BALKANS OF COLOUR

A HANDBOOK FOR DECOLONIAL ENCOUNTERS

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Use the blank pages at the end to take notes, draw your ideas and keep up the good work after reading this handbook

AUTHORS

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INTRODUCTION

Of colour is an identity label reserved for Black communities for whom racism is an authentic experience. This identifier has been largely debated in Critical Racial Studies (CRS), which, in a larger context, have stood at the center of postcolonial Europe and North America. Arguably, the category of race has been considered irrelevant for studying those countries with no colonial experiences, although racism was on the rise.

The Balkan Peninsula is an instructive case - a region compared to an overseas history of (post)colonial legacies and power trajectories, thereby sharing some aspects with the West's former colonies. After 1989, both re-borderisation and identity-remaking controversies have revitalized in the Balkans, and too often overstated studies on ethnic identities and nationalities. The rampant growth of interethnic disputes has unfolded alongside other global phenomena of racialization. Most recently, it does not come as a surprise that the murder of George Floyd and the eruption of Black Lives Matter have reached Europe and beyond. Spanning the Balkan borders, too, waves of protests have brought Roma communities to stand in solidarity. Likewise, the shockwaves of the Covid-19 pandemic acting as a great accelerator among already-marginalized Black communities and migrants from the Global South have brought to light similar human conditions for minority groups living on the margins of the Balkan societies. Globally, the struggle of indigenous people to have their lands back could be associated with the unfair policies of dislocating Roma people in Albania, Bulgaria, and the Balkans in general.

The category of race has made practitioners and activists think about issues of non-whiteness and lookism in the Balkans. It has also facilitated them to transfer the category of coloniality and race in the south-easternmost peripheries of the European region. Regardless of the lack of colonial history and postcolonial conditions, the tandem of race and coloniality points to the urgency to theoretically intertwine the complex, perhaps contradictory and subtle, mechanisms of racism. Along this line of inquiry, it is straightforward that anti-colonial practices against the West's Oriental ascriptions have paved the way for domestic practices of nativism embedded in phenomena of re-racialization. Among others, Muslims, Romani, and African descendants have been caught in policies of domestic colonization through the dispossession of land and displacement, as well as exploitation and denial of historical legacies and invisibility.

This Handbook was thought to discuss the field of Critical Race Studies in the context of Southeast Europe. It has the scope of unraveling hidden mechanisms of racialization against 'national foreigners' and the project of modernization/Europeanisation within the region. It precisely explores the viability of the race/racialization paradigm in Greece, Albania, and Bulgaria to challenge the 'innocent narrative' of these Balkan countries with a non-colonial history. The decision to execute a Handbook was made to propose a series of good practices and critical perspectives that can (re)explore some decolonial practices in some Balkan countries' history and socio-political dynamics.

This Handbook has been realized after having conducted fieldwork and interviews in three different localities – respectively, in Avato in Greece, in the Rhodope areas in southernmost Bulgaria, and the suburban areas of Tirana (Albania) between. Participation-observation method was also used for researching histories, identities, and ontologies of Afro-Greeks, Pomaks, and Romani, among whom the question of race was raised throughout desk research between October 2021 and June 2022. In addition, conversations were also held with educators, teachers, non-formal education trainers, bloggers, and journalists, thereby collecting first-hand data and direct experiences from the case studies this project is concerned with. Knowledge and visuals collected during the whole period of research constitute the core of this Handbook.

Introduction in bullet points

1

WHY DID WE CREATE THIS HANDBOOK?

- To promote European Blackness or being of Colour in Europe in a different way;
- To shed light on Southeast Europe's counter/alternative-histories, memories, and epistemologies, specifically the Balkan region, particularly Greece's people of African descent and Bulgaria's Muslims.
- To raise awareness of discrimination against the Roma community in the Balkans by majority communities.
- To confront Europe's neo/post/colonial past and/or participation in oppressive projects of the previous century regarding race and religion, focusing on EU countries with allegedly no colonial history as we know it.

2

WHAT IS THE GOAL OF THIS HANDBOOK?

- To work along the tandem of race-and-racialisation to trace out, and unpack, colonial-type methods of dismissing specific segments of societies, epistemologies, and their spaces of existence;
- To identify internal forms of racialisation and inferiorization of populations in Southeast Europe;
- To explore the complexity of racialisation and modernity of Balkan countries to transfer the 'race critical theory' across Greece and Bulgaria, as well as Albania, to investigate hidden racist logic of socialism/post-socialism/Europeanisation;
- To document the hidden histories and memories of discriminated populations in Europe;
- To showcase a different, more diverse European narrative and discourse;
- To recognize the long-term presence of Black and Muslim Europeans and show solidarity towards marginalised communities;
- To empower and support minorities in Europe;
- To highlight prejudices and discriminatory practices by the majority towards the Roma community;
- To document cases where racial prejudice (Albanian-Roma) exceeds solidarity on religious grounds and causes discriminatory practices (prohibition of marriages, prohibition of forgiveness in major mosques, public verbal violence, including in courtyards of mosques);

3

WHY IS THIS HANDBOOK IMPORTANT ... IN TERMS OF DECOLONIAL THEORY AND PRACTICE?

- race has stood at the centre of postcolonial theorising in Eastern European countries, but has not been thoroughly analysed in Southeast European countries;
- employing the notion of race to look at the construction of Balkan majoritarian national identities and displacement of the 'Other within';
- BoC diversifies the discourse around the colonization of the Black individual, as it deviates from the American context and notions of race, White gaze, appropriation, priviledge, etc. At the same time, it offers a new dimension of racialized identities in relation to Eurocentric perceptions of Othering, i.e., migration flows, refugee influx, Orthodox Christianity, and more.

WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

- Non-governemental organisations;
- Individuals;
- Networks of researchers, activists, practitioners;
- Civil Society Organisations
- Educators and Teachers
- Journalists and Bloggers
- Early researchers
- The visibly-different other.

USE THE LINK BELOW AND EXPLORE A GIF BY ESEMONO ON THE GEOPOLITICAL CHANGES THAT THE BALKAN AREA HAS UNDERGONE FROM 1796 TO 2008.

ENJOY!

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balkans#/media/File:Balkans_Animation_1800-2008.gif





**IF YOU'RE LEADING A TRAINING, PRINT OUT THESE PAGES AND PLACE THEM ON THE WALL.
MAKE SURE THEY ARE VISIBLE TO ALL PARTICIPANTS. ALTERNATIVELY, SEND THEM VIA EMAIL A FEW DAYS BEFORE THE EVENT**

SECTION 1

Western European nations, especially those belonging to the EU in recent years, continue to promote the racialization of religious differences between Balkan Muslims, who are encouraged to recognize themselves as European, white, and secular, and Arab Muslims, who are regarded as 'jihadists,' 'religious extremists,' and therefore 'bad Muslims.' The increase of North Africans seeking refuge in European nations has been met with new modes of surveillance, especially along national borders, which relies upon a re-drawing of 'self' and 'Other.' Eastern Europeans, who have historically fallen on the side of 'Other' in the Orient/Occident divide, are now encouraged to identify as European, and thus as 'self,' in order to safeguard and consolidate the white identity of Europe. Such identifications with 'Europeanness' and 'modernity' are not separable from racial ideologies.

2020 Workshop | balkansocietytp



BALKANS OF COLOUR

THE ROMA RESISTANCE IN TIRANA

Inxhi Briscu



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LEVEL: BEGINNERS

ANALYSING ROMA SETTLEMENT AND EXPULSION FROM THE TIRANA SUBURBS

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- Roma in Albania
- History of Roma in Albania
- Settlement of Roma in urban areas
- Eviction of Roma from their homes



Empathy is an important part of understading cultural differences and diverse ontologies than yours. Keep it in mind.

1 Roma in Albania From the Ottoman Empire to Socialism

There is indirect evidence that the Roma population has existed in Albanian society since Ottoman rule as an urban population. Roma groups dealt with blacksmithing, being members of small groups of nomads. However, there are data showing that even in the 1920s and 1930s, some Roma groups arrived from Turkey or Greece, settling mainly in the south of Albania.
After the Second World War, political power was taken over by the Albanian Communist Party. Partisans established themselves as a political system, the so-called "People's Democracy. In the holistic approach of the Albanian communists, their aim to transform the society would also attempt to "discipline" the Roma community. Government bodies were also devoted to taking measures for settling Roma at work. Plans for accommodating Roma into housing program were meant to "integrate" them into a valuable society. A particular emphasis was placed on their moral and political education, stripping Roma of the customs of the past and forcing them into work programs.



CAN YOU SPOT THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF TIRANA AND DURRES ON THE ALBANIAN MAP?

LEARN TO UNLEARN

A common misbelief in Albania, reinforced by media, television, and cinema, is that Roma communities do not want "normal" houses and that when they are offered proper accommodation, they leave it. This is simply a myth. Firstly, no accurate statistical data shows that most Roma people were offered proper accommodation and voluntarily decided to leave. Also, it is essential to note that flats given to Roma were often small and inappropriate to live in. Yet another issue regarded the access to the job market for Roma communities. When a Roma person was not offered a stable job, s/he should have become a blacksmith, a horse breeder, a basket maker, or an artisan. These positions, for which Roma were forced to move across the country, were mainly organised around picking up materials and selling them as products. These aspects pushed Roma communities to leave their homes against their will and search for a stable income to live on.

NEXT PAGE

As a result of these orders, the process of settling Roma in one place, mainly in urban areas, began. In general, Roma communities were sedentary in areas designated by the state. There, they were provided with opportunities for basic education and work. It should be also noted, however, that the Roma continued to be oppressed and discriminated societal segment of Albanian society.

Postsocialist period:
The Expulsion of Roma from their houses

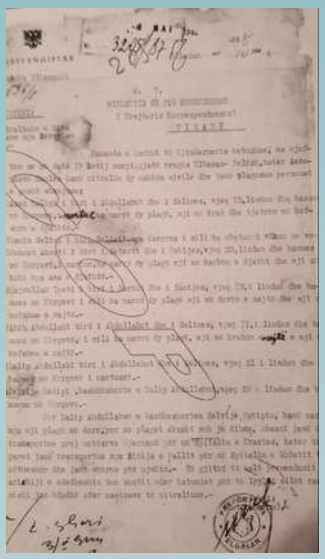
With the tremendous social changes that took place in Albania in 1991, there was an incredible upheaval in social relations, which were characterized by the significant movement of the rural population towards Tirana and Durres, the two main cities of Albania, offering more economic opportunities.

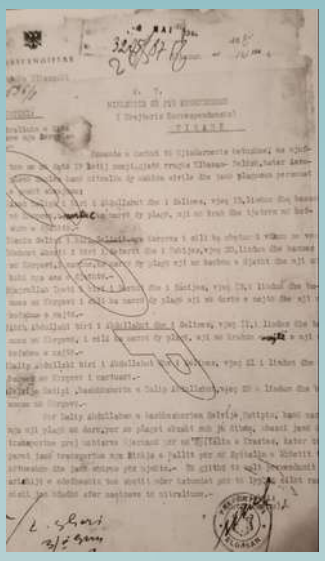
In the Albanian capital, Tirana, Roma communities used to live on the outskirts since the early 1950s. With the beginning of the construction of residential areas, Roma families were violently expelled from their homes. The State provided neither minimal compensation nor a temporary shelter for securing their communities. The State-run campaign of dispossession of lands was carried out to justify that the former Roma properties should have been returned to their rightful owners. The latter had decided to build new modern palaces in those areas, regardless of the fact that former residents were expelled and left homeless.

In the name of legality and property rights, the houses of the Roma, who have lived there for decades, were destroyed. In the name of market freedom, Roma were not offered any housing options or other opportunities. Since then, they have been left "free" to survive by finding sustainable accommodations and making their living in the market.



2 STIMULUS MATERIAL





The two photos on the left are archival documents about Roma's presence, activities, and injuries during WWII.

PHOTO CREDITS

Ivana Dervishi





Residents displaced from the Selita neighborhood were found concerned because, as they said, their houses were built before the fall of the socialist regime with effort and sacrifice. They also confirmed that the announcement of the demolition of their homes had arrived out of the blue. No housing options were provided to them. Other residents said that the Roma communities, similar to Albanian society, are very attached to their homes and have invested all their life savings in building one house. They were very attached to the houses as they had invested much savings and energy. However, within a few days, they lost everything.



New Boulevard of Tirana, Albania

PRACTICES & EXERCISES

After reading the texts above and looking at the STIMULUS MATERIAL, a reflection should be made on Albania's Roma. Focus on how the socialist regime treated Roma communities. Think of the Roma housing and the state treatment after the regime's fall in 1991.

TOO DIFFICULT?
Read other materials about Roma settlements in Albania.

READ NEWS
the journalistic article and listen to TV chronicles about the expulsion of the Roma community from their homes in Tirana suburbs.

SPEAK OF HUMAN RIGHTS
and precisely of the right to land. Do you think property rights and/or right to housing for everyone should be the priority for Roma communities in Albania?

SET UP A RESEARCH GROUP
in order to investigate the mistreatments of the Albanian socialist regime about "normalization and modernization" of Roma people.

DISCUSS THIS DIALEMMA
Between a dictatorial regime, which offers a minimum of welfare and economic security for the citizens, and the new liberal system, which in the name of freedom, development, market economy, and property rights, one takes into account the social security of its citizens?

The above activities can be performed both in groups and individually. Prepare a laptop and secure an Internet connection. If you do not possess any proficiency in Albanian, work in pair with an Albanian speaker



The New Boulevard of Tirana was built in the area of the former Train Station, also on the River Bank, from where the houses of many Roma families were expropriated and demolished. In 2020, the central government, together with the Municipality of Tirana, decided to give this area the status of "a priority area for tourism development." It resulted that all 4- and 5-star hotels built in the area and associated with international brand names continue to have zero infrastructure tax. Also, they have zero profit tax for the next 10 years, a reduction of VAT to 6% for the supply of other services offered in the hotel in addition to accommodation, and zero tax on the building. Roma communities did not benefit at all from this process of gentrification.

