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## MEMORIES AND OBLIVION: AN OCCUPIED VILLAGE IN THE RHODOPES (WESTERN THRACE, GREECE, 1941–1944)

*The present study deals with the 1941–1944 Bulgarian occupation memories of the inhabitants of Thrylorio, a village in Rodopi (Western Thrace, Greece).*

*The research methodology tool of the present study is the Oral History; the experienced by the narrating individuals themselves History. The material was originally collected in a pilot study via unstructured interviews. When the axes around which the informants' memories were focusing reached a saturation point, they were used as the basis for the construction of a structured interview, which was used for the main study. These axes are as follows: memories of the first and the last day of the occupation, the arrival of the Bulgarian settlers, the "change of use" in the landmarks of the village, the villagers' economic drain and the starvation, the curfew measures, the thrashing, the forced labour, the daily routine, the representations of the Bulgarians (positive and negative), and the memories of the resistance against the Bulgarian conquerors. As has been shown, the oral history is not the history of the facts but a history of subjectivity since it acknowledges history's true but invisible creators. This study did not aim to complement the history or reveal the historical truth but nonetheless it ended to supplement it not as a cold historical narration but via the small details of the daily life, that restores the individual person as an active agent in the process of the collective memory formation.*

**Keywords:** *memory (personal, social, "historicalness" of memory, traumatic), Oral History, fear, liminality, communitas, Thrace, Greece, Bulgarian occupation.*

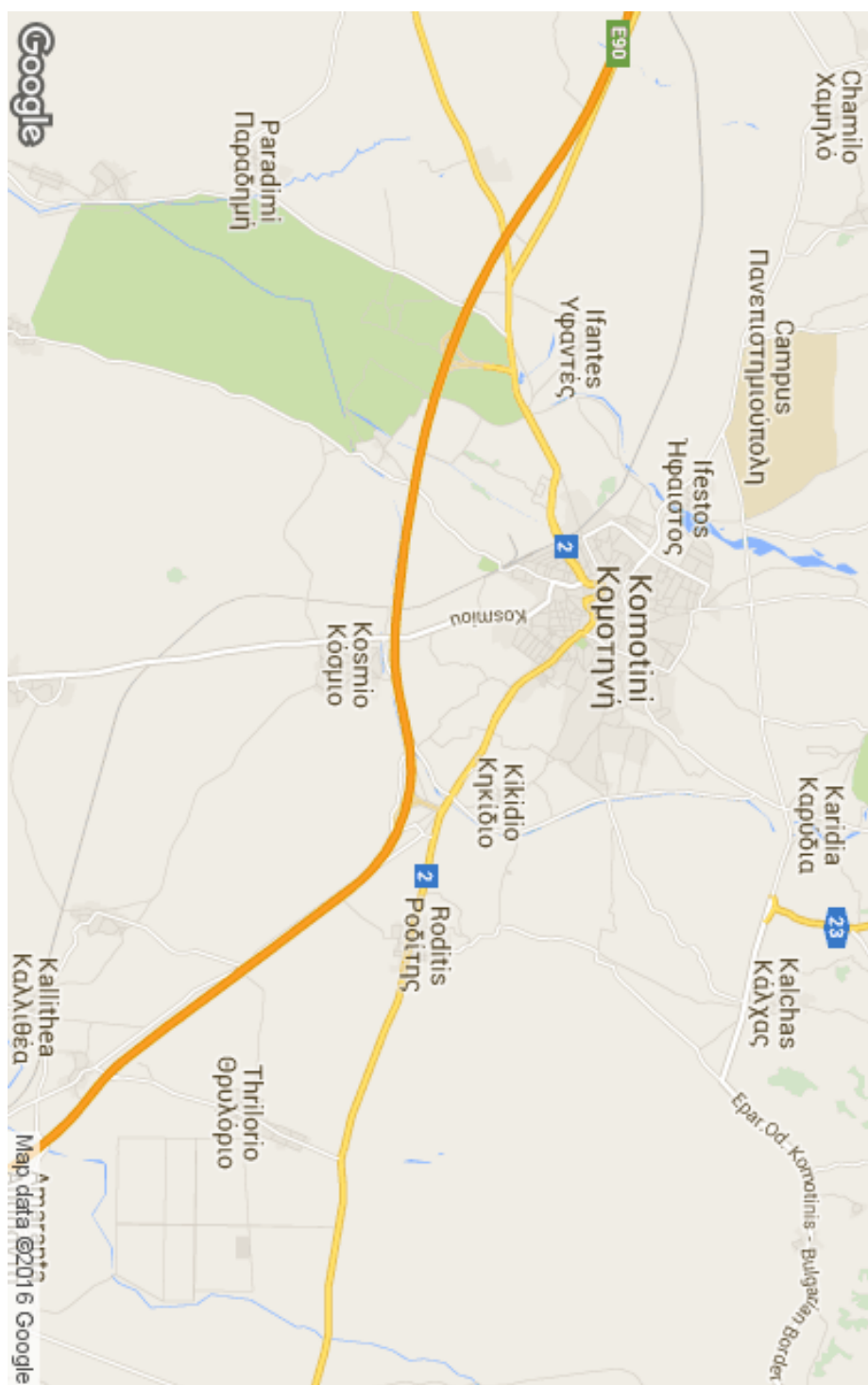
## Introduction

Thrylorio of Rodopi is a Pontian rural village that was founded in 1923 entirely by Pontian refugees coming to Greece from the regions of Kars and Kerasunda (see for more in Sergis 2006; Sergis 2008a; Sergis 2008b; Sergis 2012). The determinant landmarks in the historical course of the village (I have been studying this village since 2005) have been the "creative boom" in every aspect of its economic and social life during the 1930s, the three-year stagnation (or even retrogression) during the Bulgarian occupation, its fall be-

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*Pic. 1. The area of Rodori with the capital city Komotini and the village Thrylorio (south-east of Komotini).*

cause of the sad events of the civil war (Sergis 2012) when the wound of the migration of its population (mainly towards Europe) was intensified (during the 1960s).

The research methodological tool of the present study is the *Oral History*; the experienced by the narrating subjects / individuals themselves History (see Thompson 2000; Van Boeschoten 1997; Paradellis 1999; Thanopoulou 2000; Thanopoulou 2000; Drini 2009; Sergis 2011). The material was originally collected in a pilot study via unstructured interviews. When the axes around which the informants' memories were focusing reached a saturation point, they were used as the basis for the construction of a structured interview, which was used for the main study. These axes are as follows: memories of the first and the last day of the occupation, the arrival of the Bulgarian settlers, the "change of use" in the landmarks of the village, the villagers' economic drain and the starvation, the curfew measures, the thrashing, the forced labour, the daily routine, the representations of the Bulgarians (positive and negative), and the memories of the resistance against the Bulgarian invaders.

Ten first and second generation informants participated in this research, equally distributed in the two political "camps" of the "right wing" and the "left-wing", who confirmed, as in the case of the Greek civil war presented elsewhere (Sergis 2012), the dichotomised collective memory of the village in some issues related to the Bulgarian occupation. The classification made here ("right-wing" – "left-wing") refers to the informants' political identity during the events of the Bulgarian occupation. It is noteworthy that the informants never migrated from their village experiencing thus all the post-war period and the current political events. In this sense, the interpretive frameworks within which they reached their adulthood are those of a) the "official / public history", b) the collective memory of their like-minded and their own group, c) their personal memories. They are individuals with a consolidated experience of the events, which is a positive aspect of this research, since, to Rosenthal (in Van Boeschoten 1997: 213), the more concrete the experience the more organised its retrieval is. The "left-wing" ones, in particular, belong to the families of those who did not participate in the massive exodus of their like-minded to Bulgaria and the other "Eastern countries" during the tragic events of 1948 (Sergis 2012). Furthermore, it is *a priori* highlighted that the civil war determines once again the facets of the dichotomized collective memory. Wherever, it is absent, as irrelevant to the narrated events, the collective memory is uniform, undifferentiated, praising the collective ethos of the village in most cases.

