environment, and at a time where radio was not available. There is no record whether newspapers in Turkish were available in the village. The

⁹⁷ For further, see V. Majstorovic, *Ivan Goes Abroad: The Red Army in the Balkans and Central Europe, 1944-1945* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Toronto, 2017)

only possible news sources were the Bulgarian village authority and his family in the village:

I heard that Russian arrived at our outside door on the second wall. They yelled, my father, to open the door. They had an interpreter, a Tatar man who spoke Turkish. They touched nobody, but a soldier wanted to take my father's horse, and my father did not want to give it. So, the soldier wounded his hand. Thank God, an officer heard them and took that soldier away immediately. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 5)

When I addressed the question, "Have you ever seen any Germans?" I was also confronted with some exciting narratives during the interviews. According to the common point of narratives, villagers had not had any encounter with German soldiers during the occupation. However, some witnessed a large group of German war prisoners who were taken through the villages, Buranlar and Omranköy in autumn 1944:

They had nothing on them, shoes, etc. Nothing to eat... There were beautiful blond boys. When they were passing through, some people from the village gave them some raw pumpkins, and they devoured them immediately. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 4)

Another witness was Hüsni Muallim from the village of Omranköy. He also witnessed the Germans sheltered in their infants' school in the village:

The Russians shut them up in the school building, next to the mosque. Some children were curious, wanted to look at them. A boy jumped over the garden wall and gave the prisoners some bread. The German who took it got off his belt and gave it to the boy. I still remember the smell in the school after their departure. People cleaned the classroom, but the smell. It did not go away for a long time. (Interviewee 4, Appendix B, 5)

With the arrival of soldiers with red-starred helmets, Bulgarian partisans took power in Sofia with a bloodless coup, initiating a new era for Bulgaria.

CHAPTER 4
CHANGING DYNAMICS OF THE ETHNIC TURKISH MINORITY
AFTER THE WAR

The stance of Muslim community took another turn after the end of the WWII. On September 9, 1944, the Soviet Ultimatum to Bulgaria's Kingdom for German forces' evacuation out of the country was expired. Then, The USSR declared war against Bulgaria, and Red Army troops already waiting on the opposite shore started to cross the Danube. The same day, Sofia and the government were taken over by Bulgarian communist partisans with a coup d'état.⁹⁸ According to eminent Bulgarian scholars, K. Popova and M. Anelogova, the communist partisans allied with the left wing of the Agrarians, Social Democrat, and Radical parties next to other leftist fractions.⁹⁹ Shortly after that, the Fatherland Front, which was under the total control of communists, initiated a provisional government that would have governed the country until the official announcement of the socialist regime in 1946.¹⁰⁰

In their work, *The History of Social Work in Eastern Europe* Kristina Popova and Milena Angelova remind us the relatively pluralist atmosphere that prevailed for a while, after the Bulgarian Communist Party's consolidation in 1947 and onwards. The opponents of the new regime from various ideological fragmentations, including high social strata like aristocracy and bourgeoisie, were arrested alongside the nationalist and monarchist elements of wartime governments.¹⁰¹ Richard Crampton states that some 10,000 of them were put to death with show trials or directly

⁹⁸ Dimitrov, *Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Foreign Policy, Democracy and Communism in Bulgaria, 1941-48*, 51.

⁹⁹ Popova and Angelova, "The History of Social Work in Eastern Europe 1900–1960," 31.

¹⁰⁰ Dimitrov, 68.

¹⁰¹ Popova and Angelova, 31.

executed without a fair trial at all.¹⁰² Other components of the Fatherland's Front, Agrarians, and Zvezda either were eliminated during that purge, or were suppressed by being placed into inactive positions within the front.¹⁰³

4.1 The State and the Muslim Minority after 1946

The first census after the war displayed once more the multi-ethnic and multi-religious structure of the society in Bulgaria. Alongside its significant Bulgarian Orthodox majority, the country had several minority groups, including Muslim Roma, Pomak, Tatar, and Turkish population. Ali Eminov's research shows that according to the census of 1946, the number of minorities reached 934,418 and constituted 13, 3 percent of the country's whole population.¹⁰⁴

During the socio-political turmoil, the Muslim minority had been on thorns because of the socialist government's harsh attitude towards non-communist elements. On the other hand, the relations between the Muslim minority and Fatherland Front representative started much earlier, shortly after the occupation of Bulgaria by the Soviet Red Army in September 1944. The state bureaucrats had a collaborative meeting with minority representatives in Sofia by late 1944 leaving a rather positive impression for the minority. In fact, the Fatherland Front, the ruling party, adopted favorable and constructive attitudes towards the Muslim Minority during the early years of the republic. Within this sense, A. Pashova states that the ruling party's policy aimed at religious and ethnic convergence under the slogan of "modernization" and framed the minority as "people of the new socialist state."¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 308–11.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 308–23.

¹⁰⁴ Ali Eminov, *The Turkish and Other Minorities in Bulgaria*, 71. At this point, it is also important to be emphasized that it was the last census, which demographical statistics of minorities were openly announced till 1992 census.

¹⁰⁵ Pashova, "The Muslim Roma — an 'Inconvenient' for the Communist Regime Minority."

The shift to a new socialist state was indeed quite a radical change. Initially, there was not a direct attitude to organize an assimilation campaign for minorities into to make them new ‘socialist subjects.’ A forced name-changing campaign was imposed on Pomaks during the Rodina Movement under the ‘condonation’ of the pro-fascist government, which had taken power with the 1934 Coup.¹⁰⁶ In 1942, a movement was initiated to change Bulgarian Muslims' names to Bulgarian, but not Christian, names.¹⁰⁷

Those acts were also condemned, and their ‘original’ Muslim names were returned with an official degree. After the population census conducted in 1947, Pomaks were ‘allowed’ to declare themselves as “Pomaks” again for the second time.¹⁰⁸ This was to be however, the last time to announce their identity at an official level. As for Muslim ethnic Turks, their minority rights were ‘re-granted’ and ‘re-ensured’ through the Ankara Agreement in 1925. Those rights, which were granted, were almost suspended later unofficially, during the rule of the series of pro-fascist or fascist series of governments of the Kingdom of Bulgaria until September 1944.

In 1947, the National Assembly adopted a constitution granting freedom of conscience and religion, often referred as the “Dimitrov Constitution”, named after the BCP leader, Georgi Dimitrov.¹⁰⁹ According to M. Wien, this constitution was indeed a general adaptation of the Soviet Constitution of 1936, also known as the Stalin Constitution.¹¹⁰ Even though those civil rights were given a place in the Soviet

¹⁰⁶ The Rodina movement of late 1930s and the early 1940s, was defined as a revival process. For further, see Maria Todorova, Identity (trans) formation among Bulgarian Muslims, *The Myth of Ethnic Conflict: Politics, Economics, and Cultural*, 1998, 477.

¹⁰⁷ Todorova, 476.

¹⁰⁸ After Bulgaria gained its autonomy of in 1878, Pomaks had also claimed their “Pomak identity” in 1905. See Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*, 101–11.

¹⁰⁹ These citizenship rights were codified later in 1949 in the Law on Religious Denominations adopted by the Grand National Assembly. See Eminov, 51–52.

¹¹⁰ Wien, “Georgi Dimitrov,” 201.

Constitution, their applications in the state framework had been quite problematic, especially during the Stalinist Period.

In fact, the Constitution of 1947 offered some benefits for minority groups in Bulgaria. According to the new constitution, it was no longer possible to distinguish national minority groups within the People's Republic, at least officially, which had acknowledged total equality for its entire people. This also began a new era for Muslims in Bulgaria. Important benefits came for the fields of religion and education. In his comprehensive work, *Turks of Bulgaria 1878-1985*, Bilal Şimşir informs us that with the acceptance of Bulgarian National Education Law, revolutionary reforms in religious affairs and education were announced and put into practice in 1946:¹¹¹

To meet the minority people's educational needs in Bulgaria and to ensure education in their language, the State and the Municipalities could open minority schools of any grade according to the needs observed. The Municipalities meet the material expense of these schools while the State pays salaries and administrative staff salaries.¹¹²

According to the new reforms, Grand Muftiate in Sofia would continue to serve as a governmental office for Muslims in Bulgaria. In this regard, minority schools were included in the general state public education system and would be granted the privilege to continue their education in the Turkish language with a reformed curriculum. Furthermore, it was officially announced that the state would defray all the expenses of minority schools in order to improve Turkish schools' conditions. The semi-autonomous school system of the Muslim minority that was linked to Grand Muftiate, was now directly transferred to the Ministry of Education, and practically carried under the Bulgarian state's control.

¹¹¹ Eminov, 129.

¹¹² Şimşir, *Turkish Minority Education and Literature in Bulgaria*, 7–8.

The Fatherland Front had selected minority units, which were formed just after the revolution on October 10, 1944. The Political Bureau had founded in its own terms a Department of Mass Activities with eight other sub-commissions, where the 8th commission was focusing on national minorities.¹¹³ In this regard, an umbrella association was formed for all minority groups including every Muslim group inside. Later, the umbrella association would have been turned into a more comprehensive organization for various ethno-cultural and social backgrounds.¹¹⁴

4.2 Changing Attitudes towards Migration Waves of the Muslim Minority

Richard Crampton reminds us that Bulgaria has been a country of agriculture since the Ottoman domination. The population of the country consisted of a significant rural population until the mid-1950s.¹¹⁵ When the broad-scale collectivization and shock-industrialization project started, agricultural goods and other raw materials like mineral products were the country's primary income sources. Crampton states:

From 1878 to 1944, several traditional practices disappeared. Still, the fundamental nature of both society and the economy were little altered: Bulgaria remained predominantly rural, its society rested on the village and the family, its agriculture was almost entirely the preserve of the small peasant proprietor, and its exports, at least in times of peace, were dominated by grain.¹¹⁶

According to the development program of BCP, early industrialization was planned on the two phases, first agricultural collectivism and the second heavy industry taking the USSR's early shock progress policy as a model for the first and second five years plans. Within this context, Popova and Angelova emphasize how these moves were a milestone for the country:

¹¹³ Pashova, "The Muslim Roma — an 'Inconvenient' for the Communist Regime Minority," 94–95.

¹¹⁴ Pashova, 96.

¹¹⁵ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 283.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid*, 282.

In 1947 plan economy started with the appropriation of the first Two-Year's National Economic Plan; the Directives of the First Five-Years Plan were accepted by the end of 1948. The Fifth Congress of the Communist Party held in December 1948 marked the final victory of the socialist system of Soviet type in Bulgaria.¹¹⁷

Hereby, the Party set its initial attempt on the issue of land in the countryside.

However, it was quite different from the previous cult, the Soviet example, because land distribution was not similar to the Tsardom time's Russia. In Bulgaria, the land was generally distributed more horizontally, and it was at the hands of small and medium-size farmers.¹¹⁸ At that point, governmental seizure of land with a radical collectivization campaign had some difficulties because it aimed to persuade a bevy of small landowners to join into collectivization with their lands voluntarily. Despite that, only a small part of the arable land of the country could be collectivized into the TKZS, the state farm collectives.¹¹⁹ The collectivization rate among the Muslim Turkish populated regions had not been entirely successful, as they were not 'voluntary' by the late 1940s and early 1950s.

The government introduced conventional collective agriculture plans on a nationwide scale, yet the practical necessities of coalition government enforced a temporary moderation of policy. In this regard, J. T. Sanders highlights the importance of "Article 15" of the law of the TKZS, which declared, "Members of labor cooperative farms (TKZS) retain full rights of ownership in land contributed to the collective, and may sell said land, in whole or part, as well as mortgage it."¹²⁰ After the low participation rates in the earlier phases of the campaign, the communist party initiated radical transformation in collectivization: "The new 'Exemplary

¹¹⁷ Popova and Angelova, "The History of Social Work in Eastern Europe 1900–1960," 32.

¹¹⁸ Crampton, 287.

¹¹⁹ Trudovo Kooperativna Zemedelsko Stopanstvo, the state farm collective established in 1945.

¹²⁰ Sanders, *Collectivization of Agriculture in Eastern Europe*, 77.

Standard Status' of the TKZS, introduced at a conference of collective farms in Sofia (April 5-7, 1950), [which] destroyed the peasant's fundamental right ownership, though still recognizing it in theory."¹²¹ Hence, nearly half of arable land would have been confiscated across the country in a short while. Furthermore, their owners joined TKZS with their land and other property like animals or farming tools.¹²²

Under the light of property statistics and intelligence reports of Radio Free Europe, it can be said that there had been an unorganized but significant passive resistance among peasants. The report shows how peasants openly or indirectly resisted against collectivization of land on a broad scale.¹²³ Eventually, social unrest in the countryside would have driven many rural people in Muslim minority regions to seek other emigration options. Thus, after 1949 with early 1950, their position in relations with the minority had changed drastically. In other words, their strategy started to show political fluctuations in brief periods, which would have continued during 1951. After the failure of the Muslim farmers' voluntary involvement in newly established collective farms, TKZS had remained relatively low. Herein, the Bulgarian state put another strategy into practice, 'paving the way for social revolution' out of the 'unwanted.' The stigmatization of Muslim minority groups had continued, as the cloud of suspicion had never been entirely removed through the years of socialist administration. This minority group was alienated and marginalized as former subjects of the Ottoman rule, sympathizers of the capitalist bloc and the Republic of Turkey, and these perceptions greatly shaped the official policies of the

¹²¹ Sanders, 78.

¹²² Hoffman, "Transformation of Rural Settlement in Bulgaria," 62. Furthermore, I have confronted with many parallel narrations during my field research.

¹²³ Radio Free Europe, "Obstacles to Emigration of Ethnic Turks from Zirnevo near Tervel in Dobrudja", 24 July 1952.

state thereafter. This is when the official emigration option came into the agenda, a matter that began a series of arranged migration waves from Bulgaria to Turkey.

In this case, the depopulation of Dobrudzha constitutes an illuminating example of the government's earlier social engineering attempts. The Dobrudzha region has been known for its vast arable grain lands and a dense Muslim population. The government's pressure over Muslim villagers for voluntarily joining the collective farm cooperatives TZKS led to public turmoil in the region. An intelligence report of Radio Free Europe states:

In February 1951, just after the kolkhoz in the village had been founded, the Turkish ethnic inhabitants of Zirnevo were given the choice of either joining the collective farm or handing in their emigration applications. Every one of the 600 families immediately handed in their request to leave the country, but emigration authorities at Tolbuhin¹²⁴ said that each family had to cart eight cubic meters of stone before receiving the permit to leave the country.¹²⁵

On the other hand, the entry of Turkey into ongoing Korean War among the US lead coalition in 1950, also led to unrest in Bulgaria. Even though, this reason is not quite clear and proved but it is quite possible that Turkey's involvement in the Western Bloc could have instilled a fear of national minority issue in Bulgaria. In this regard, Kemal Karpat and Lila Petkova claim that the Soviet Union could have pushed Bulgaria to punish Turkey with a sudden influx of tens thousands of refugees.¹²⁶ Furthermore, with the revealed problem between Yugoslavia and the USSR, Bulgaria had to take a stance against Yugoslavia after the split in 1948. Alongside that,

¹²⁴ Tolbuhin was name of the city, 'Dobrich' (Dobruca, in Turkish) after a Soviet military general, F. Tolbuhin in 1949.

¹²⁵ Radio Free Europe, Obstacles to Emigration of Ethnic Turks from Zirnevo near Tervel in Dobrudja, 24 July 1952.

¹²⁶ Petkova, "The Ethnic Turks in Bulgaria: Social Integration and Impact on Bulgarian - Turkish Relations, 1947-2000," 45. For further, see Karpat, "The Turks of Bulgaria: The struggle for national- religious survival of a Muslim minority".

relationships between Turkey and Yugoslavia began to see development and this situation could have distressed Bulgaria, according to Vasil Paraskevov.¹²⁷

The first official emigration wave had taken place during 1950 and 1951, as some 155,000 Muslims left the country for the Republic of Turkey.¹²⁸ Turkey has also been a counterparty of the Geneva Convention, prepared in 1950, open for signature in 1951, and valid by 1954. The Convention dictated the framework of being a refugee, refugee rights, and states' obligations for refugees in international standards. G. Goularas and B. Sunata state that the agreement had periodical and geographical limitations because it was prepared specifically for post-war migrations.¹²⁹ In 1961 and 1968, Turkey added geographical restriction that limits the location of migrations for Turkey to a convention based upon the country-based privilege stated in the first version of the agreement. According to those restrictions, Turkey would accept refugees only from states in Europe.¹³⁰ Thus, the country positioned itself for incoming migrations from former Ottoman states with sizeable Muslim minority groups in the Balkans. In the same year, Turkey came to an emigration agreement with Bulgaria, which would last until 1978. During these developments, the Bulgarian politburo did not take any particular decision. There was also an international dimension to the issue; Turkey signed an international migration accord as well, for accepting Muslim emigrants from the Balkans as a continuous act for its policy since its establishment.

These moves were not however easy. The borders were suddenly closed for passing because of several domestic and international reasons for both countries, and

¹²⁷ Paraskevov, "Insecurity and Control: Bulgaria and Its Turkish Minority," 121–22.

¹²⁸ Eminov, 83.

¹²⁹ Goularas and Sunata, *Türk Dış Politikasında Göç ve Mülteci Rejimi*, 19.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

the actual reason behind this fact has long remained unknown. According to various sources, there are several possibilities. One of those is that Bulgaria had veered away because a huge agricultural territory would almost be emptied. One other relates to the huge lack of labor power to appear, due to the unregulated and harsh emigration policy of Bulgaria towards non-Bulgarian subject. Bulgarian state records from these years show that this concerned mainly northeastern cities, Shumen, Ruse, and Dobrich triangle.¹³¹ The Bulgarian authorities allowed only a group of Muslim Roma, sending them to the Turkish border. When the situation was understood, Turkish officials closed the borders unilaterally.¹³² This is in fact a much wider and deeper issue, which relates to Turkey's reluctance regarding Muslim Roma emigration from the Balkans. One can clearly observe that through its history of emigration from the Balkans, the Republic of Turkey had never leaned towards Muslim Roma as 'citizens-to-be' and hesitated to accept them into its territory during the long period of emigration from the Balkans, at least from Bulgaria undoubtedly. A record of Radio Free Europe dating 17 November 1952 stated:

The Bulgarian Communist Government has changed its policy toward those ethnic Turks who were stranded near the border in their attempt to emigrate to Turkey. In 1950 and 1951, the Bulgarians were desirous to get rid of the Turks whose property and land had already been taken, away from them and whose further stay in Bulgaria caused the Communist Government a headache. However, toward the end of 1951, the (Stalinists) changed their technique and made a propaganda issue out of the border question, blaming the Turks for the closing of the border who thus allegedly wanted to prevent more ethnics from emigrating to the tether country because of the bad economic situation within Turkey.¹³³

¹³¹ Records of Radio Free Europe "Bulgarian Measures to Win over Ethnic Turks", 10 June 1952. HU OSA 300-1-2-21012.

¹³² Records of Radio Free Europe, "Turks May Be Allowed to Return to Homeland", 11 June 1956. HU OSA 300-1-2-71968.

¹³³ Records of Radio Free Europe, "Communist Wave of Terror Directed against Ethnic Turks", 17 November 1952. HU OSA 300-1-2-27776.

During the 1950-1951 emigration wave, nearly 150,000 people have left Bulgaria with reference to Kemal Karpat.¹³⁴ Unfortunately, there are not any specific demographic statistics on the features of those emigrants. Alongside the mass emigration of Muslim farmers from the countryside settlements, most of the Muslim Turkish intelligentsia, who had remained until the late 1940s, also left Bulgaria through that emigration wave. The effects of this migration had also important consequences in Bulgaria. An immense shortage of agricultural workers appeared, especially in the northeastern part of the country, after the processes of emigration. This situation led Bulgarian authorities to revise their policy and keep their Muslim minority groups in the countryside.