READING TIPS

Meta, Beqir. "Pakica malazeze, romet dhe hebrenjte gjate viteve 1925-1939." Studime historike 3-4 (2019): 133-1959.

Sula-Raxhimi, Enkelejda. "Normalizing provision: Policies on Roma in Socialist Albania." Antropologji 2, no. 2 (2019): 7-31.

Xhavara, Bredi. Debimet e komunitetit rom; skandali i heshtur i autoriteteve shqiptare. 09 08, 2019. https://www.reporter.al/debimet-e-komunitetit-rom-skandali-i-heshtur-i-autoriteteve-shqiptare/.

Watch these short reportage for better understanding the issue of housing and exclusion of Roma in Albania



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xbyHKyy7aOI



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rYxMhyFUaIw

If English is not your first or second language, avoid using online translations.Your language skills will improve if you use dictionaries!

LEVEL: MEDIUM/ADVANCED

THE STRUGGLE OF ROMA COMMUNITIES: GENEALOGIES AND ORAL HISTORY

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- Resettlement and Reeducation
- Oral history of Roma in urban areas
- Segregation in outskirts
- Roma resistance
- Communism in Albania



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1 COMMUNIST REEDUCATION

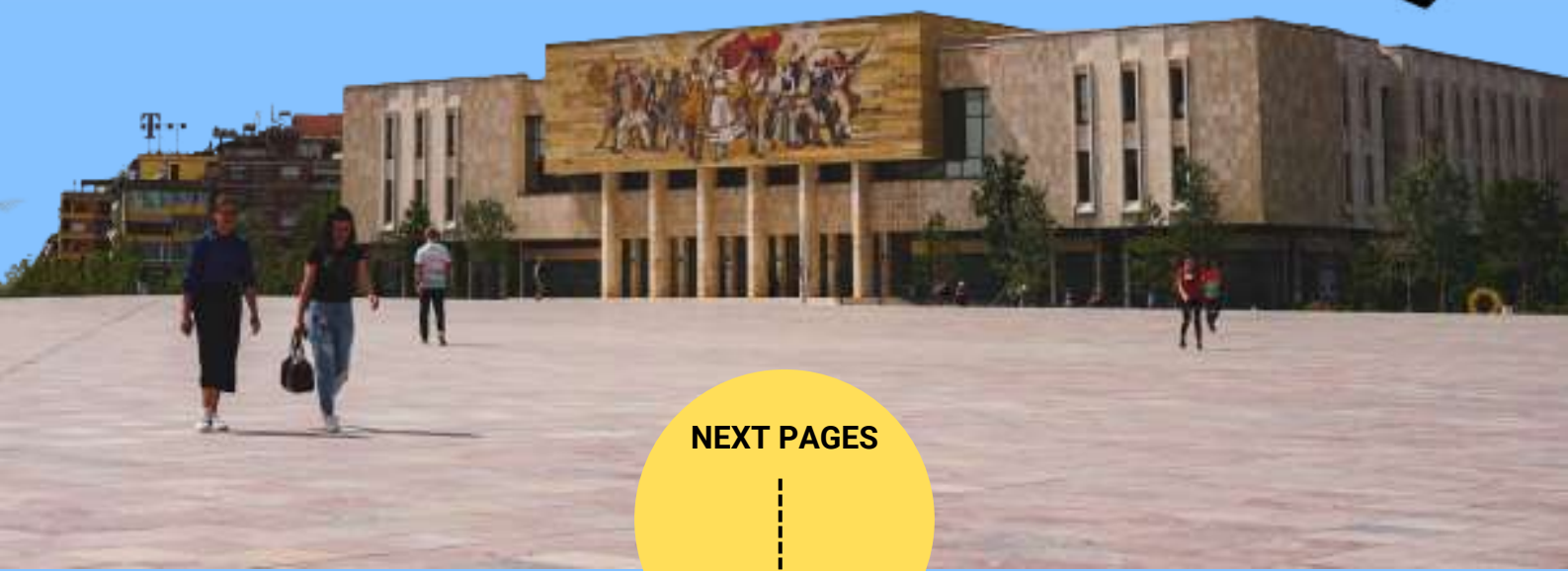
In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Albanian Communist Party established a similar regime to those in Eastern Europe, following the model of the Soviet Union. Due to the economic and political conditions of the country, one of the main tasks was to discipline the whole society, to be ideally composed of "new men with a socialist morale." This holistic approach brings the Albanian communists to transform the society by also considering the Roma population.

Resettlement and reeducation of Roma began in the first years after the establishment of the "socialist regime." The first document dates July 21, 1947, namely a year and a half after the communist takeover. The Prime Minister's office report on Roma minority stated that community members were predominantly nomadic and capable of committing acts of vagrancy, begging, and various crimes. The report also highlighted the miserable economic, moral, and social conditions that Roma communities lived in. Acts of corruption, parasitism, immorality, and other evil deeds, were also ascribed to Roma groups and considered a major concern. In fact, Roma communities did not only put authorities on alert for being nomadic and, therefore, potentially escaping security control and policing. They were also supposed to begin a correction of societal behaviour as the only path to integrate themselves into a valuable Communist society.



CAN YOU SPOT THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF TIRANA THis ALBANIAN MAP?





NEXT PAGES

However, the report subtly differentiated policies and reforms of the Albanian population from the everyday life of Roma communities. Among the memoirs of former communist leaders of that time, and even in the personal notes of Enver Hoxha himself, the socialist regime was praised for having achieved great results only in grouping and settling Roma neighbourhoods by providing houses.

The process of "education" of the Roma population in Albania was paternalistic and discriminatory in its rhetoric. Oral histories still recollect the events of Roma gathered and settled in urban clusters in order to stop their movement in the streets and "damage" the image of the Albanian cities. According to socialist leaders, Roma who begged in the streets or wandered as nomads tarnished the image of the city, especially the capital Tirana. This explains why still nowadays all Albanian cities host Roma neighbourhoods in their outskirts and suburban areas, mainly ghettos where Roma communities have lived since the socialist period. This form of ghettoization deepened when schools, kindergartens, nurseries, and some agricultural or handicraft enterprises were organised within those Roma areas where locals could work. Only a few non-Roma and tiny families used to live in those areas.

The Ministry of Interior was tasked with gathering Roma people in certain places and banning their potentially "uncontrolled movements" across the Albanian nation. It was also requested their full registration in the statistics of the Ministry (for the first time in the history of the Albanian state), including specific data about their identification number, age, and physical and health condition. This operation aimed at controlling Roma better and penalizing their potential acts of vagrancy. Other government bodies were also tasked with similar actions to be undertaken. Particular emphasis was placed on the both moral and political education of Roma population, thereby attempting to strip customs and align their everyday life with "proletarian morality." For this reason, the government bodies also relied on the Party bodies.

Roma workers were engaged in handicrafts such as blacksmithing, basket weaving, and pottery. After resettlement, they lived in cities where they had to abandon their work in the agricultural sector. Moreover, only some Roma families settled in rural areas. In urban clusters, instead, between the late 1940s and early 1950s, Roma settled in the basements or first floors of city blocks. Since then, it even became a tradition that the first floors of palaces were occupied only by Roma. Here, it should be explained that the first floor of the newly built socialist blocks were almost half basements, as part of the apartment were underground and rather unliveable. Nevertheless, Roma apartments were often overcrowded - sometimes even with more than 20 people living together - thereby showing how housing program was gangrene for the system.

Particularly in Tirana and Durres, urban construction did not follow criteria from the socialist period until around 2005. Civil conflicts erupted as public spaces were occupied by citizens coming from rural areas that could be officially state property. Private owners seized them during the socialist regime, and many were expropriated generally without compensation. After 1991, the new liberal democracy system considered these expropriations unfair, recognized in principle the right of ownership of the "legal" owners of these properties, and stated that the state would try to return or compensate these properties. In turn, however, social conflicts erupted between those who had built their houses on public property and those who claimed ownership of these spaces even before 1945. Since the 1950s, in many outskirts of Tirana where Roma lived, construction of residential areas began expelling Roma from their homes. The first case of Roma being forcibly displaced happened in 2004. In the former Food Factory area, 15 Roma families were forcibly expelled from their homes without any reward. The justification was a private matter between individuals, as it was a property owned by someone who entered into a personal relationship with the constructors.

Once again, Roma people were considered only a "collateral damage." In addition, the state institutions responsible for housing, namely the Housing Authority, did not assist homeless Roma after their expulsion from their houses. The story of these expulsions came to the public attention once again after almost 11 years, when from another suburban area of Tirana, a Roma refugee camp was burned, and the inhabitants were expelled, as a residential area would be built there. Interviews with Roma deported from the camp in 2016 said they had taken refuge there, having had their homes demolished in previous years, including deportation in 2005, without being offered any housing opportunities.

With the expansion of the city of Tirana, suburbs became more and more valuable. New owners discovered these suburban areas for having a great potential for development, regardless of the "collateral damage" that could hit the majority of Roma citizens in the years to come. Such a flagrant case also occurred in 2011 around the Train Station in Tirana, previously considered a remote suburb of the city. The Municipality of Tirana undertook this gentrification for commercial purposes. About 37 Roma families have lived in modest houses since the 1950s. In previous cases, an owner was found demanding that the property should have been returned for new "investment and development." Many Roma families were not yet again given any housing opportunities, finding legal artifices common in Roma evictions. These artifices consisted in the fact that, although these families lived for years in these territories, Roma did not have ownership certificates of these areas. Even the law "On restitution and compensation of property", Roma property was recognized as belonging to the "rightful owner" - namely, the descendant who owned it before 1945.

The systemic expulsion of Roma from this area was conducted forcedly. Meanwhile, the Municipality of Tirana and the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs did not offer any remuneration. The only "solution" proposed to the Roma community was to provide temporary houses and recognize their right, "in principle", to be accomodated in the city. In practice, however, neither time was allocated nor housing program was developed.

The place offered to set up these tents was a field near a landfill in Sharra - namely, another suburb of Tirana. Despite the resistance of the residents and the protest of the civil society organizations, the State Police intervened and forcibly evicted these residents from their homes. Even today, after almost 11 years, these Roma residents have not received social housing, live in barracks, and have even been forcibly relocated to other cities in the country.

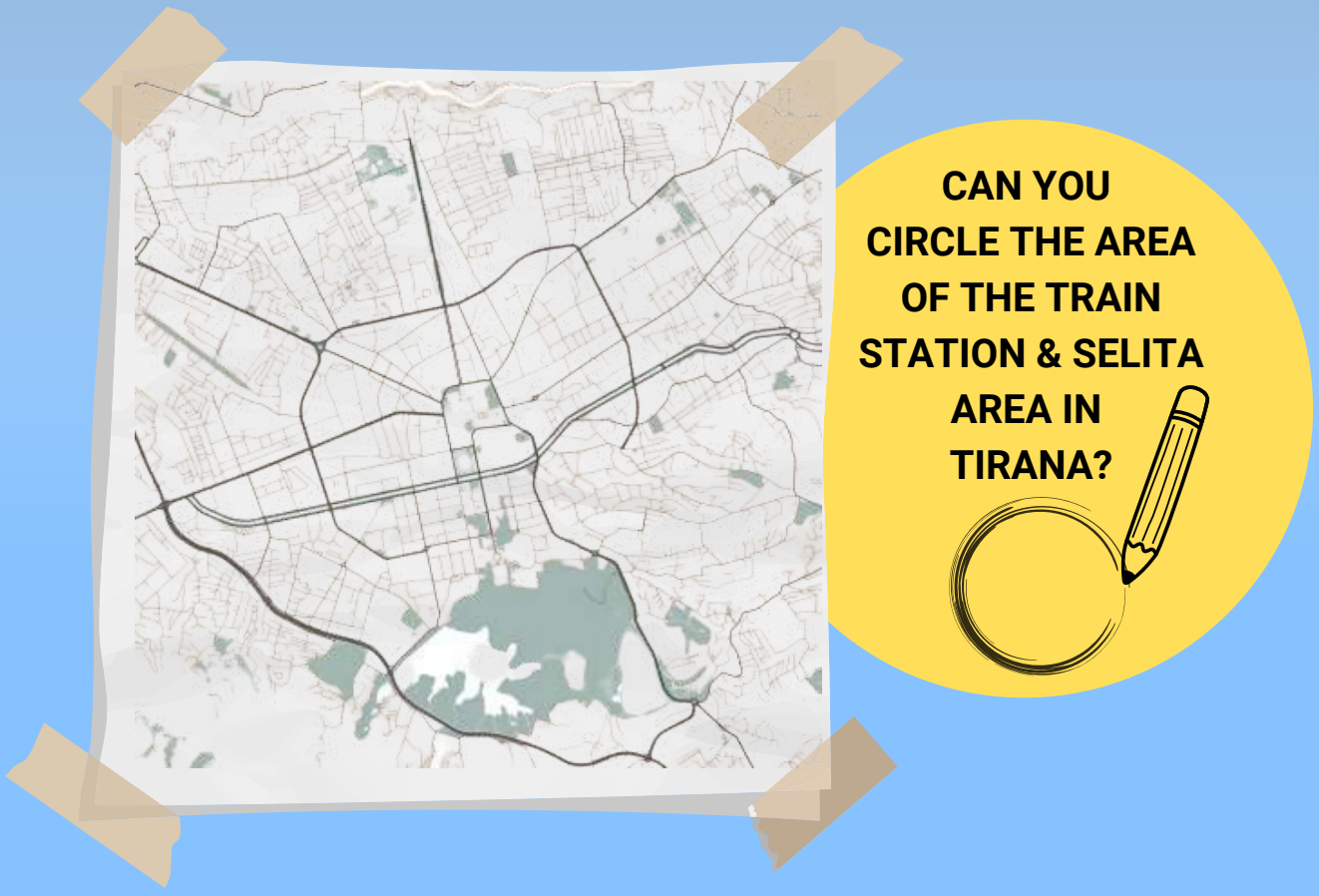
LEARN TO UNLEARN

Although Roma families were expelled from the area nearby the Train Station in Tirana, it should be pointed out that a more modern and more functional railway station has never come to life. Besides the dubious construction procedures, the Train Station was completely flattened, and in today's Tirana there is neither a proper train station nor a developing area with a flourishing business.