This article is divided in three sections. The *first* one discusses the theoretical considerations on the basis of which the research findings are analysed, the *second section* deals with the "official" history in brief, which, as will be revealed in the discussion of our findings, is refracted in our informants' experienced history. Finally, the *last* section is devoted to the discussion of the nine axes unfolded in the interviews and the discussion of our findings based on the theoretical framework of the present study.

### Theoretical considerations

The basic concepts around which the content of this study is unfolded and which constitute the theoretical basis of this research are as follows.

1. *Trauma and traumatic memory* (Vidali 1999; Caruth 1996; Kokkinos, Lemonidou 2010; Roth 2011; Davoine 2013). The more traumatic an event the more difficult its representation is.

2. *Fear* (see Robin 2010; Mc Dougall 2006; Bourke 2011).

3. *Hunger / starvation* (Newman 2006).

4. *"Historicalness" of memory*. I use the term "historicalness" in the sense of the historical coincidence in which the events of the past are retrieved but also that of the interpretive framing that gives meaning to the lived experience of the events of the past (Voglis 2008: 65). The data of the present study was collected during the period 2005–2012 when the political passions in Greece (since early 21st century) showed a recession. The informants' *present of memory* was thus rather smooth. It is widely accepted now that in Greece the opposing ideological camps of the 1940s ("right-wing" and "left-wing") and the official historical memory formed (via numerous ways e.g. with commemorative symbolisms, see Halbwachs 1997: 99) opposing interpretive frameworks in order to attribute meaning to the lived by individuals (personal) experience, especially when they refer to civil conflicts. The period after 1981 and 1989, with the changes that occurred to the Greek and international community, has caused a crisis to the structured since 1940 identities, therefore has multiplied the memories of the past (Voglis 2008: 75),

5. *Collective memory* (Halbwachs 1997; Madoglou 2005), taken to mean the persons' lived experience. I use it here granted that there is not one collective memory since even the actual event that was experienced by a group of persons is not represented by them in the same way when retrieved from memory. The concept is a simplifying, fragmentary, selective one and forgets or silences certain events when it deals with identities at risk and is thus regulatory. Its main function is to keep the cohesion of the group safe since memory (in general terms) constitutes a common relationship that joins the group and discriminates it from other ones,

6. *Personal memory*. The individual recollections are intimately connected to the collective ones and vice versa. In this sense, they cannot be entirely personal since they are linked to the social dimension. The modern views of the *Self* (Eriksen 2007; Gefou 2006) on the self-determination of the person and those that bring to the fore the social impact on the formation of the *Self* maintain that the personal memory is formed intersubjectively through the interaction of the person with the "Other" (Gefou 2006: 26-49). The formation of the personal memory starts with the recording of the experiences in long-term memory. New experiences, however, are incorporated, the initial messages are modified or erased, and the past is continually re-interpreted under the prism of the needs of the past as aforementioned. To M. Halbwachs (1997) the personal memories of an individual cannot exist independently from the occasional social framework since the persons use the social frameworks to determine and recognize their recollections (Madoglou 2005: 49).

Therefore, on the basis of the above-discussed 4 and 5 points I choose to speak here for "a multiplicity of fragmented and internally divided memories" (Portelli 1997) or, in simpler words, for "collected memories", for personal and collective experiences. At the end of the day, the citation of contradictory experiences or interpretations for the same event, I believe, enriches the perception of the past, reveals the individual's role, dissolves some historians' obsessions, renegotiates their certainties, corrects stereotypes, demystifies "materialistic" versions of history (Van Boeschoten 1997: 207).

7. The concepts of *liminality* (Turner 1967; Turner 1974; Turner 1995; Ashley 1990) and *communitas* (Turner 1969), which will be further elaborated below in this study. The period of the Bulgarian occupation is considered as important for the historical life of the village. I take this period to be a transitional one, a *passage* one, as this was defined by A. van Gennep (1909/1960) and was further elaborated by Turner: as a passage from a period of peace, creation and welfare to a condition of illiberality. This constitutes a "dangerous" passage because

the *borderline* between the past and the present is still blurred since the past time still intrudes itself quite dynamically upon the present time. *Liminality* is manifested during transitional historical periods when some social behaviours and values in force (or even the whole range of them) are doubted, which, in some cases, contributes to the activation of traditional cultural forms. How did the village pass through this liminality period? What happened to the pre and post occupation *communitas* and the collective *habitus* (Bourdieu 2006)? In this *habitus* I spot certain aspects of the collective memory that have not changed; I refer to certain social practices that need not be commented or do not shift in meaning because they are considered self-evident in the Pontian ideological cosmos.

### The “official” History

The diplomatic discussions for the integration of Bulgaria to the Axis Powers had already begun at the end of 1940. The warmly wished by both counterparts deal was signed in Vienna, on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 1941 (Kontzageorgi-Zymari 2002: 30). This deal also included the promise on the part of Germany that the region of Northern Greece between the rivers Strymonas and Evros would be handed to Bulgaria. The Bulgarian nationalists’ old dream was eventually close to its tempting fulfillment; to secure a passage to the Aegean Sea for Bulgaria. The Bulgarian government considered the territories of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace as belonging to Bulgaria and thus as returned ones (Grigoriou 1953: 599, 600). After the German invasion in Greece, the gradual settlement of Bulgarian armed forces started and lasted from the 20<sup>th</sup> of April until the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1941.

The occupied by the Bulgarians territory had the river Strymonas as its western border and the line Alexandroupolis – Svilengrad as its eastern one. It included the provinces of Serres, Drama, Kavala and Rodopi (the area of Xanthi included) and a certain part of the area of Evros but a narrow slice of earth along the Greek-Turkish frontier, possibly to avert conflicts with Turkey (Kontzageorgi-Zymari 2002: 38).

Despite the fact that the legal status quo of the Bulgarian occupation was not crystal clear, it is noteworthy that a new administrative entity was organised on the occupied Greek territories on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of May 1941, namely, Belomorie, (*Беломорие*, or *Ксантийска област*), which was incorporated to the 4<sup>th</sup> prefecture of the Bulgarian State and was divided in eleven counties having the town of Xanthi as its seat (Kontzageorgi-Zymari 2002: 44).

Along with the “official” Bulgarian administration, a great number of cultural associations and organisations were established in the area aiming at a propagandistic policy. The Greek civil servants were replaced by Bulgarian ones invited to settle with their families in the occupied territories. It is estimated that almost 2000 employees came to the area of Komotini (the capital city of the county of Rodopi nowadays). In every community Bulgarian presidents, secretaries, policemen, rural guards were appointed. In Komotini, the administration of the county was undertaken by a three-member committee (Dark Bible 1945: 42, 74).

### The axes of memories

In this section the nine axes that were disclosed from the interviews will be presented and discussed in the order announced at the introductory part of this article.





Pic. 2. The green parts of the map show the areas that were occupied by the Italians. The brown parts of the map show the areas that were occupied by the Germans. The pink part (North of Greece) shows the areas that were occupied by the Bulgarians.

*Memories of the first and last day of the occupation*

The concepts “first time – last time” have a particular meaning for the folk civilization. By “first” in our case I mean the arrival of the political and army authorities at the village of Thrylorio. Since then the inhabitants moved *violently* to another phase of their social life and their social status changed; from free citizens they become enslaved. They start living hereon in an ambiguous and unbalanced status quo. They are intended to undertake roles that they do not wish. They enter to an *anti-structure* condition in the sense that they are found beyond the “normal” space and time, their “regular” duties are withdrawn, the structures of their “regular” life are dissolved and new forms of relations are created. They experience the phase of liminality, the passage to a verge, to a condition where all concepts (identity, time, and place) are fluid and ambiguous. The whole situation signals a diversion from the established social order, from its social ladder and hierarchy as mentioned by V. Turner (1995: 94 onwards). The persons are generally suspended in an in-between, unclear, abnormal, timeless and fluid condition. They are in the air “between and betwixt” (Turner 1995: 131 onwards) without holding a particular place in the social structure. Values, conceptions, roles and behaviours that until recently were considered self-evident are now discredited. During the transitional phase of liminality the interaction among individuals is quite intense. A process of *communitas* takes place; an homogenization and equalization of the persons and a feeling of belonging to a community and consolidation come to the surface (Turner 1995: 131 onwards). The liminal phase (as transitional and thus dangerous) facilitates (but is also responsible for) a likely social change with unknown results, especially in the case of long duration. During this period nobody knows whether a possible new *communitas* will be established or whether the old one will act as a means of questioning the established conditions and social hierarchies (the structure).