4.3 Land Property Policies of the State and the Socio-economic Conditions in the Post-War Countryside

Richard Crampton reminds us how shortly after the establishment of the socialist regime and the announcement of the 1947 Constitution, organizational structures began to be formed in the countryside to involve the prominent locals in collective farms.¹³⁵ They were direct executive organs of the Bulgarian Communist Party, and they were required to be work-effective. Thus, all legal regulations were arranged for the complete synchronization of all political organizations to carry out the shock collectivization in the countryside.¹³⁶ Within this purpose, the indispensable element of any democratic republic, including the division of powers, was given up from the

¹³⁴ Karpat, "The Turks of Bulgaria: The Struggle for National- religious Survival of a Muslim Minority," 739.

¹³⁵ Crampton, *Bulgaria*, 318.

¹³⁶ For further, see Ivanov, Martin (2008). Reform without reform. The Political Economy of Bulgarian Communism 1963 - 1989. Sofia, Institute for the Study of the Recent Past, Ciela.

very beginning. The establishment of agricultural collectives, the TKZS, was taking place within such a socio-political atmosphere.

To be affiliated to the collectives was being promoted, starting from the inner cycle of villages in the countryside. As I aforementioned, those local administrative organs of the Party set to work for farmers' voluntary involvement in the TKZS with all of their landed property. Local headmen assigned directly among the locals were given directives to execute, at least preparing a suitable ground for it slowly. However, the local organizations' initial effects had remained limited until the early 1950s, up until the migration especially.

After the migration, measurements for involvement in the farm collectives started to be given greater importance, and harsh encouragement began to be implemented through different channels. Imams in the countryside began to be scrutinized by higher levels of administration in cooperation with the armed forces. Some villagers, who resisted giving up their family property and joining the TKZS, were taken to police headquarters. In the countryside, state authorities visited villages to put pressure on local leaders of the villages.

A climate of fear was soon settled within the minority, and state pressure had increased gradually until the mid-1950s. That situation was strongly perceived in Kufallar, Buranlar, and neighboring villages as well. Earlier pressure of state and effects of the collectivization in the region had already been evident before, but the pressure grew further for those who stayed after the migration.¹³⁷ Finally, villagers' joining to collective farms accelerated gradually, and by the mid-1950s, total domination of TKZS was established in the villages.

¹³⁷ Watch, *Destroying Ethnic Identity*, 10–12.

4.4 The Backlash after the Emigration of 1950-1951

The 1950-1951 Migration was not a forced displacement movement by the state, at least explicitly. However, the farmers' pressure for their 'voluntary attending' into newly established farm cooperatives, under the name of TKZS, reached an irresistible dimension for the people who were used to sustaining a conventional way of living. On the other hand, after the migration, the Bulgarian government changed its policy towards the Muslim minority within the campaign of collectivization. Starting from October 1951, Turkey's borders were closed, and no more emigrants were allowed to leave Bulgaria. Because the government had already lost ten thousand of the workforce, who would have been beneficial for the country's agricultural reforms. A record of Radio Free Europe stated:

Since October 1951, when the Turkish/Bulgarian border was closed, the Bulgars have changed their policy toward the Moslem minority. The Communist Government has realized that the exodus of 154,000 Turks has not been a success, on the contrary, it has brought about the economic disaster in formerly Turkish / populated areas of the country. The communists / true to Leninist doctrines / abolished radical discrimination. Some Turkish families who were left stranded on the Bulgarian side of the border were given land and property in uninhabited parts of Bulgaria, encouraging them to settle.¹³⁸

Next to socio-demographic measurements, like anti-discrimination policies towards non-Bulgarian subjects, there was an effort to keep the minority available for collectivization. Furthermore, after the migration, the state had continued its collectivization campaign with 'revised articles.' The campaign continued under the 'voluntary' title, but in fact, it had become an inevitable obligation for those who stayed.

¹³⁸ Racial Discrimination against Turks Abolished, 17 November 1952. HU OSA 300-1-2-27770.

4.4.1 Nazım Hikmet's Visit to Bulgaria: Between the State and the Muslim Minority

A memorable event during those difficult years was the visit of Nazım Hikmet, then an internationally known Turkish communist poet in Bulgaria. Nazım Hikmet was in fact invited to encourage the minority to attend collective farms. He came to Bulgaria by the end of September of 1951, just before the date when borders were closed and migration stopped.¹³⁹ Archive material in Tüstav (Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı) suggests that the poet volunteered to help the Communist Party of Bulgaria, stating that 'Comrades can always consider me on their side. For me, it will be a great pleasure to work within the Turkish population of Bulgaria.'¹⁴⁰ A record of Radio Free Europe informs us that he addressed the crowd in a public meeting placed in Omurtag, a Near-eastern Bulgaria city with a dense Muslim Turkish population:

A tragic crowd of haggard men and shabby women with feeble children in their arms was gathered in the Omurtag city square at 10.30 hours. Only fear reigned among these people brought to the place by force on militia trucks. On 18 September 1951, all the villagers near Omurtag were summoned to attend a meeting to be held in honor of Hikmet Nazim, the Turkish Communist poet. The dais was full of Communist leaders. ... At 1035 hours Hikmet Nazim began to speak. In a low voice, he said, "Dear comrades, the Turkish minorities in Bulgaria being deceived by the capitalists. The standard of living in Turkey is very low. A kilo of bread costs 5 Liras. Those who emigrated to [for] Turkey are suffering from hunger. They are not given any jobs, no matter how highly educated they are; and they are obliged to sell their belongings to buy food. The government ignores the emigres in Turkey and offers them no help. I beg you in the name of Humanity, My friends, not to com[m]it crime of going to Turkey, you can be proud of Bulgaria with her newly-constructed cities and her honest administrators."¹⁴¹

According to the information given in the Bulgarian state's official reports, during Nazım Hikmet's presence in Bulgaria, 32 public meetings and gatherings in total with Turkish peasants amounted to around 130,000 people reached.¹⁴² Even

¹³⁹ Somel and Başaran, "Engagement of a Communist Intellectual in the Cold War Ideological Struggle," 92.

¹⁴⁰ Tüstav, Türkiye Sosyal Tarih Araştırma Vakfı; material at Dr. N. Hikmet at 10 lista. p. 1.

¹⁴¹ "Turkish Poet Hikmet Nazim in Bulgaria", 3 January 1952. HU OSA 300-1-2-13420.

¹⁴² Tüstav; material at Dr. N. Hikmet at 10 lista, 1.

though those numbers seem exaggerated, I have found narratives about the poet's visit to the region. One is again from the archives of Tüstav:

During the visit, which lasted 12 days, the poet's efforts had two main objectives. First, he strove to understand the reality of the Turkish minority in Bulgaria, the reasons for their wish to leave the country, and their demands of the Bulgarian government, all through face-to-face contact with the Bulgarian Turks. To this end, he also requested the related statistical data from the party authorities in local areas concerning the social conditions of the people who had already left for Turkey or were intending to emigrate. Second, together with this, he tried to convince the Turkish people he met in the towns and villages to stay in the country and to get registered in the collective farms.¹⁴³

It is still unknown whether the visitation affected the Turkish minority because there are no precise findings. During his visit, he was interested in and examined the social and economic conditions of the Turkish minority in places where he visited. Moreover, it is also known that Nazım Hikmet made some criticisms about the forcible collectivization and acts of state administrators in those farms established.

I realized that the Bulgarian comrades working within the Turkish population are confused about the Turks' customs and religion. A genuine class approach, stopping the migration and educative practices, will serve to establish the TZKS in a short time. For instance, I saw in Pravda a TKZS in a village of the Duloovo region where Turkish peasants were engaging in swine breeding. As you know, in the religion of Mohammed, even touch the pig is a great sin.¹⁴⁴

After his visit to Bulgaria, Nazım Hikmet came to the country a second time in 1957. However, this time the poet could not arouse the official interest that he had in 1951. His second visit took place at a time when Todor Zhivkov had established a new government. Zhivkov governed the country for the next 35 years, until the regime's dissolution in 1989. Once he took power, he went to a radical change concerning

¹⁴³ Tüstav, Nazım Hikmet, *Informatsia a paezdke v Balgariu c Nazimom Hikmetom* (information about the trip to Bulgaria with Nazım Hikmet), 2.

¹⁴⁴ Tüstav; material at Dr. N. Hikmet at 10 lista, 1.

official minority policies after April 1956 Plenum. Even the former Turkish High school, named after him, Nazım Hikmet Türk Lisesi, will have been closed in two years. A new era was beginning for the Turkish minority.

4.4.2 A Case in Point: The Family Story of Saime and Hüseyin Muallim from Omranköy

The memory of the state's relation to Muslim countryside can best be explored through oral history. The story of a young couple, Saime and Hüseyin Muallim offers us a case in point. Saime and Hüseyin had lived in Bulgaria until their emigration to Turkey in 1989 and closely observed the historical process that we focus on this study. Saime was born in Omranköy village in 1933, lived there until her marriage to Hüseyin Muallim in 1951, and then moved to Buranlar village. Her husband, Hüseyin Muallim, was born in 1930 in Buranlar and had attended the village primary school. He had continued his education at the *Medrese-i Aliye* settled in Shumen downtown, very close to Medresetü'n Nüvvab.

After his education, Hüseyin started to work as an imam and a religious official in Shumen's villages. Ali Aliev who studied diverse approaches to religiosity, including atheism, among the Muslim community in Bulgaria underlines that daily and ritual prayers of Islam and regularly attending the mosque was defined as '100%' among the Muslim minority.¹⁴⁵ Saime remembers the impact Hüseyin left on the community as a care-giving religious young man:

He attended our mosque in Omranköy. He personally looked after and cared for a man who was wounded in an accident for six months. I was eighteen, and my father liked him very much. He was a good, religious young man. Then, they made us engaged. Shortly after that, we were married in 1951. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 6)

¹⁴⁵ Aliev, *Formiraneto Na Nauchno-Ateistichen Mirogled u Bülgarskite Tur̂si*, 55. This rate has shown a gradual decrease in the following decades.

After Saime and Hüseyin got married, they moved to Buranlar, next to Hüseyin's family house. Hüseyin was working as a Turkish teacher in the village's primary school. One day, state officials came to the village. They declared that if he wanted to continue working as a teacher, he must attend the new pedagogical institute in Shumen city for two years' education. At first, he did not want to go because his father (a Balkan War veteran, İsmail Dede) was old and sick. Nevertheless, his father persuaded Hüseyin Muallim to attend the school. As Vlad Naumescu reminds us, the socialist states adopted a method of transformation to redefine material forms of daily life. They also used pedagogical means for individual transformation.¹⁴⁶ Exposed to the curriculum of the new pedagogical institute in Shumen, Hüseyin Muallim had gradually given up his religious practices, and had joined the Farmer's Party, becoming a communist. After his graduation, he returned to the village and started to teach as a Turkish teacher in the village school in 1953. He thereafter began to forbid any prayers in the house for Saime, who has been a religious young woman. Nevertheless, the change also affected the village, where a challenging radical secularization process began for the ethnic Turkish minority in the countryside.

The couple moved from Buranlar to Kufallar village in 1961 where Hüseyin Muallim began to work in the village primary school. When they came to the village, they lived in a tenement for a year. However, Hüseyin wanted to build their own family house, as a two-floor, good looking, and archetypal village house. The village authority assigned them a place in the center of the village. The house was finally built with an *imece* style. At that time, nearly all the houses in Muslim villages were

¹⁴⁶ Naumescu, "The End Times and the near Future," 317.

made from adobe and wood. Hüseyin was able to build his house, of concrete and bricks, in the new style that was developing by the early 1960s.

4.5 Education in the Post War Era

During the post-War era, the government made sure from the very beginning to exert its power over the non-Bulgarian subjects. In the beginning, this was a silent and deep intervention into the Muslim minority through the youth. Hence, the state's intervention would not have been direct. There was a two-fold strategy. On the one hand, the state followed a mediate way to ground their control at the heart of minority intelligentsia, starting a transformation at the important educational centers for the Muslim minority, like the Medresetü'n Nüvvab. On the other hand, education in the countryside was redesigned to impose a socialist society on the children of Muslim villages.

4.5.1 Transformation of Nüvvab

Medresetü'n Nüvvab was established in 1922, at a historical moment when independent Bulgaria declared its loss in WWI and modern Turkey denied the Ottoman legacy. The Ankara government was preparing to establish a secular Republic with radical reforms in the fields of education, alphabet, and clothing. For the Muslim minority in Bulgaria, however, the establishment of Medresetü'n Nüvvab as a new religious teachers' school represented a last legacy from Ottoman times.¹⁴⁷ The school maintained a conservative curriculum in the beginning, but it was also a symbolic institution regarding the assimilation of Muslim minority in Bulgaria.

¹⁴⁷ See Başkonak, Mustafa.2018. "Medresetü'n-Nüvvab'ın İslam Eğitim Tarihindeki Yeri." 2. Uluslararası Din Eğitimi Kongresi Bildiri Kitabı, Yediveren kitap, P.145, and Bilal Şimşir, 1986: 63.

The earliest involvement of the state into Nüvvab was the promotion of socialist youth organization of the Fatherland Front (namely Bulgarian Communist Party) in the school. Ali Eminov describes this era as follows:

Atheistic education and anti-Islamic propaganda together would be enough to weaken Islam's influence among Muslims without any need for coercion. Eventually, the Islamic worldview would be replaced with a scientific-atheistic worldview. According to this scenario, as the number of young intelligentsia increased among the Muslim population, they would play their historical role in replacing their elders' superstitious ideology with the scientific Marxist-Leninist ideology of the Communist Party.¹⁴⁸

At this point, the autobiography of Ismail Cambazov offers us a revealing narrative as one of the last students of Medresetü'n Nüvvab before its transformation into a Turkish lyceum as a minority school. Cambazov had studied law and had a Ph.D. in philosophy. He was also one of the earliest members of the communist Turkish intelligentsia as part of the promoted official project. His autobiography, *Beşiğim ve Eşiğim*, and *Medreset'ün Nüvvab: Anılar ve Belgeler* constitutes one of the very few sources on Medresetü'n Nüvvab. As there is almost nobody left out of the past students at the school, the work may remain as the only memory source depicting the course of events on almost daily basis. Cambazov accounts that the first steps of a new era began to be perceived by a few students' actions in some schools and in dormitory meetings. Those voices were demanding revisions in the school curriculum, and they were trying to organize other students against the conservative side of lectures in Nüvvab.¹⁴⁹ In the beginning, their voice and impact were weak, and they could not gather enough supporters around them, consequently. However, over time they were able to increase their influence among students, thanks to a significantly passive school administration and lecture circles.¹⁵⁰ As Cambazov

¹⁴⁸ Eminov, 52.

¹⁴⁹ Cambazov, *Medresetü'n Nüvvab: Anılar, Belgeler*, 14–16.

¹⁵⁰ Cambazov, 54–56.

asserts, students of the Nüvvab were a mixture of the Muslim Minority in Bulgaria. There were students from nearly every part of the country and all ethno-cultural groups (Pomaks, Tatars, Roma, and Turks), thereby, despite the majority of boys with ethnic Turkish background. For example, there were just a few Pomak students educated in Nüvvab, according to its registers.¹⁵¹

Nüvvab was a school applying for the entrance examination, its *tali* (secondary school), and *ali* (high school) parts. It required a conventional Turkish education in classical minority primary schools early on. The countryside's primary schools could have only given elementary education because of teachers' skills and lack of educational conditions. On the other side, the higher quality prep schools for Nüvvab and other higher minority institutions were generally settled downtown. The classes in them were densely in Turkish and Arabic, where few Bulgarian were taught.¹⁵² Nüvvab students' ability in Bulgaria was generally weaker than their Bulgarian peers in secondary and high schools. Cambazov also reminds us that those early prop agents of communist youth organization representatives were responsible for the Turkish minority who have grown up in Turkish populated villages or towns, where Turkish culture and language prevailed.¹⁵³

The vantage point here is that a significant proportion of the boys attending the school came from countryside towns across the country. Moreover, they were already living under the war circumstances during these years, a time where their

¹⁵¹ In this case, you may find further information in Ismail Cambazov, *Medresetü'n Nüvvab: Anılar, Belgeler*, (Sofia, 2005) and in registers of the school published in H. Ertürk, R. Eminoglu, & E. İhsanoğlu, *Bulgaristan'da Türk-İslam eğitimi ve kültür müesseseleri ve Medresetü'n-Nüvvab*. İslam Tarih, (Sanat ve Kültürünü Araştırma Vakfı. 1993).

¹⁵² Keskioglu, *Bulgaristan'da Türkler: Tarih ve Kültür*, 48:68–70.

¹⁵³ Cambazov, 29–34.

families lived under very poor and deprived conditions, almost facing famine.¹⁵⁴ At such a point, the communist ideal became extremely appealing for not only themselves but also their families. This ideal promised benefits in the field of agriculture and supplies of other necessities. Thus, the communists could arouse interest among the minority youth, and they could gain significant support from them.

The school administration was attacked both verbally and then physically. Shortly after that, the administration was changed with teachers that are more ‘moderate’ from the school. Cambazov states:

The communists pampered students. They promised them everything. Unfortunately, most of the students got involved in this activity. The "most progressive students," who claimed to be Communists, had now left turban and fez ... One day, they occupied the principal's room. While he was about to throw him down the balcony with a teacher friend beside him, others intervened and prevented it. Thus, the principal resigned.¹⁵⁵

This was the beginning of a transitional process transforming Nüvvab into a secular, modern gymnasium, named as “Türk Lisesi.” Cambazov recalls how their diplomas were signed as Türk Lisesi Nüvvab (Nüvvab, the Turkish Lycée) at the end of the 1948/1949 school year.¹⁵⁶ The school was later named after Nazım Hikmet, as Nazım Hikmet Türk Lisesi following the poet’s first visit to Bulgaria in September 1951.¹⁵⁷

However, it seems there were also ‘some problems’ with the youth. Even though a significant part of the students was inclined towards the youth organization,

¹⁵⁴ There is limited acknowledge about the living in countryside during interwar and World War Two years. In this regard, Cambazov’s work, *Beşğim ve Eşğim* (2014) gives a very nice examples about the conditions in countryside in Bulgaria.

¹⁵⁵ Cambazov, 14.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁵⁷ Somel and Başaran, “Engagement of a Communist Intellectual in the Cold War Ideological Struggle,” 87.

there were some who were not. The emerging discrepancies are accounted again in Cambazov's autobiography.

In 1946, members of the organization were called to party headquarters downtown. They were advised to prepare and perform a theater play in the Turkish language as students of Nüvvab. After that, Cambazov and other boys chose a theatre play with unanimity and immediately prepared for it. They worked hard and performed the play as a premiere to leading communists of Shumen, including the head of youth organization in the city theater. After the play, they were congratulated and appreciated, but it seemed there was a problem. Shortly after the show, the organization head, came and said "Guys, you have done a significant job and performed it very well; but let's not perform it again and get prepared for another play." Apparently, they had performed the famous play of Namık Kemal, *Vatan Yahut Silistre*, a pioneering play associated with Turkish nationalism.¹⁵⁸

Namık Kemal was a famous author, and he was one of the earlier members of the Young Ottomans in the late 1860s and 1870s. He is known for works with nationalist tendencies with a broader framework shaped around Islam as the unifier. *Vatan Yahut Silistra*, the theater play can be translated as "The Motherland or The City of Silistra," and it treats patriotic themes taking place around the Siege of Silistra by the Russian Imperial Army in 1854 as one of the breaking points in the case of defending Bulgaria as an Ottoman territory during Turkish-Russo War between 1854-1856. Furthermore, Namık Kemal himself was also sent to exile by a decision of the era's sultan, Abdülaziz, after the play's performing led to great enthusiasm among the masses that was taken to be a danger to the sultan's authority in Istanbul in 1870.¹⁵⁹ That incident shows the current confusion within Turkish

¹⁵⁸ Cambazov, 27–28.