What is worth mentioning here is how the discourse on the common good and the public cause are used to justify the eviction of people from their homes and a case of fraud. Also, authorities spoke of "the general public interest cannot be held hostage, manipulating the rest of the citizens about the Roma expulsion and covering up the vested interests.



In all the cases of Roma deportations since 2004, the most critical case in the Selita area was the expulsion of 130 families for the construction of the Great Highway of Tirana. In late July 2015, the Inspectorate of Territorial Planning launched an action to demolish houses of Roma in the area of Selita, which were on the trail of the construction of the Great Highway of Tirana.

Those residents were not informed in time, and no alternatives were offered, although this is mandatory by law. The only thing left for the residents was a protest near the responsible institutions. Residents organised some public demonstrations and forwarded an official request for help to the only institution that agreed to wait and tried to help them, the Ombudsman. Yet, an administrative problem appeared: the residents had not received official notification for demolishing their houses, which the Ombudsman could appeal in Court. Although the Inspectorate continued to demolish Roma houses, officially in line with the judiciary system, this was not happening as there was no official announcement. The Ombudsman gave some official recommendations to solve the problem, such as providing social housing as a long-term solution, as well as providing temporary rent. Yet noone followed any recommendations. Rome residents displaced from the Selita area had the same concerns because houses were built before the fall of the socialist regime. Other residents said that Roma locals, like the rest of Albanian people, are very attached to their houses and have invested all their life savings in the building at least one. They were very attached to the houses as they had invested much savings and energy in them; however, within a few days, they lost everything.

The Municipality of Tirana refused to expropriate them at actual market prices. Still, thanks to the tremendous social pressure and the protests of the Roma, the Municipality undertook to pay the rent bonus for two years, which was by no means a long-term solution. For these people evicted from their houses, it was challenging to secure housing, firstly because the amount of rent offered by the Municipality was difficult to afford, even in suburbs. Secondly, due to prejudices on Roma people, landlords refused to rent apartments. For these reasons, Roma citizens, put in extraordinary difficulties, were forced to go to Germany to seek asylum. Despite the discrimination against them, since Albania was considered a safe country, they were not granted asylum and returned to the country after some months.

Likewise, in June 2016, in the River Bank on the outskirts of Tirana, the Municipality informed the Roma community that they would be displaced from their barracks in order to plan the construction of a new residential area. Thus, Roma residents were deprived of the right to give any proposal for resolving the situation. The offer of the Municipality foresaw one year of rent paid by the Municipality at the rate of 80%, and the residents had to go out to the free market themselves to look for news houses. According to residents and activists who have been dealing with this issue for about four months, this offer had two main problems: (1) It takes a lease to prove the payment by the Municipality, and (2) residents need a place to collect recyclable waste, thus securing a livelihood. Residents have verbally opposed this offer and requested a meeting with the Mayor to negotiate. These residents have agreed among themselves to claim a piece of land. The employees of the Municipality had asked them to sign a statement to benefit from a facilitated loan. Still, these families suspended the loan for a long time due to insolvency. Activists have also requested a map for the Municipality, knowing which families will be specifically affected by these works. Although no response was provided, seventy-two families in the River Bank area were affected by this construction and left without any alternative.

It is known that the socialist system in Albania was a harsh dictatorial system that undertook disciplinary policies for modernizing the masses. According to the discourse of the socialist regime in Albania, the Roma, who had to settle in certain places, were supposed to be disciplined and reeducated through work. While supposed to be cultured through a proletarian morality, Roma would have become valuable to society. This kind of rhetoric, which has a paternalistic and prejudicial approach to the Roma, was similar to other segments of society, especially to those who were called "inverted classes" who had to be disciplined and made valuable to socialist society.

With the tremendous social changes in Eastern Europe, which also affected Albania in 1991, political discourse emphasized freedom and democracy. Yet, the displacement of Roma people, the destruction of their homes, and the lack of suitable alternative housing continue to function in the postsocialist predicament.



STIMULUS MATERIAL 2

…in the early 1950s they together with other Roma families came to Tirana from where they lived as nomads and settled on the first floors of buildings…

… after a few years, five or six, the police had forcibly expelled them from the basements of the palaces in Tirana…

… removal from the basements of the palaces in Tirana was done by force. The police came and gathered the Roma, loading with all the few items they had in the trucks, and sent to the suburbs of Tirana. There settled and did not move anymore, initially the government had given them some umbrellas to live and some of them had built some barracks with reeds that grew by the river …

…not all Roma were treated equally, as those who were closer to the Party and the authorities received more help or more quickly, while others tried to improve their living conditions…

On the left, memories of locals from Tirana. Down, an official document from the time of socialism

According to the documents of the Ministry of Interior, relocation of Roma people from the basements of blocks to separate and more isolated neighborhoods, was taken in order to tackle Roma misbehaviours in making...

… noise, irregularity, lack of discipline as they went out to beg publicly, and disturbed order and tranquility."

Can people's memories be considered also official history?

3 PRACTICES & ACTIONS

If you are in Tirana or nearby, **organize a visit around the Train Station** and **collect oral histories from locals**. Ask about traditions, everyday customs and how the area has changed after the demolition of Roma houses.



After visiting Selita area, **build your knowledge on archival materials and other documents**. By asking permission to locals, **take photos and collect first-hand data in order to create a visual map of the neighbourhood** and understand how State-run campaigns of dispossession of Roma properties have radically changed their everyday life.



After your potential visit and desk-research activity, **use social media**. **Produce a social media campaign** in order to raise awareness on Roma rights, their (oral) histories and resistance in Albania



SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: BEGINNERS

ANALYSING ROMA SETTLEMENT AND EXPULSION FROM THE SUBURBS OF TIRANA

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage a group of beginners with little knowledge about the history of Roma minority in Albania, its identities and histories.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, ideally foreigners who have very little knowledge of Albania and its ethnoreligious diversity, as well as Albanian students living in the capital Tirana or in other cities such as Durres.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities

OBJECTIVES

- Familiarise with the history and identities of Albania's Roma communities;
- Reflect critically on Roma resistance during the time of socialist Albania;
- Understand and come to know the high level of societal transformation and gentrification that hit Roma people the hardest;
- Stimulate critical thinking about freedom and security in public sphere by developing research skills and some actions through easy-to-handle pieces of Roma histories and ancestry in Albania.

MATERIAL

Internet connection, laptop, projector, flipchart posters, handouts, (online) dictionary

PREPARATION

- Make sure to review the keywords before kicking off the different activities.
- Organise activities in two sections of 45 minutes each. Make sure to have enough time to restore participants' attention for the second session.
- Divide participants into small groups in order to initiate research activities and have diverse findings to discuss as a follow-up activity.
- Prepare links for the YouTube videos for a group activity. For doing so, make sure to have Albanian speakers;
- Provide translation of the videos and materials in Albanian in case of a foreign audience; hence, skip this part if you have less time available for more engaging activities.
- Be prepared to open up the discussion among the participants about the cartoon and related sensitive topics, such as nationalism, ethnicity, and religion. Throughout, make sure that none in the group will feel marginalized or discriminated against.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

If possible, organize a one-day trip to Tirana and the formerly Roma areas mentioned in this section. Tirana's New Boulevard or Train station may be the best places to visit in order to acquire a full-fledged understanding of how resettlement and gentrification have changed Roma everyday life.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: MEDIUM/ADVANCED

THE STRUGGLE OF ROMA COMMUNITIES: GENEALOGIES AND ORAL HISTORY

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage a group of university students with knowledge of minority groups, ideally of Roma communities, identities, and histories in Albania and the Balkan region.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, ideally foreigners who have very little knowledge of Albania and its ethnoreligious diversity, as well as Albanian students or activists living in the capital Tirana or outside the areas mentioned in this section.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities ; if a visit is organised in the areas mentioned above, make sure to allocate enough time to the connected activities to be done on the ground.

OBJECTIVES

- Familiarise with Roma history and identities of Roma in socialist Albania;
- Reflect critically on the issue of securitization vis-à-vis Roma groups;
- Understand and come to know the wide range of Roma oral history during and after the socialist period in Albania with a spotlight to put on a series of Roma protests and attempts of resistance;
- Stimulate critical thinking and develop research skills through easy-to-handle pieces of Roma minority history.

MATERIAL

Internet connection, laptop, projector, flipchart posters, handouts, (online) dictionary, map of Tirana.

PREPARATION

- Make sure to review the keywords before kicking off the different activities.
- Organise activities in two sections of 45 minutes each. Make sure to have enough time to restore participants' attention for the second session;
- Divide participants into small groups in order to initiate research activities and have diverse findings to discuss as a follow-up activity;
- Prepare links for a detailed map of Tirana;
- Be prepared to open up the discussion among the participants about the different photos and related sensitive topics, such as socialist Albania, ethnicity, and gentrification. Throughout, make sure that none in the group will feel marginalized or discriminated against.

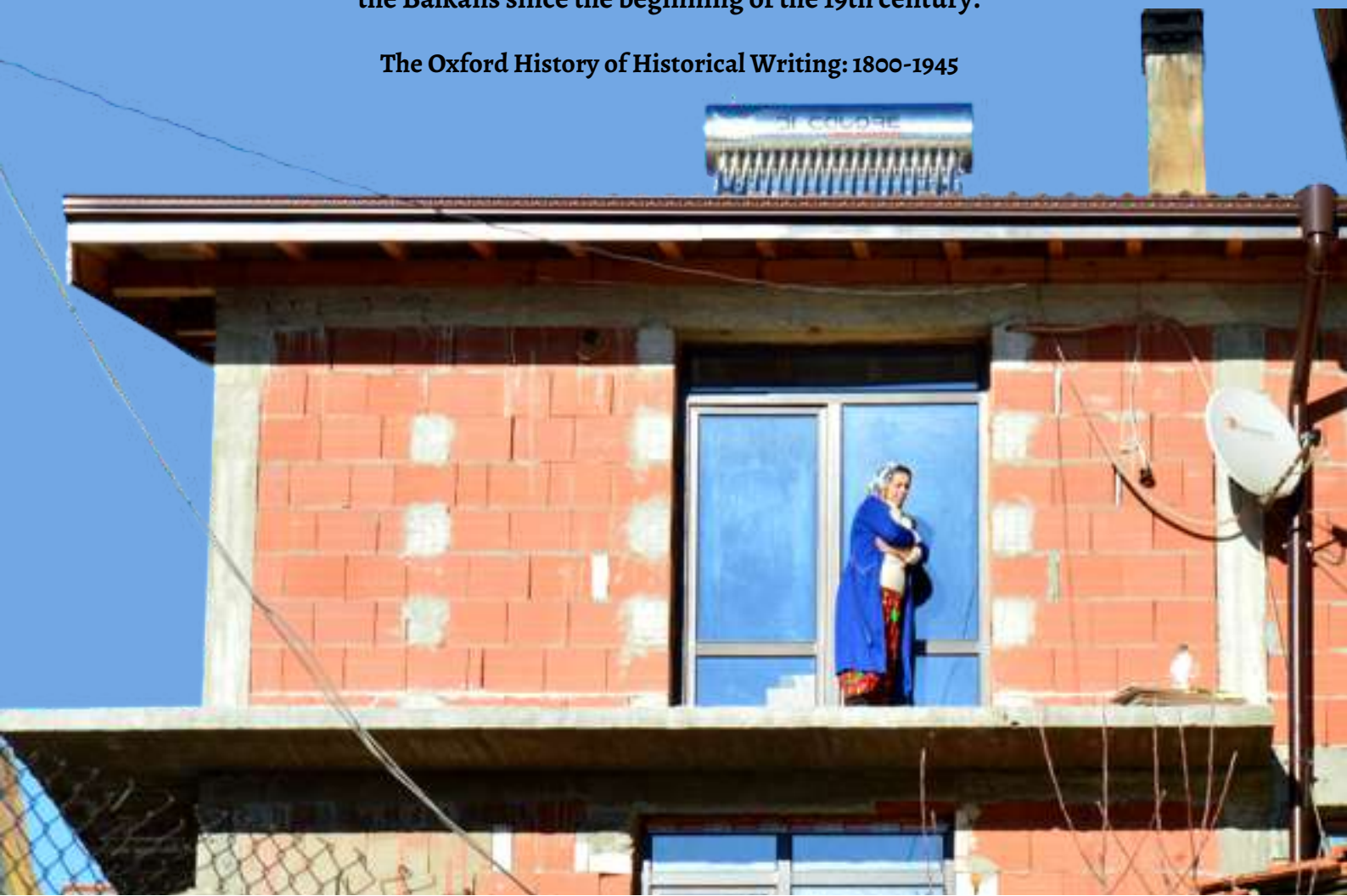
FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

If possible, organize a one-day trip to the Selita area mentioned in this section. A tour around Tirana may also be an interesting place to visiting during the workshop, training or conference.

SECTION 2

[...] history and historical writing in the Balkans became a commodity, serving competing narratives of different nations which, despite sharing a common culture and traditions, became alienated from each other during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The emergence of academic historical writing in the Balkans should thus be seen as part of a larger European process of cultural and political transfer that these countries engage with during critical stages in the consolidation as nation-states. Once these national historiographies are viewed in a comparative framework, one can then suggest a more integrative interpretation, one that is equally attentive to historical idiosyncrasy and regional similarities. In broader terms, therefore, looking at the specific themes on which historians and others in the Balkans base their narratives will enable us to explain teleological interpretations of history which have dominated historical writing in the Balkans since the beginning of the 19th century.