By “last time” I mean the withdrawal of the entirety of the occupants and the *reintegration* of the villagers to their community having a new quality hereon; that they have been introduced to the conditions of the traumatic occupation. I mean the *passage* of the village again to its earlier life, which undoubtedly cannot be similar to the one they abandoned three years ago. A variety of visible and invisible changes occurred. The latter are noteworthy since they focus on the fundamental question: how did the *communitas* function during the occupation?

In the case under investigation, as far as the “first time” is concerned, the inhabitants welcomed the occupation authorities at the edge of the village with flowers. This most probably happened because the persons usually feel weak in the face of obscurity that the new, fluid context creates, especially if it is hostile and violent; the fear of the unknown at the beginning of liminality is a usual phenomenon. Therefore, the quest for certainty and safety is projected as an easily accessible *strategy* by the weak. It is a practice that faces the mighty enemy in a similar way to the hostile animals in nature, mainly with fear and the logic that “if you do not harm them they will not harm you either” (Van Boeschoten 1997: 217). The classic historian Thucydides provided us with his own answer to this issue centuries ago: within the discussion of the human condition, the argument of justice (and its vindication I add) has value only if there is an equal power for its imposition. The powerful one inflicts what his power allows him and the weak one grants what is imposed by his weakness (book 5: 89). The “welcoming of the enemy” therefore should not be interpreted as an attitude of reconciliation with the conqueror or as an index of submission. That would be a rather unfair judgment, which is revealed in the informants’ narrations



concerning their daily relationships with the Bulgarians.

The Bulgarian army, they remember, entered the village from the (nowadays) central road and stopped at the square of the village. The informants remember the consensual and international flair of the Bulgarian president's brief speech aiming clearly at "*we are all brothers, long live Bulgaria, long live Belomoria*"<sup>17</sup>. It is quite interesting to note once again at this point that *time* in folk culture is perceived and is identified either with the productive procedure (Nitsiakos 2003: 120 onwards) or with personal events: a female informant remembers that it was on the Palm Sunday that the news about the enemies' arrival came to the village because it was on that day that they baptised Egnosia Anastasiadou; she connects an important event of the social life of the village with a religious celebration, which constitutes a landmark for their religious calendar. My male informants, even though they do not all remember the exact date, they, however, used the linear time ("*in April of 1941*"). I could attribute this different perception of time to the general system of gender differences, to the illiteracy, for instance, of women and the more or less literacy of men.

Giannis Savvides remembers nonetheless that a few days after the Bulgarian authorities' arrival the Mayor, "*a huge person*", through the voice of his interpreter, announced to the villagers that the Bulgarians have strict regulations, that the inhabitants can steal in order not to starve because if they do not steal they will definitely starve, but on the occasion of their arrest cold-blooded their punishment will be very harsh. This was indeed the bible of behaviour towards the villagers.

The *end* of the Bulgarian occupation is one of the historical incidents that were indelibly inscribed in memory because, quite simply, the accompanying emotions were very intense.

The massive withdrawal of the Bulgarian settlers took place on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September 1944. Some of the settlers had of course moved long ago this date either because they disagreed with the political philosophy of this settlement or because they foresaw the upcoming events or because they had behaved tyrannically during their settlement and they were afraid of possible reprisals on the part of the inhabitants of the village. Gianni's Savvides remembers the case of his Bulgarian neighbour Георгиос, which he called *George* abiding to the usual practice to turn the foreign names into Greek, who had left a year before the massive Bulgarian departure because he had foreseen the upcoming disaster on "his own people". The informant remembers that this Bulgarian person had gone many ways to and from Bulgaria carrying his goods and crops. He was an educated person; he could read a newspaper and had formed a view for the upcoming political evolutions. Георгиос – and some more to be mentioned below – was actuated by democratic feelings. The informants present quite vividly in their narrations these people's dichotomised identity, as soldiers of a brutal regime and unwilling invaders, on the one hand, and as people filled with universal ideals, on the other hand.

The Greek Local Security, which was founded by some inhabitants of the village, were sympathisers of the communist ideology and the "left-wing" president of the village Thanassis Avramides declared the dogma of noble behaviour towards the leaving Bulgarians. The general impression is that the people wished to celebrate the fact in their own way. They remember that the new political authority had organised a celebration (at the *kafeneion* [café] of Kitsa Tsitiridou) with the participation of the like-minded villagers. The "right-wing" lyre player who dared play – on the request of some villagers present at the time- was insulted and left. A "left-wing" is supposed to have declared that that dance "*was not a feast but had another hidden goal*". It is certain that for the "right-wing" in-

formants the event gained greater importance afterwards after it had been integrated to the interpretative framework of the yet to come events of the civil war at the village.

They managed to at least ridicule the leaving Bulgarian settlers with a gesture of sexual implicature and the phrase “*eat now Belomoria*”, “*here Belomoria, here Belomoria!*” through which they expressed their enthusiasm for the shattering of the dream of the Bulgarian nationalism. The “right-wing” informants characterise the behaviour of the communist leadership as anti-Greek and guided by their empathetic feelings towards their Bulgarian companions (see *Drini* 2009: 147). The latter actually benefited from the political evolutions and left bloodlessly. The Bulgarian occupation has thus ended in the way that it started with the Bulgarians coming and leaving without any casualties, an evolution totally reverse to other cases I have come to know from documents of the “official history”, unpublished studies and oral testimonies. In such more violent cases, for instance, the “folk juries” were assigned the role to pass the Bulgarians from trial and execute the ones found guilty.

The informants remember with great disappointment the most “blood-dripping” Bulgarian policeman’s (Antoni) escape. He was called “*a tyrant*” by one informant since he always ended his speeches with the phrase “*I am the god in this village*” and he escorted his words with the respective deeds. He is said to be related to the events of Doxato at Drama (28.09.1941) where at least 200 innocent people were executed as an act of reprisals (*Kotzageorgi-Zymari* 2002: 203–204). They remember that another one, Kostas, was almost victim of revenge by Giannis Savvides and his father near the main fountain of water of the village but he was rescued from their wild intentions by a fellow villager. His children were crying, as the informant narrated, and he begged for forgiveness. “*Show mercy for the sake of his children!*” was the phrase the fellow villager used in order to appease the two furious Thrylorians. Trying to justify this attack, Giannis Savvides told me that this person (Kostas) had wrongfully accused them to the authorities that they hosted Greek guerrillas at their home. He remembers that the *началник* (Head of the police) himself escorted by cars and other policemen had come from Komotini and surrounded his house. His parents had been arrested and jailed where they remained for interrogation for several days. He himself had been interrogated in his field but he was lucky to have a testimony of innocence by a 15-year-old Bulgarian girl who was a friend of his sister and his family. This girl’s testimony in front of the *началник* that these people had nothing to do with the accusations and that their accuser was not of a good conduct (he was arrested to steal crops from their field) saved the Greek family. All my informants admitted that the Bulgarians were fair and that they imposed a status of equality of rights. Their compatriots that violated the law were also punished in a brutal way (just like the local people).

The sudden withdrawal of the Bulgarians did not allow them to carry the requisitioned agrarian production or part of their goods. The issue set by my “right-wing” informants is how the “left-wing” group in power (those days) handled the collected agrarian production. In this case the “left-wing” informants’ memory has a difficulty to be articulated or refuses to become a narrative speech. *Oblivion* is the other side of memory. It is not a matter of denial of memory (*Van Boeschoten* 2008: 12), but a strategy of cancellation or omission of part of the past. Human beings learn to forget – the psychologists claim – and develop the relevant strategies for particular types of experiences or events (*Madoglou* 2009). Ferro’s declaration that the silence is not history of a lesser degree than the “real” one is quite revealing (1999: 11, 42).