¹⁵⁹ For further information, see M. N. Özön (1938). *Namık Kemal ve İbret Gazetesi*.

youth in the communist organization, as Cambazov himself depicts. He stated, “it seemed OK and nothing to worry about for them at that time.”¹⁶⁰ Nevertheless, it was a break-through experience on how to interpret communism in Bulgaria as a member of Muslim minority. These young people could not realize the red line between ‘permissible patriotism’ and communism in the Bulgarian way. On the other hand, the confusion between patriotism, nationalism, and communism was widespread among the newly established Turkish intelligentsia.

Lastly, there was more to add to the issue about teachers' attitudes and the administration of *Medresetü'n Nüvvab*. It seems that the school administration was well aware of the situation that they encountered. Still, they had not had the political and socio-economic power to resist it after the war. They had lived through a difficult period for the minority under the rule of pro-fascist governments, which had taken power one after another since the coups of 1923 and 1934. The friendly relations with Turkey, which had continued even after the coup against Aleksandar Stambolyski, had radically changed after the military coup in 1933. The school administration had gradually lost its social influence, one could observe during the activities of the Turkish intelligentsia in the late 1920s and early 1930s. In such an atmosphere, the party took control over the minority into its own hands, starting from the republic's early years. The furthest, bloody suppression of dissidents and non-communist groups after communists took power in Bulgaria, led to a climate of fear. The Muslim minority intelligentsia were well aware of the country's ongoing situation, and they followed a mood of mandatory passivity against the state's current politics. Those situations in the country led many Muslims to mass emigration, including the urban intelligentsia at the beginning of the 1950s.

¹⁶⁰ Cambazov, 23.

4.5.2 Education in the Countryside

The reformation of education in the Muslim community is a complicated topic for in-depth analyses. It should be emphasized that those attempts should not be segregated from previous Bulgarian governments' interwar programs. According to official socialist principles, the socialist government aimed at penetrating the isolated minority by offering its members a proper education and social atmosphere. Through that move, the party planned to train native party officials within the Muslim minority groups. They would have created a relatively smooth ground for the transformation of isolated minority communities in the countryside. This first phase of the campaign was named '*priobstavane*,' 'inclusion,' and declared the ethnic Turkish minority to be 'an integral part of the socialist nation' under the umbrella of a Bulgarian cultural identity.¹⁶¹

According to those principles, nearly 99 percent of Turkish communist cadres were drawn from the rural areas. These people would have been assigned to places in the countryside as 'agitator brigades' in a short while, as the builders and consolidators of the regime in later years.¹⁶² In this regard, Antonina Zhelyazkova also claims that the number of BCP members and Fatherland Front from the Turkish minority had reached as many as 4000 in a short while. In the following years, some 18,000 would have held state and economic posts.¹⁶³

The education system was also redesigned to impose a socialist society on children who were growing secluded in the countryside in a Muslim village. Schooling of children was one of the significant points for creating new, socialist

¹⁶¹ Höpken, "From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism," 67.

¹⁶² Mary C. Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria*, 60.

¹⁶³ Zhelyazkova, "Bulgaria in Transition," 288.

men and women. In his historical survey of religious identity and ethnic mobilization among the Turkish community in Bulgaria, Wolfgang Höpken remarks:

The goal of the Communists after gaining power in 1944 was first to create a 'socialist Turkish minority.' Following the Stalinist pattern, the ethnic identity and rights of this minority would be respected within the general limits of a Soviet-modeled system. To achieve this, it adopted a strategy well-tried in the Soviet nationality policy. One of the first steps was to improve educational and cultural conditions.¹⁶⁴

At that point, the education system in the Muslim minority groups was already taken under governmental control by 1946.¹⁶⁵ However, in earlier years, the previous schooling system of the Muslim minority had remained with some reformations. After 1947, state control over the education gradually increased, and the country's 1952 schooling system was brought under the total domination of the state. In this manner, all minority schools lost their private, autonomous status officially. In her study on the Turkish minority under communist Bulgaria, Milena Mahon, comments on the politics of ethnicity and power as follows:

The first Constitution of the People's Republic of Bulgaria of 4 December 1947 stated that 'National minorities have a right to be educated in their vernacular, and to develop their vernacular, and to develop their national culture.' There was a Turkish language department at the University of Sofia as well as several Turkish language publications, and the Turkish language was taught as an extra-curricular activity.¹⁶⁶

While those changes happened, the state established arguments based on equality of opportunity in education. As mentioned earlier, facilities in Muslim schools were minimal, and state public schools' conditions were much better. Oral history accounts

¹⁶⁴ Höpken, "From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism," 64.

¹⁶⁵ Eminov, *The Elimination of Turkish Language Instruction in Bulgaria*, 7.

¹⁶⁶ Mahon, "The Turkish Minority under Communist Bulgaria—Politics of Ethnicity and Power," 155.

confirm this visible difference. Hüsni Muallim shares his thought about their primary school in Omranköy by the 1940s:

We were taught on the ground; there were no proper desks in the room that our teachers use as a classroom. It was near to the mosque, already in the same garden ... the Bulgarian school [the public school in the village] was not like that, [and] we were watching through the window ... They had desks, blackboard, [and] maps. Their facilities were much more prosperous than ours. (Interviewee 4, Appendix B, 7)

As can be understood from the narrative of Hüsni Muallim, there was another school, which was a state-sponsored public school in Omranköy for the Bulgarian population in the village. In fact, public schools were open to all Bulgarian citizenship. All citizens were already granted equal opportunity for public education provided by the state. It has already been a common right for decades. There was no visible obstacle for a boy or a girl from the Turkish minority to attend a Bulgarian school, with the exception of the socio-cultural barriers between Christian Bulgarians and Muslim Turks. In this regard, interviewees did not hesitate to say that there was no Turkish child in public “Bulgarian school.” “The Turkish and Muslim populations sent their children almost exclusively to their ‘own’ schools and made almost no use of Bulgarian state schools.”¹⁶⁷ These public schools were also available in Kufallar Village. It was also known as the “Bulgarian school” established in the 1930s after the settlement of Pirin Bulgarian migrants from Macedonia on the upper side of the village by state.

Another interviewee who witnessed this era was Saime Muallim (born 1937). Saime was from the same village as Hüsni Muallim (her future husband), and she was the first female teacher in her village, Omranköy.

¹⁶⁷ Uchilishten pregled, vol. 31, no. 5, 1932, 40. via W. Höpken, From religious identity to ethnic mobilization: the turks of Bulgaria before, under and since communism. *Muslim identity and the Balkan state*, (1997), 54-81.

My father was a *hoca*; my grandfather had him sent to a madrasa in Şumnu. After that, he returned to the village and taught in primary school where I went later. We learned basic Arabic in school to read Koran and we were taught knowledge of religion and mathematics and the Turkish language. I was a clever girl, and I had already read and memorized the Koran by the age of seven. So, our lessons were completely in Turkish at that time, in the old alphabet. We started to learn Latin [she means the Latinized Turkish alphabet here] and Bulgarian much later. (Interviewee 5, Appendix B, 8)

Saime's father was 'persuaded' to become the village's mukhtar, Omranköy (Trem), in 1946. Nonetheless, he was not very willing to become the headman and resisted at the beginning. However, Saime Muallim informs us that he could not reject the 'suggestion' coming from the higher authority of Shumen.¹⁶⁸ Saime's father was also a primary school teacher with the classical madrasa education, which was previously taught in the village's primary school. As Omranköy's mukhtar, the first thing he was asked to do was the physical reorganization of the local primary school. One of the earliest attempts of the state was re-organizing the schooling system. In this regard, starting from the urban places, thousands of schools across the country were aimed to be re-established both in their methods of teaching as well as in that of their physical structure. This also included minority schools in urban places and countryside. Later, as the village mukhtar, he also got involved in the schooling of young girls in the village. In fact, the girls' schooling rates were not meager; nevertheless their education was completely limited to classical religious primary education given at Muslim schools in general.

Saime Muallim completed primary and secondary schools in their villages, Omranköy. Her father was aware of her interest in continuing her education in high school. In those years, the campaign had just started throughout the region. She recalls these days as follows:

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

They were collecting girls from the villages for higher education. They said to my father -he was the headman in the village- “You must determine two girls from the village for high-school in the city, the rest is then arranged”. My father did nothing at the beginning, but later the authorities continued to give directives for that. At last, he chose me with another girl from the village. I would have liked to go to Sofia Teacher’s School. At that time, education there was free of charge. So, they were supplying everything needed. However, we were already late. ... We could not attend school, but next year I insisted again to go to school, and I achieved to register to Razgrad Teacher’s Academy as the second group of students in 1953. (Interviewee 5, Appendix B, 9)

By this school policy, Bulgaria's present regime recruited a gradually increasing number of students from the ethnic Turkish minority. This situation reflected in the foreign press, especially on intelligence reports of Radio Free Europe:

Since 1939, the Bulgarian Communist Government has more than doubled the number of Turkish general educational establishments. Three Turkish pedagogical institutes were also opened in the country, in which about 900 students—young Turkish men and women—are being trained at the expense of the Bulgarian State. A special department for the study of the Turkish language was created at Sofia University, attended by about 200 young Turks.¹⁶⁹

There is another dimension of the issue, ethnicity. The state's earlier socio-cultural strategy for the Turkish population tended to indulge in socio-ethnic elements like language and cultural rituals apart from Islamic customs. That ‘relative tolerance’ period began after the 1950-51 emigration between Bulgaria and Turkey. In this regard, state-funded various Turkish language and culture studies favored the Bulgarian Academy of Science in Sofia. Many philologists specialized in the Turkish language were taught in the department of Turcology, within the academy. Thus, the first official dictionaries for Turkish-Bulgarian languages, Turkish textbooks, and a

¹⁶⁹ "Cultural Situation of Turkish Ethnic Minority", 26 March 1955. HU OSA 300-1-2-56624; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: General Records: Information Items; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

school. A Radio Free Europe record stated “By this school policy, the present regime in Bulgaria recruits a steadily increasing number of followers from: among the Turkish minority's youth, and thus weakens the power of resistance of this minority.”¹⁷⁰ Those schools were generally boarding schools. One must remember that formal bus services between those villages and the Shumen city center opened only by 1965. The transportation facilities had been very limited at that time. By the late 1950s, a grade school was opened in Kufallar, *Uchilishte Todor Vlaykov*, and shortly after, its dormitory came into use. Those semi-regional boarding schools constituted a vital place in creating a new social system by establishing a new society.

The schools with dormitories were the places where children from an isolated social environment were leaving their families and comfort zones for the first time. Although they were being collected into another space not very far from their native villages, they adapted into a new social sphere that their parents had never experienced. In this new context of education, they were obliged to have a different experience for their following life and career. In some cases, they might continue their education and turned back to their villages as the fresh representatives of a new system. This was the case with Saime and Hüsni Muallim.

After their graduation in 1956, Saime and Hüsni turned back to their region, to a neighboring village of Uzunlar, very close the Omranköy, where they were assigned as primary school teachers. In the same year, they got married in their native village, and according to their narrative, it was the first ‘public marriage,’ and Saime Muallim was the first woman who wore a white gown in the village.

¹⁷⁰ "Cultural Situation of Turkish Ethnic Minority", 26 March 1955. HU OSA 300-1-2-56624; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: General Records: Information Items; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

I am the first woman in the village who wore a modern, white wedding dress in the village. Our wedding was done in the village center [and] there were tables [which was not usual for Turkish village celebration publicly] arranged for our Bulgarian friends who cycled to our village from Razgrad for 30 kilometers for our wedding. (Interviewee 5, Appendix B, 10)

In the case of public events, there had not been any ‘mixed’ cultural rituals that took place in the villages before the mid-1950s. For instance, wedding ceremonies were taking place directly in houses or in surrounded structures like big barns. Two different ceremonies were taking place for men and women separately. At this topic, one interviewee, Mustafa (born 1940), recalls:

Weddings were taking place in different places, under lights of many oil lamps and candles. In our village (Buranlar), we were going to peek the ceremony of women in the barn through holes in the walls when we are boys. (Interviewee 6, Appendix B, 11)

The wedding of Saime and Hüsni was not a mere *rite of passage* of them, but much more than that. The wedding was signifier and harbinger of socialist modernization for the region. It was a compulsory rite of passage of the ethnic Turkish community to the inevitable top-down modernity of the Bulgarian state.

The cultural policy of the People’s Republic of Bulgaria was settled based on “socialist brotherhood.” It was the main reason behind creating a new socialist culture around the ‘reformed rituals.’ Webb Keane draws attention to how the state followed a moral narrative of modernity similar to the one imperial powers espoused in a colonial context, centered on the idea of progress and human emancipation from the old feudal and later bourgeois domination.¹⁷¹ In this regard, conventional folklore of the various communities was used to create new ethno-socialist rituals that could

¹⁷¹ Keane, *Christian moderns: freedom and fetish in the mission encounter*, 6. Excerpt in Vlad, Naumescu, “The End Times and the near Future: The Ethical Engagements of Russian Old Believers in Romania: The end times and the near future.” *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 22, no. 2 (June 2016): 314–31.

establish a cultural gravitational field for the groups, which were willing to be transformed. The state involvement in the case of minority groups' rituals was a direct attempt to transform the social group beginning from its dynamics. This social contract was thought to belong to the ancien regime. Hence, a kind of rechoreographing of the rituals might have been aimed, which might lead to a metamorphosis in the sense of belonging of the minority. As Roy Rappaport says, “ritual contains within itself not simply a symbolic representation of social contract, but the implicit social contract itself. As such, ritual, which also establishes guards, and bridges boundaries between public systems and private processes, is the basic social act.”¹⁷²

Corresponding to that notion of space participation based on gender, nearly all rituals were segregated in rural social life. Before the early 1960s, all wedding ceremonies would be segregated according to gender, while *the groom* entertainment and *Hannah* for the bride were taking place at the same time, in the same closed, indoor areas. According to oral accounts, this tradition had continued till the early 1960s when the closed private rituals shifted to open public events with a gradual yielding to socialist rituals under ‘advice’ and ‘recommendations’ of the BCP authorities.

4.6 Collectivization and Women

With the establishment of the TZKS, the collective farm cooperatives, the routines of the minority groups in the countryside started to transform drastically. Because of the socialization of private lands, the villagers' daily living habitations' relative

¹⁷² Rappaport, “Enactments of Meaning,” 465.

independence was demolished. According to collective works which the higher administrative authorities for the farm collective, a joint program had started to be shaped. Therefore, women's place and roles in the conventional village routine also began to change radically. Many women were gradually pulled from their private space, from the household both physically and mentally, out to a virtual public space constructed by forced applications. In his study on Turkish community in Bulgaria, Wolfgang Höpken explains the impact of this change:

Not only was collectivization an attack on small peasant property, but it had a much greater impact on the day-to-day life and customs of Turks than of Bulgarians. For example, the integration of women into work brigades was seriously at odds with their traditional role. It was deliberately used to shake up 'conservative behavior' within the Turkish community.¹⁷³

Thus, gender-based participation of space was not destroyed but got a severe wound, and that had not been the only radical change for the daily life in the village. It was much more than a reform; an irreversible revolution had just begun.

In addition to establishing farm collectives, many social reforms started to be put into practice within a gradual process. The infamous unveiling campaign began shortly after the collectivization of land. The aim was to eradicate the veil from the public space since it seemed to be a signifier of 'Ottoman times' backwardness.' Thus, the change was framed as a sign of emancipation for Muslim women. Mary Neuburger underlines how Bulgarian and Turkish women were distinguished on the meanings assigned to their cultural symbols, in the modernization processes of Bulgaria: "Bulgarian women were praised as "preservers" of "progressive" folk culture. In contrast, cultural development for Muslims had very narrowly defined

¹⁷³ Höpken, "From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism," 66.

Many of the young women population in their 20s and 30s were unveiled in the 1950s and 1960s. At this point, young female Turkish state officials like teachers, nurses, and male officials' wives, daughters took the lead in a voluntary or forced way. The campaign of the Communist Party intended to convince women and their families to remove their veils voluntarily, for 'their own good in the farms and workshops.' Even though there was not a public unveiling ceremony taking place for propaganda, like its previous examples in Soviet Turkic republics in the late 1920s and early 1930s, a different path had been followed by the government. At this point, Turkish intellectuals, party activists, and especially ethnic Turkish teachers performing their duties in minority villages and neighborhoods were 'motivated' to unveil their wives and daughters as role models for the rest of the local community. They were becoming public figures of the social revolution, which was coming up. Saime, being the wife of a teacher and a party member, was forced to give her veil up firsthand by her husband. She expresses her feelings about her story of her unveiling by her husband, who was a teacher and a devoted communist:

We heard that there was an order from the communist party. They say, "teachers' wives should give up their veil and dress in modern principles" in the Turkish villages. So, the day after tomorrow we were sent by our husbands, all teachers of the village [Kufallar] to the city center to buy dresses with short sleeves and proper skirts because we had not worn such things before. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 12)

It seems that the process had very tragic effects on women and the whole community. Even though there is not any record about the brutal public act of violence against the unveiling campaign in Muslim villages, it should be mentioned there had been a severe 'silent' public unrest among the minority.

I had put up my new dress, and gone outside to work. No one says anything; they already knew the situation we were in. However, I confronted with someone old from the relatives, and he said, "Saime, would you visit your

parents these days?" I have been humiliated a lot, a lot. However, there was nothing to do against this. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 12)

In the following years, a hard public campaign was conducted against the veil and other conventional dressing of the minority. Eventually, the propaganda started to give results beginning from the younger females, especially school-age girls, taught in the socialist education system in the late 1950s. However, these were accompanied by some 'harsher' measures like forcible unveiling campaigns, which were implemented in some neighboring villages. Oral history research reveals narratives that depict forced unveiling in public spaces, with 'scissors'. Ahmet, for instance recalls, "When I was a kid, I remember, our mukhtar or someone from local administration cut a woman's ferace with scissors in the street." (Interviewee 16)

However, in the case of the older generation, the process of unveiling was less effective. Mostly, women with children and older generations were resisting the campaign. Ayşe Saime recalls:

We were obliged to wear skirts even in working in gardens. At those times, I was working in the vegetable garden of the collective. The skirt was uncomfortable for us, and we were accustomed to *shalwar*. However, we were afraid to be reported. So, I was wearing my shalwar under the skirt. When somebody from the Bulgarians approached the garden, I folded shalwar to the upside, under the skirt. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 14)

At this point, another idea came up, both for the part of activists and for that of the local population. In return, they gave up their *feraces* and *yaşmak* s. They were provided with blue working clothes, *robotni*, as shown in *Figure 4* a work dress with generally long sleeves, and maxi skirts covering their bodies. In such a way, many women had continued to dress these work outfits as their 'new' veils, which they used to wear. Moreover, most of them had continued to wear their shalwars under the robotni and skirts, which they were forced to dress as a signifier

totalitarian patriarch established and continued brand-new domination over the female in Bulgaria by the early 1950s.