The Oxford History of Historical Writing: 1800-1945



BALKANS OF COLOUR

THE POMAK REBELS

Francesco Trupia



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Speaking of Race in Bulgaria

Francesco Trupia

In Bulgaria the contemporary anti-Roma discourse and rampant Islamophobia have indicated how widespread racism is. It should be also pointed out that the country has regularly foreclosed the notion of race in order to assess such a phenomenon, thereby favoring the notion of ethnicity rather than race itself. The perpetuation of the myth of racelessness from the historiography and political landscape of Bulgaria and the Balkans in general, has diminished the shared connections between ethnic minority groups and other typically minoritised communities that are ascribed around their race. Elana Resnick argues that, in the Balkans, such a denial unravels a form of white supremacy and asserts the existence of racialized hierarchies. The entanglement of modern racism and power is not only appropriate to studying the chronological history of Europe but also paramount for rejecting the issue of racist politics as an unfortunate and unexpected identification with whiteness. Therefore, there is one question that deserves to be raised: does race, or do racial hierarchies, exist in Bulgaria?

In general, the tandem of race and racism can propel the same value-laden rationale behind which the research approach of Critical Race Studies (CRS) provides as a better lens of investigation worldwide. In particular, numerous intersecting and overlapping threads that pertain to the notion of race and phenomena of racialisation show multiple forms of discrimination and exclusion which have been similarly shaped by global white supremacy. The concrete tension between being unable to engage vs. being unwilling to examine forms of racism and anti-blackness is of great importance even in the Balkans where "ethnicity" matters the most.

Among others, the case of Pomaks provides a critical perspective for unraveling issues of internal racism and domestic coloniality in the contemporary history of Bulgaria. Within the country, according to Dušan Bjelić, race relations and internal (domestic) colonialism can be found in the race discourse against national minorities such as Turks and Muslim Pomaks. Subjected to racial-type laws and policies of assimilation, which almost led to cultural genocide, Pomak identity was hotly debated. Members of groups composed of Bulgarian-speaking Muslims, the state-endorsed official historiography depicted them as most probable descendants of Bulgarian Christians who converted to Islam during the period of Ottoman rule. They retain the Bulgarian language as well as certain Orthodox practices, yet their self-identification with Islam has been historically strong.

After the Balkan Wars, Bulgaria and other Balkan states were quite young, somewhat lacking in national pride, and in desperate need of a dignified collective identity. As Myuhtar-May noted, the Slavic-speaking Pomaks were recast as "pure-blood" Bulgarians who spoke the "purest" Bulgarian language and preserved the "truest" Bulgarian traditions.

During the interwar period, the process of Nazi Germany's ethnic self-racialisation vis-à-vis Jewish ethnicity understood as an internal sub-race, did not differ much to the long-standing post-Ottoman process of Bulgaria's "ethnic self-racialisation" vis-à-vis Muslim nationals and ethnic Turks. While the latter were privileged by a former empire's minority status, Pomaks were instead subjected to forcible Christianisation and name-changing campaigns since the 1910s. In the 1940s, the Nazi-allied Bulgarian Monarchy passed the "Law for the Protection of the Nation" (Законът за защита на нацията), which resembled and recuperated some logics and interactions of the Nuremberg Race Law. Ironically, Slavic majoritarian populations were equalized to other colored races in the early 20th century, especially after the rapid production of racial hygiene policies and implementation of eugenic measures. These were about to counter 'qualitative' aspects of the implementation of Slavic and colored populations themselves along with their racial characteristics.

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In the aftermath of the Second World War, Michel Foucault introduced the concept of "internal racism" by referring to eugenics. Despite the takeover of Communist forces and anti-imperialist stances, Bulgaria's domestic colonisation unfolded violently within specific ethnic landscapes. This typical form of "internal (domestic) colonialism" was rethought by Foucault himself as a form of governmentality impinging on individuals in their most basic relations to themselves and others. Foucault argued that not only Nazism and Western ethnocentrism, but even socialism and Marxism were racist from the outset. During the same period of time, in Bulgaria, another wave of vigorous attempts was made to oblige Pomaks to abandon their Muslim and Arabic names and adopt Bulgarian ones. Paraphrasing Foucault here, Bulgarian socialism showed its racist component by taking up, developing, re-implanting, and modifying its basis or its modes of working. Race relations between Bulgarians and Muslim Pomaks were presented as existing inside the "same type", where the political conversion of ethnicity into race was central to account the history of Bulgaria. Race of Pomaks, in this sense, was an operative category of identity-remaking over their specific ethnic space, namely, the Rhodope region. Hence, Pomaks themselves were simply considered pure-blooded Bulgarians who had just been forced to convert to Islam during the Ottoman Empire.

This form of auto-referential racism came into shape through the so-called 'Rebirth Process' – namely, an often inconsistent and contradictory policies of nativisation that the Communist Bulgaria Party orchestrated and implemented on the ground against ethnic and religious minorities. The rhetoric was that of salvation and progress, more precisely of "cultural uplifting" (e.g. културно издигане), which echoed a particular tradition of humanist practices with a long colonial career. As Gerhard Meinsenbeg would have argued, the words 'culture' and 'race' happened to be interchangeable. Likewise, Angela Saini wrote that particular cultural features had been historically chosen arbitrarily, through a superficial selection of external characters. Culture mattered only because it had a political meaning attached to it. When the word "race" had been prudently replaced by 'population', racial differences came to replace the notion of 'human variation'.

Moreover, socialism's auto-referential racism showed how the traditional relationship between race discourse and nationalism had the tendency to reverse itself. Affirming the superior value of the majoritarian cultural self (us) and thereby making room for the logic of isolation and exclusion of the 'abnormal', Communist Bulgaria's nationalist turn of the 1970s was increasingly becoming, or perhaps had already become, a function of racism. After all, the power of nationalism has historically been to tell different peoples to descend from greatness, that they have been genetically endowed with something special, something passed down to them over generations. Both mechanisms of dissimilation and assimilation against Pomak identity and history were possible discourse strategies of the internal racism discourse. Expanded into an internal war that defends the core society against the threats born in its own body, the 'Rebirth Campaign" mulled over Pomak identity, history, and ontologies. The central scope was to engine a policy of nativisation of all mediating cultural devices among different communities in order to reinforce the 'unity' of the nation – namely, of the 'Edinstvo'. Literally "oneness", the Edinstvo was introduced as a performative societal model during socialism; its philosophy dragooned everyone into a sort of 'epistemic self-colonisation' implemented through institutionalizing a new normative history. Accordingly, Pomaks and other minorities would have taken an absolute distance from their own past, their legacies and ontologies. Becoming the ideological watchword of a society without divisions, the Edinstvo was an operative category of "socialist unity" blatantly depicted as a step further to a full-fledged classless society. Under the parapet of such a State-run ideology, the purpose of the Edinstvo was that of regrouping and reanimating Bulgarian-ness as a locus of state sovereignty. In this way, Communist Bulgaria showed its nationalism's internal supplement, as Balibar would refer to it. It was not merely exacerbated xenophobia but, in a sense, the very opposite: the rejection of the Bulgarian "complementary enemy", namely, the Muslim identity of Pomaks and their Turcophilia.

Tellingly, the term "complementary enemy" was firstly coined by Germaine Tillion during the war in Algeria against the French colonisation. Another similar paradigm - namely, 'judicial humanity' - almost equalises the colonised experiences of Pomaks to that of Egyptians under the British domination. In fact, judicial humanity could serve to unravel some mechanisms of Bulgaria's judicial internalisation of colonialism and coloniality. The British repression of "alternative sovereignties" that Egyptians had aspired to, yet repressed through a "technique of purification", enabled the British administration to turn law's ideals of humanity into violent weapons of control. Similarly, Communist authorities propagated their purpose of re-humanising non-Bulgarian subjectivities and healing the wounds of Turkification. From a (post-)colonial perspective, here Franz Fanon's argumentation could also provide yet another eye-opening lens of explanation of the paradigm of coloniality and race in Bulgaria. The different waves of the Rebirth Campaign, some of which were opposed particularly violently by Pomak communities between the 1960s and the 1970s, had the aim of re-humanising Pomak Muslims, and not dehumanising them. Pomaks themselves were not simply excluded and violently targeted; on the contrary, the act of changing their Muslim and Turkic-sounding names as well as forcing them to renounce their traditional attire, had the goal to elevate them from their status of backwardness and fully uplifted them to the status of Bulgarians. They were supposed, in other words, to return to their Bulgarian ancestry and be liberated from the inhuman condition prescribed by some former rulers. It followed that birth control, prohibition of abortion, selective breeding, and sterilization, were all some of the eugenicists' technologies for racially enhancing the ruling ethnic majority. If compared with Samera Esmeir's understanding of judicial humanity, Communist Bulgaria's purified ideal of humanity was only aimed at safeguarding the central authority of power and the danger of imperilling the sovereignty of the Bulgarian statehood.

All of these cannot gloss over the discourse over domestic colonisation which, since the end of the 19th century, was not only associated not only a biological race thinking, but also embedded in the colonial roots of ethnic nationalism. After the Ottoman Empire, in fact, Bulgarian institutions had to forge a new nation out of the crumbled structures of the old colonial regime and transcend them. The new "foreign nationals" were soon considered the outsiders to the new state; they were not outside the border of the state itself, but rather present and belonging to it.

To conclude, even if the 'word' race was not being used, the idea of race and race thinking was there, deep within the bedrock. Within it, Western Europe's colonialism penetrated Bulgaria as well as the Balkans and Eastern Europe in the same sequential order, informing each other via the boomerang effect of colonial practices.

WHO IS WHO?

TO KNOW MORE

***Michel Foucault* is one of the most celebrated French philosophers and activists who challenged people's assumptions about medicine, prison, psychiatry, government and sexuality. All his writings continue to have a huge influence on politics and its related issues of personal freedom and activism.**

***Franz Fanon* was one of the most outspoken African intellectuals and Marxists. His work has largely influenced the post-colonial studies, where he was also deeply concerned with the psychopathology of colonization and the cultural consequences of decolonization.**

***Germaine Tillion* was a French ethnologist and a member of the French resistance during the Nazi occupation of France. Tillion is still a renowned scholar for her studies in Algeria during the 1950s, especially during the anti-colonial struggle of Algerians. She was among the first to denounce the use of torture by French colonial forces.**

Étienne Balibar **is a French philosopher and the most celebrated student of Louis Althusser. In his career, he has been working on the theoretical nexus of historical materialism and critical theory.**

Dušan Bjelić **is professor and Chair at the University of Southern Maine, US. His areas of interest are ethnomethodology and critical studies of psychoanalysis and psychiatry.**

Elana Resnick **is Assistant Professor at the Department of Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Barbara (US). Her research interests cover environmental politics, phenomena of racialization, socialist and postsocialist period in European Union and Bulgaria.**

Angela Saini **is a British journalist, writer and radio presenter. Among her publications, *Superior. The Return of Race Science* (2019), and *Inferior: How Science Got Women Wrong and the New Research that is Rewriting the Story* (2018) have received international recognition and attention from both civil society actors and academia.**

use Wikipedia or other research platforms to look people up: ResearchGate, Academia

QUESTIONS AND FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Does Foucalt's analysis of racism fail to adequately take into the account the role of European colonialism in the Balkans? After reading the text, **do you think that racism and colonialism are always two faces of the same coin?**

2. Bulgaria has never had a history of colonisation, even though the text above argues that a different form of colonisation shifted gears domestically after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. **What's your take on it?**

3. "In all areas of social life in Bulgaria, ethnic and religious minority groups remain mostly separated and disturbingly unequal to the core society". After reading and reflecting on the text above, **do you agree with this statement, why or why not?**



FUTHER READING

Neuberger, Mary (2004) *The Orient Within: Muslim Minorities and the Negotiation of Nationhood in Bulgaria*, Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press.

Dušan I. Bjelić (2018) *Toward a Genealogy of the Balkan Discourses on Race, in: "Interventions* International Journal of Postcolonial Studies".

Arneil Barbara (2017) *Domestic Colonies. The Turn Inward Colony*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Angela Saini (2019) *Superior. The Return of Race Science*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Samera Esmeir (2012) *Judicial Humanity. A Colonial History,* Redwood City: Stanford University Press.

LEVEL: BEGINNERS

Discovering Pomak Ontologies and Epistemologies

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- Pomak identity
- Islamisation and Christianisation
- Surat & Qur'an
- Shalvari



Empathy is an important part of understading cultural differences and diverse ontologies than yours. Keep it in mind.

WHO ARE THE POMAKS?

Pomaks are one of the most minor yet much-debated minority groups in Bulgaria, historically living in the Rhodope mountainous region across Turkey and Greece. Bulgarian historiography has, over the decades, described them as "Bulgarian Mohammedans" or "Bulgarian Muslims" due to their fluency in many Slavic dialects and Bulgarian language proper. The institutionalized viewpoint over the community implied that Pomaks themselves were descendants of Bulgarian ancestors, whom the Ottomans Islamized by force during the Ottoman Empire. Bulgarian authorities have always questioned the **Pomaks' 'identity** pedigree'. Since they have embraced only an idiosyncratic form of Islam, Pomak identity became a subject of discussion during socialism. Within the Party, the danger posed by their cultural affinity with ethnic Turks put Sofia on alert. Communist officials decided to mull over a mass-scale assimilation campaign through name-changings, which was not implemented smoothly at first. Since the 1910s, Pomaks were forcedly **Christianised** to embrace their "native identity" and heal from the previous process of **Islamisation** they themselves had undergone during the Ottoman period. As time has passed by, Pomaks' self-identification continues to appear puzzling and it sparks criticism in today's Bulgaria. According to the 2001 census, between 60.000 and 130.000 citizens declared themselves "Muslim" and "Muslim with Bulgarian identity." Additionally, Pomak communities live in the Western Thrace, in North-easternmost Greece, where Turkish influence is quite strong.

CAN YOU MAP OUT THE GEOGRAPHICAL POSITION OF THE RHODOPE REGION?