They also remember that many of the leaving settlers wore on their lapel a red sign, a signal of their ideological shift towards the new political ideology of their home country. Maybe they belonged to the group of those who had shown the conquerors' human face during their stay at the village – exactly as powerless subjects in their present situation, – they behaved in an “adjusting” way and thus declared their political similarity to the “left-wing” new leading group with obvious goals.

*The arrival of Bulgarian settlers, the “change of use” in the landmarks<sup>2</sup> of the village*

The colonisation of the Greek territories<sup>3</sup> is the one side of the policy implemented by the Bulgarian government to alter the ethnic composition of the population of the conquered areas<sup>4</sup>. Such a memory refers to the arrival of some 50–60 families of the Bulgarian settlers to Thrylorio. This event follows the arrival of the authorities mentioned earlier and happened at the end of September 1941.

The owners of the houses had to allot them moving to the houses of other co-villagers with whom they would live together hereon. As the number of the settlers increased, however, the internal dislodgment and people's compression were implemented. In this sense, two and three families (mixed in nationality) had to live in the same house (maybe the compulsory associating with the oppressor is the most tyrannising condition). During the settlers' stay at the village, some villagers had to move house not only once but numerous times. *“The Bulgarians threw us out of our houses <...> They were very hard, they tyrannised us, and they threw us out and moved to our homes themselves. I was the first to suffer this. They took us and led us to Nikolas Tsatlides' house (another villager). I had to live in a single room”*. The successive displacement of the families was interpreted by some informants as a conscious effort on the part of the authorities to prevent the organisation of a likely conspiracy. Moreover, the extensive re-registration of residences and other estates to the settlers was interpreted as an effort to lend a more permanent character to their presence there.

During the occupation only one *kafeneion* (café) was offering services; the one belonging to Kitsa Tsitiridou. A Bulgarian, Baj Petko, appropriated it to himself and the settlers only frequented there. Thrylorians avoided entering this cafeteria (only to buy cigarettes) because, as they explained, its Bulgarian patrons almost every time requested a treating from them, which they could not afford. The settlers in this indirect way suppressed an important public place - a modern agora - where the dialogue and communication are developed and the individualities and the social coherence are enhanced (*Papataxiarchis* 1992; *Meraklis* 2001). This public space is now disorganised, confirms the power of “we”, and constitutes a form of exclusion of the dominated population, a monopoly of those in power, a way of deprivation of a form of everyday entertainment and relaxation.

A similar shop with a wider range of services (grocer's and *kafeneion*), as most similar Greek shops used to be until recently, was left to his owner (Nikolas Kyriakides) because he was handicapped and had a large family. This granting was praised by many informants as a proof of the equality and social justice that the people in power tried to impose on their co-patriots and the enslaved Greeks.

The building of the former village council (it does not exist nowadays because it was demolished by the April 1967 Junta) changed its use. The site and the having two stories building belonged to the agrarian association which granted the right to use the second floor for its offices and the first floor as storehouse to the village council. The Bulgarian authorities changed the use of the first floor and they turned it into a detention house made more spacious by a dark basement. The second floor continued to host all the bureaucracy of the

administration. The police and the army had settled – to an informant – at Nikos Topalides' *kafeneion* (café) at the square of the village where there was another detention house.

Despina Navrozidou's house was turned into an army kitchen. Its owner today recollects intensely her eagerness to taste something from the food prepared in this place those days. She remembers that, along with other small children, she went to this kitchen waiting for some food to be handed to them or they tasted the honey that was boiling "*in a dixie*" with their fingers. The *memory of the senses* of the past (see Seremetaki 1997) and the taste, in particular, is retrieved more easily and is stronger if it was stored in periods of deprivation.

In the domain of education and language the Bulgarian State followed a methodical assimilating policy with the expulsion of the Greek teachers and the appointment or the transfer of Bulgarian ones to staff the schools of the occupied regions (*Kotzageorgi-Zymari* 2002: 85 onwards). The Bulgarian citizens' children and any Greek children that wished so had the right to attend these schools, as happened with the case of Thrylorio. The removed from Bulgaria teachers, who were the ideological gate-keepers of the Bulgarian nationalistic system, propagandised their national culture. The school subjects more directly related to the national identity (language, history, literature, music) were given high priority since they were used to cultivate an anti-Greek spirit and enhance the Bulgarian consciousness to the students (see *Vamvouri* 2004: 654). The school of the village worked within this framework of policy during the Bulgarian occupation period using Bulgarian teachers. The place did not change its use but while in earlier days it formed the Greek consciousness during this period it became the seat of the official Bulgarian propaganda.

The *church* of the village officiated as before during the occupation<sup>5</sup>. It was manned with two priests, a Greek and a Bulgarian one, who celebrated the *mass* together or in turn. The priest of the village Vangelis spoke the Bulgarian language as did the church singer. The settlers and the inhabitants of the village attended the mass and the religious rituals together. The wedding, being the most important event in the "traditional people's" life, is an indelible memory easily retrieved. They remember that a couple that wanted to get married despite their parents' will were not allowed to do so maybe because of the strict relevant collective ethos of the village.

#### *The villagers' economic drain and starvation*

The Thrylorians' main money-making activity was agriculture and cattle-raising as a supplement. The cultivated products were mainly wheat, barley, corn, chick-peas, lentils and beans. Immediately after the Bulgarian authorities' arrival, most fields became theirs and their former owners turned into labourers on their own land<sup>6</sup>. It goes without saying that the production reduced dramatically. The local inhabitants had to deliver to the *държава* (State) most of their production of wheat. They were allowed to keep 80 kilos per person for their nutrition and grain for next year's crops. The legumes and corn, which were valuable for the villagers' nutrition, were excluded from this measure. The same applied to animals. Before each slaughter they had to inform the *Obština* (village council) and deliver afterwards the 3/4s of the meat to *държава*. The same procedure was followed for the milk, which should be delivered at a specific place specially prepared for this purpose (at the industrial zone today). Some others say that the villagers had to deliver 2–3 kilos every morning, some others 1 kilo per cow.

The violation of this law rescued them from starvation despite the fact that the Bulgarians or a Greek betrayer from a neighbouring village kept inspecting and the consequences of the "theft" were very heavy. The most usual kinds of practice they followed to escape delivering their products were:

- the clandestine slaughter of a “big” animal usually at night. Panayiotis Nikolaides had slayed a cow secretly. He suffered a good thrashing for this;
- the early pounding of the wheat before its threshing and its harvest. This was a laborious and risky work because there was always the danger to be seen by the patrolling policemen. The latter occasionally waited for the returning home farmers at the entrance of the village to search their carts. The illegal wheat was loaded on the carts stored either in pots or in sacks and covered with grass. In this way they managed to fool the controllers, a fact that is described with a feeling of satisfaction.

The legal threshing of the wheat used to take place in 4 or 5 areas of the site of the village using a Bulgarian threshing machine (*patoza*), the history of which has become well known and remained vividly imprinted in the villagers’ collective memory. In the presence of the Bulgarian check weigher (*katartzis*, from the Turkish word *kantarci*), who weighed the products and took in return (as taxation) “the threshing machine royalty”, that is 10% of each farmer’s harvest. The latter, after deducting their legal part of the harvest, carried the rest to the storehouse of the association to the neighbouring Venna where they were handed the receipt, which, in turn, they had to hand to the *birnik* (secretary of the village council) and thus in a few days receive their compensation in money.