4.7 The Impact of Mechanization and Spatial Transformation on Muslim Countryside

The networks between urban centers and the countryside had been particularly weak. At that time, the only available transformation that connects the countryside and urban places was the railroad, which was not developed sufficiently to provide a healthy link between them. People were generally leading a life in nearly complete isolation in their villages and could contact just neighboring villages and towns within a close geographical radius. Apart from that, only taxmen and conscription officials were coming to the villages until the 1950s. Up until that time, there had been nothing relative to modern vehicles in the villages. Mustafa (born 1940), a retired truck and bus driver, shares his memory about their departure to Shumen on foot in the mid-1950s:

After I finished primary school here [Buranlar], we heard about a vocational high school in the town [Shumen]. In some way, we informed a relative who lives downtown about our arrival. Then, me and a friend of mine, we departed early morning, at dawn, and walked to Shumen [for twenty kilometers]. There were no buses at that time, even if they were available, we did not have money. (Interviewee 6, Appendix B 15)

A disconnection between the countryside and urban center had created the ground for an isolated, conventional life for the minority. Oral history accounts regarding the so-called era of ‘mechanization,’ reveal exciting details. Uncle Sali, or Sali the Nutter, as the villagers call him, is a retired shepherd from Buranlar village. He told his memory about how they were conscripted for military service, with my own grandfather:

There were trucks, which arrived at the village to conscript boys whose time for the military service has come. They took us with your grandfather, and we went together on the truck's body for the military service. (Interviewee 7, Appendix B 16)

The region's mechanization had started relatively late, after the arrival of earlier tractors and duty trucks for farm cooperatives in the mid-1950s. The villagers could have seen motor vehicles due to army trucks collecting boys of eighteen for the army in conscription times. However, there was still time for the beginning of a good public bus service for Buranlar and its neighboring villages. It will begin only by the mid-1960s.

With new tractors, conventional farming methods were evaluated into a different dimension. Oral history research shows that goods produced in the region increased drastically, while collectivization in the village had been 'completed' in those years, many former private partial fields were combined into a few much bigger fields by demolishing the walls and fences between them. Thus, fields around the village were made physically suitable for the mechanized farm. However, it was only the beginning of the further effects of mechanization. There would have been additional costs of mechanization for people and nature in the future.

During my field research in Buranlar in June 2018, I have walked towards the old farm collective buildings over the hill near the village. While I was batting around, something suddenly appeared at the gate of one of the nearly destroyed barns, a young hind. When I was close, she did not escape. After a while, two shepherds also appeared and told the story of the hind. She had been involved in cowherd a day when she had been still relatively young and started to live with them. One of the shepherds was a middle-aged man who raises cattle in the former TKZS establishment in Buranlar village. He told me that, not a long time ago, herds of deer

began to be seen in far hills of the region again, ‘after 50 years of disappearance.’ The last part of the answer had suddenly urged me about the ecological dimension related to the changes in the countryside daily life. Furthermore, the environmental size was largely left unstudied in regional studies, at least in Bulgaria's People’s Republic. Nahit recounts:

We were walking from Buranlar to Omranköy without seeing the sun. There had been forests all over the land between two villages” ... then they uprooted the forests between Buranlar and Omranköy. The booms were coming to the village. They were using dynamites for massive tree roots that they could not handle. (Interviewee 8, Appendix B, 17)

By the early and mid-1960s, the collectivization had almost completed its settlement. Herein, the state took the total control of not only social and economic life but also of the ecology of the region as well. Combine harvesters started to be provided for large-scale wheat farming. However, after a while the fields of the collectives began to fall short of increasing the farming quotas. Therefore, plant cover on flat places was increasingly destroyed. Collectivization did not affect only the countryside's socio-economic structure. The winds of radical transformation could also penetrate private spaces in the village.

During my field research in Buranlar Village in summer 2018, I also heard of an incident, which had occurred in the 1950s. During one of the interviews with an elderly couple, Baki and Bedia, we were talking about the early collectivization period in the village. Baki has halted for a while, and then he started to mention a man from the town with a striking condemnation. When I asked him about the reason why he mentioned the man, (I asked that specifically as a probe question because it is an uncommon and undesirable thing that are having an ill speech for a deceased people in Islamic tradition), he continued:

He killed lots of dogs by giving an electric shock to them or shooting them where they find ... they corded power led to metal tools and made the dogs that collected snapped those tools. They killed lots of like that. ... And later, they [the village administration] charged hunters for shooting the animals. [They] Wanted to kill my dog, too. However, I did not let them because we were living at the village's edge, and foxes were always trying to penetrate our coop in the garden. (Interviewee 9, Appendix 18)

Later, I started to examine the incident and added that issue to my interview questions for the following interviews. As a result of that, I noticed that many domestic dogs were killed by a decision of village council years between the mid and late 1950s in Buranlar and neighboring villages in the region. Following Robert Darnton's masterpiece, *The Great Cat Massacre* (1984), one may call this happening the "Great Dog Massacre" indeed. In his book, Darnton approaches the cultural history of the eighteenth century France's daily life through this fascinating incident. Parallel with Darnton's analyses, when the "Great Dog Massacre" took place had been years, the state started to control all economic and social relations of the ethnic Turkish minority in the region. The massacre may be regarded as a discrete incident. A hydrophobic epidemic was probably present, but it can also be interpreted as the total control over the minority. In this regard, the falling of the dog with a bullet on its chest was a clear signifier that the communists would have stayed in the cities like the previous governments. On the contrary, they had the power to interfere in the social life of the countryside, up into their gardens, and even in their own families.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHALLENGE OF “CULTURAL LEAP FORWARD”:

THE BACKLASH OF THE SOVIET MODEL

After World War II, with the rise of the USSR in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, local communist parties began to control governments from the Baltic Sea to the Aegean Sea. With socialization, all the countries under the effect or dominance of the USSR started to adopt the Soviet model of social-economic ideals alongside with administrative regulations that aim at an internationalist harmony provided by Marxism-Leninism (Figure 5). Soviet’s ‘war against backwardness’ through a revolutionary remaking of society, took the notion of the ‘war against the eastern backwardness’ in newly established People’s Republic of Bulgaria starting from the Constitution of 1947. Georgi Dimitrov, the first communist leader of Bulgaria, from 1946 to 1949 closely followed Soviet anti-religious policies. In her *Balkan Smoke*, Mary C. Neuburger explains how Muslim minorities were framed from the communist perspective:

In theory, BCP stressed the class unity of the Bulgarian and Muslim ‘toiling masses’ based on the ‘socialist nation.’ Since the bulk of Turks, Pomaks, and Roma were a rural laborer, ‘they were embraced as ‘brother’ populations that had been oppressed and exploited by the ‘bourgeois Fascists,’ as well as the Ottoman ‘feudal’ overlords.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁶ Mary C. Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria*, 56.

system, Mary Buckley reminds us how women were of vital importance to the success of the revolution, and how the party guided aspirations to gender equality, particularly for women in all spheres of life according to Mary Buckley.¹⁷⁸

Women's oppression under Ottoman and post-Ottoman regimes had therefore a twofold structure for all women, but particularly for women of the Muslim minority. It was thought that Muslim women were being laid a burden twice on their shoulders, first by having suffered from the feudal lords, and second, crushed under the rule of their own newly flourishing Bulgarian bourgeoisie. Both systems, which conformed the old conventional patriarchal systems, were now "ancient regimes". In her historical analysis of the "unveiling of Muslim Women in Bulgaria, Mary Neuburger observes:

Islamic women played a dual role within the greater Soviet experiment as the "ultimate proletariat" whose liberation would be both a signifier of Soviet achievement and a tool in the global spread of communism. Within the gradation of "nesting yokes of oppression," the women of the Soviet East occupied the core.¹⁷⁹

The absence of Muslim and ethnic Turkish women in the political ground does not mean that they had not been present in public and working life in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Starting with the late 1940s and early 1950s, the government had followed a successful 'integration policy for Muslim women' into the proletariat. There were public gatherings and courses organized for women everywhere in villages and towns by the 1960s. Oral history also confirms this experience. Saime Muallim who worked as a teacher in Shumen region states, for

¹⁷⁸ Buckley, *Women and Ideology in the Soviet Union*, 26.

¹⁷⁹ Neuburger, "Difference Unveiled: Bulgarian National Imperatives and the Re-dressing of Muslim Women, 1878–1989," 171.

instance, “we worked a lot, and I gave courses, speeches to women, to liberate them.”

On the other hand, tobacco farming was already an essential occupation in the region since the late nineteenth century. Most women were working in their families' private tobacco fields or as farm laborers in big landowners' lands. It is significant to say that tobacco farming had been a gendered occupation, mostly handled by women in the countryside for decades. In this regard, the collectivization policies and women's emancipation issues were standing side by side within the context of production relations and interrelations of the minority community with the state mechanism. In his deconstruction of religion in colonial and postcolonial histories, Webb Keane draws attention to how emerging states may take the role of former imperial powers while trying to 'emancipate' the 'other,' as was the case for the idea of progress in the socialist teaching of the proletariat “from below”.¹⁸⁰ Based on an archived document from the Municipality of the city of Haskovo, Mary Neuburger states:

The drive to activate Muslims, and, particularly, their "most backward" element – women – to fulfill the first five-year plans and to be productive on the new collective farms was coupled with a literacy drive, in Turkish and Bulgarian; this, to propagate the tenets of the new state ideology. The OF [Fatherland Front] sent ... part of the zhenotdeli or women's sections—into Turkish regions to give lectures such as "The Turkish Woman—an Active Builder of Socialism," "Islam—The Reactionary Enemy of Women," and to teach courses, hold meetings, and organize committees to bring Muslim women into the work of the party. ¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Keane, *Christian Moderns: Freedom and Fetish in the Mission Encounter*, 1:6.

¹⁸¹ Neuburger (1997). “Difference unveiled: Bulgarian national imperatives and the re-dressing of Muslim women, 1878-1989”, *Nationalities Papers*, 25(1), 169-183.

The collectivization campaign aimed at involving Muslim women in the workforce by saving them from the segregated and isolated Muslim household structure. Mary Neuberger asserts, “The Muslim women attracted the increasing attention as the presumed guardians of Muslim tradition and the hidden, and hence menacing, real of the Muslim home.”¹⁸² At this point, it can be claimed that the party apparatus entered into a power struggle with the minority culture and religion; in other words, the oriental “relics” of the Ottoman times. The party’s struggle was relatively consistent in this regard. In their analysis of socialist secularism, Ballinger and Kristen Ghodsee, the post-War interplay between religion and modernity for Muslim women's emancipation in Bulgaria:

The socialist example suggests that scholarly genealogies of secularism, grounded in the Catholic/Protestant split, need to engage more directly with the literature on Orientalism. This seems particularly urgent given the centrality of the “oppressed” Eastern female to both classic Orientalist thought as described by Edward Said and Western secularism, which often rests on a view of tolerance that celebrates the protection of such Eastern women from religion as well as to religion.¹⁸³

The Muslim women were the most associated with religious ‘backwardness,’ that is why from the earliest years of communist rule, Muslim communities were subject to persecution. The wearing of traditional clothes by Muslim women, referred to as ‘religious clothes,’ came under attack because it was claimed that such clothes were a symbol of women’s subservience to ‘patriarchy’.¹⁸⁴ With vulgar euro-centric behavior of progressivism, the state was drawing a correspondence between ‘oriental figures’ and bourgeois conservatism. In this sense, Neuberger states: “In contrast, for

¹⁸² Neuberger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria*, 72.

¹⁸³ Ballinger and Ghodsee, “Socialist Secularism: Religion, Modernity, and Muslim Women’s Emancipation in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, 1945-1991,” 21.

¹⁸⁴ Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*, 58–59.

‘uni-national’ Bulgaria the de-veiling of Muslim women became a critical part of a constellation of concerted modernization efforts aimed at consolidating the Bulgarian nation.”¹⁸⁵ That act, even generated further fascistic thoughts with reference to orthodox Marxism of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In his essay on the communist ideal of fighting Islam, Petar Vodenicharov quotes Ahmet Arunov, a director in the Bulgarian Communist Party's Turkish branch:

Islam does not consider women as human beings, but as objects which could be bought and sold. By marriage, a man buys a woman, and she becomes his property and slave for life... Muslim women do not have a right of love and choice. They are obliged to be loyal to their husbands all their lives, although the husbands in question could be old men or someone they despise. Female infidelity is considered a huge disrespect and shame on the male’s private property and the Islam commands such wives to be killed with stones.¹⁸⁶

Women’s emancipation subject had a privileged place in the Bulgarian-Marxist modernization. Neuburger stresses how “the Muslim women were defined as the “proletariat ultimate,” oppressed in terms of social, national, and gender relations (Figure 6).”¹⁸⁷ According to the regime, the mainspring of that oppression was the conventional superstitious cultural elements and religion in particular. Sunni Islam was regarded as ‘an ideological weapon for dominating the people.’¹⁸⁸

The barrier of religion between the socialist brotherhood and Muslim minorities needed to be reshaped or eliminated. According to Neuburger, the party never stopped its official war on Islam. Through public lectures on clearly anti-Islamic messages, like “Islam, the obstruction to the building of socialism in our

¹⁸⁵ Neuburger, “Difference Unveiled: Bulgarian National Imperatives and the Re- dressing of Muslim Women, 1878–1989,” 169.

¹⁸⁶ Arunov, Ahmed, *Islam*, 283. Quoted in Vodenicharov, Petar, *Islam-an Atheistic Handbook for Fighting Islam and the Communist Newspeak*. *Балканистичен Форум*, (2), 2003, 109-127,

¹⁸⁷ Neuburger, *Balkan Smoke: Tobacco and the Making of Modern Bulgaria*, 57.

¹⁸⁸ Vodenicharov, “Islam-an Atheistic Handbook for Fighting Islam and the Communist Newspeak,” 115.

In fact, the Bulgarian state had attacked the Muslim minority in the country not because they perceived Muslim women as the “backward” component of the society that needed to be freed. More importantly, women were the preserver of the communal cultural identity, which constituted the backbone of the Muslim minority. They were the stronghold of the community. Even though they were the first targeted by the state during the long assimilation campaign, often called *priobstavane* (inclusion), they used to be the most durable and resistant constituent of the community. Most Muslim women in rural areas were the major practitioners of passive resistance in daily living, and they were the ones who dared to take action against the state and even their husbands. Ayşe Saime, whose husband adopted communist ideals, remembers these days as follows:

Someday, he came to me and said: “you should cut your braids; wives of so-and-so teachers had their hair cut.” They said [others from the village] they would present some theater plays in the villages around. “I do not let anyone cut my braids”, I said. This was the only time I shouted at him. (Interviewee 2, Appendix B, 13)

Women were strongly attached to their religion, even when the religious affiliation of men started to show a drastic decrease from the early 1950s across the country. Moreover, because women were the ones who looked after the children, they had more control in shaping the incoming generations of the community. They continued their children's religious education at home, even after it was banned in public schools. This was a vital survival move, as religious education constituted an integral part of communal identity.

5.2 The Double Burden: Harvest in the Dark

When the harvesters have arrived at the village, the farmworkers, especially the harvester drivers, were starting to work night and day before the rain comes at the end of summers. Hatice was a farmworker like most women in the village. She was working in the tobacco field and the fruit and vegetable gardens of the collective. Her husband, Uncle Hasan, was also a farm laborer who worked as a harvester driver during the harvest seasons on wheat fields near the village. She depicts their typical working cycle as follows:

He was working the same times round the clock to complete the harvest. He was getting tired a lot. Someday, he wanted to teach me how to drive a harvester and said OK.” Thus, I learned it within a short time, and we began to workday and night at the harvest time. (Interviewee 10, Appendix B, 19)

Their working period was expending during the harvest time at the end of summer.

Hatice gives a narrative of an ‘incident’ that they lived with her husband a night in the field:

A night, we were working in a field over the hill. After a while, I went to sleep a bit, somewhere on the field. Somehow, he [her husband, Hasan] could not have remember the place, panicked and started to cry ‘Hatice! Hatice!!’ He got crazy [and] thought that he crushed me in the dark... After a while, I heard him, I woke up and showed up myself. (Interviewee 10, Appendix B 19)

Bulgarian state executed its policy towards women within a multidimensional framework by using its total domination over education, cultural policies, and media agencies. News articles aimed directly at minority groups had started to appear in various periodicals by the late 1940s. Furthermore, few magazines and newspapers like *Yeni Işık* and *Yeni Hayat* prepared to address Turkish-speaking minority. Those periodicals were published in dual languages, Bulgarian and Turkish. Alongside that, some magazines focused on specific working lines or workers’ groups. Within the

labor force of the new republic, women could find a place on the pages of these periodicals. Hatice remembers how she met for the first-time journalists who approached them as a pioneering woman harvester:

A day while we were working on the field, they said journalists came to the village and wanted to see me; and then they came to the field and photographed me on the operator's seat of the harvester. ... They published it in a magazine, but I do not know where it is now... (Interviewee 10, Appendix B, 20)

The state was trying to increase women's visibility, especially from minority groups like Muslims, which were regarded as relatively backward following the rest of the population. Exposing “good examples” from the minority, the state aimed at creating role models for the youth who did not attend to the workforce yet and the current workers in the line already. Hatice will learn about the photographs when her comrades mentioned her about the new issue, *Yeni Hayat*, in the following weeks when the magazine was published. She was the first female harvester operator of the country.

By the new socio-economic environment establishing in the country, women from the Turkish society were brought out of the household to work as farm laborers in farm cooperatives in their villages. Furthermore, many of them were supported to participate in newly opened vocational courses and schools in nearby villages or towns and were also employed in various business lines within the new facilities opened in the cities, like kindergartens, community health centers, or cultural centers.

However, the fact they worked outside of their households did not mean that women were being freed from their domestic duties. In that regard, one can easily say that women's emancipation did not mean a ‘total freedom’; on the contrary, it increased the amount of work that could be reached to levels named ‘dead-weight.’

Women were expected to double their effort daily, regardless of their position or occupation.

Indeed, it is evident that women between 15 and 65 were almost totally employed, excluding the disabled. Many of them also entered a new technical field of study through technical high schools that aimed to increase throughout the region by all countries. Women workers' integration into the industrialization movement was successful in particular rates. Most women in the countryside were working for TZKS, where the works were generally labelled as heavy-duty class, and women did not earn less than men who did the same job. At this point, it can be said that financial inequality was not harsher as it has been in urban living. However, there was a common point for the women on both sides, urban and countryside, *the double burden*. Although increasing life quality in the region, women's vernacular requirements like the daily domestic works at home and caring for children continued. Thus, it might open a rosy path for women during their long-lasting struggle for emancipation in establishing the socialist order. Even though there were significant family size changes and women's legal rights within the family, many patriarchal attitudes and practices continued.¹⁹²

Saime Muallim, the first female student and first female teacher of her village, was a representative of the party's local committee. In 1965, the party officials from the town came to her with a suggestion. They wanted her to be the first Turkish female mayor of the region where she lived with her husband and child:

They came to me and said you should be the first female major for Turks. However, I was already pregnant for six months, and I weather the suggestion initially. I thought they would let me free for the position, thanks to my baby. After returning to work, I gave birth, and they came to me again; "You will be the new major." What can you do? And I started as the new major in 1965.

¹⁹² Wolchik, "Women and the Politics of Gender in Communist and Post-Communist Central and Eastern Europe," 299.

I worked hard for the next five years. I brought tap water to the village for the first time. (Interviewee 5, Appendix B, 21)

It can be said that, during the first two decades of socialism in Bulgaria, the system had come with various improvements in the case of the emancipation of women both urban and in the countryside all in all. It had also left many unchanged components that were barriers to the full liberalization of women. Therefore, patriarchy's domination could continue its presence through the system in both high politics and simply daily life at many points in the next decades.

5.3 Education in Red

With the new education reform, the last school of minority Medresetü'n Nüvvab, which was transformed to Nazım Hikmet Turkish High school, was closed permanently in 1959. Religion lessons were already removed by 1952 in all education establishments across the country.¹⁹³ Thus, taking full control of education, the country's monopolization was completed. Starting from 1959, teaching in the mother tongue was also left. Bulgarian became the only education language countrywide, including primary schools. In this regard, the education reform of 1959 can be considered a turning point for the Turkish-speaking minority, mostly illiterate in the Bulgarian language in those years.

Correspondingly, with the collectivization campaign, radical socio-economic reforms also took place in the country. The BCP penetrated the everyday life of the society, including the Muslim minority in the countryside. The schooling rate was increasing drastically since the establishment of the state. According to national

¹⁹³ Cebeci, "Bulgaristan'da İslam Dinine Yapılan Baskı," 209–11.

education reforms, new pedagogical institutes were opened with special quotas for future teachers from minority groups. Hüseyin, Saime, and Hüsnü teachers were graduates of those institutes established in Shumen and Razgrad cities by the early 1950s.