LEARN TO UNLEARN

If Pomaks in Western Thrace speak Bulgarian at home, go to Turkish schools and live in a Greek environment, are Pomak children trilingual?

This question was posted in Quora – the popular crowdsourced Q&A platform. Beyond the answers, it should be pointed out that **Pomak identity** is undoubtedly transnational. In Bulgaria, they speak the national language, while in Greece, they might speak Turkish and Greek, too. Many live in Turkey, in and around the city of Bursa. Their religious identity is often associated with Islam, but others may refer to Orthodox Christianity. This heterogeneity had often led to the misleading ascription of Pomaks themselves due to the inconsistent and contradictory yet troubling process of demographic engineering established long before the socialist period in which ethnic and religious (primarily Muslim) minorities were targeted.

2 STIMULUS MATERIAL

Hanging **Shalvari** in the town of Ribnovo, one of the most typical female pair of loose-fitting trousers... **whose attire was forbidden in socialist time, especially after the assimilation campaigns started in the 1910s.**



***Shalvari** are part of the Ottoman culture. Bright colours and flowered prints are favoured by rural women.*

Down on the right, Arabic-written graves placed nearby the local mosque of the Pomak village of Kornitsa, Southwest Bulgaria...



...and we separated them and made from water every living thing? Then will they not believe?

Surat 30, V. 30. This phrase recalls the Surat Al- 'Anbyā' (The Prophets) ...

...during communism, many Arabic-written scripts were chiselled from tombes of Muslims



... Building a fountain is seen as a spiritual act in the Rhodopes. A sip of water can restore memories of joyous events or a family member. Above, on the left, just outside the town of Rudozem, this fountain reminds one of the most specific verses of the Qur'an. It speaks of how Allah made water the cause and origin of life. The Rhodopes are rich in water, a symbol of eternity, energy, togetherness and belonging

3 QUESTIONS, PRACTICES, EXERCISES



This cartoon shows Ludmilla Zhivkova - daughter of the Party boss, Todor Zhivkov - bribing Bulgarian academics and scholars. It alludes to the historical controversy of Bulgarian culture and nationalism, which, especially during socialism, Zhivkova used to boost through unmarxist perspectives and passion for mysticism and folklore.

SET UP A RESEARCH GROUP

Discover more about how Pomaks were described in socialist Bulgaria and the reasons for which their identities disappeared from the circle of academic production.

As Margarita Karahimora argues, the interpretation of the historical legacy of Bulgaria was compromised by the overwhelming idea of patriotism and national pride that misled folklore and religious studies. Minority groups were mentioned almost anywhere, not the cultures of neighboring countries strictly connected with Bulgarian culture. Such a 'scientific truth' penetrated all aspects of everyday life, education included. In this regard, Evelina Kelbecheva points out that only in the last couple of years more detailed sections have been introduced in the history textbooks concerning the mistreatment of ethnic minority groups.

JUST BELOW, CHECK OUT THE READING TIPS

Still too difficult to grasp?

Look at the following activities below for a better understanding

After reading and looking at the **STIMULUS MATERIAL, do you think that traditional attire and local ontologies can mislead the historical image of Pomaks in Bulgaria and beyond even more? If so, how?**



READING TIPS

Teodora DRAGOSTINOVA (2020) *Cold War from the Margins. A Small Socialist State on the Global Cultural Scene*, Cornell University Press. Chapter 5, "Like a Grand World Civilisation," pp. 162-195.

Margarita KARAMIHOVA (2021) "Exploring Memories of Communism in Bulgaria", in H. RIGELS / G. GRANZINETTI / A. KOLA (Eds) *Studying the Memory of Communism. Genealogies, Social Practices and Communication*, Toruń Wydawnicstwo Nauko Uniwersytetu Mikołaja Kopernika, pp. 257-275.

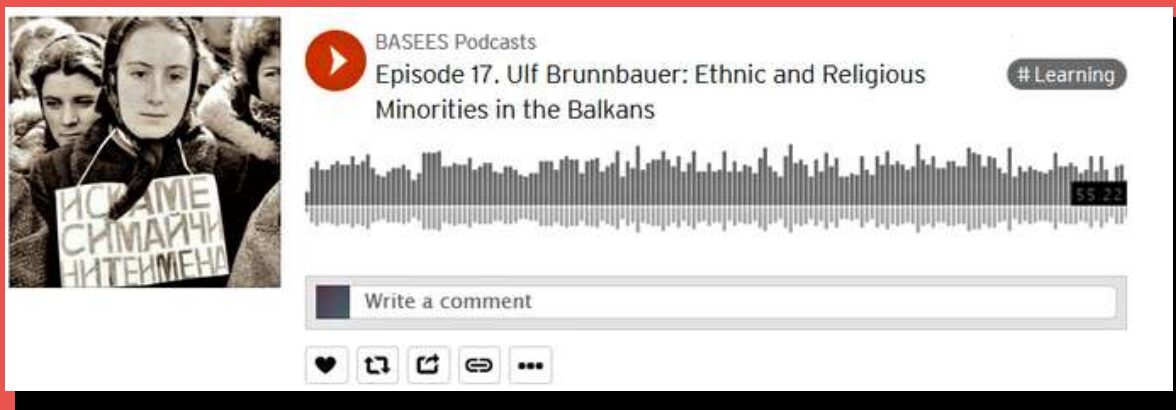
Evelina KELBECHEVA (2020) "A Chronicle of an Anachronism: The Struggle for Adequate Education about the Communist Past", in *Constructions and Instrumentalization of the Past. A Comparative Study on the Memory Management of the Region*, Centre for Baltic and East European Studies.

4

HISTORY LISTENING

Ulf Brunnbauer is Professor of History at the University of Regensburg and director of the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies. He talks to ***Petru Negură***, Humboldt fellow at the Leibniz Institute, Regensburg, about the categories of perception and strategies for the inclusion and exclusion of interwar Bulgaria, Greece, and Yugoslavia's Muslim minorities. The Bulgarian-speaking Pomaks is especially revealing, with both Bulgarian and Greek nationalists and state agencies claiming they were "alienated" from their true identity (Bulgarian or Greek), having been forced to embrace Islam in the past.

https://soundcloud.com/user-267970745/episode-17-ulf-brunnbauer-ethnic-and-religious-diversity-in-the-balkans



LEVEL: MEDIUM

DECOLONIAL ENCOUNTERS IN BULGARIA: THE POMAK REBELS

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- Pomak identity
- "Rebirth Process"
- Turkophiles
- Name-Changing Procedure

If English is not your first or second language, avoid using online translations.Your language skills will improve if you use dictionaries!

CAN YOU MAP OUT THE LOCATIES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT? ?



1 OPPOSING COMMUNIST COLONISATION

During Communism, the **Pomak identity** became a subject of discussion inside the Party due to the danger that their cultural affinity with ethnic Turks could have represented for Communist Bulgaria. In 1964, Communist officials decided to initiate a mass-scale assimilation campaign through a **name-changing procedure**, which was not implemented smoothly.

LEARN TO UNLEARN

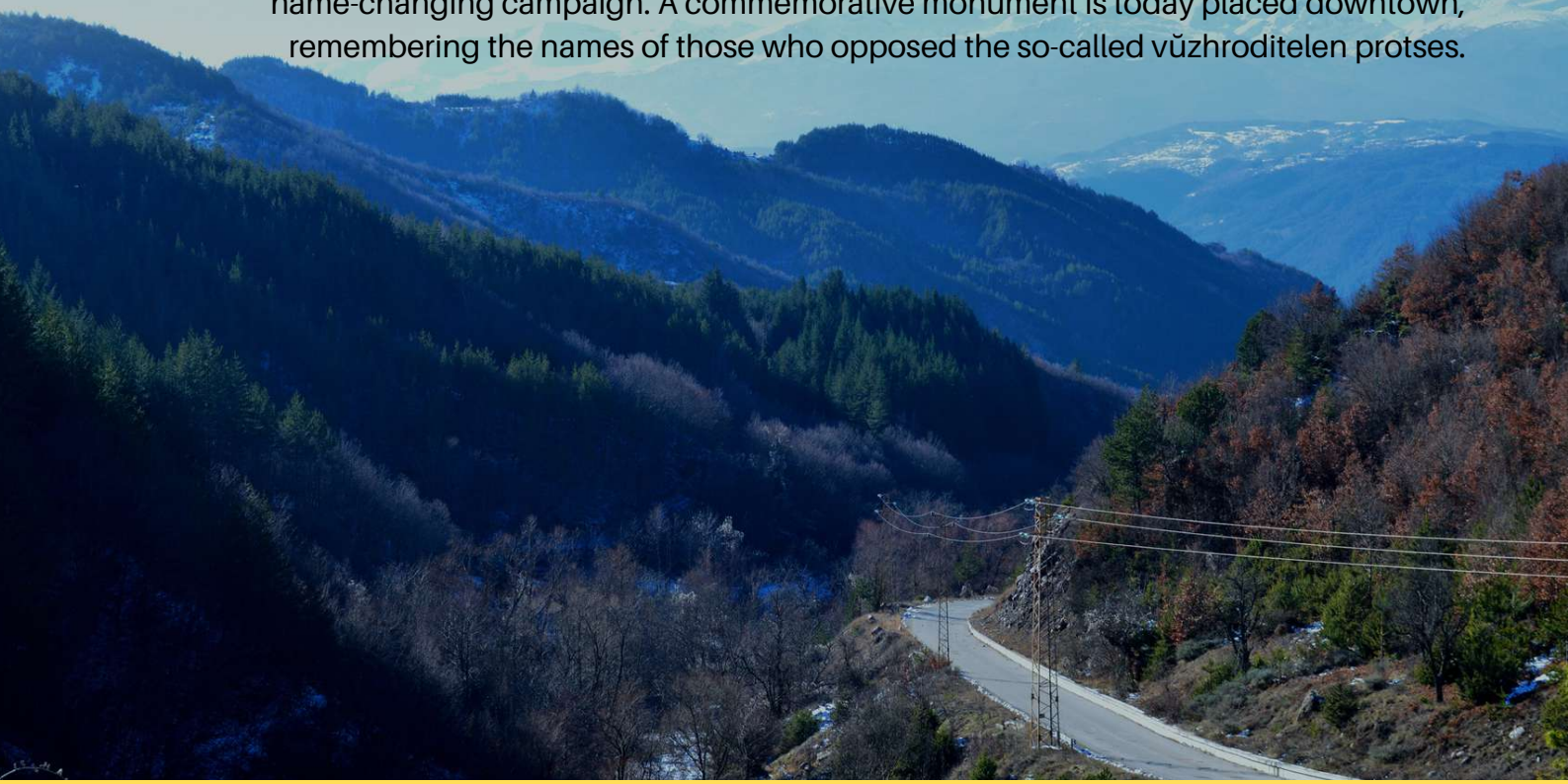
Pomaks are not ethnically Turkish, nor do they speak a Turkic language. They are a Slavic-speaking community that embraced Islam as a religious knowledge system. For this reason, Communist authorities depicted them as "**Turchophiles**." Yet the latter ascription reflected a negative attitude of Bulgarian authorities against Islam, which was associated with ethnic Turks and the former Ottoman Empire in the country.

NEXT PAGE



In 1964, the Bulgarian Academy of Science distributed to local teachers and other influential figures a list of 'acceptable Bulgarian names' to convince Pomaks to embrace their Bulgarian-ness again. When the '**Rebirth Process**' was launched on the ground, ethnic Pomaks resisted it.

Although almost all Pomaks had their original Arabic-Turkish names changed into new Bulgarian ones by 1980, outbursts and uprisings unfolded between the 1960s and the 1970s. Many Pomaks made their voices heard and stood up against Communist policies, paying a high price for their resistance. As Mary Neuburger recollected in her work, many were either interned or brutally killed, and their bodies were thrown into local rivers or mine shafts. When the Blagoevgrad Prefecture began to visit villages in South-westernmost Bulgaria to promote the name-changing campaign among locals, dissidence was already on the rise. While in the town of Brashten, many elderly Pomaks were found only disturbed by the name-changing, rumors of revolt coming from the village of Ribnovo were soon proven true. A large-scale violent protest took place. Many Pomaks took to the hills, but others patrolled the town's school and its main entrances all day long, keeping teachers under house arrest at the same time. Petar Diulgerov, the Blagoevgrad Regional Secretary of the Communist Party, described the gravity of the resistance in the mountainous region. The rebels – that was the way Pomak resistors were described – did not only take control of the local government but also fought violently with a government commission and military detachment that were sent from the town of Gotse Delchev to quell the revolt. Despite this, Pomaks were able to heavily injure police officers and disarm them, putting fezzes and turbans on their heads as a sign of disagreement with the 'Rebirth Process.' A few kilometers away, precisely in the village of Vukovar, which was back then considered one of the most Turcophile villages in the region, a similar tactic was organised to confront Communist officers. Local Pomaks resisted Diulgerov and his comrades, building a human yet impenetrable wall composed of most villagers surrounding the mayor's office, where Diulgerov and the others could not have escaped. From midnight until sunrise, many Pomaks armed themselves with hunting rifles, axes, and sticks, letting Diulgerov and other officials out of the village, yet without changing the local population's names. In March 1973, a few Pomaks were murdered in the town of Kornitsa for opposing the name-changing campaign. A commemorative monument is today placed downtown, remembering the names of those who opposed the so-called vŭzhroditelen protses.



Access to the town of Ribnovo, where Pomaks resisted the assimilation campaign

STIMULUS MATERIAL

On the right, a relatively small monument of memory erected alongside the central square of Kornitsa, a village nearby Gotse Delchev in Southwest Bulgaria. It is one of the few places of memory that recall one of the most brutal waves of the assimilation campaign against Pomaks. About 2000 horse police were thrown against the Pomak resistors rioting the central square of Kornitsa. Youssein, Moharem, Salih, and Tefik died due to the violent assault, as confirmed by the then-mayor of the village, Bayram Zul. Ismail was killed a few days later after refusing to sign a declaration to change his original name.