The illegal product was stored in bricked up sofas, in sacks under the bed, in specially formed spaces under the floor, on the roof under a wooden cover, in special hiding places built in their oven or in their storehouse covered with grass or straw. An informant remembers that in a neighbouring to hers house, in the living room, the Greek owners had dug huge potholes in the form of a grave and had stored dozens of kilos of wheat in wooden boxes. It goes without saying, that the success of such practices, to the informants, lies to the courage each head of a family had to show in order to secure the living of his family. Part of this product was milled on the spot, at home, using hand-mills. The largest quantity of the product was carried at night to the water-mill at Gratini or the wind-mill at Fylaka, two neighbouring villages. This arduous task was made easier, however, by the fact that the police were afraid to move outside the borders of the community at night (the time of violation of the law and liminality, see *Palmer 2006*) and move from the socialised space to the “outer” one (the *profane* world of the demons, see *Lagopoulos 2003*).

In this same category of recollections belong the ones that have to do with the Bulgarian authorities’ onslaught at the villagers’ houses to check for qualities of wheat above the permitted weight. These checks were usually taking place unexpectedly at night time so as to unveil a possible violation of the law. The authorities were using pointed canes and checked every part of the house that raised some suspicion to them. The discovered forbidden products were seized and its owner was called to the police where he was usually beaten very heavily or, in some better circumstances, was given some advice. The informants’ memories focus on these extremely stressful moments, turned into centuries, when the intruders were looking for “hidden treasures” which actually existed. “*I lost years of my life once*” a female informant, who was a little girl at the time, narrated. This distress was followed by a relief in the case that their secret had not been revealed and could still be consumed.

The surprise inspection by the administrative authorities was not always successful, however, due to the villagers’ solidarity spirit. The informants remember cases when some of the villagers who were in the village notified the others in the fields that there were patrols at the entrance of the village so as to unload the hidden products somewhere outside

the village. The formation of cooperation relationships within the community constituted a defensive strategy against its enemies (see *Van Boeschoten* 1997: 57, 58), which blunted the inter community oppositions and strengthened its coherence. Such behaviours put to the fore the “heroic joint effort” of the village.

The foods that sustained the population those difficult days was primarily the corn bread, the porridge made of corn flour, the oil made of *simiskas* (the black sunflower seeds brought and first cultivated at the village by the Bulgarians), the legumes, the chicken and pig meat slaughtered at Christmas. The roasted brown lard, the *retselia* (pumpkin or quince immersed in must syrup), the beans, the chick-peas, the milk, the cheese and the wheaten bread for a minority of villagers can also be added to the list. They kneaded the bread and hid it leaving only a few slices on the table out of fear for a surprise entrance of uninvited visitors<sup>7</sup>.

The villagers’ access to food gave them an advantage over the urban population of Komotini. For the informants the word “starvation” is associated in their mind to some women from Komotini who took refuge in the village to buy some flour paying with a handiwork from their trousseau or some other objects. Indeed, the households that need to *buy* their food are more vulnerable when they have to face starvation conditions (*Newman* 2006: 34). It is reported that quite a number of the villagers helped their co-patriots by buying something from what they were bringing to sell in return of food. This attitude, they claim, has been guided by feelings of social solidarity contrary to some others’ behaviour (they do not name them) who tried to exploit these women and evoked their anger (cf. *Drini* 2009: 123); it is indeed a tragic event to try to exchange a sacred family jewel for some kilos of corn flour.

Therefore, if starvation is taken to mean insufficiency of quantity of the food consumed by an individual in relation to the required for survival type and quantity of food (*Newman* 2006: 22), it can be safely claimed that the Thrylorians did not experience starvation in the sense of shortage of food while it would be rather exaggerating to claim that they were deprived of food at a collective level if we take for granted that nobody died because of starvation in Thrylorion at a time when famine had caused the death of almost 300 000 people throughout Greece during the period of winter 1941 until May 1942, 40.000 of whom lived in Athens and Piraeus (*Kavala* 2003: 50, 51). Famine was a problem faced by the settlers as well. Actually, if we referred only to the Thrylorians as far as this issue is concerned we would run the risk of being inconsistent with our data. The memories confirm the repulsive face of war for both sides proving that in such cases the discrimination between conquerors and conquered is *a-typical*. In any case the settlers’ previous economic condition was equally hard, as mentioned below in this study.

### *Curfew measures*

The control and deprivations did not concern only food but also the inhabitants’ obligation to conform to the curfew measures. After sunset (or after 19.00<sup>8</sup>) the soldiers used to patrol and dictated to the inhabitants to remain at home (the informants remember the order «вътре, вътре» (get inside). They were not even allowed to exit for some water from the fountain of the village. The lighting of the houses was also forbidden during the night. To cater for this, the inhabitants invented ways to conceal the faded light of their lamp: “when the Bulgarians were here we did not hang curtains at the windows. We used blankets instead so that light could not be seen by them”, newspapers, black sheets, rugs and anything else they could afford so as to avoid their violation of regulations to be perceptible. If this happened, the arrested were wildly beaten. The night where violation of regulations and “freedom”

flourish can be again traced here and allows the “free besieged” inhabitants of the houses to proceed either with all the activities and forms of sociality that they were used to or with the exercise of violating behaviours that boosted their national identity.

### *Thrashing*

The ill treatment of the Greek population is an easily retrieved experience from the informants’ memory because the inhabitants of Thrylorio were not excluded from this practice, which, as they narrate, was performed any time of the day and on any occasion. The violation of any of the aforementioned regulations, the slightest suspicion that they were giving refuge to Greek guerillas, a look taken to be a sign of “aversion” or contempt towards the invaders, were all excuses for thrashing. The informants actually correlate the word *Bulgarian* with *continuous* and *unjustifiable thrashing*. I sensed that even nowadays, when they were narrating scenes with thrashing, they were moving their shoulders or bringing their hands on their face or their head as a protective shield against an invisible cudgel; the formed into bodies expression of the memory of fear, the infallible body language. The *trauma* inhibits the comprehension of the event while it is taking place (Vidali 1999: 90) but comes bitterer later Despina Navrozidou remembers that her mother passed water due to her fear when she suddenly saw a Bulgarian when she went to bring water from a well. Her horror turned into a nervous breakdown from which the woman did never recover. The psychologists maintain that a traumatic memory is mainly recalled through sensory channels, e.g. images, sounds, scenes connected to the traumatic events associated with unpleasant feelings. Or in dreams; some female informants narrated to me that they dreamt of them during their sleep at night and they were overwhelmed (see Van Boeschoten 2008: 141)<sup>9</sup>.

The reformation of the people was usually done through *bastinado* (foot whipping, *phalagha* in Greek), which caused very serious wounds for the healing of which they used the skins of recently slaughtered animals. The wounded part of the body was covered with the skin of the dead animal, which absorbed the blood and offered a relief from swelling and “blackness”. Many informants remember the case of Charalambos Fotiades whose feet were pricked with a needle to allow the blood to gush. They also remember that the settlers themselves did not avoid being beaten in the case of violation of the law or unfit behaviour.

### *Forced labour*

One of the strategies the new authorities used to oppress the enslaved population was the imposition of various types of forced labour. Every man was obliged to respond positively to the administration’s daily invitation for involuntary work. Thrashing was the punishment for its avoidance. The announcement of the men’s mandatory presence for the execution of works was done by the village crier in the afternoon of the previous day. These works included collection of grass, opening of ditches, carrying of wood from the mountains of Komotini for the needs of the army, widening or construction of roads. Many times the inhabitants had to offer their animals’ labour along with theirs to the Authorities.

The *dourdouvakia* (from the Bulgarian terms *трудова войска* or *трудова войник* – labour battalions or labour soldiers) was exemplary of forced labour, which remained inscribed in the inhabitants’ memory (see Exarchou 2002; Batsioulas 2011). While the aforementioned works were collective and everybody was invited to participate, *dourdouvakia* was of a personal nature; the dispatch of young persons to Bulgaria for forced work as a substitute of their army service to the Bulgarian State. These young people used to work



gratis<sup>10</sup> (from springtime until autumn) under adverse conditions, for many exhaustive hours (construction of roads, railways, etc.), without proper nutrition, being frequently beaten and resting in miserable tents. “*Many young boys*” of the village experienced this horror, to my informants. They remember that the Bulgarians carried them in cars when they took them but they returned on foot, crossing long distances under very miserable conditions. The memory of these events was imprinted very vividly in the everyday speech of the people of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace. The term is used even today as an adverbial predicate of purpose (he was taken as *dourdouvaki*) or manner (he did as was told like a *dourdouvaki*).