The first teachers who were schooled in state institutions were also the ones who taught in their own villages. After their education in newly established governmental institutions in cities, most of them were assigned to their native towns and villages. It is a striking point that most of those teachers, active or not, were also members of the party. Here, another ambiguity arises; how does it feel to turn back to your homeland as a teacher and be an attaché of the party. In this regard, Ernest Gellner accounts for centralized national education systems in developing countries:

Only a nation-size educational system can produce such full citizens: only it has the resources to make men of the raw material available, resources large enough to keep in being a sufficient number of specialists, of the second-order teachers and intellectuals necessary to produce the ground-level teachers.¹⁹⁴

To be a teacher for a member of the ethnic Turkish community comes with different dimensions. While they were sent to their hometowns or neighboring villages after their graduation, they were also required to have the party membership card seen as the indicator of loyalty for the state and its official ideology. In this sense, teachers and other officials were expected to live as a ‘proper socialist’ and act according to those principles. Certainly, not every person who had party membership was a devoted communist; many carried the party card just as a requirement of being a state official.

¹⁹⁴ Gellner, “Thought and Change,” 159.

Even though all state constitutions were guaranteed to Muslim minority teachers as a right of citizenship, the non-official attitudes towards religion and the application of religious practices were sharp and unbending. Beginning by the 1950s, practicing daily, special (like eid prayers) prayers for party members from the Turkish minority was almost unthinkable. In such an atmosphere where, religious rituals were ‘on probation,’ many families of state officials and other party members, experienced traumatic events. Saime Muallim, remembers for instance the hesitation of her husband about the circumcision of their twins, which turned out to be an issue in the early 1960s:

When our boys were three years old, we wanted to have them circumcised. However, he (her husband, Hüseyin) did hesitate, but said nothing at the beginning. After a while, He said: “Do whatever you want.” Then, my father said, “I will handle it.” Thus, we took the boys to our village and had them circumcised and turned back to our home afterward. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 22)

Nevertheless, circumcision had never been officially banned until early 1980. According to Petar Vodenicharov it had already been under the control of public Health Services by 1961.¹⁹⁵ However, the anti-circumcision propaganda seems to have begun during the first years of the state. In that regard, Ahmed Arunov’s comments about circumcision is revealing:

With the disappearance of cannibalism, the sacrifice of humans also disappeared. Instead of living humans, parts of the human bodies gradually began to be sacrificed. Circumcision was practiced with the same function in some tribes and nations. Circumcision creates conditions for worsening of the health of some believers and in certain, rare cases can cause the death of innocent children.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Vodenicharov, “Islam-an Atheistic Handbook for Fighting Islam and the Communist Newspeak,” 114.

¹⁹⁶ Arunov, Ahmed, *Islam*, 239–43.

It is not clear that attacks have already begun in the late 1940s and early 1950s, especially in the case of circumcision. Ali Eminov also confirms that circumcision was already portrayed as a barbaric and pagan rite, a convention left from the barbaric times¹⁹⁷. The official discourse about circumcision had continued as a ‘strong suggestion’ declared in public meetings and press organs. However, the ritual's total ban did not appear until the mid-1980s through drastically hardening assimilation politics of the state over the minority. The minority has a cultural life that strictly engages in Islam, starting from a baby's birth to a man or woman's death. In such an atmosphere, especially teachers, as state officials, found themselves in a deadlock in the following years when the smooth starting assimilation campaign began to make its existence clearer.

5.3.1 Todor Vlaikov, the School

Narratives collected from Muslim generations born during the post-WWI and inter-war era reveal the difficulties of learning proper Bulgarian and speaking the language fluently. They were not taught in Bulgarian in school, and it was not possible to learn Bulgarian in the village context with a nearly 95% Turkish population. Moreover, their primary school teachers were generally from the Turkish minority, generally from the same village. A few Bulgarian teachers were available for specific lessons like Bulgarian literature, geography, and history. However, the ordinary course of that situation would change with the growth of a new generation in the early 1960s.

The post-WWII generation, who are born in the early 1950s, was able to take much formal education in their hometowns. They could attend schools after the education reform of 1959, which removed education in the mother tongue. Later, that

¹⁹⁷ Eminov, 58.

generation could have continued their education by attending schools in bigger towns and cities where they could also find a chance to engage in society. Furthermore, the Bulgarian government had started a process to renovate old schools or construct new ones, which were well-organized, modern public schools with favorable opportunities compared to the former ones left from pre-war times.

The 1960s were a crossroads for the community. The generation who was born after the war grown up in traditional extended families. In those conventional families, their mothers or grandmothers within their household brought up infants and young children before attending the village's primary school. However, this system was also terminated gradually since the TKZS. The collectivization in the countryside was a total reconstruction of daily life. Most women were employed in newly established state farms in the countryside.

In this manner, kindergartens (*detska gradina*), were also opened countrywide (Figure 7). Almost every village has its kindergarten for children of working mothers. Those were the primary institutions after the education revolution. Children used to be taken to those obligatory infant schools starting from age two to six. With the state's restrictor policy, religious education of the children within the traditional family education has begun to be interrupted.

Todor Vlaikov, a boarding school, named after famous Bulgarian writer, was constructed next to the Bulgarian school in Kufallar. That school was much bigger than the previous single floor, older schools in Kufallar and neighboring villages, and it had a dormitory for students coming from neighboring villages. Todor Vlaikov

in Bulgarian. There were some ethnic Bulgarian students whom they needed to speak in Bulgarian. Furthermore, nearly all of the students were coming from the surrounding Turkish villages. That is why the Bulgarian language was only a school language because their daily life was continuing in the Turkish language.

On the other hand, in such an organized middle-size boarding district, school life was relatively different from the primary schools they were coming from. According to socialist principles in the Bulgarian education system, all students were ‘voluntarily’ involved in socialist children and youth organizations starting from the primary schools. For instance, children of secondary school age were defined as *Chavdarchis*. They were carrying neck bandages in blue in school times, signifying their status and belonging to the organization. When they grew up and attended high school, they were beginning to carry red neck cloth, which defined them as *pioneers*. These bandages were not just a piece of cloth, they signified young students’ mission towards their state and society. With them, children and youth were being prepared as junior socialist individuals who would raise the country's prosperity within directions of the socialist ideology. Since the primary school age, *chavdarchis* and *pioneers* were taken to various specific ideological courses and practical missions (Figure 8). For example, cultural ensembles were being organized by their teachers. In those ensembles, they were preparing for dance and song groups. They learned various ethnic and modern dances and songs from Bulgarian, Turkish, and Russian folklore, which they would perform in the regional and national organizations where many groups all over the region and then country attended. Thus, they began to be part of a kind of national and international socialist consciousness. In one of my interviews, a local of Buranlar Village, Fatma, explained their group works as follows:

society.¹⁹⁹ Hence, not only children and the youth but also their families were drawn to their performance.

The state aimed at establishing these socialist rituals, as social habits within the minority community. It first created student ensembles to support the socialist youth's progress in the People's Republic of Bulgaria. Through the children's and youth's enrollment into the socialist nation the ultimate target was reaching out to children and youth who had not been 'contaminated' by traditional values and the ideology of the past as much as their parent imposed. As Ward H. Goodenough states: "The ability to be informed by ritual is itself established in the individual in part in the course of a series of rituals starting in early infancy and proceeding maturity."²⁰⁰ They, children, and youth, each powerful social catalyst, tended to be open for the new teaching that the new nation aimed to establish on. Moreover, those choirs and folkloric groups were not performing in the local villages only. Significant mobility for them had been provided by the state to make them performed in different villages in the region and neighboring towns. Hence, a network was established between people from different ethnic and religious groups and being a 'new socialist man' had become a common denominator where everybody could meet.

5.3.2 A Day in September 1972

Throughout the 1960s, course books were published by state print houses, and were delivered to students as soon as education term began. However, a decree from above dictated in 1972, that all Turkish language books provided for Turkish lessons should

¹⁹⁹ Naumescu, "The End Times and the near Future," 3.

²⁰⁰ Ward H. Goodenough, "Evolution of the Human Capacity for Beliefs", *American Anthropologist*, 92/3: 597-612.

be sent back to the center. Ismail Muallim recalled how Turkish courses were removed from all schools in the countrywide all of a sudden:

Books have already arrived, and we have passed them to children. Then, they ordered all books for Turkish language classes to be returned immediately. This is how we understood that Turkish classes were removed from the curriculum. (Interviewee 12, Appendix B, 24)

The date was a sign of the radical acceleration in assimilation that has been implemented for more than two decades and was a turning point for the cultural existence of the minority. Nearly all educational and cultural achievements for the ethnic Turkish minority had started to be taken back. Up until the 1970s, numerous studies on the Turkish language and folklore were conducted. However, by 1974, the Department of Turcology had been transformed into an “Oriental Studies Department”, and former studies related to Turcology were simply aborted. Parallel with those developments, Turkish folkloric elements began to be removed from the cultural life. Cultural complexes, like Turkish Theaters which had been opened back in the 1960s, were now limited and were closed down one by one by shortly afterward.²⁰¹

This process must be evaluated from a broad perspective. In fact, the Bulgarian state had followed a long-lasting assimilation policy since its establishment in 1946. Even though there had been some gaps during the early collectivization period and the emigration of 1950-1951, the state stepped back and continued to keep its integration policies towards national minorities. However, it does not mean that Bulgarian governments stood up for a total pluralistic attitude towards the ethnic Turkish minority. Especially after the 1956 April Plenum, the party took harsher integration measurements. For instance, after the acceleration of

²⁰¹ Buttancı, “Bulgaristan Türkleri Arasında Tiyatro Faaliyetleri,” 141–42.

the involvement of the Turkish minority in education, cultural meaning began to lose ground due to the state organism's incoming restrictions. In her analysis of Pomak Heritage, Fatme Myuhtar-May states “The Party’ had stabilized its control over the country and could comfortably consider a reversal of minority policy, especially concerning the Muslims.”²⁰² One could see those political changes in nearly every level of life, from academia to a primary school in a village. James W. Warhola and Orlina Boteva remind us that however, of the historical roots of this process. In their book on the Turkish Minority in Bulgaria, they state: “From the establishment of the communist regime in 1947 until around 1958, the ideals of minority rights and political autonomy were manifest to some degree.”²⁰³ The government, under the consolidated leadership of Zhivkov, first imposed smooth policies in this regard. However, it was already known that the Bulgarian government had not been very pleased with the religious affiliation of Muslim minority groups. The first signals of this unease were given from the very beginning with some daily life regulations and deeper structural reforms in the education system. For instance, the fact that the minority schools were integrated into the public schooling system, and that religious teaching in them was already removed in 1952 was an early manifestation of state’s approach. Warhola and Boteva give us a summary:

A special plenum of the Central Committee Politburo on 4 October 1958 initiated a marked shift in policy toward the Turks and other minorities. This shift involved a further curtailment of the (admittedly already restricted) freedoms, “a new concept of ethnic and national structure in inter-ethnic relations in Bulgaria,” and a “sharp change in policy toward the Turks and the Bulgarian Moslems” whose goal of “full assimilation” was chillingly straightforward.²⁰⁴

²⁰² Myuhtar-May, *Identity, Nationalism, and Cultural Heritage under Siege: Five Narratives of Pomak Heritage—From Forced Renaming to Weddings*, 97.

²⁰³ Warhola and Boteva, “The Turkish Minority in Contemporary Bulgaria,” 262.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 262.

In explaining the Bulgarian government's ideological transformation in minority politics, Warhola and Boteva claim that further periods, the 1960s and 1970s, passed in a smoother mode for the Turkish and other minority groups.²⁰⁵ However, the policy of assimilation was already hardening and began to make itself gradually more evident. By the early 1960s, it is also known that the government took assimilation steps towards the Roma communities in Bulgaria. In her study of Roma communities, Carol Silverman accounts “According to [some] Bulgarian scholars writing in the 1960s, the Gypsies lived a misery during the Ottoman period. The "backwardness" of the Gypsies before 1870s is blamed on the oppressive "Turkish Yoke”.”²⁰⁶ Similarly, Ted Zang reminds us how Roma community was chosen as the earliest applicants of the systematic assimilation policy in Bulgaria:

In the early 1960s, the government initiated a campaign to require Gypsies with Turkish names to accept Bulgarian names. The campaign continued on and off through 1985. The first evidence of the campaign appears in a decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, issued in April 1962. The decision noted "some negative tendencies," which hampered the development of the Cultural Revolution in Bulgaria and created difficulties "for the strengthening of the moral and political unity of the people" and served as an instrument of propaganda for the "enemy."²⁰⁷

Even though those earlier steps had been taken, they remained limited until the 1980s. A more comprehensive assimilation campaign took place thereafter under the name of so-called *The Vǎzroditelen Protses*. Such kind of applications toward the Muslim Roma community had continued. A former advocate Hayriye with ethnic Turkish background who worked for the Municipality for Targovishte (Eski Cuma in Turkish), shared a memory during our interview:

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Silverman, “Bulgarian Gypsies” 52.

²⁰⁷ Zang, *Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Gypsies of Bulgaria*, 10.

I was working at that time for the municipality in Targovishte. Some day they informed us about a case. A Gypsy couple adopted a baby boy and would have liked to name him with a Turkish name, and the municipality did not let them. So, they sued the municipality. In the trial, I was the legal representative of the municipality. The couple was present with their adopted boy at the court. The judge asked them, "How do you know that baby is not Bulgarian?" Against that question, the woman turned down the baby as the judge can see, removed his diaper, and answered: "Your honor, have you ever seen a Bulgarian butt as black as this one." The judge went hot and cold all over and turned me, and I answered: "What can I say, she is right." However, they lost the case. The next day, I was fired from the municipality. (Interviewee 13, Appendix B, 25)

The case shows us many things. For instance, the Roma couple's act for naming their adopted baby with a Muslim name proves that there was not much awareness of drastic changes in minority politics of the state. Their struggle or 'audacity' for suing a state organ for acting against their natural citizenship right demonstrated that minorities still felt dignified for being a citizen of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, and not a second-class subject it. However, their failure in the lawsuit also establishes the fundamental change in minority politics in the 1970s. By then, the category of "Gypsy" was abolished, and disappeared from the official documentation.²⁰⁸ Bulgarian-speaking Muslims and Muslim Roma were the first to have changed their common names to Bulgarian in the 1970s. They would have been a testing ground for similar actions, which would be taken against the Turkish community in the following decade.²⁰⁹

5.4 The Constitution of 1971

In 1971, a new constitution was adopted after a national referendum conducted in the country. The result was reported as 99.7% in favor, with a voter turnout of 99.7%.²¹⁰

²⁰⁸ Silverman, "Bulgarian Gypsies," 51.

²⁰⁹ Höpken, 68–69.

²¹⁰ Nohlen, "Stöver, Philip," 375.

Through the new constitution, which was unofficially named as ‘Zhivkov Constitution’ after the head of state Todor Zhivkov, nearly all references to national minorities simply ‘vanished.’²¹¹ At this point, Ali Eminov also reminds us the ‘ignoring the other’ approach of the state after 1971: “... references to “national minorities” or “ethnic groups,” were purged from official discourse. Instead, there were only "Bulgarian citizens," "normal ones, on the one hand, and those of 'non-Bulgarian ancestry' on the other."²¹²

Eminov also states that the People’s Republic of Bulgaria was then pursued as one nation, her border incorporating no foreign territory, and that not a single part of the Bulgarian people belonged to any other people or nation.²¹³ Since that turning point, the state's assimilation policy began to be more strongly felt for the Muslim minority of the country. Soon, the ‘one nation’ notion began to be used more often in state media.²¹⁴ In 1979, Zivkov would have gone further as far as to claim: "The national question has been solved definitively and categorically by the population itself . . . Bulgaria has no internal problems with the nationality question".²¹⁵

Furthermore, the earlier steps of the Rebirth Campaign had already taken with the forcibly name changing of Muslim Roma in some districts of the country by the early 1960s. The report of Helsinki Watch on the Roma of Bulgaria also proved it with official documents of the politburo and stated it in 1991:

In the early 1960s, the government initiated a campaign to require Gypsies with Turkish names to accept Bulgarian names. The campaign continued on and off through 1985. The first evidence of the campaign appears in a decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, issued in April 1962.

²¹¹ Petkova, “The Ethnic Turks in Bulgaria: Social Integration and Impact on Bulgarian - Turkish Relations, 1947–2000,” 46.

²¹² Eminov, 9

²¹³ Ibid., 11.

²¹⁴ Karpat, “The Turks of Bulgaria: The Struggle for National- religious Survival of a Muslim Minority,” 730.

²¹⁵ Eminov, 9.

Furthermore, the forced name-changing campaign against Pomaks had also begun to be applied during 1972-1974.²¹⁶ This process was generally implied region by region across the country, and the issue did not receive any media coverage. At that point, one of my oral history interviewees, Fatma shares her memory about the campaign against Pomaks in the 1970s:

I was working in a canned good factory in Shumen, Trakia District. There was a woman, a friend of ours. A day, they summoned her something. When she turned back to the line, she said her name was changed to a Bulgarian name. She was outraged and continued, “do not worry; they will come for you as well.” (Interviewee 14, Appendix B, 26)

The state policy of changing names was soon heard among other minorities through oral communication. Even though it led to some unrest among the ethnic Turkish minority, it did not cause any active resistance. The country's worsening situation was already being observed by the minority, especially by the intellectuals of the community. In her interview, Saime Muallim recalled that period as follows:

To the end of those years [the 1960s] we began to suspect about somethings, somethings were not right. Later, those fascists [she says that for the party's nationalistic attitude drastically increased with those years] started to ruin everything we had made. (Interviewee 5, Appendix B, 27)

In fact, Bulgarian state's attitude toward the ‘integration of national minorities’ into the new socialist man was already known. It is however confusing to understand why the state took a further action to impose ‘Bulgarianship’ as a new socialist identity through Soviet-type social integration models. In any case, this model did not create ‘a new type of Bulgarianship,’ an ideal that was adopted starting from the mid-1950s

²¹⁶ Konstantinov, “Strategies for Sustaining a Vulnerable Identity: The Case of the Bulgarian Pomaks,” 35; Zhelyazkova, “Bulgaria in Transition,” 289.

and was represented mostly through traditional Bulgarian identity adorned with folk costumes. The developments took another turn than what was predicted and planned.

The earlier name-changing campaigns towards Muslim Roma and Pomaks starting from the early 1960s were not the beginning of the assimilation process towards minority groups in Bulgaria. The earlier campaign was conducted in the 1960s to see how the land lies in a way. For instance, the first forcible name-changing attempts were not extended to a broader geography. During that time, some remote Pomak villages in the mountainous Rhodope region were assaulted by the military to carry on the name change. Because of the fierce resistance of local Pomaks in those villages, the campaign was canceled. However, it was conducted in 1972 after the Pomaks resistance in the countryside was heavily crushed by armed forces.²¹⁷

It was the first official decision against an ethnoreligious community's cultural identity. The 'limited tolerance' of communist governments in Bulgaria for religious freedom was already known and, it was broadly examined in eastern European countries under the effect of the USSR. However, that act of forcible name changing is situated in a different dimension. It contains some nationalistic tendencies that are not very common, not visible at the official level until that day. In this regard, the government wanted to accelerate "*Priobshtavane*", the inclusion process to start another phase, which would have been called "Vazroditelen Protses," the Rebirth Process in the 1980s. The name-changing campaign carried on in smaller Muslim communities can be seen as the earlier steps of the Rebirth Process, which became known worldwide during the infamous campaign against ethnic Turks in the

²¹⁷ For a detailed analysis of the subject, see Myuhtar-May, (2014) Identity, Nationalism, and Cultural Heritage under Siege: Five Narratives of Pomak Heritage—From Forced Renaming to Weddings.