"Forever living in our hearts"
In Memory of Those Killed in a Time of the Assimilation Policy of the Communist regime – March 1973



.... Tomasz Kamussela, a historian of modern central and eastern Europe, argues that the Monument of the Victims of Communism in Sofia contributes to forgetting rather than remembering the political killings conducted by the Communist Party. By simply glancing at the wall, the memory of minority groups – such as Pomaks and Turks, Roma and Muslims in general - are largely underrepresented despite approximately being a third of the whole number of victims across Bulgaria. The presence of a small chapel named "Temple of All Bulgarian Martyrs" and a stone-made Christian cross posited next to the wall contribute to assimilating the memory of Muslims into an image of the mono-ethnic homogenously religious identity of the victims of Communism in Bulgaria between 1944 and 1989.

Tomasz Kamusella (2019) *Ethnic cleansing during the Cold War. The forgotten 1989 expulsion of Turks from Communist Bulgaria,* Routledge, pp. 274

READING TIPS



Monument of the Victims of the Bulgarian Communist Regime, which displays the names of about 9.000 victims

ACTIONS, EXERCISES, PRACTICES

Local Pomaks resisted Diulgerov and his comrades, building a human yet impenetrable wall composed of the great majority of villagers ...

Pomak uprisings remind us of the currently organized actions of civil disobedience, which take place through blocking roads, occupying vital public spaces, resisting a wealth of injustices, human rights violations, and police violence.

Tiana Jacout, Robin Boardman, and Liam Geary Baulch - all activists of Extinction Rebellion - speak of

SHUTTING DOWN ONE AREA IS FINE, BUT TARGETTING SEVERAL WILL CAUSE THE MOST DISRUPTION - THEREFORE, YOU HAVE TO CHOOSE YOUR AREAS FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT.

THINKING ABOUT DIFFERENT LEVELS OF **CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE** AND TRYING TO **DESIGN ACTIONS** SO THAT, WHOEVER TURNS UP, THERE ARE WAYS TO BE INCLUDED AND INVOLVED.

RECOGNISING IMPORTANT AREAS WHERE ACCESS NEEDS TO BE CLEAR AND PLAN ACCORDINGLY. **WE ARE HERE TO DISRUPT, NOT TO CAUSE HARM**

READING TIP

This is not a Drill. An Extiction Rebellion Handbook, 2019, Penguin Random House, UK.



Yordan Yovkov School in Ribnovo, where clashes between Pomaks and Party officials took place

AFTER LOOKING AT THE STIMULS MATERIAL AND READING THE TEXT

Check your history book. Does it speak of the Rebirth Campaigns and the history of Pomaks? If so, what does it say about?

Set up a discussion group to evaluate and think of the safeguard of Pomak histories, epistemologies, as well as the denial of their minority rights during Communism and in today's Bulgaria.

Test your history teacher at school, asking about the Rebirth Campaigns and the history of Pomak rebels



Referring to the history text above, focus on the issue of violence. If a broader concept of peace means a lack of violence and the presence of justice and equity and a report for human rights and the Earth, could Pomak violence be justified? If so, how?

4 FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The notion of epistemic violence could be used to describe the case of Pomak rebels. In a few words, epistemic violence is the necessary action of extricating oneself from the linkage between modernity and coloniality, and then definitely from all power that is not constituted by a free decision made by free decision. Since the Rebirth Process had nothing to share with the freedom and rights of Pomaks, whose revolts embraced a form of protection of the community's heritage on a collective and personal level, **can you draw a comparison between epistemic violence and self-defense? Can a violent action of self-evidence be justified, at an individual and collective level, as a means of protecting human rights? Do you know other forms of resistance? If so, which ones you can mention?**

During Communism, bureaucratization and centralization came to control literary and cultural life strictly. Schools, universities, unions of writers and journalists, and their public houses and reading publics were systematically silenced. Todor Zhivkov, leader of the Bulgarian Communist Party, had even stated that the backbone of Bulgarian literature is a political one. Likewise, Petko Slaveikov said that knowledge in Bulgaria was a resource of power with a view to the interests.

"Българин да се наричам,
Първа радост е за мене ..."

"To be called Bulgarian
Is a great joy for me ..."



TO KNOW MORE

These lines are taken from "Az Sum Bulgarche" (Аз съм българче) – namely, a significant poet written by Ivan Vazov. He was a Bulgarian poet, novelist, and playwright who is today still recognised as the Patriarch of Bulgarian literature. All students in Bulgaria know by hearing this poet. 1. **Does Ivan Vazov's poet highlight some education problems regarding the recognition of different identities of young students?** 2. **Should education be free from national references, significantly when potentially raising controversies over history and respect for diversity? If so, what steps can be taken to achieve this?**

Type up* Ivan Vazov *on your search engine. Start with his wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ivan_Vazov
... or alternatively: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/campus/decolonising-curriculum-how-do-i-get-started

LEVEL: ADVANCED

THE POMAK AMAZONS: ANTI-REVITALISM & GENDER PERSPECTIVES

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- Bulgarian-ness
- Rodina (Родина)
- Revitalsts (or, revitalism)
- Hodzha
- Cultural Uplifting (Културно Издигане)

If English is not your first or second language, avoid using online translations.Your language skills will improve if you use dictionaries!

CAN YOU MAP OUT THE LOCATIES MENTIONED IN THE TEXT? ?



1

WOMEN AGAINST THE STATE

Local stories of Pomak revolts against Communist policies were made available by two of the Communist persecutors and presumed scholars, respectively Peter Diulgerov and Peter Marinov. The latter was a renowned ethnographer and notorious figure, having joined the Bulgarian Communist Party in 1944 with his fellows from '**Rodina**' – a cultural movement founded in Smolyan to promote Bulgarian-ness to "misguided brothers" sisters."

LEARN TO UNLEARN

In time of Yugoslavia, distrust toward State-run campaigns was expressed by Muslim women, who refused to participate in the political life and in the public life. In Communist Bulgaria, Pomak women were at the center of active forms of civil disobedience, including some with violent actions.

CONTINUE TO THE NEXT PAGE



Central Mosque in Rudozem

However, after a few years, precisely in 1947, Marinov and his Rodina's fellows were expelled from the Bulgarian Communist Party since rumors arose regarding their collaboration with the Fascist regime in the pre-war period. Neuburger reports how Marinov nevertheless described how revolts of Pomak communities unfolded. He noted the gender dimension of the Pomak resistance in Rudozem, where Pomak women were much more active than men in standing up against the forced name-changing campaigns for newborns between the 1960s and 1970s. As Myuhtar-May wrote, in the early 1960s, in the village of Brezhnitsa, the Communist attempt of **revitalists** to force Pomak women into a new attire failed utterly. After arresting the young **hodzha** (religious teacher), Pomak women who had heard of it headed toward the jeep-load of Communist revitalists and stumbled upon an access road blocked by them. Forcing the vehicle to a stop, one of the Pomak women, Ana Dŭrvova, shattered the windshield with a bludgeon. The women collectively pulled the hodzha out of the jeep and safely escorted him home. A couple of years later, precisely between 1970 and 1974, the local resistance of Pomaks against the name-changing campaign escalated across other regions of Bulgaria. In February 1970, the spirit of this local resistance was so contagious that other small towns, such as Lŭzhnitsa, Madan, Rudozem, Dospat and Devin, and other surrounding villages in Southwestern Bulgaria, as well as in Dolno Izvorovo in Central Bulgaria on March 1972, were all influenced by. Thousands of Pomak resisters assembled for several days to contest the assimilation campaigns. In May of 1972, in the village of Yakoruda in the Western Rhodopes, a few Pomaks with freshly changed names accepted to promote the 'reacquisition' of their Bulgarian identity as volunteer brigades. The fanfare was utterly interrupted, however. Other local Pomaks began to organize blockades at the exits of the town and later headed to the main town square. There, Peter Diulgerov was holding a speech emphasizing the tragic fate that Pomaks happened to face due to the measures of Ottoman colonialists. Pomaks came to incite the locals to oppose the Communists and their subtle plans to heal the 'wounds of Turkication.' Despite the several hours of threats of bloodshed with barred doors and physical resistance, they had to give in to the pressure of local authorities.



The founders of Rodina organisation. On the front, from the left: Adil Hodgadgikov, Arif Beiski, Petar Marinov. Behind, standing, from the left: Mehmed Karahusov and Mehmed Isharliev.

2

STIMULUS MATERIAL





Above, the "Community Centre Hristo Botev" in the city of Smolyan, on the wall of which a commemorative plate remembers the date of the foundation of Rodina organisation.

On 3 March 1937, here the "Rodina" organisation was founded by patriotic Bulgarians

3

SKILLS, PRACTICES AND EXCERCESES

After reading the text "**WOMEN AGAINST THE STATE**" and looking at the **STIMULUS MATERIAL**, think of Pomak women who rebelled against the assimilation campaign, and look at the male members of Rodina.

Is there any gender perspective over nationalism in Bulgaria and the Balkans in general?



Think of how women and how they have been historically misrepresented in the history of the Balkans

Conduct a research about the role of women during Communist Bulgaria. Use visuals, such as posters, images from newspapers, propaganda items, photos from open archives, to map out how Communist regime depicted womanhood in Bulgaria. Start with the three photos below:



A Greek woman with her kids in the Bulgarian campaign "remaking memories"



A Angela Davis visiting Bulgarian female workers at the Varna port



Turkish women demanding their names back in 1989, after the forced name-changing campaign between 1984/1985

USE THESE PHOTOES FOR YOUR STUDY

> One of the significant developments of this still young twenty-first century, and one that has been growing in strength for several years, is the movement of decolonial feminisms the world over
>
> *François Vergès*

Likewise, Frantz Fanon wrote "*Let's win over the women and the rest will follow*". What actions need to be taken in (society, country, collective, city or village of your choice) to raise awareness about minority women's right?

Design and present a manifesto for action, showing different intersectional perspectives.

Keep in mind: Your action must be active – it cannot be an essay, for instance – and it must involve collective work and include cross-cultural perspectives of decolonisation.

4 QUESTIONS & IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION, DEBATES, REFLECTION

> ***... Socialism was racist from the outset ... you will always find a racist component in socialism, which has, in fact taken racism up, developed, re-implanted, and modified it in a certain respect, but it has undoubtedly not re-examined its basis or modes of working.***
>
> Michel Foucault

Too often, anti-colonial scholars and activists, refer to socialism as a cure from neoliberalism and colonialist mechanism of racialisation. **Do you agree?**

Think of Communism in Bulgaria. **Was it racist, in your opinion?**

If so, **to what extent racial discourse/practices unfolded from Communism in Bulgaria?**



Referring to the STIMULUS MATERIAL above ...

... according to Rodina's adopted statute, one of the goals was to "support all initiatives aimed at the cultural uplifting of Bulgarian Muslims [...]". In this instance, Franz Fanon's *Wretched of the Earth* can provide some food for thought. Paraphrasing the psychiatrist and political philosopher, Bulgaria's engineered form of colonialism did not claim to dehumanize Bulgarian Muslims but to humanize them. As Samara Esmeir, Britain-led colonial legal reforms in Egypt claimed to elevate Egyptians to humans' status and liberate them from the inhuman conditions prescribed by their "native" rulers, such as Islamic law, Ottoman domination, etc.

Comparing Rodina's goal to "culturally uplift Bulgarian Muslims", do you see any connection between the Pomak resistance with Fanon's critique and/or Esmeir's argumentation on colonial Egypt?

READING TIPS



Samara Esmeir (2021) *Juridical Humanity. A Colonial History*. Stanford University Press.

Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth, Penguin Classics* (republished, edition 2001)

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: BEGINNERS

Discovering Pomak Ontologies and Epistemologies

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage a group of beginners with little knowledge about Pomak communities, identities, and histories.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, ideally foreigners who have very little knowledge of Bulgaria and its diversity, as well as Bulgarian students living in the capital Sofia or outside the Rhodope region.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities

OBJECTIVES

- Familiarise with the history and identities of Pomak communities;
- Reflect critically on knowledge of Pomaks and other minority groups during socialism in Bulgaria;
- Understand and come to know the high level of diversity of Bulgaria along with a series of different ontologies and cosmologies in the Rhodope region
- Stimulate critical thinking and develop research skills through easy-to-handle pieces of minority history

MATERIAL

Internet connection, laptop, projector, flipchart posters, handouts, (online) dictionary

PREPARATION

- Make sure to review the keywords before kicking off the different activities.
- Organise activities in two sections of 45 minutes each. Make sure to have enough time to restore participants' attention for the second session.
- Divide participants into small groups in order to initiate research activities and have diverse findings to discuss as a follow-up activity.
- Prepare links for the "History Listening" and YouTube video for a group activity. For listening to the podcast, invite your group to listen to it before/after if you have less time available for the other activities.
- Be prepared to open up the discussion among the participants about the cartoon and related sensitive topics, such as nationalism, ethnicity, and religion. Throughout, make sure that none in the group will feel marginalized or discriminated against.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

If possible, organize a one-day trip to one of the different Pomak villages mentioned in this section. Ribnovo may be the best place to go during the first part of January in order to acquire a full-fledged understanding of Pomak history, traditions, and everyday customs.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: MEDIUM

DECOLONIAL ENCOUNTERS IN BULGARIA: THE POMAK REBELS

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage a group of university students with some knowledge of minority groups, ideally of Pomak communities, identities, and histories.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, ideally foreigners who have very little knowledge of Bulgaria and its diversity, as well as Bulgarian students living in the capital Sofia or outside the Rhodope region.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities

OBJECTIVES

- Familiarise with the history and identities of Pomak communities;
- Reflect critically on knowledge of Pomaks and other minority groups during socialism in Bulgaria;
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SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: ADVANCED

THE POMAK AMAZONS: ANTI-REVITALISM & GENDER PERSPECTIVES

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage an audience who is already familiar with minority issues in the Balkans and both history and legacies of socialism in the region.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, foreigners, and Bulgarians, ideally activists or practitioners already engaged in the NGO sector, youth organizations, or collectives.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities

OBJECTIVES

- Familiarise with the political history of Pomak communities;
- Reflect critically on how knowledge production of socialism came to impinge on, and mull over, Pomak groups in Bulgaria;
- Understand and come to know the high level of violence and domestic racialization against Pomaks between the 1960s and the 1970s;
- Stimulate critical thinking on epistemic violence of the socialist regime in Bulgaria and beyond;
- (Re)think of decolonial practices in the political history of Pomaks and other minority groups vis-à-vis ongoing strategies of decolonization worldwide.