*The daily routine and the representations of the Bulgarians (positive and negative)*

Some aspects of everyday life are usually erased from the folk memory as trivial and unimportant events or as overlapping and repeated ones. In our case, however, when their life suffered an abolishing shift and can be characterized as an entirely different period in their life, the relevant memories come to surface more often. The inhabitants’ cohabitation with the Bulgarians in the house, in the neighbourhood and the village, created a new reality where both parties were invited to live together. In this sense, the daily life comprised activities that lent a tone of entertainment and regularity to the rhythms of life of the totality of the inhabitants of the village.

A pleasant memory is that of the *dances*, to which Bulgarians also participated. It was a happy note to the Greek inhabitants’ miserable reality since they were afforded the chance to reduce a little bit and possibly reverse their hard reality, “to bring the world upside down”, which provided them the courage to continue the rest of their everyday life as enslaved subjects. The common dancing took place at the square of the village, a primarily social space (Meraklis 2011: 42–43), which, under these “irregular” circumstances of the occupation became a space of competition of:

a. *personal and collective feelings*. The harmony and symmetry of every dance is determined by the cultural conditions of each society that performs it. As revealed by the narrations, I conclude that the two different cultural nationalities dance for different things but eventually their common wish for entertainment is projected and sets aside any difference among them momentarily;

b. *personal identities*. There is a latent competition of identities (the ones in power and the ones enslaved), of a subconscious national *We* and the *Others* at a lesser or larger degree. It goes without saying that a certain gender competition among the girls – dancers might also be part of this view;

c. *power relationships*, which are temporarily reversed in the “innocent” cycle of the dance. It is not a coincidence that - to the informants - the Bulgarian girls protested intensely when the Thrylorian ones came to lead the dance. This was actually the only chance for the Greek girls to reverse the roles within permitted limits and this, I deduce, had a relieving effect on them. I remind at this point that in the traditional society the competent leader of the dance was held in high esteem by the society. His/her whole dancing behaviour was an element of self-actualisation and self-confirmation for him/her but also an important criterion for his/her selection by a future husband/wife. *S/he led all the other dancers*. This is the relationship that the young Bulgarians could not tolerate; be degraded to the “second place”. All these mechanisms have a tremendous semiotic load for the persons that suffer and are dominated by others. It is a mechanism of personal resistance and boosting of their “ego”. The dance performed – among others - communication and entertainment functions in the folk culture (Zografou 2003) the specific case included; it functioned inevitably as a means to surpass the relationship between

the conqueror and the conquered ones. It was also a unifying contributor that brought the two strange groups closer and had thus a transnational dimension (*Garaudy*: 214).

An outcome of these daily encounters with the settlers was the acquisition of the Bulgarian language by the local inhabitants. It goes without saying that many Thrylorians had heard this language and had some very basic knowledge of it since half of them originated from Kars, a Russian-speaking area. The Turkish language was another vehicle they could use to communicate. The knowledge of the Greek language by many settlers who came from the Greek villages of the wider area also helped to this direction.

The contacts at an interpersonal level took a wider range of forms; visits by the Bulgarians to the Thrylorians' houses and vice versa, while there were cases when the inhabitants were totally distanced from their Bulgarian neighbour due to fear. The visits were exchanged mainly among married couples who shared the same house or lived in the same neighbourhood. At younger ages the young girls often made friends with Bulgarian ones with their common interest being needle work. The young men watched the sheep together.

To such honest relationships belong the well-intentioned warnings to Greek heads of family by the Bulgarian ones for the aforementioned possible upcoming searches. The memory does not also forget those cases when the good relationships were sealed by some gifts or sweets mainly on the part of the Bulgarians to the Greeks. These were small worthless objects with a rather symbolic value since they were offered (as the informants interpret it) as a sign of gratitude and proof of the well-meaning character of their relationship.

From their "sacred time" they remember the common carol singing at the New Year's Eve; they also remember the modified version of *Surva*, *surva godina* / *vesela godina* / *Mihail Arhangele* / *stani nine stani* / *stani gospodine*. Also, a female informant remembered that they were taught the Lord's Prayer and other religious hymns at school in Bulgarian. Another one had been enchanted by the accordion and its sweet sounds that accompanied the dances at the square.

The competitive relationships are reflected in the games with the skirmishes among the boys being recurrent. The struggle among the older ones passed to the young children as a game that depicts the social reality. It was a matter of national dignity (apart from personal) for the children of Thrylorion to answer back violently to the challenges set by the Bulgarian ones or to be defeated in a competitive game. The latter had actually enhanced the existing national competition.

*Bulgarians as the Other. The satire as anti-structure*

### **The socially inferior and filthy Bulgarians**

According to the *relief theory* the satire towards the opponent or the *Other* is taken to be an anti-structure since it relieves the persons from the pressures and the prohibitions exercised upon them by the social structure in power. It functions as an institutionalized deviation from the socially accepted norms; it emancipates the persons from any external censorship and imposition (*Sergis* 2005: 189 onwards). The *superiority* is actually based on the satirizing person's feelings of superiority to the *Other*; the enemy-other in specific. The persons represent themselves according to the *self-stereotypes* that they have created and boost their self-identity comparing themselves to the *Other*. Actually, I am what the *Other* is not. In other words, I construct my identity based not only on the positive self-stereotypes but also as it is contrasted to the *Other*.

My informants represent the settlers – Others as poor people, illiterate farmers who arrived at their village on carts drug by oxen. They actually came from southern Bulgaria and the northern villages of Rodopi. Among them there were some families of Greeks from (the village of) Petroussa (county of Drama), who had all been *bulgarised* and were thus rewarded (they had also received some privileges as far as their professional occupation was concerned). They all spoke “*fluently Turkish and Greek*” and nobody could not tell whether they were Greek or Turkish<sup>11</sup>. This is confirmed by the following narration: “*those who came here were retarded, many had Greek origins and previously inhabited the cliffs around here for a long time but in 1923 with the population exchange they left and went to Bulgaria*». Two inhabitants of Thrylorio and a Bulgarian soldier, Stoiko, went once to sing the Christmas carols with a lyre to collect money for the foreign soldiers. The former remember the filthy looks of the “Bulgarian” houses, the very little money (one *stotinka*) that the Bulgarians gave to the carol singers while the Thrylorians were handing much more (their financial situation taken into consideration) and the curses uttered by the Bulgarian soldier against his fellow countrymen, which are, however, indicative of their low financial level.

The Bulgarians’ representations (Papastamos 1995; Katerelos 1996; Moscovici 2000; Mauss 2001; Deaux & Philogène 2001; Sergis 2005) (their *national stereotypes*, in other words, see Puchner 1998) were thus negative. The derogatory characterisations “*gypsies*” (and *katsivelli* in Greek, the men having a *filthy face*) attributed to them correspond to their untidy and unorganised way of living. This is a reference to the *pollution* end (Douglas 2006), of the continuum *purity* (represented by the Thrylorians) vs. *pollution* (of the settlers). One female informant remembers that their women did not wear underwear, urinated upright and smelled very bad. They used the same utensils to “*cook and wash themselves*”. The counterpoints made here are quite clear: the attributed to the Bulgarian women cultural characteristics are opposite to their own cultural system and the female one in general. The cooking utensils were, for instance, a parameter of the female ritual of food preparation and were occasionally attributed a collective dimension with symbolic actions, words, wishes, and body movements. In this sense the utensils received an additional symbolic function. Therefore, the ones used for washing the body cannot be used to cook the food. As well-known, filthiness constitutes an irregularity beyond the social borders, it offends order and its elimination is a positive effort towards the organisation of the environment (Douglas 2006: 30).