1980s. Hence, The Bulgarian state could have conducted those campaigns through the 1960s and the early 1970s. Nevertheless, they did not face any international sanctions. Hence, they would have gradually perfected their strategy to apply to the ethnic Turks.

5.5 The Never-Ending Emigration

Scholars from Turkey, Bilal Şimşir, Ahmet İçduygu and Deniz Sert give us a historical review of the changing waves of migration from the Bulgaria to Turkey in the 1970s. They underline the 1968 agreement between Bulgaria and Turkey, where both countries had agreed upon a migration envisaging reunification of families who had left Bulgaria before 1952. The agreement would be available for nearly a decade between the years 1969 and 1978.²¹⁸ However, during the first years of the agreement, emigration to Turkey had remained limited to lower numbers than expected. Towards the end of the agreement, emigration started to increase and found its peak by the year 1978. During the migration, 116,104 people left Bulgaria for Turkey.²¹⁹ The reason behind the acceleration in the number of emigrants was obvious. The state's harshening assimilation policy towards all Muslim minority groups had found a response among ethnic Turkish minority over time.

The agreement was the last major demographic “cleaning” act by migration for the Zhivkov government. Through the emigration era between years 1969 and 1978, they would have created a discursively ‘convenient ground’ for the incoming “Rebirth Process”. This would have been put into practice in 1980 as the last push for the long-lasting, inter-governmental assimilation policy of the People’s Republic

²¹⁸ Şimşir, “Bulgaristan Türkleri (1878-2008),” 324–27; İçduygu and Sert, “The Changing Waves of Migration from the Balkans to Turkey: A Historical Account,” 96.

²¹⁹ Kirişçi, “Post Second World War Immigration from Balkan Countries to Turkey,” 64.

of Bulgaria. In 1979, Zhivkov went as far as to claim: "The national question has been solved definitively and categorically by the population itself . . . Bulgaria has no internal problems with the nationality question".²²⁰ That chain of statements will have reached up to the point of "There are no Turks in Bulgaria" by March 1985 after completing the forced name-changing campaign.²²¹

The pattern of emigration may seem to be experienced as expected. However, the reason of what happened between the two countries was not only the pressure from above. There was a longer retrospective ground where the memory of migration, the memory of losing the beloved ones paved the way. Social tragedies such as forced displacements were often tended to be taken into regard as a breaking point for those forced to leave their native land. However, in the case of Bulgaria's social history, the 1950-1951 migration wave constituted how it was experienced differently. This migration was a 'breaking point,' which left a massive amount of land depopulated, at a time when the agricultural revolution was going on. The migration had also separated "the meat from the bone" among the Muslim minority, when part of the families emigrated while others stayed in Bulgaria. Moreover, the intelligentsia of the Muslim minority were among the first leaving for Turkey. Most studies produced in recent and contemporary time focus on that incident unilaterally, in a macro framework, without touching upon the inner dynamics of the people, especially those left behind. Saime tells about her mother-in-law, Sabriye Anne:²²²

On time of the migration [emigration of 1936 for Turkey], Sabriye Anne's brother emigrated for Turkey with his family. During their farewell to the leaving group, she got crazy, they say, she did not want to let them go so much so that they had to cord her to a pole with a rope. Then she starts to

²²⁰ Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*, 9.

²²¹ "Situation Report: Bulgaria, 28 March 1985", 28 March 1985. HU OSA 300-8-47-41-5; Records of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty Research Institute: Publications Department: Situation Reports; Open Society Archives at Central European University, Budapest.

²²² "Anne" means "mother" in Turkish language but at local dialect of northern Bulgaria it means "grandmother" a generally used as a title for the women over a certain age.

scream [...] her voice still could be heard from Omranköy they say [on the train station's road, about three kilometers to Kufallar Village where she lives]. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 28)

As the rumor circulated, people began to be uneasy, and prepared to leave their land. The migration was always a probability for them. For those who left, there was also a psychological load for the people left behind in Bulgaria. Most families had their first photographs in their passports, since the passports were directly issued for 'family'. So, every 'emigrant-to-be' family had a passport where they have a family photo and their identification entries involved. Hüseyin Muallim's family also attended Turkey's emigration and got a 'collective' family passport. Saime Muallim accounts:

While they were waiting for the train in Şeytancık [the town with the railway station], they learned that the border was closed. So, they turned back to the village. They say, there were people whose belongings went to Turkey [border] beforehand with a freight train and many were left behind with nothing in Bulgaria. (Interviewee 3, Appendix B, 28)

This was a socially traumatic process for both who migrated and other who were left behind. Life was not 'continuing normally,' anymore. The regular flow of time was already broken. Behind the imposed emigration, an emotional load accrued for centuries.

In his seminal book on the sociology of knowledge, Karl Mannheim, states that the notion of a generation is formed in the biological rhythm of birth and death, which is a *social positioning* based on the social atmosphere where it is grounded.²²³ Muslim minorities were born into narratives of oppression and forced migrations, for generations. The social positioning of generations is rotated according to the early impressions they got from the society where they grew.²²⁴ However, the situation

²²³ Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*. Edited by Paul Kecskemeti, 290–91.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 291.

could be more sensitive for the young. The gradual change of the social atmosphere or the direct intrusions in daily life could radically transfigure that progress. This is how a passive resistance found a ground to settle and flourish within the minority groups, lasting for a long time. Passive resistance developed gradually and continued to survive in daily life silently, especially in matters that concerned cultural identity. However, this did not mean that passivity always remained as a sub-wave that had created invisible barricades on the forefront, with every day's resistance practices against the politburo's long-term assimilation policy of the Bulgarian state.

CHAPTER 6

THE NEW BEGINNING: *VAZRODITELEN*

Nationalism in the Balkans is a complicated topic since the early nineteenth century. By the third quarter of the century, as it appeared in Bulgaria while the country was still a part of the Ottoman Empire.²²⁵ Following the Congress of Berlin in 1878, an autonomous Bulgarian Principedom was established, and Bulgarian nationalism was on political scene until WW2. With the establishment of the country's socialist administration, populist nationalism lost its appeal as an official state ideology. The socialist governance under the Bulgarian Communist Party's strict domination has left extreme nationalism behind.

6.1 Nationalism in Bulgaria

Modernization has always been problematic in Bulgaria, particularly for the minority groups. As it is being mentioned on Chapter 3, throughout Bulgaria's modernization process after its independence in 1908, Muslims in Bulgaria could have sustained their cultural and religious autonomy (except for tragedies during the Balkan Wars) thanks to agreements signed with firstly Ottoman Empire till 1922, and then Republic of Turkey.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of Bulgaria in 1946, a new phase began. Muslim minority groups lost their autonomous structure by the earlier years of the regime but they were 'granted' full citizenship rights like freedom of belief and education in the mother tongue. However, those given rights would have been 'wiped away' as far as the earlier mode of pluralist modernization movement

²²⁵ For further information on the Bulgarian question in Ottoman Empire see İnalçık's marvelous PhD disertattion, Halil İnalçık, *Tanzimat ve Bulgar Meselesi*, Eren, 1943.

ended in socialization shortly after by the 1960s. During the early years of the socialization period, the notion of Soviet internationalism had been officially adopted as the unifier identity of society in Bulgaria.

The nationalist experience in the People's Republic of Bulgaria should be evaluated within a more detailed, in-depth retrospective analysis of the regime. This retrospective reading and analysis also should be carried on for the BCP, the Communist Party of Bulgaria made itself apparent after the October Revolution of 1917. The BCP has paved the way for contacting the Turkish-speaking Muslim minority in Bulgaria through its members from the Turkish minority intelligentsia and the *Ziya* newspaper published between 1920 and 1923 in the Turkish language.²²⁶ Nevertheless, following the coup of 1923, the BCP was re-organized alongside the agrarians in the early 1930s. They survived the era of increasing fascism through the military coup of 1934. In the case of the BCP's relations with Muslim minorities of Bulgaria, Wolfgang Höpken claims that the communists tried not to lose their connection with the Turkish Muslim intellectuals in Bulgaria's Northeastern cities Shumen and Varna during that period.²²⁷

When the Fatherland Front under strict domination of the BCP took power in Bulgaria, the People Republic of Bulgaria was officially announced the year after the Plebiscite of 1946. With the plebiscite, the monarchy was forbidden, and the government had condemned all the atrocities done by fascist and monarchic regimes during the interwar period.²²⁸ Even though they had followed moderate relations with the Muslim minority, they always had kept a distance as well. This distance started to

²²⁶ For a detailed information on *Ziya* Newspaper see Mete Tunçay, *BKP'nin Türkçe yayın organı Ziya gazetesi (1920-1923) ve Türkiye* (Vol. 9), (Sosyal Tarih Yayınları 2009).

²²⁷ Höpken, "From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism," 62.

²²⁸ Nohlen, *Philip Stöver, Eds. 2010. Elections in Europe*, 368–75.

become more visible with further developments. For instance, The Turkish place names were changed with Bulgarian place names in 1934 through the military junta, a matter that has never returned to the original.

In fact, the education system had greatly changed and was re-organized during the early 1950s. Nevertheless, the regime continued to emphasize in their official curriculum the role of Bulgarian nationalists, who revolted against the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century. On the contrary, the effect and appearance of those figures gradually increased by the following years.

After such a fault, although support and positive discrimination of the state had continued in some areas like cultural development and education for a while, the official plan for Muslim minority groups had changed drastically by the 8th Plenum of the BCP in April 1956. Thenceforth, the Bulgarian Politburo put ‘more national’ policies on the agenda and got away from the notion of ‘socialist internationalism’²²⁹. In 1959, the BCP Central Committee declared a decree asking citizens to make new registration within a month. This new ‘regulation’ was to authorize People’s Councils to change the ethnic affiliation of the people from national minorities, re-registering them ‘as Bulgarians’ through citizens’ own volunteer applications.²³⁰

The Party looked to establish a new socialist state on the ashes of Bulgaria. To achieve that, first, they had to create the “new socialist man”, and the dominant ideology behind that would have been internationalism according to Marxism and Leninism and the correspondence with newly establishing Eastern Bloc in the orbit of the USSR. Herein, the Party began to deviate slowly from the official path and leave the ideological umbrella that they had stood under. Cultural nationalist

²²⁹ For further about socialist internationalism in a comparative analysis of Bulgarian and Soviet examples, see Eminov, (1990). Nationality policy in the USSR and in Bulgaria: Some observations.

²³⁰ Vodenicharov, “Islam-an Atheistic Handbook for Fighting Islam and the Communist Newspeak,” 110.

elements started to take up more and more space on the official agenda through 1962 when the Politburo resolved to apply for a ‘cultural revolution.’²³¹

Although Soviet-type internationalism was adopted, secular Bulgarian nationalism began to make its presence felt by the second half of the 1960s. Starting from those years, as cultural facilities granted to minority groups were began to be reduced both in a physical and academic manner, on the contrary, Bulgarization in official cultural programs had gradually become visible.

The People Republic of Bulgaria's cultural leap forward did not mean a mere cultural policy with some folkloric core. It was a covered move that would be more visible within a decade, as all the cultural achievements of ethnic Turkish and other Muslim minorities was gradually been taken back by the 1970s. Herein, the state initiated an all-out attack on ‘everything’ related to cultural elements starting from daily living associated with ‘oriental’ heritage. On the Bulgarian side, historical studies had started to focus on the physical anthropological studies and origins of the Muslim minority. By the late 1970s, with the rising assimilation politics of the BCP in Bulgaria, some major studies were conducted under the aegis of the Bulgarian Academy of Science.²³² For celebrating 1300th years of establishment of first Bulgarian Kingdom in 681. On the other hand, there was an important bulk of cultural and academic works focused on newly establishing a Bulgarian mythology. Many movies were filmed focusing on Ottoman atrocities towards Christian Bulgarians. However, especially these two films, *Koijat Rog* (Metodi Andonov, 1972), and *Vreme Na Nasilie* (Ludmil Staikov, 1988) were to become symbols of rising Bulgarian nationalism in Bulgaria in those years.

²³¹ Borden, “The Politics of Nationalism Under Communism in Bulgaria,” 325.

²³² One such work was *Bulgaria's 1300 years*, written by Hristov.

Furthermore, some important figures from nineteenth century Bulgarian history were revived in a new form, not as Bulgarian nationalists, but ‘Bulgarian revolutionaries’ with some leftist tendencies after the 1960s. Vasil Levski (1837-1873) and Hristo Botev (1847-1876) are two significant examples. As Höpken put it, “So-called ‘patriotic’ education was introduced, which aimed to establish among Turks and Muslims a feeling of solidarity and loyalty with Bulgaria, its mostly Christian culture, and its partly anti-Ottoman history.”²³³

The revival of national history in the People’s Republic of Bulgaria was not limited to historical figures. Systematic mythologization was also implemented in this context. There were two different systematizations of state-created mythology. The first one was the semi-legendary narratives with figures from pre-medieval or medieval ages. Moreover, the second one was those relatively pre-modern or modern events from the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries, leading them to freedom from the Ottoman Empire. The second one focused typically on establishing the country as a free nation-state, and it came with some special days where significant commemorations would be held.²³⁴ For instance, the Constitution Day (April 16) for adopting the Tarnovo Constitution of 1879 after some part of the country gained autonomy from the Ottoman Empire. The medieval mythological approach also had such memorial days. For instance, St. Cyril and Methodius and Cyrillic Alphabet Day (May 24) were also commemorated as transforming Bulgarian culture into a written culture.

The reason behind the whole struggle was not quite comprehensive. The People’s Republic of Bulgaria took over the flag of modernism from the previous

²³³ Höpken, “From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism,” 68.

²³⁴ Aretov, “The Starting Point of Bulgaria in National Mythology,” 167–68.

rule. It sustained the country's long process of constructing a new Bulgaria by establishing a new national culture integrated into Eurocentric and socialist identity. Ernest Gellner approaches the issue saying that nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness. It invents nations where they do not exist, but it does need some pre-existing differentiating marks to work on, even if, as indicated, these are purely negative. These nations and their identities were not natural but created virtual subjects that could not exist without specific time and space boundaries.²³⁵ To achieve that purpose, Bulgaria had to get away from their oriental heritage of the Ottoman Empire that they left behind. At his point, Nikolay Aretov states:

Amongst all the motives that led to the negatively constructed image of the oriental essentiality, the aspects of religious difference are distinctive, which was later added to “the mythology and the propaganda of nationalism, emphasizing on the outer and oppressive political character of the empire, which was possible to emancipate of only by arms in the hands.”²³⁶

The Turkish image in Bulgaria was generally considered identical to the Ottoman heritage. Wolfgang Höpken claims that the state mechanism has tried to disassociate the minority and the so-called oriental heritage during the inclusion phase:

The policy of encouraging secular rights at the price of curtailing traditional customs and religious affiliation had only limited effect. Against this background, the Bulgarian Party began to revise its policy towards the country's Turkish and Muslim minority from the late 1950s as part of a gradual shift towards ‘Communist nationalism.’ The policy was now directed at a gradual but continuous undermining not merely of religious affiliation but also the separate ethnic identity of Turks and Muslims.²³⁷

²³⁵ Gellner, *Thought and Change*, 151.

²³⁶ Aretov, “Балканските Народи и Османската Империя: Едно Отхвърлено Наследство,” 60. Excerpted in Alexiyeva, (2011) “The Traumatic Heritage: Images of the Oriental Within Bulgarian Culture,” *Young Minds Rethinking the Mediterranean*.

²³⁷ Höpken, “From Religious Identity to Ethnic Mobilisation: The Turks of Bulgaria before, under and since Communism,” 67.

In the beginning, the Bulgarian state had taken religion and national identity as two different concepts. While they have begun to attack Islam and Ottoman heritage in Bulgaria, they had kept the ‘Turkishness’ out of their direct assaults within their secularization and integration policies. However, those secularization policies could not be sustained well. The state could not reach its goals in separating Islam from Turkish identity. In the beginning, the Party had attempted to undermine religious identity without touching ethnic identity. After that, it tried to build up a kind of double identity, including the ethnic Turk and a citizen of the ‘Bulgarian socialist nation.’²³⁸

The forms of inclusion and integration of the minority population solidified cultural and group boundaries by treating minority groups as the ‘others’ of Bulgarian society.²³⁹ However, multiculturalism is quite a difficult concept to explain. It was generally discussed in the framework of ‘tolerance’. Thus, another question mark also appears at this point. According to Jacques Derrida, multiculturalism, tolerance, would lead an unexpected result at last, ‘otherification’ might be embedded in those two.²⁴⁰ In terms of meaning of identity in such a state-powered ambiguity, Stuart Hall clarifies the issue:

One thinks of identity whenever one is not sure of where one belongs; that is, one is not sure how to place oneself among the evident variety of behavioural styles and patterns, and how to make sure that people around would accept this placement as right and proper, so that both sides would know how to go on in each other's presence. 'Identity' is a name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty.²⁴¹

²³⁸ Ibid., 71.

²³⁹ Gruev and Kalyonski, “Vazroditelnijat Proces: Mjusjulmanskite Obshtnosti i Komunisticheskiyat Rezhim (The Revival Process: Muslim Communities and the Communist Regime),” 108.

²⁴⁰ Öztürkmen, “Performance in the Ottoman World: Between Folklore and History”, 5.

²⁴¹ Hall and Du Gay, *Questions of Cultural Identity*, 19.

Although some positive discrimination provided minority or disadvantaged group quotas in universities, their affirmation for higher positions in state institutions like the military and academia had always remained ‘limited.’ All in all, the issue of otherness has not just been ‘embedded’ or at least ‘intensified’ in the state level, but also within the society itself. In this regard, Fatma Myuhtar-May mentions:

To achieve a homogenous and compliant nation, the regime put forward a suitable ideology, calculated to appeal to the patriotic sentiments of the ethnic majority. As the Bulgarian historian Vera Mutafchieva explains, the Bulgarians began to be brainwashed en masse with fresh arguments about the “otherness” of Turks and Pomaks.²⁴²

Hereby, it is possible to say that struggle for construction of national identity in Bulgaria, dragged the society throughout modernization, socialization and Bulgarization phases in the years 1946–1989. During this time however, the Bulgarian state had tried to establish its solid, unified society with long-term assimilation process, it had a segregated society. Turkish minority had remained as the *ultimate other*. After such a fail, the state went to a radical solution, the Process of Rebirth by 1980s. In result, women were forced to give up their traditional clothes. Religious teaching was removed from the general curriculum, being added to the list of ‘not-recommended.’ Furthermore, circumcision was banned, and religious funeral ceremonies were intervened and changed. Cemeteries, even ones in the remote villages, were closed, and people were forced to bury their deceased in the new places determined by the state. The new regulations were soon named as the “*Vazroditelen Protses*,” the Rebirth Process by the early 1980s.²⁴³

²⁴² Myuhtar-May, *Identity, Nationalism, and Cultural Heritage under Siege: Five Narratives of Pomak Heritage—From Forced Renaming to Weddings*, 98.

²⁴³ Ibid.

6.2 Comrades from the Party are Worried about Something

By the early 1980s, many points in the infamous ‘not-recommended’ list of the state became forbidden. Circumcision was one of them and the most controversial point. The Party’s attitude towards circumcision was already known. In the People’s Republic of Bulgaria, the official and non-official campaign against religious practices like circumcision had in fact begun much earlier, nearly by the late 1940s and early 1950s. As Eminov reminds us, even though there had been no official ban, the ritual had not been “welcomed and recommended.”²⁴⁴ As the newspaper *Nova Svetlina* wrote on March 20, 1986, circumcision was being declared a primitive intervention against the physical integrity of boys, calling circumcision as “A tradition that comes from the stone-age”²⁴⁵:

During the 1970s and 1980s, the authorities intensified their anti-religious propaganda and increasingly resorted to outright prohibitions of certain religious practices and rituals. A number of Islamic beliefs and practices came under wide-ranging attack[s] in the mass media. Circumcision was portrayed as a barbaric and pagan rite, a holdover from the Stone Age, and prohibited.²⁴⁶

In the first half of the 1980s, circumcision was prohibited completely, and heavy penalties up to two years’ imprisonment started to be implemented for citizens whose children were circumcised without the authorities’ official permission. Furthermore, little boys who have not been circumcised until that date were listed for regular anatomic checks to be applied by state authorities in the future.²⁴⁷

Bulgaria has a developed health system, which is well diffused into remote villages of the countryside. Almost every local administration center and small town

²⁴⁴ Eminov, *Turkish and Other Muslim Minorities In Bulgaria*, 58.