MATERIAL

Internet connection, laptop, projector, flipchart posters, handouts, (online) vocabulary; Bulgarian history and literature textbook for high school students.

PREPARATION

- Make sure to review the keywords before kicking off the different activities.
- Organise activities in two sections of 45 minutes each. Make sure to have enough time to restore participants' attention for the second session.
- Divide participants into small groups in order to initiate research activities and have diverse findings to discuss as a follow-up activity.
- Make sure to have a stable internet connection in order to use Google Maps for section 2. STIMULUS MATERIAL, and access to social media platforms for section 3. SKILLS, PRACTICES, EXERCISES;
- Be prepared to open up the discussion among the participants and related sensitive topics, such as religion, literature, and history. Throughout, make sure that none in the group will feel marginalized or discriminated against.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- If you are in Sofia, visit the Monument for the Victims of Communism;
- If you are nearby Kornitsa, organize a visit to the small monument erected to commemorate the Pomak victims of March 1973. In both places, ask people what they know about these two monuments and what they mean to them and their communities;
- Alternatively, pick up a Bulgarian history and/or literature textbook. If you lead a group of foreigners, pay attention to photos and pictures chosen to illustrate historical and literature knowledge of the Bulgarian past and identity;
- If you lead a group of Bulgarians, reflect on how Bulgarian heroism and national identity convey a message of ethnonationalism and cultural homogenization at the expense to minority groups in general, and Pomaks in particular.

SECTION 3

... if retracing the chains of their distant origins almost inevitably leads back to Africa, their sojourn in the world has, by contrast, unfolded by way of displacement, circulation, and dispersion. As movement and mobility have been structuring factors of their historical experience, today they find themselves spread across the face of the Earth. And so there is no part of the world (or any region of it) that must not also account for the past of the Negros, just as there is no Negro past that ought not to inform the history of the world as a whole. Thus, Negroes constitute part of the West's past, even if their presence in this self-awareness of this West often crops up only in the mode of obsessive fear, denegation, and efficient.

Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics*, 2019: 157



BALKANS OF COLOUR

THE 'OTHER' PLAIN OF XANTHI

Natasa Chanta-Martin



To cite this section of the handbook, please consider the following:
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Speaking of Race and African Legacies in Northern Greece

Natasa Chanta-Martin

Greece of today is known for being the EU country with one of the largest refugee influx of the past decade, if not longer. Although People of Colour have existed in the country long before that, either as students or economic migrants, only recently the existence of people of African descent has been mentioned in Greece. The Hellenic Republic, as it is formally known, is considered predominantly White and Christian Orthodox. The Muslim and/or turkophone community on the north-eastern part of the country, as well as the overall Roma community living in other various regions, are acknowledged as minority populations. The former are legally named the Muslim Minority of Greece and many children of those areas attend so-called minority schools, where they are taught the Turkish language and Islamic studies. However, a small population in this geographical area, the Plain of Xanthi, is said to be and seems to be of african descent. The alternative history that we will shed light on in this case study is an attempt to present some sort of European blackness of the unknown. What kind of neocolonial attitudes towards the Balkan region can be discussed in this section? Are concepts such as racialisation, whitewashing, and religious descrimination relevant? For more information on these keywords, **take a look at The Racial State by influential scholar David Theo Goldberg (2002).**

The AfroGreek community that will be presented as a case study in this handbook is important to be mentioned as a very specific and unknown part of the minority population in Greece. Through this section we will show how:

- no country was ever homogeneous throughout history;
- that population exchange, oppression and migration practices have always been happening;
- and to potentially offer a state-run narrative of different belonging for the incoming African populations of Greece.

In no means does the above narrative imply that recent refugees from Africa must be associated with the population of this case study, since the latter, as we will see, have been living in Greece for almost 400 years. However, the afrogreek presence suggests that exploring hidden histories of a nation-state can change one's view on receiving a foreign population and support the argument that part of Greece has always been Black or of Colour. This perspective does not portray the current status of the afrogreek population as an oppressed or vicitimised group. Yet, the community in question does feel forgotten by the government, while declaring to be treated unequally and in constant need to prove its greekness. In this particular case, the manifestation of "othering" is happening through ignoring racial diversity amongst Greece's oldest inhabitants and at the same time colonially "discovering" it through the mainstream media .

Greece's simultaneous connection to the Balkan region and colonial practices

Greece is not always considered as part of the Balkan region but a large part of its mainland (Northern, Central and the Peloponnese) is considered as the southernmost part of the Balkan Peninsula which is bordered by a large number of seas (Mediterranean, Adriatic, and Black).

Historically, Greece did not participate in the colonial acts of Western and Central European countries towards Africa, nor in the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans. Yet, the practice of implementing colonial-type methods of dismissing certain segments of societies, epistemologies and their spaces of existence can be seen domestically through this almost unknown microsociety. It is a top-down practice of correcting the past and a bottom-up struggle for equal representation in one's homeland. By ignoring and hiding these histories, the project of Europeanisation finds its racist logic within Whiteness- even though Greece is geo-politically and culturally part of Mediterranean, Balkan, Middle-Eastern, and North African ways of being and ways of looking.

The contents are the responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views and opinions of Europe Lab, their donors and the NGO Forum for Glocal Change. The opinions expressed by the author are her own and do not represent the views of the institutions, organisations and entities that are professionally affiliated with the author.

How can we use history to understand the concept of 'belonging'?

To answer that question, you can seek some advice from sociologist Gurminder K. Bhambra. She claims that countries without a direct colonial past or with moments of oppressed histories act in the idea that the rest of the world was external to these world-historical processes and that colonial connections and processes were insignificant to their development. She adds that we cannot understand who we are until the imperial history that has shaped each nation is understood. For more information in an audiovisual format, listen to G.K. Bhambra's 2018 lecture



> ***If you want to be part of European enlightenment, you have to be part of European enslavement.***
> ***G.K.B.***

https://encc.eu/resources/database/cohere-final-conference-who-europe

Greece and the issue of Race

Greece is no stranger to the term 'race' as the word φυλή [pron. phee-lee] is very much used until today. A great explanation of its meaning has been put in writing by sociologist Sevasti Trubeta in (2007): Anthropological discourse and eugenics in interwar Greece. Blood and Homeland:" Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900–1940, 123-142. :

The meaning of the term 'phili' (Φυλή) has been transformed over time, from the time of its origin in Hellenic Antiquity, through to the time of the Ottoman Empire, when it was adapted to the 20th century. It was useful because it could be employed to describe large communities, potentially including aspects central to the definition of an "imagined community".
In church texts of the 18th century 'phili' was used in reference to all Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire. Later, the term was used to describe distinct religious and linguistic communities within the Empire and was enriched by national connotations.
Indicative of this transformation is the usage of the term 'philetismos' (Φυλετισμός) by the patriarch of Constantinople in reference to the Bulgarian Schism. [...] By the end of the 18th century, the term had acquired additional racial connotations. This was due to a number of reasons, including the increased collaboration between Greek and European scholars in the rising significance of race in European scientific discourse.



Traditional table cloth from the region of the Plain of Xanthi.
Photo by N.C.-M. 2022

Access the above quote via:

https://books.openedition.org/ceup/2262?lang=en

TASKS AND FOOD FOR THOUGHT

1. Try to identify where the word race is mentioned in the text below.

2. What does each sentence mentioning the word race cannotate in the text?

TO KNOW MORE

This text is from 1886 written by a significant historian about the Greek nation, C. Paparrigopoulos.

'[...] If the kingdom of Greece, from the moment it was first founded, had behaved with due foresight and dexterity towards the races which it is currently opposing, things would have been much less difficult than they are today. At that time, the Bulgarians and Albanians were not yet dreaming of autonomy, and felt an affinity towards the Hellenic nation, which, having benefited from this, could have easily appropriated those living in Epirus, Macedonia and Thrace. Besides this, Europe's main concern at the time was either to salvage the Ottoman state or to render autonomous the countries which comprised it, while now different plans are being plotted. Unfortunately, the kingdom, for fifty whole years, forgot the traditional command to use time well; and, what was worse, the first national assembly in Athens withheld any affection towards its fellow nationals and speakers of the Hellenic language, perceiving them as foreigners, and not as brothers who had suffered all manner of ills in the common struggles.

[...] Modern Hellenism is very different from ancient Hellenism. In the first place, its distinguishing features are not identical to those of its past form. The Hellenic nation today is separated from the other countries neither by its religion, nor by its institutions, nor by its way of life. Its religion is common to that of most of the Eastern peoples, while its institutions are common to most of those of the West. [...] It is understood that modern Hellenism does not demand to appropriate other races and other countries. It restricts itself to saving its fellow nationals from the threat of incursions by those of other races in countries which have belonged to Hellenism for a century. But if it is stated thus, that the Hellenic state does not covet the lands of other races, why use the term Hellenism, since, as we have often said, it is not necessary except as regards to its propagation to those of other races? Because the Greeks are still divided into those who are free and those who are not free. Hence, in its political sense, the term Hellenic nation could be limited only to the inhabitants of the free state. Because of this it was deemed necessary to express by the same term, unambiguously, the moral and spiritual unity of a politically split nation. '

Post-colonial countries are not only the ones that were colonised but also the colonisers themselves because they used colonisation to create the notion of nation-state. Their expansion and global dimension, as well as the cosmopolitan dimension today, is what legitimised the becoming of a nation-state. In order to become a European nation you have to colonise, and the non-White have always been part of your project. Therefore, Europe as we know it had never been White. Similarly with the Ottoman Empire- in order to prove that it was an empire, it had to bring enslaved people in its territory.

Like one of my Afrogreek interlocutors from Xanthi has testified, his ancestors were Greek before Greece was even conceived as a nation state. Now the story twists when Greece needs to show its cosmopolitanism as a European state by hiding its minority groups of Colour, therefore trying to convince that it is created out of Whiteness in order to seek belonging. Every population needs to feel part of their country's fabric and their diverse characteristics should be celebrated instead of hidden. The process of Othering in this case touches on exotisization, the unknown history, the "Christopher Colombus syndrome", and governmental ignoring. How many current Black students, second generation migrants of Greece, African kids of Athens and other cities would feel empowered and less foreign if their schools taught them the history of the AfroGreeks from centuries ago? How could such a historical fact, but also a present reality, raise awareness on discrimination and othering practices?

The example of the Afrogreeks of Thrace diversifies the discourse around colonization of the Black individual, as it deviates from the American context and notions of race, White gaze, appropriation, privilege, etc, while it offers a new dimension of racialized identities in relation to Eurocentric perceptions of Othering, i.e. migration flows, refugee influx, Orthodox Christianity, and more.



FUTHER READING

For more information on Greece and race, check out S. Trubeta's book:

Physical Anthropology, Race and Eugenics in Greece (1880s–1970s) a glimpse of which you can get if you visit Google Books at:

https://books.google.gr/books?id=wfqZAAAAQBAJ&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false

LEVEL: BEGINNERS

Exploring African Legacies and Ontologies in Northern Greece

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- National identity
- Turkophone and Grecophone
- Christian and Muslim
- Slavery

Empathy is an important part of understading cultural differences and diverse ontologies than yours. Keep it in mind.

1

WHICH EXACT AREAS ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

The villages of Avato/Beyköyü and Evlalo/İnanlı, which are part of the Xanthi/İskeçe Plain, belonging to the administrative region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace located in North Eastern Greece.



Could you spot the villages on the map?

WHO ARE WE TALKING ABOUT?

In the villages of Avato and Evlalo, one can find a large mix of cultures, religions, origins, nationalities, and skin colors. Among the two villages, the main ethnic groups consist of Greek Orthodox, Greek Muslim, Greek and Bulgarian Pomak, Roma, Pontic Greek, Albanian migrants, and the so-called, by the greek media, Afrogreeks or Black Greeks. The latter, which this case study focuses on, is a very rough approximate population of 1,000 people of African, possibly Sudanese descent, who are at their majority Muslim, as well as both Greek and Turkish-speaking. Historically, there are a few scenarios of the origin of this population, although very little research has been initiated regarding this specific group.

Popular Scenario:

During the Ottoman Empire, which included the ruling of the area of Thrace, Africans (specifically people from Sudan) were brought to NE Greece as workers of the higher administrative officials of the different villages.

Let us rephrase:

During the centuries of Ottoman Colonialism, which included the colonization of Thrace, people of African descent were taken to Northeast Greece as slaves of the Ottoman ***Beys*** ⁎ in the area.

⁎**Bey = the governor of a district or province in the Ottoman Empire. That is how the one village took its name: Bey köyü = the village of the Bey**

LEARN TO UNLEARN

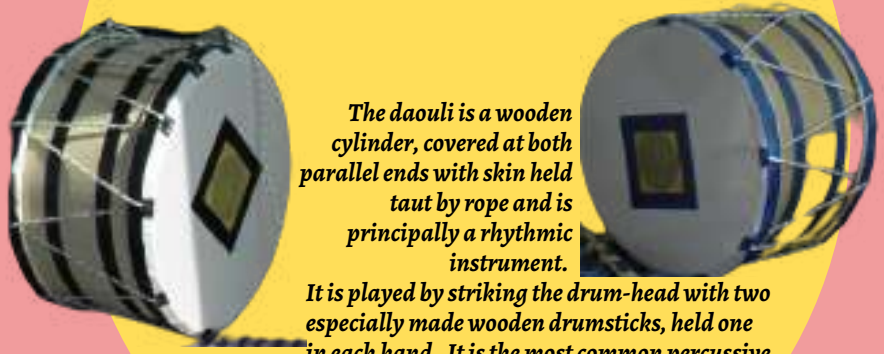
Pay close attention to the various questions and critical thoughts that come up when trying to find out more about hidden/undocumented history.