Others recall that the settlers had filled the village with fleas and lice and were sleeping with their dirty clothes worn during their work in the fields or the sheep. The condition of houses after their departure was a disheartening one. “*They left only the four walls at their houses*” is one of the characteristic phrases used by the informants. A female Thrylorian – as a representative of the female collective memory – remembers that their shiny wooden floor that her mother used to mop diligently, was now black from the coal of the stove used by its temporary lodgers, and dirty from the dust and the mud purposely brought indoors to put their smudging pans and other cooking utensils on (as we currently use the *sous-plats*). Her following remark is noteworthy: “*when they left my mother dusted, mopped and cleaned the entire house and finally she threw some holy water from the church to chase the Bulgarians’ dirt out of the house*”. Indeed, the faith in the healing and purifying power of the *holy water* is well known and widely spread in the Greek Orthodox world (Varvounis 1992: 96–97). Some other female informants narrated the laborious task of getting rid of the fleas and the lice through the broken windows of their houses. The fleas

and the negatively associated to them lice represent the filthiness in their cultural system having been the tyrants of the people (urban and rural) for centuries. As becomes obvious the social meaning of an event is again confirmed; the women recall easily the events that changed their personal life (*Van Boeschoten* 1997: 214.)

### **Bloodthirsty Bulgarians and the exceptions to the rule**

The characterisations “*barbarians*”, “*bloodthirsty*” and “*worse than the Turks*” refer mostly to the people in power and not the entirety of the settlers. All of them are related to their daily behaviour and the thrashing. The comparison to the “national enemy” (Turks) is quite interesting (see *Millas* 2001). A person identified with the above characterisations is the policeman named Antonis. A rural guard, however, Dimitri, had helped many villagers and covered all their illegal actions. “*A good man despite his Bulgarian origin*”. Savvas, another rural guard, urged a violating the law Thrylorian “*do not allow anyone to see you. I have not seen you and I do not know you*”, Yiannis the shepherd had many times urged them to “*grind wheat*”. Another one, Giorgos, was “very educated” and served as a commander at the Drossini mine where some Thrylorians were working having satisfactory wages. The policeman Svetko was a “*good-hearted man*” and asked for his transfer because he could not tolerate those conditions. Yannis Savvides remembers a relevant story: Giorgis, a sergeant-major, had stayed at the army camp while the other soldiers went out to patrol. He was reading the satirical newspaper *Borba*. One day in 1942, when the Germans had invaded the Soviet Union, he showed to him a sketch in the newspaper. It depicted the Kaiser’s half-opened grave with Kaiser having a stick in his mouth. The conversation was as follows: “Kaiser, come out to see what Hitler is doing! We are marching in Russia!” The answer from the grave was: “Did you conquer Moscow?” meaning that nothing had ended presaging the pitiful end of the Germans’ army expedition.

Under this classification of memories come the ones that have to do with the fool Zlatka, a tall Bulgarian woman who would not allow anyone to pass from her neighbourhood. No-one knew the cause of her madness but all spoke sympathetically for this tragic figure.

### **When admiration or love abolishes the *Other***

The impressive appearance of some Bulgarian men was often praised by some female informants; many of them were “*handsome men, tall*”. The abolishing power of beauty, of seducing Love, suppresses any sense of limits set by anyone. The cohabitation in the same yard or the same neighbourhood, the entertainment of both national parties in the same dances resulted in the creation of more tight personal relationships. The love rivalries among local and Bulgarian young people for the sweet peep of a young Thrylorian girl, or a legal marriage, even the murder of a Thrylorian woman by a Bulgarian rival who believed that her husband had an affair with her were likely to happen. The latter case refers to K.S. It was sunset, “*at the time of grapes harvest*” (it is amazing how they set the time on the basis of the productive procedure as already mentioned) when she killed her with a gun. A female informant remembers the couplet composed on the occasion of this event and “*authentisises*” the collective memory:

The kirliki, the kirliki and at the edge of the village  
The Bulgarian Marta killed Kyriaki

They also remember the wedding (a mixed one) of Aggeliki Afentoulidi with a Bulgarian man. The bride's parental objections were too weak to stop the young people's love. This was indeed a very special event for a monocultural society, such as the Pontian one, with a very intense endogamy. However, the phenomenon of mixed marriages needs to be examined within the political, social and religious context where it takes place. The consciousness of *national diversity* was the most powerful factor against in this case. The family's homogeneity and its reputation were thought to be at stake as revealed by the narrations. However, the man's common religious belief and his gentle personality functioned as compensation and facilitated, as they say, the parents' change of mind. The faith in God and Orthodoxy is the primary element of the Pontian identity, which kept them alive back "home" (Turkey) for centuries when they lived among people of another religion and under harsh conditions. "*They all had great fun in the end*". They narrate that the man was asking the bride to sing the Greek folk song "*we the miserable guerillas*". They lived in the village during the occupation and had a baby but when the settlers left the woman stayed for a short period of time in the village alone. She begged her father to let her go to her husband. *The mixed marriage* reveals the roles of the two sexes quite impressively; which of the two is prepared to change, in which aspects and with which consequences? How would the couple manage the distance between them? The woman should (to the Pontian "family law") follow her husband to his new environment as demanded by the structure of the Pontian family based on viripatrilocality (Sergis 2007: 140). Her father allowed her wishes to come true and gave her his blessings, two oxen, a cart loaded with goods and sent her to her husband. Her parents met her there later, completely adjusted to her new context, and died there under her protection.

These are memories narrated pleasantly mainly by women (apart from the last case above) due to their "spicy events" which have always attracted the folk imagination and aesthetics. They know, however, that these memories constitute a "common secret" known to all villagers and, therefore, its revelation cannot be criticised by anyone. Some of such "spicy" memories cannot be revealed nonetheless (Van Boeschoten 1997: 216). In our case everything could be revealed.

### **The positive elements of the representations of Bulgarians**

All the informants praise the settlers' contribution to the economic development of the village through the introduction of new cultivations unknown to its inhabitants until their arrival, e.g. sugar cane, black sunflower seed, cotton<sup>12</sup> and another species they could not recall its name but only that it was cultivated only for one year and was used as medicine. The sugar cane was sowed in the fertile area of the Marsh and had usually good crops; their plants looked like "forests". They had massive productions, which did not fall within the restrictions and the taxation of other products. The women remember that they used to boil 40-50 kilos of juice in huge square, deep, pans and made their precious *pekmez*.

The informants also recall the machine used to process the sugar cane which was permanently installed in an area close to the cemetery and was worked by Matthews Salpigides. Its function was based on a system of cylinders, a main and two smaller ones. Two oxen, moving clockwise, were turning a piece of wood around that set, in its turn, the iron cylinders into motion. The peeled sugar cane was put between the cylinders and was pressed by the two moving cylinders. In this way its sweet juice was extracted. Its heavy weight or lack of time were the likely reasons that did not allow its carrying to Bulgaria when the settlers returned there in 1944.

### *Memories of the resistance against Bulgarians*

The concept of *resistance* is not restricted only to dynamic actions; resistance is also the everyday ridicule on the ones in power, as aforementioned. I remind that some of its forms are manifested on a daily basis either in a “disguised” in “transliteration” or “behind the scenes” way to Goffman (1990); rumours, derogatory characterisations, pseudo-consensus to the imposed rules, jokes, consumption of forbidden music, other verbal forms of resistance (curses, invectives), or symbolic forms of resistance such as parallel to the official rituals performances that ridicule them (Kiourtsakis 1995: passim).

The issue of the resistance against the Bulgarian power is ranked last in the order of the recalled memories. These memories are actually remembered only after a probing question mainly because my “left-wing” informants (as aforementioned) do not belong to the group of the “violently expatriated” ones during the Civil War. Also, all the “right-wing” ones claim that there was not a dynamic or worth mentioning act of resistance by their co villagers during the Bulgarian occupation. The main excuse for this rather passive reaction is, to them, the fear the inhabitants felt towards the Bulgarians. Another excuse put to the fore by the informants is the Bulgarian regiment in the neighbouring village of Arato, which would instantly suppress any act of resistance. Once more it is confirmed in this case that there are specific limits at the manipulation and the reconstruction of the past, which are set by the particularities of the recalled past but also by the society that retrieves it from their memory.