²⁴⁵ The newspaper was formerly named as ‘Yeni Işık’ and published in Turkish, but during the Rebirth Process it was completely transformed into a publication in Bulgarian by 1985.

²⁴⁶ Eminov, 57.

²⁴⁷ Soysal, “The Flight of the Turkish Muslim Minority in Bulgaria Part A,” 57.

had its medical unit required with adequate health staff. The issue of circumcision had begun to be approached as a public health issue, and those units were involved in regular ‘check operations’ in their villages. However, the medical officers working in Muslim populated towns and villages were generally from the Muslim minority like the teachers and most state officers. Oral history research reveals memory from these times. A past medical officer, Nebahat, states: “When the committee’s incoming visit for the town was close, all the children who had circumcised recently would be sent to their grandparents living in other remote villages. No one was caught in our village.” Nebahat used to be working in a big neighboring village with a dense ethnic Turkish population. Even though she hesitated to be outspoken about the issue, it is important to observe that she did not abstain from saying, “No one was caught in our village,” with a proud and thriving expression. Her statement implies that as Muslims working as state medical officers indicated that they had an effect of informing the community regarding the visits for the dissimulation of newly circumcised boys. The ‘suspected’ counter-act of Nebahat and her colleagues in the case of the anti-circumcision campaign is a clear sign of passive resistance of the minority within the ongoing Rebirth Process. In this regard, they had taken the risk for the penalty of malfeasance, which would result in being ostracized from the profession, or even imprisonment for a charge to act against state security. Nebahat also had a baby boy, Nihat, who was recently circumcised. Even though she saved lives in the region, she could not escape the danger because of an informer.

6.3 Nebahat’s Story

Nebahat was born in Buranlar Village in 1959 as the first child of a worker couple. She had lived in the village until they moved to downtown in 1965. When she began

school, she did not know any Bulgarian. “Although my teacher was a Turkish woman, she did not speak even a word with me in Turkish,” she says, “however, this is how I have managed to learn Bulgarian.” At that time, her younger brother was given to a boarding kindergarten in the city because her parents worked full-time jobs and could not find a chance to look after a second child in the town while nearly all of their relatives were still living in the village.

Nebahat was quite a successful girl. After her primary education, she continued the gymnasium. During that time, they moved to newly built collective houses in the city where her father began working in construction. Towards the end of her education in the gymnasium, Nebahat says she always wanted to apply for medical faculty to be a doctor. “My family always supported me, but when I said them, I wanted to be a doctor, they said, “my girl, you are a Turk, you cannot do that. If they had stood behind me, I could have been a doctor, rather than just a health officer.” Herein, Nebahat studied at a vocational school for health in Shumen and graduated in 1980. As she finished with a high degree, she was asked about her first place of duty after graduation. Although she could choose a much better place, she volunteered to work in a Turkish populated region where people were sent for compulsory duty in general. The next year Nebahat married a boy from her native village, Nahit. Two years later, she gave birth to her first son, Nihat.

When Nihat turned two years old, a rumor spread that circumcision would be forbidden in a short while. As a family, they made a quick decision, and had the boy operated secretly thanks to a Bulgarian plastic surgeon and nurses from the Varna region. His circumcision was done in Kufallar village where Nihat’s grandparent was living, and it was kept as a secret. Even the close relatives did not learn this until the time came, because it was already being known that a constant espionage network

existed even in the countryside. Moreover, the espionage network did not consist only of subjects with Bulgarian identity, but also from among the local Turks who were also conscripted as informers for years. Such units were available since the very beginning, but with the acceleration of the assimilation campaign by the 1970s, espionage activities also increased the state's importance through local administration channels.

Nihat's paternal grandmother was nursing him in the village of Kufallar. A day, Nebahat was visited by state security in her workplace and taken into headquarters in Shumen:

I can still remember the yawping of that grey-haired inspector, "Don't you know what you have done? Don't you know!" and I was shivering from fear. As much as he shouted at me, I was shivering. I'm still shivering when I remember ..." (Interviewee 15, Appendix B, 29)

Nebahat and Nahit were very young parents, twenty-four and twenty-five, respectively, and were sued for the circumcision of their boy. They were charged with a significant offense, almost treason against the state. During the judicial proceeding, the plastic surgeon and his medical assistants also were caught and imprisoned. "I still remember the surgeon in prison uniform", Nebahat remembered, "and chained like a common criminal in the trail." After examining the medical team, inspectors of the case also revealed that the surgeon and nurses had circumcised nearly eighty boys across Northeastern Bulgaria. A couple of weeks later, the boy's parents were taken to police headquarters to investigate their illegal act towards a citizen's physical integrity of the People's Republic of Bulgaria. In the trial, Nebahat's father, Ali Osman, took all the accusations to save Nebahat and Nahit and declared that he made the boy operated. At the end of the trial, he was charged with a

hefty fine. The penalties against the medical team and other families were unfortunately unknown. Nebahat recalled the sacrifice her father did for them:

They [the surgeon and nurses] were all in black and white striped prison jumpsuits, and their hands were chained like ordinary criminals. In the trial, my father [maternal grandfather of the boy] took the charge to save us. He was afraid that my husband and I would be fired from our jobs, and that we would not find a new one, because they would probably blacklist us. In the end, other families and we have released with a fine, but those people got imprisoned for have many years, I do not know. (Interviewee 15, Appendix B, 29)

After that incident, Nebahat and Nahit started to conduct a local investigation in their native village because they already knew that the informer was not from outside of the community, they were living in. Not in a long while, they could have reached the informer's petition file by a friend of them working in the local police station. They recognized the handwriting on the petitions. It belonged to the wife of Nahit's twin brother, an ethnic Turkish health officer working in a neighboring town. While his grandmother took Nihat to relieve himself somewhere in the garden, the informer chased them and identified that the boy was circumcised. The informer sent an advice letter to the police first, but as she could not receive any answer, she wrote a second one, and the police started an investigation. Then, they went directly to her house and found the informer to double-check it.

“When we cried them [her and her husband] about letters, she said, “Is not it true, what do you asking for?” After the informer accepted that she informed the police, they transfer that situation to the family. The boy's paternal grandfather did not want to announce the informer, his daughter-in-law publicly. At that point, I assume that the family worried about the informant because she had a baby girl, and she worked and lived in Turkish populated countryside. If the informer were announced, her life would probably be in danger. At least she would be alienated and

excluded from society forever. So, the informer has never been revealed publicly, even though the village locals already knew it. It has been kept as a semi-secret so far.

When I went to that village, I tried to bring up the subject a couple of times and realized that the native of the town already knew the informer but did not talk about it. Thus, it seems a family secret, turned to a secret kept publicly. The issue was more broadened within the family relations and its counter connection with community dynamics.

6.4 The Class Book with No Name

The literature on name changing of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria includes a documentary film by Alan Berliner, *The Sweetest Sound* (2001). In the film, Berliner explores the concept of “having a name” and shows how much it can matter for a person. During the oral history research, it was difficult to pursue stories of how the forced name change of ethnic Turkish minority had been experienced. One could not directly ask questions about the issue, not to re-traumatize them. Even though the minority had tried to ignore their ‘official names’ in their daily lives, especially in their home, try to estimate the meaning of a name for an individual. After new names were given, all the people's documents were stipulated to be arranged with the ‘new names.’²⁴⁸ It means everybody who ‘took’ new names had to renew his or her official documents retrospectively, starting from the last salary check to birth records. That act would

²⁴⁸ I do not hesitate to use “new names” because the forcibly given names will have been generally called as “the new names” (“*yeni adlar*” in Turkish) and it even adapted into the daily language among ethnic Turks from Bulgaria. It is actually a kind of categorization and an attempt to derogate the name changing.

have ended with assaulting tombstones with a Muslim name on them. I will come to that issue in the following part.

It was a quite traumatic process for the people to adapt to life after the name change, which is a cultural offense against the ethnic and cultural identity of the minority. Hence, the first concrete indicators of active resistance started to show up among the minority. While trying to understand the feelings of victims in which they had been during those times, I have always been looking for some intimate stories during interviews even though I have hesitated to ask direct, or by aiming questions regarding the incident. On the other hand, it is a topic that you cannot stay away from, even if you want to avoid in talks with the witnesses. You could find yourself being told the mode after the name changing because the last attack on their identity had left a deep trace on the collective unconscious of the people.

Indeed, nearly a million Muslim minority had lived a period within double identities in Bulgaria. However, some points should not be skipped over. When people were forced to choose their new names from the present lists, which was officially determined by state authorities, they tried to take Bulgarian names similar and with the same initials as their original names. It was also important to take names that ‘look like it does in Turkish’ if it was possible. Moreover, their first names were changed, along with the names of their father and family, without considering whether their fathers or grandfathers were alive.²⁴⁹ Their names could have also been changed posthumously. Thus, thousands of strange combinations of names suddenly appeared in Bulgaria. Therefore, people have continued to identify each other's ethnoreligious background from their names even if they did not know each other.

²⁴⁹ In Bulgaria people have three names. One their first name, second one is father's name and third one is family name generally originating from their paternal grandfathers'.

Once the name-changing campaign was done by spring 1985 in the region, stringent precautions were taken to prevent the use of non-Bulgarian languages (Turkish and Romani language, which was also forbidden). The fine for speaking a ‘certain’ foreign language began to be implemented in the public place. Use of ‘past’ personal names was also strictly forbidden. Here, it should also be emphasized that implementing the ongoing Vazroditelen Protses had not been policed by the local administration and security forces. A broad web of informants among the ethnic Turkish community supported it. Even though the majority already knew most informants, they could not be revealed publicly, and the people could not be sure who is reliable.

People were forced to give up their names in public spaces in a way. They had to use their given Bulgarian names in public areas. However, the ‘real names’ continued to be used in private spaces. While someone was leaving home, he/she had to ‘put on’ his/her official name until turning back home. Moreover, newborns were being named with Turkish names by their families, and then their fathers were sent to the local registration office to take the ‘official name’ of the baby between the years of 1985 and 1990. Herein, a kind of double identity was established during the long-term assimilation politics in Bulgaria. In this regard, Veselin Dimitrov accounts for the unexpected double identity issue that emerged in the country:

The result of the campaign was, not surprisingly, to stimulate the growth of national feeling amongst the Turkish minority. The reports of the political intelligence services indicate that while there was outward compliance with the new status quo, the Turks hung stubbornly to their identity. Only Turkish was spoken at home, and even newly born babies were given informal Muslim names. Circumcision continued to be practiced, emerging as an essential gesture of defiance. The official ceremonies were evaded by all possible means, while the flood of propaganda served to irritate rather than convince.²⁵⁰

²⁵⁰ Dimitrov, “In Search of a Homogenous Nation,” 15.

Shortly after the name changing was done in the village of Kufallar, someday, Saime Muallim went to the primary school where her husband, Hüseyin was working. When Hüseyin and Saime were on the corridor, they met some of the Bulgarian teachers. “The teacher asked me bitingly for my new name. Suddenly, Hüseyin stamped with rage and shouted at his face, “Saime!” he took me, and we left there.” Hüsnü Muallim remembers: “I remember the first class day after the name change in the village. I tried to read the new names of the children, but I could not have continued. The next day I left the job.” After he quitted the job, Hüsnü would begin to work as a farm laborer in the village's farm cooperative, and he worked like that until the Great Excursion started in the summer of 1989.

Those examples were the earliest signs of the incoming end for the minority, even though the campaign was completed with minor resistance. However, a kind of silent unrest would have existed and spread among the community. Name-changing campaign means overstepping the mark, and it would have results for both the ethnic Turkish community and the state in the near future. Even the most silent members of the community have begun to raise his/her voice. It was a turning point for the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria.

6.5 Tombstones with No Name

The change of names also mattered in the case of burying the deceased. After the cultural leap forward decree of Politburo 1962, another phase opened not only for the Bulgarian population but also for national minorities of the country. Funeral rites were ‘restructured’ regarding the state's ongoing secularization policy. Thenceforth, the state performed a considerable effort in intervening in everyday life and rites and

Turkish community rituals. In this regard, many different components of Islamic traditions were taken under inspection:

In May 1978, the Council of Ministers announced "an obligatory system of socialist rituals and holidays" to replace the traditional ones. The implementation of the new rituals was spelled out in "Guidelines for the Development and Perfection of the System of Holidays and Rituals in the People's Republic of Bulgaria."²⁵¹

In the beginning, the implementation of those new rites had remained limited in the countryside. However, especially after the forced name-changing campaign was conducted across the country by spring 1985, new radical decrees were sent to local party councils, and the closure of old Muslim cemeteries and opening of new 'mixed' ones was ordered, with all citizens regardless of their religion to be buried. Since then, state officials were sent to Muslim funerals to check the rituals' acceptability according to those socialist rite principles. In those funerals, no prayer in Turkish or Arabic was allowed; only ones in Bulgarian were to be tolerated. Moreover, some official letters were sent in some regions of the country to families, ordering to cover their deceased close relatives' tombstones with any foreign inscriptions in Turkish or in Arabic or any Islamic symbols.²⁵² About forcible secularization policies of socialist states in Balkan examples, Vlad Naumescu brings a good analysis:

The attempts of the socialist state to control and eventually contain religion were innumerable, at the level of spaces (destroying or converting sacred buildings and places), specialists (imprisoned, killed, or forcefully 'converted'), and ritual practice (forbidden in public, domesticated, secularized).²⁵³

²⁵¹ Zang, *Destroying Ethnic Identity. The Gypsies of Bulgaria*, 12. Retrieved from Ali Eminov, *Turkish and other Muslim Minorities in Bulgaria*, 1997, 59.

²⁵² Eminov, 60.

²⁵³ Naumescu, "The End Times and the near Future," 316–17.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

This study aimed at examining the assimilation policies imposed on the Muslim minority groups in Bulgaria, from a retrospective perspective, which goes back to the interwar period. In this sense, it tries to present the different signs of the more recent campaigns against Muslim minorities, laying out examples of Turkish Muslim villages in Northeastern Bulgaria. The study explores the long-lasting passive resistance of the Turkish minority in dealing with the growing oppression during the Rebirth Process carried in the People's Republic of Bulgaria between 1946 and 1989. Focusing on the everyday life of the villages of Buranlar, Kufallar, and Omranköy, it examines the daily rituals and performances based on personal identity, culture, and traditional habits, which turned out to be a kind of passive resistance developed against the state's assimilation policies.

The historical period, which is studied, is the Process of Rebirth from the 1920s until the 1970s. However, that era has generally been neglected in the academic works that studied Bulgaria's Muslim minority. Therefore, highlighting this historical era sheds light on a remarkable period in the People's Republic of Bulgaria's history not studied before. The Process of Rebirth has indeed a much longer and deeper history than already known. The fact that the thesis highlights this significant period, offers also an alternative way of exploring the state and community relations, through an analysis of everyday life practices, expressions of cultural identity. It calls attention to how the state and minority relations changed during the interwar and WW2 periods, according to the changing political atmosphere in Bulgaria. Although Muslim minorities had relatively enjoyed the

cultural and religious autonomy granted by the Stamboliyski government, after the coup d'état and his assassination, this situation changed. There also happened significant nationalist attacks in the 1930s.

Later, when the Fatherland Front took the power after September 1944, nationalist acts of former government of Kingdom of Bulgaria were rapidly condemned. However, the state's early pluralistic approach to Muslim minority groups under a formulation of 'integration' policy, the "*priobshtavane*" had its own agenda. It aimed at forming a new society according to principles of internationalism of the USSR. This official approach had gradually changed, when the ongoing official integration policy was found not quite effective against ethnic Turks. Hence, Bulgarian politburo determined new principles and measurements to impose on the minority groups in order to accelerate the process of integration, which came to an end with the Process of Rebirth in 1980s.

The emigration agreements of 1925 and 1968 had opened a way towards a continual migration to Turkey from Bulgaria. The continuous emigration wave, which had accelerated through the years, depended on the intra-state and international socio-political developments as seen during the emigrations of 1950-1951 and 1968-1978. Furthermore, these agreement and continuous fluxes to Turkey had put the ethnic Turks of Bulgaria in a difficult situation. Several generations were born into and lived in an atmosphere where these emigrations took place. The notion of emigration was therefore embedded in their life as an ultimate possibility, which they too could experience eventually. Former generation were however lucky as they had left the country for Turkey during migration agreements. One should remind here how the situation was even more difficult for Pomaks and Roma population. Because Turkish authorities did not accept the Muslim Roma Pomaks,

they were not given passports to leave Bulgaria for Turkey during these emigration periods. Herein, that ‘inability’ to emigrate had made them more fragile against the assimilation policies they were imposed.

Ethnic Turks managed to form some underground organizations during the name-change campaign and afterwards. These organizations had some contact with the international press like Radio Free Europe, the BBC, the Voice of America and Deutsche Well. Turkish minority also raised a public awareness in Turkey through their relatives, and put pressure on the government to take steps against Bulgaria. The assimilation campaign had eventually gained a broader echo in international media. Throughout this historical process, the focus was more on Turkish minority. The Muslim Roma and Pomaks never had a chance to raise their voice in the 1960s and 1970s, simply because they did not have significant diaspora abroad to protect them. Their tragedies found only a partial place in academic literature as well. All these experiences were considered as separate ‘incidents,’ yet these campaigns proved to be the significant indicators about what would have occurred against ethnic Turks in the 1980s.

Even though the Process of Rebirth was defined and started to be used by state officials in the mid-1980s, it was initiated much earlier, by the early 1960s gradual attacks to cultural and religious dynamics of Muslim minority groups had long been taking place. For instance, the circumcision was officially forbidden in 1984, but it was an unwanted practice by the state since the early 1950s. Moreover, the level of education in Turkish was decreased starting from those years until it was totally removed in 1972. However, by the late 1984 the government accelerated its nationalist campaigns and began to take steps that are more radical. For sure, there are several claims for economic and political reasons for the increasing radicalization

of BCP in its nationalist approach. There were major economic problems in the Eastern Bloc, which were deeply affecting Bulgaria beginning by the early 1970s. The state wanted to achieve an ultimate 'national unity'. This was a strategy to compensate the worsening course of economy with a project of "solidified socialist nation."

The Bulgarian state had managed to sustain their 'integration' policy, which had attacked many religious and ethno-cultural elements of the Turkish minority until the 1980s, when they turned it into a new phase, the Process of Rebirth. Radical assimilatory acts attacked the indisputable divine and cultural elements, like circumcision and mother tongue of the community. Those provocative acts of the state lead to the transformation of former passive resistance to an active will of migration, called *Golyamata Ekskurziya* (The Great Trip), which happened in a form of mass deportation of ethnic Turks during summer 1989. This massive social movement countrywide brought an end to the dictatorship of Todor Zhivkov in November 1989,

There are still many special topics present to be studied in the notion of Muslim minority groups of Bulgaria, with a generation of young scholars. There needs more oral history research to document the collective memory of that era.

APPENDIX A
LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

Interviewee 1: Male, 92, retired schoolteacher. Interviewed on 07.07.2016, in his house.

Interviewee 2: Male, 78, retired construction worker. Interviewed on 07.07.2016 in his house.

Interviewee 3: Female, 84, retired farm worker. Interviewed on 23.06.2017, in her house.

Interviewee 4: Male, 82, retired teacher. Interviewed on 24.01.2019 in his house.