As acts of resistance, I recorded the participation of 6–7 “left-wing” people in the liberation of Komotini, the supplying with food and medicines of the guerrilla freedom fighters, the offer of work at the quarry of the neighbouring village Drosini from which the guerrillas were provisioned, and the presence of only one man in the active freedom fighting forces “of the mountains” against the Bulgarians, namely, Nikos Papageorgiou (see *Sergis* 2012).

As mentioned earlier, resistance can be performed in a wide range of forms. In this vein, the villagers’ dignified (as the informants characterised it) and moral behaviour during the occupation period despite the fact that they felt the pressure of the ones in power and the settlers to “be Bulgarised” can be recorded as an act of resistance. Only a handful of families actually obeyed to this practice and were Bulgarised during the occupation period. Their names are not mentioned (see *Van Boeschoten* 1997: 215, 216), because the informants do not want to affect still living relatives of theirs. One nonetheless has confessed his deed and attributed it to his desperate need to help his family survive. Everybody, however, agree, that “*we did not have any betrayals. We were splendid*”, none of them had committed an anti-Greek action. Does this unanimous effort on the part of my informants constitute a tendency to beautify their *communitas* and their traditional *habitus*? Is it once more a case of “structural amnesia”? (*Goody* 1968; *Ong* 2005: 64–65).

Some people’s denial to leave their houses, which resulted in their expatriation, can also be taken as a resistance deed to my view. Panayiotis Navrozides, Polykarpos Eleftheriades, Lazaros Eleftheriades suffered such expatriation to the village Kallithea of Rodopi as the informants remember. Other forms of resistance are the conspirational communication among the breaking the law inhabitants, the notifications for the Bulgarian authorities’ searches in the houses or the entrance of the village mentioned earlier, the shaping of cooperation relationships in general within the community, etc., which were all defensive mechanisms against the pressures imposed on them (*Van Boeschoten* 1997: 57, 58).

## Conclusion

The aim of this article has been to offer an alternative narration of the past, the Bulgarian occupation in a village of Rodopi in specific, as a case study. As has been shown, the oral history is not the history of the facts but a history of subjectivity since it acknowledges history's true but invisible creators. The oral tradition is the indicator of the "survival" of the events and the behaviours of the collective bodies in the present and it measures the experience of the history (*Asdrachas* 1995: 192), it puts new life into history and widens its horizons (*Thompson* 2000: 53). This study did not aim, as aforementioned, to complement the history or reveal the historical truth but nonetheless it ended to supplement it not as a cold historical narration but via the small details of the daily life which restores the individual person as an active agent in the process of the collective memory formation.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> A misrepresentation of Belomorie.
- <sup>2</sup> The landmarks (physical or man-made) are recognizable spots of a town or a village with a mainly symbolic or commemorative function. They are unbreakably connected to the life of the town, its history, individual and collective memories, the personal memories of its inhabitants, etc. for the term see indicatively, Lynch 1960.
- <sup>3</sup> 10.000 Bulgarians of a relatively high economic status settled in Komotini and an equal number of them in the whole county. See:Black Bible 1945: 29, 77.
- <sup>4</sup> See:Black Bible 1945: 28.
- <sup>5</sup> The occupied areas of Macedonia and Thrace were divided in two counties, Maroneia (it included Komotini, Alexandroupoli, Didymoticho, Xanthi, Soufli, Ferres) and Drama (it included Drama, Kavala, Serres, Sidirokastro), which were respectively under the administration of the bishopric of Philippoupolis and Neurokopi (See:Kontzageorgi-Zymari 2002: 79).
- <sup>6</sup> The economic integration of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace to Bulgaria was one of the conquerors' primary aims. The rich tobacco crops of Drama, the fertile fields of Serres, the richness of the Thracian Sea, the ports of Kavala along with its mines were a temptation for them. See:Kontzageorgi-Zymari 2002: 113, 114.
- <sup>7</sup> The inhabitants of Thrylotion also state that they did not want the Bulgarians in their feasts or wedding celebrations because their primary aim was to taste the most official and rich meals of their rituals.
- <sup>8</sup> In the beginning of the occupation the circulation was allowed until 22.00 o'clock but later it was restricted to 19:00. See:Chrysochoou 1951: 53, 129; Kontzageorgi-Zymari 2002: 62.
- <sup>9</sup> Gadi Benezer spotted 13 signs that warn the researcher for the existence of trauma (in Van Boeschoten 2008: 140).
- <sup>10</sup> The conditions of work in the labour battalions constitute a violation of the article 52 of the Treaty of Hague (IV, 1907) for the right of the war on land (See:Kontzageorgi-Zymari 2002: 63). Many Greeks died in such battalions (See:Chatzitheodorides 2002: 71).
- <sup>11</sup> Many of the settlers had moved to Bulgaria from Greek areas after the First World War. This was indeed a very interesting repatriation...
- <sup>12</sup> This is still the main product of the village with an important economic significance.

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**Манолис Г. Сергис Воспоминания и забвение: оккупированная деревня в Родопях (Западная Фракия, Греция, 1941–1944).**

*В статье рассматриваются истории, сохранившиеся в памяти жителей одного из селений в Родопском округе (Западная Фракия, Греция), о болгарской оккупации 1941–1944 гг. В качестве исследовательского метода были использованы устные истории, рассказанные пережившими оккупацию респондентами.*

*Данные, полученные на начальном этапе исследований в ходе свободных интервью, дали возможность определить основные «стержневые» мотивы, связанные с происходившими событиями и переживаниями людей в годы оккупации, оставившие глубокий след в их памяти. Таким образом, были выявлены следующие мотивы: первый и последний день присутствия болгарского оккупационного начальства; появление болгарских поселенцев в селении; появление новой топонимики для значимых мест селения и местности; постепенное разорение хозяйства и голод; ограничение передвижения для местного населения; частые издевательства, избиения и т.д., которым подвергалось местное население; принудительные работы; сцены из повседневной жизни местного населения и болгарских поселенцев; образ болгар (положительный или отрицательный) и воспоминания о борьбе местных сопротивленцев против оккупантов.*

*Вышеприведенные мотивы стали предметом основной части исследования, в процессе работы над которой, в качестве исследовательского метода использовались жестко структурированными интервью.*

*В нашем исследовании мы не ставили перед собой цель восполнить пробелы в исторической науке, или пролить свет на историческую правду, а дать сухому официально-историческому рассказу другое измерение, которое заключено в повседневной жизни, в личностных чувствах и переживаниях оставшихся в памяти наших респондентов, которые в конечном итоге формировали коллективную память.*

**Ключевые слова:** *память (индивидуальная, социальная, «историчность» памяти, травматическая память), устная история, страх, liminality, communitas\*,<sup>2</sup> Фракия, Греция, болгарская оккупация.*

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\* Не даем перевода этих двух терминов, поскольку подобрать для них однозначные русские эквиваленты невозможно, а создавать неуклюжие кальки («коммунитас», «лиминальность»), коими наш понятийный аппарат уже основательно засорен, не считаем нужным. Впрочем, это, уже сделали (см.: В. Тёрнер. Символ и ритуал. М., 1983). О смысле данных понятий можно прочитать в книге самого Тёрнера (правильно именно Тёрнер, а не Тэрнер), приведенной в списке литературы, – *Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. В контексте проблематики, исследуемой в публикуемой статье Манолиса Сергиса, *communitas* можно перевести как «солидарность», «взаимопомощь» и т. п., а *liminality* – как некое неустойчивое состояние внутриобщинных отношений и норм поведения людей в переходный период адаптации к условиям иностранной оккупации. Выражаем признательность А.Л. Елфимову за помощь в разъяснении этого вопроса. – Прим. ред.