Interviewee 5: Female, 82, retired teacher. Interviewed on 24.01.2019 in her house.

Interviewee 6: Male, 76, retired driver. Interviewed on 24.08.2018 in his house.

Interviewee 7: Male, 88, retired shepherd. Interviewed on 17.06.2018 in his house.

Interviewee 8: Male, 60, retired construction technician. Interviewed on 28.08.2018 in his garden.

Interviewee 9: Male, 84, retired shepherd. Interviewed on 23.06.2018 in his house.

Interviewee 10: Female, 77, retired farm worker. Interviewed on 19.06.2018 in her house.

Interviewee 11: Female, 68, retired farm worker. Interviewed on 19.06.2018 in her house.

Interviewee 12: Male, 78, retired teacher. Interviewed on 16.08.2018 in his garden.

Interviewee 13: Female, 68, retired lawyer. Interviewed on 21.01.2019 in her house.

Interviewee 14: Female, 71, retired worker. Interviewed on 10.08.2019 in her house.

Interviewee 15: Female 58, retired health officer. Interviewed on 19.05.2017 in her house.

Interviewee 16: Male 77, retired worker, musician. Interviewed on 17.06.2017 in his house.

APPENDIX B
ORIGINAL QUOTATIONS

1. [...] Duman almış,
[...] Durmaz akar,
Güneş ufuktan [şimdi] doğar,
Yürüyelim arkadaşlar,
[...] Yer, gök, su dinlesin,
Sert adımlarla her yer inlesin! (Interviewee 1)

2. Askerleri hatırlamıyorum ama bir kere tarlada oynuyorduk. Sonra birden “v” gibi, kuş sürüsü gibi uçan uçaklar geçmeye başladı üzerimizden. Korktuk, toprağa ekinlerin arasına yattık. Uçaklar üzerimizde geçiyordu. Romanya’ya doğru gidiyorlardı. (Interviewee 2)

3. Germanlar bize bir şey yapmadı. Bizim köyde yoktular, Ruslar geldiği zaman gördüm Almanları, sıra sıra yalın ayak gürüyorlardı, esir. Güzel güzel çocuklardı, sarı sarı. Köyden biri çiğ kabak verdiler bunlara, kemirdiler kabağı fakirim. Rusların geldiğini duyduklarında köyde kızları dama, tavana saklamaya başladılar. Ben de küçük o zaman ama onlarla gitmek istedim, beni de sakladılar. (Interviewee 3)

4. Ruslar geldi, dış avlunun kapısını vurdular. Babam gitti kapıyı açtı. Tatar bir adam vardı yanlarında, o konuştu bizimle kafirler için. Kimseye bir şey yapmadılar ama bir asker babamın atını istemiş de

babam vermemiş. O asker de babamı elinden vurmuş. Allah'tan bir komutan görmüş bunu da ahırdan dışarı atmış askeri hemen, ben onun cezasını vereceğim demiş babama. (Interviewee 3)

5. Ruslar, Almanları getirdiler bir gün köye. Gece bizim köyde kalacaklarmış, eski mektebe kapattılar. Çocuklar meraklı, bakmak istiyorlar içeriye. Çocuklardan biri duvardan atladı girdi içeri. Bir parça ekmek verdi Almanlara. Bir askerın gözü doldu, ekmeđi aldı, kemerini çıkardı verdi çocuđa hemen. Mektepteki kokuyu hatırlıyorum hala Almanlar gittikten sonra. İnsanlar mektebi temizledi iyice ama koku gitmedi çok zaman. (Interviewee 4)

6. Omranköy'de camide Ramazan hocalığı yapardı. O zamanlar köyden bir adam kaza geçirdi de o adama 6 ay baktıydı. O zamanlar ben 17-18 yaşındayım, babam da onu tanımış, çok sevmiş. Genç, dindar, düzgün adamdı. Öyle öyle bizi nişanladılar, sonra da evledik 51'de. (Interviewee 3)

7. Biz yerde okuduk, sıra falan yoktu okuduđum odada. Mektep caminin yanıydı, bir avluda. Bulgar mektebi öyle değildi, camlarından bakardık sınıfa. Kara tahtaları vardı sınıfta, sıralar, haritalar vardı. Onların durumları çok daha iyiydi okulda, devlet gönderiyordu. Bizde böyle olanaklar yoktu. Çok sonradan geldi onlar, okullar birleşince bizim öğretmenliğimizde. (Interviewee 4)

8. Babam köyde hocalık yapmış. Dedem Şumnu'ya medreseye göndermiş onu, orada okumuş. Sonra köye dönmüş, öğretmenlik yapmış köydeki ilkokulda. Biz de orada okuduk. Basit Arapça, Kur'an okuyacak kadar öğrendik. Ondan başka, matematik ve Türkçe gördük. Zeki bir kızdım ben, yedi yaşında Kur'an okuyabiliyordum, sonra hatim indirdim daha o yaşlarda. Bizim derslerimiz Türkçe'ydi o zaman, eski alfabede. Latince öğrenmeye [Türkçe] çok sonra başladık, Bulgarca da öyle. (Interviewee 5)
9. O zamanlar her köyden birkaç kız topluyorlardı okutmak için şehirde. Öğretmen okulları yeni açılıyordu o zaman, Türkçe öğretmen okulları. Babam köyün muhtarıydı. Gelmişler muhtarlık yapar mısın demişler. İlk başlarda istememiş ama sonradan ısrar etmişler, kabul etmek zorunda kalmış o da. Köyden iki kız bul bize kasabada okutmak için, gerisini bir halledeceğiz demişler. İlk başlarda babam bir şey yapmamış ama daha sonra tekrar gelmişler, iki kız seçmesini istemişler. Ben o zamanlar okula devam etmek istiyordum, Sofya'da öğretmen okulu vardı. O okullarda okumak parasızdı, her şeyini veriyorlardı. Daha sonra babama bir kız seçti bizim akranlardan. Babama senin kızını de önermene demişler. Öyle öyle razı oldu sonra. O yıl geç kaldık, Sofya'ya gittik ama kayıtlar dolmuş, bir hafta sonra geri gönderdiler bizi. Sonraki yıl Razgrad'da yeni açılan öğretmen okuluna kaydolduk, ikinci öğrenciler olarak 1953'te. (Interviewee 5)

10. Köyde, beyaz gelinlik giyen ilk kadın bendim. Bizim düğünümüz köy meydanında yapıldı. Okuldan Bulgar arkadaşlarımız da gelecekti. İlk defa onlar için masalar kuruldu köy meydanında. O zamanlar otobüs yoktu köye, 30 km bisiklet sürerek geldiler. (Interviewee 5)
11. O zamanlar köy meydanında, açıkta yapılmazdı düğünler. Kadın erkek ayrı olurdu, sayvant altında, ahırlarda. Gaz lambaları yakarlardı her yere gaz lambaları, kandiller yakarlardı. Biz o zamanlar küçük, genç oğlan. Gidip gizlice gözetlemeye çalışırdık duvarlardaki gediklerden kadınların eğlencelerini. (Interviewee 6)
12. Partiya'dan demişler, "muallimlerin karıları çemberleri, şalvarları bırakacak etek, elbise giyecek" demişler. Ertesi gün kasabaya elbise almaya gönderdiler bizi, Şumnu'ya, böyle kısa kollu, etekli. Biz öyle şeyler giymezdik önceden. Ertesi gün yeni elbiseleri giydik biz çalışmaya gittik. Bizi biliyorlar, mecbur giyiyoruz bunları ama bir yere giderken ihtiyar hısımlardan birisine denk geldim bizim. Bana bir baktı, "Saime, anana babana bu günleri mi gösterecektin?" dedi. Hiçbir şey diyemedim. O yüzden ben şimdi hiç kızmıyorum uşağım kızlara, giydiklerine. Biz de giyindik zamanda öyle şeyler. Ko giysinsinler. (Interviewee 3)
13. Kocabana hiç sesimi çıkarmadım ben. Ne dediyse yaptım ama bir kere duyduk ki köyden muallimlerin karıları oyun yapacaklarmış köyde, kasabalarda. Kocaban geldi, "peliklerini keseceksin" böyle

böyle dedi. “Kestirmem!” dedim, bağırdım. Bir şey demedi daha.

(Interviewee 3)

14. Bahçede etek giymeyi mecbur yaptılar sonra. Bir alışık değiliz öyle şey giymeye, bir de bahçede. O zaman ben bahçede çalışıyorum, yeşillik yetiştiriyoruz TKZS’ye. Etekte rahat edemiyoruz çalışırken, dona [şalvar] alışkınız biz. Ama birisi duyar, görür diye de korkuyoruz. Ne yaptık, eteğin içine don giymeye başladık biz de. Biri gelirse Bulgarlardan, kıvrıveriyorduk donu yukarı hemen görmesinler diye. (Interviewee 3)

15. Birinci mektebi bitirdikten sonra, kasabada bir okul açılmış duyduk, yataklı. Gitmek istiyoruz bir arkadaşıyla buradan. Baktık ne yapacağız ne edeceğiz, kasabada bir akraba var Şumnu’da o zaman, sentırda. Bir şekilde haber verdik ona, bir geliyoruz diye önceden. Sabah erkenden yola çıktık, yayan. O zaman otobüs falan yok, olsa bile para yok ki. Yayan gittik Şumnu’ya, 5-6 saatte. Sonra öğrendik ki kaçırmışız kayıtları, o gece akrabamızda kaldık da geri döndük ertesi sabah. (Interviewee 6)

16. İlk kamyonlar geldi köye, o zaman kamyon traktör yok. Asker toplamaya geldiler. Kocabanla birlikte aldılar bizi, kamyon kasasıyla bindik gitti. Başka köylerden oğlanlar da vardı, doluydu kasalar. Traktörler, kambaynalar vs. sonra geldi TKZS’ye. (Interviewee 7)

17. Buranlar'dan Omranköy'e kadar güneşi görmeden yürürdük bir çocukken. Düşün, taa oradan orası hep ağaçlık, ormandı. Sonra TKZS'ye tarla açmak için kestiler, temizlediler o ağaçları. Çok büyük ağaçlar vardı, kimisini sökemediler de dinamitle patlattılar bizim çocukluğumuzda. Köye serleri gelirdi, güüm, güüüüm!
(Interviewee 8)

18. Bir elektrikçi vardı köyde, Allah onu bildiği yapsın! Sonra elektrik direğinde tamir yaparken elektrik çarptı da düştü öldü. Çok köpek öldürdü o, böyle diğrenin ucuna elektrik kablosu bağlıyordu da ısıttırıyorlardı köpeklere, vuruyorlardı avcılar, söylemişler onlara. Öyle öyle öldürdüler hayvanları. Benim de köpeğimi öldürmek istediler. Salmadım alsınlar köpeğimi. Biz o zaman köyün dışında yaşıyoruz. “Biz köyün dışındayız, tilki geliyor gelincik geliyor, tavukları kapıyorlar yoksa” dedim de vermedim köpeği. (Interviewee 9)

19. Hasat vakitleri gece gündüz işliyordu Hasan enişten kombaynaya [biçerdöver]. Çok yorukuyordu. Bir gün bana geldi; sana “kombaynayı aydamasını [sürmesini] öğreteyim mi?” dedi. Ben de olur dedim. Çok zaman olmadan öğrendim. Çalışmaya başladık sonra gece gündüz. Bir gece çalışırken yorukmuşum, kenara bir yere ekinlerin arasına yatıverdim, uyumuşum. Sonra enişten unutmuş nereye yattığımı, biliyordu o da ama bilememiş sonra. Meraklanmış, Hatice! Hatice! Diye bağırmaya başlamış. Delirmiş adam, ses

çıkılmayınca. Benim uykum ağırdır. Ezmiş sanmış beni kombaynıyla. Sonra duydum ben onu da doğruldum ayağa, gördü beni. (Interviewee 10)

20. Bir gün tarla işlerken jurnalistler geliyor dediler. Beni görmek istiyorlarmış, resim yapacaklarmış. Neyse geldiler, kombaynıyla resim yaptılar beni. Jurnale çıkmışım sonra. Bende vardı o şimdi nerede bilmiyorum. (Interviewee 10)

21. Bir gün şehirden geldiler ve yeni belediye başkanı olmamı istediler, ilk Türk kadın belediye başkanı olarak. O zaman altı aylık hamileydim ve bunu öne sürerek yapamayacağımı söyledim. İlk başta bir şey demediler ve tekrar böyle bir şey istemeyeceklerini zannettim. Doğum iznim bittikten sonra tekrar geldiler ve belediye başkanı olarak işe başlamamı söylediler. Ne yapabilirsin ki, mecburen kabul ettim ben de. İlk kadın belediye başkanı olarak 1965'te çalışmaya başladım. Çok çalıştım. O bölgeye çeşme suyunu getirdik ilk defa. (Interviewee 5)

22. Oğlanlar üçe geldiğinde sünnet yaptırmak istedik onları babamlarla. Dedene dediğimizde sessiz kaldı, bir şey demedi en başta. Sonra ne yapmak istiyorsanız yapın dedi. O zaman öyleydi... Sonra babam, "ben halledeceğim," dedi. Babanla amcanı Omranköy'e götürdük arabayla sünnete, sonra geri getirdik eve düzenlince. (Interviewee 3)

23. Okuldan ansambleye (dans, folklor grubu) aldılar bizi. Orada dans ve şarkılı presentsiyalar (gösteri) yaptık çok köyde. Şarkılar, Türkler söylüyorduk çocuklarla. Muallimlerimiz çalıştırıyordu bizi. Çok köy, kasaba gezdik. Reyondaki (vilayet) presentsialara götürüyorlardı bizi. Bir kere Şumnu tarafında bir Bulgar köyünde Rusça ve Bulgarca şarkılar söyledik. Dinleyenler çok şaşırdılar, biliyorlardı Türk olduğumuzu. Nasıl bu kadar iyi söylediğimize şaşırdılar. Çok iyi bilir, söyledik sadece Türkçe değil, Bulgarca, Rusça şarkı, türküleri, oyunları. (Interviewee 11)

24. O sene güzün okul yeni açılmıştı. Kitaplar geldi matbaadan, çocuklara dağıttık. Ben o zaman müdür yardımcısıyım okulda. Türkçe dersi için kitaplar da var, verdik çocuklara. Sonra müdür geldi, emir geldi, Türkçe kitaplarını geri istiyorlar dedi. Ee topladık kitapları çocuklardan gerisin geri. O sene Türkçe dersleri yapılmadı. Biz gelene kadar da [Türkiye'ye] bir daha olmadı. (Interviewee 12)

25. Tırgovişte'de belediyede çalışıyordum o zaman. Bir gün duyduk ki; çingene bir karı-koca, çingene bir çocuğu evlat edinmiş ama belediye çocuğa Türkçe isim koymalarına izin vermiyormuş. Onlar da belediyeyi mahkemeye vermişler. Ben de belediyeyi temsilen davaya katıldım. Kadın, çocuğu da yanında getirmiş mahkemeye. Çocuk küçük daha, 1 yaşlarında. Duruşma başladı, hâkim sordu; "Bu çocuğa Türkçe isim koymak istiyorsunuz da bu çocuğun Bulgar olmadığı ne malum?" Bu soruyu duyunca, kadın kucağındaki bebeği yüzüstü

çevirdi, donunu aşağıya indirip, poposunu hâkime gösterdi ve “Hâkim Bey, siz böyle kara Bulgar götü gördünüz mü?” dedi. Hâkim, kıpkırmızı oldu, cevap veremedi adam. Bir şey diyemeyince de bana dönüp, “savunma, siz bir şey demeyecek misiniz?” dedi. Ben de omuzlarımı kaldırıp “ee, doğru söylüyor, ne diyebilirim?” dedim. Yine de mahkemeyi kaybetti Çingeneler. Daha sonra o mahkemeden dolayı belediyeden kovuldum ben de görevimi yapmadığım gerekçesiyle. (Interviewee 13)

26. Şumnu’ya, kasabaya taşınmıştık 1969-70’te. Trakiski’deki [Şumnu’da bir semt] büyük konserve fabrikasında işe girdik. Ben fabrikadaydım, Mustafa abin de kamyon sürüyordu. Güzel para kazanıyorduk, güzeldi. Fabrikanın olanakları da iyiydi. Denize bile gidebiliyorduk fabrika lojmanlarını kullanarak. Fabrikadan bir arkadaşım vardı, Pomak bir kadındı, genç. Bir gün çağırdılar bu kadını, sonra üzgün geldi, ağlayacak gibi. “Noldu?” dedik, kızgın bir şekilde; “ismimi değiştirdiler. Merak etmeyin, size de gelecek sıra!” dedi. Bir şey diyemedik. (Interviewee 14)

27. Sonra, o yılların sonuna doğru bir şeyler anlamaya başladık yavaş yavaş. Bir şeyler doğru gelmiyordu. Bu faşistler yaptığımız her şeyi mahvetmeye başladı! Bulgaristan’a gitmiyorum, gitmek de istemiyorum artık. Babamın muhtarken yaptığı okulun harap halini görmek istemiyorum. (Interviewee 5)

28. Türkiyecilik zamanı, Sabriye Anne's kardeşi Türkiye'ye gitmiş hep birlikte karısı, çocuklarıyla. Onları geçirirlerken, Sabriye Anne delirmiş gibi olmuş. Onları salmak istememiş, o kadar yırtmış ki kendini tutamamışlar Sabriye Anne'yi, ağaca başlamışlar. O kadar bağırmış ki, Omranköy yoluna geliyormuş Sabriye Anne'nin sesi. Gidenleri geçirmeye gidenler anlatıyormuş. O zaman yolda kalan çok olmuş, Şeytancık'tan bagajlarını yüklemiş göndermiş insanlar Türkiye'ye de kendileri gidememiş, sınırlar kapanmış. Duyduk öyle şeyler. (Interviewee 3)

29. Sünnetin yasaklanacağını duyduk biz. Yasaklanmadan önce yaptırmak istedik. Bir plastik cerrah bulduk sünnet yapan, orta yaşlı Bulgar bir adam Birkaç hemşireyle beraber çalışıyorlardı. Sünneti evde yaptırarak, kimse öğrenmeden. Kimseye de söylemedik. Bir gün babaannesi bahçede çişini yaptırırken o görmüş bahçede. İşyerindeyken bir gün telefon geldi, Şumnu'ya emniyet müdürlüğüne çağırıldılar acilen. Gittiğimde sorguya aldılar. Kır saçlı bir savcı girdi sorguya. Hala hatırlıyorum bağırmasını, "ne yaptığınızın farkında mısınız siz!" diye bağıyordu. O bağırdıkça ben titriyordum. (Interviewee 15)

30. İki mektup yazmış polise, iki tane. İlkinde almış polis ama işlem yapmamışlar. İkinci de gelince, işleme koymazlarsa başları ağrıyacağı için mecburen soruşturma açmışlar. Biz sonra o mektubu bulduk, o merkezde çalışan polis bir tanıdığımızdan. Size imzasını gösteremem

dedi ama el yazısından tanıdık kimin yazdığını. Sonra o da itiraf etti. Mahkemede babam aldı bütün sorumluluğu üstüne. Biz memurduk, işten atılırsak tekrar iş bulamayacağımızdan korkuyordu. Öyle olsaydı kara listeye alabilirlerdi bizi. O yüzden kendi üstüne aldı her şeyi. Mahkemeye sünneti yapan cerrahı ve beraber çalıştığı ekibi de getirmişlerdi. Adi hükümlüler gibi siyah beyaz çizgili hapisane kıyafeti ile giydirmişlerdi adamcağızı, ellerinde prangalarla. Sadece onlarla biz yoktuk mahkemede. O cerrahın sünnet ettiği 80 çocuğun ailesi daha mahkemelik oldu o davada, Deliorman'dan. Babama para cezası verdiler, ama o diğer insanlar kaç sene ceza aldılar bilmiyorum. (Interviewee 15)

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