Regarding scenario of origin : What difference do you find between the two ways in which this sentence has been phrased? Which one uses more politically correct language? Which one tries to sugarcoat brutal historical facts? How would you rephrase it to give respect to the oppressed people, but also, to reveal hidden realities? Is there a difference between an imperial system and a colonial system? Discuss.

For further insights, reading about the difference between a colony and an empire might be of help: Kumar, K., 2021. Colony and empire, colonialism and imperialism: A meaningful distinction? *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, *63*(2), pp.280-309. To enrich your knowledge, even more, go to Young, R.J., 2015. *Empire, colony, postcolony*. John Wiley & Sons.

STIMULUS MATERIAL

The Evlalo Market -currently taking place every Tuesday in the central square of the village- brings to life the multiculturalism of the region where Blacks, Whites, Romas, Christians and Muslims occupy the local shops and share a cup of coffee.



The daouli is a wooden cylinder, covered at both parallel ends with skin held taut by rope and is principally a rhythmic instrument. It is played by striking the drum-head with two especially made wooden drumsticks, held one in each hand. It is the most common percussive instrument of Greece, Turkey, and the Black Sea region and was found in the Evlalo Market in July 2022.

Photo by N.C.-M.

Both mosques and churches co-exist in all villages as well as Christian and Muslim cemetaries.





Photos taken in Evlalo and Avato by N.C.-M. (2022)

Muslim women do not have much access to mosques or cemetaries. They may enter the former a few times a year for specific religious training and discussion only. During a funeral, all women gather at the deceased 's house and give their final farewell while the main later take the body for burial at the cemetary.

QUESTIONS, PRACTICES, EXERCISES



There is a need to see People of African Descent/ Black Europeans as populations not (only) with a recent migration history, but as part of Greek/European history and therefore to show how countries like Greece, without a colonial past, might be part of histories that include slavery and colonialism.

Apart from a lack of data collection on this topic, there is also a lack of knowledge of its history from the community itself. This handbook is trying to provide access to this knowledge in a simplified manner in order for active citizens to pass it on to other groups (students, civil society, NGOs etc).

An old, undated photo off harmonious living in Avato, generously offered from the community's historical archive.

SET UP A RESEARCH GROUP

Look into a/your country's historical paths, try to seek hidden identities. Do these happen to be of People of Colour? Discuss.

Does the country you live in/are from have some sort of African history? Remember, no region has ever been homogeneous. Cultures and continents always found a way to interact, sometimes revealing brutal histories of the past.

JUST BELOW, CHECK OUT ANOTHER READING TIP

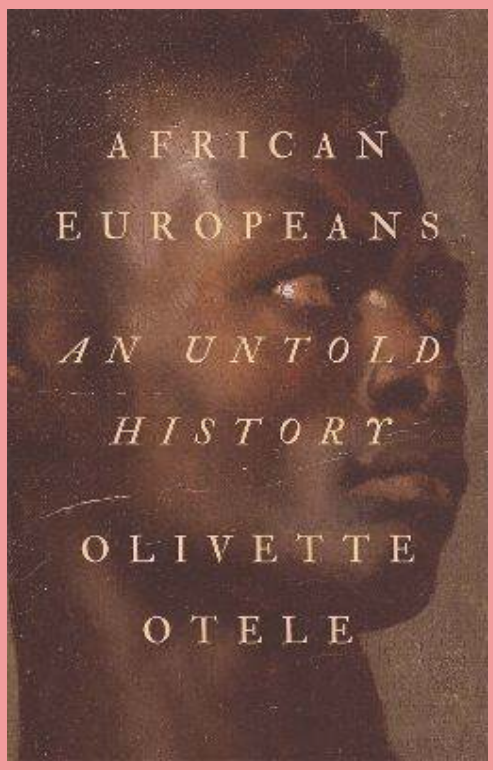
Still too difficult to grasp?

Look at the following activities below for a better understanding



ANOTHER READING TIP

In case you need a place to start from, consider reading:
Otele, O., 2021. African Europeans: An Untold History. Basic Books



Olivette Otele PhD, FRHistS *is a Professor of History of Slavery and Memory of enslavement at the University of Bristol. She is a Fellow and a Vice President of the Royal Historical Society. Professor Otele holds a PhD in History from Université Paris, La Sorbonne, France. Her area of research is colonial and post-colonial History and the histories of people of African descent.*

Professor Otele has been the recipient of several national and international research grants (AHRC, European Commission-RISE, Canadian-SSHRC). She is also a regular contributor to the press, television and radio programmes (BBC, Sky News, Guardian, Sunday Times, Elle Magazine, HuffingtonPost, New Yorker, etc).

Her latest books include a monograph, African European: an untold History (Hurst, 2020) and an edited volume, Post-Conflict Memorialization: Missing Memorials, Absent Bodies (Palgrave-MacMillan, 2020)

LEVEL: MEDIUM

DECOLONIAL ENCOUNTERS IN GREECE: THE GREEK CITIZENS OF MUSLIM RELIGION AND AFRICAN DESCENT

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- National identity
- Media discourse
- Critical Discourse Analysis
- The "discovery" syndrome

If English is not your first or second language, avoid using online translations.Your language skills will improve if you use dictionaries!

To Think:

Where do you get your information from?

What is the main source of information that monopolises the way citizens are being informed about current affairs in your city?

Why? Discuss.

1

HOW DID AFROGREEKS OR BLACK GREEKS OF THRACE GET THESE NAMES?

AfroGreeks became well-known a few years ago (app. 2014) when mainstream online media and a few newspapers "shed light" on this population as their own discovery. Few of the writings were in support and in acceptance of diversity in Greek populations, however most sources portray a more exotisising and Othering view. By analysing the words and expressions that have been chosen to describe a certain group of people, the reader can establish a more critical view towards mainstream media and be more aware on the political implications behind a source's media exposure.

LEARN TO UNLEARN

Media discourse is the action of oral or written interactions about a third party in the absence of that third party. The words, descriptions and expressions used to explain and analyze a matter that concerns a specific topic, person, or group are used on a public platform, most likely the media, such as newspapers, radio, television, online sources and social media. The overall, summary, or most commonly heard or read sources of "what is being said" about a topic becomes the discourse.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is theory of critically and sceptically thinking about a topic when seen on the (media) discourse, as it is conscious of the relationship between the micro (the words that are used and the information that is shared in a document) and the macro (the current sociopolitical context that this information is found in) reasons a reader or a listener has access to specific information. CDA is an interdisciplinary approach that incorporates gender and queer theory, race theory, postcolonial theory and more.

To Think:

Next time you read a newspaper article, question:
what is being left in for you to know and what is being left out?
Who is the writer writing for?
Who is the assigned reader?
Would the writer write differently if the reading audience were from a different social class/race/gender etc?
Why? Discuss.

One of the articles in 2014 uses these sentences:
[african characteristics with a pronunciation from Thrace] would alienate any passerby
[...] far away from the world's eyes
[...] they are slaves of the unknown.
[...] exotic look
[...] they do not know where they came from and when
[...] the mystery behind their presence in Avato
[...] the only connection to Sudan is the afro hair and the big lips.

Another article in 2018 makes the following statements:
...Some of them have integrated, like Giannis Antentokoumpo.
...the use of the word Black is just being used here to determine skin colour and no other racist characteristic.
...AfroGreeks (like AfroAmericans) living here for centuries...

The view from the main road that leaves the Rhodope mountain range, goes past the city of Xanthi and arrives at the plain with sunflowers and corn meadows.
Photo by N.C.-M. (2022)


Αφροέλληνες: Οι μαύροι Έλληνες της Θράκης!

Πώς βρέθηκαν στην Ελλάδα; - Σε ποιο χωριό ζουν; - Τι λένε οι ίδιοι για την καταγωγή και τις συνθήκες διαβίωσής τους;

Theme Insights

Title:
AfroGreeks: The black Greeks of Thrace!

How did they appear in Greece?
In which villages do they live?
What do they say about their origin and their conditions of living?


news 24 7

ΠΟΛΙΤΙΚΗ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΙΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΣ ΚΟΣΜΟΣ 20/20 VIDEOS

Στο Άβατο των μαύρων Ελλήνων της Θράκης: Οι απόγονοι των σκλάβων

Άβατο
Avat

Έλληνες με αφρικανικά χαρακτηριστικά και θρακιώτικη προφορά. Συνδυασμός που ξενίζει όποιον τυχαία περάσει από το Άβατο, λίγα χιλιόμετρα έξω από την Ξάνθη

Title:
At Avato of the black Greeks of Thrace:
The descendants of slaves.

OTHER MEDIA REFERENCES:

- *AVATON: The "Black" Greeks of Thrace*
- *The most beautiful and special: The small village of Thrace where exclusively black Greeks live- A special community that deserves everyone's attention. They do not know when they arrived and from where…*
- *Avaton: The small village of Thrace where exclusively black Greeks live (pics)- Even though in the past decade it seems like there has been a larger blend with the Caucasian of the area.*
- *Afrogreeks: The…"Black" Greeks at Avato and other villages of Topiron and Avdiron regions and their... "history".*
- *African-Greeks. Slave descendants in Greece. The minority of the minority!*


ΔΗΜΟΣ ΠΟΓΩΝΙΩΝ
ΠΑΙΔΙΚΟΣ
ΣΤΑΘΜΟΣ
ΑΒΑΤΟΥ

Try to evaluate the wordings of these articles from these two pages.
Which do you think use acceptable language?
What alternative words or expressions would you use to better display this information?
What effect does choice of words have on how Others are perceived in the media?
Discuss.

THINKING TIPS

Sign of a kindergarten entitled: Kindergarten of Avato, located on the main road of the village. Photo by N.C.-M.

QUOTES FROM THE FIELD

”

Hey, Black man, bring me a chair to sit !
(non-Black customer to a Black waiter at Evlalo cafeteria)

”

In my youth, I had fallen in love with a White woman, I was ready to marry her, but her family did not approve due to the fact that I was Black.
(Mr. Mohamed, Avato resident)

How to position oneself in a racialised terrain

KEEP YOUR EYES AND EARS OPEN, EVERY LITTLE DETAIL IS IMPORTANT AND CAN OFFER YOU GREAT INSIGHTS FOR EVERYDAY LIFE CONVERSATION STARTERS

LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR INTERLOCUTROS HAVE TO SAY, ECHOE THEIR NEEDS, EMPATHISE WITH THEIR STORIES.

BEWARE OF YOUR BALANCE BETWEEN **PARTICIPATION AND OBSERVATION**. IF YOU GET TOO PASSIONATE ABOUT THE FIELD, YOU MIGHT GIVE THE WRONG IMPRESSION (THE PATRONISING OUTSIDER)

Wong, D. A. (2008). *Shadows in the field: New perspectives for fieldwork in ethnomusicology*. Oxford University Press.



The quiet, central part of fieldwork when everyone has left. Center of Avato/Beyköyü (2022)

AFTER LOOKING AT THE STIMULS MATERIAL AND READING THE TEXT

Set up a discussion group to evaluate and think of the safeguarding of Afrogreek histories, epistemologies, as well as ways to bridge human connection.

Go through your books at home, at school, your local library, or your university. Is there any material that can inform you about communities of Colour in Greece?

Test your history teacher at school or university. Have they heard about the Afrogreeks of Thrace? Was it through the media, oral tradition, bibliography?

4 AN EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE

All the above do not imply that you or your institution should definitely know about the community in question, however, the topic does become a conversation starter on the earliest african history of Greece, as we know it as a nation-state today.

The villages of Avato and Evlalo have become quite a research destination since the Afrogreek community was portrayed on mainstream media in 2014. Various reporters, researchers, and artists have passed by the areas to seek Afrogreeks, have a chat with them, or possibly an interview.

An interesting approach was made by filmmaker Menelaos Karamaghiolis, who was accompanied by Nikos Kabasele, a Greek-Congolese fine artist who had never imagined before that people with his skin color existed in Northern Greece for so many centuries. Menelaos and Nikos's approach was unique: they approached the people of the villages in a very friendly manner and kindly asked if Nikos could draw their portrait. This ice-breaker immediately fostered space for discussion on facial characteristis, skin colour, and later on, generated talks and interviews on natioanal identity and a general sense of belonging. This genuine approach can be qualified as a best practice of using a non--verbal tool to connect with people (drawing) and be accompanied by an extended member of the community with a common trait (african descendence).



On the way to an Afrogreek burial. Photo by N.C.-M. (2022)

Watch the best practice video HERE.

This video is part of the ongoing collective project 'TheAfroGreeks' on african presence in Greece through the lense of the youth who are born and raised in Greece. For more information on the project just go on to Instagram and type : #theAfrogreeks !

LEVEL: ADVANCED

TWO AVATOS:
THE NEW AND THE OLD, THE WEST AND THE REST

Some of the critical issues and keywords that the text below includes:

- Greek-ness
- The Bey Village (Beyköyü)
- Refugees
- Hodzha
- Cultural heritage

If English is not your first or second language, avoid using online translations.Your language skills will improve if you use dictionaries!

Can you locate the areas we are discussing in this case study?



LEARN TO UNLEARN

The meaning of the word Avato is Unpassable. It was given that name because the New Avato used to be a large, wild forest with a swamp right off the Nestos river. When Greek Christian refugees from Eastern Thrace (Kestritsa, Hariupoli, Saranta Ekklisies) fled the Ottomans in approx.1920, they started building the area from scratch. In the beginning of their arrival, they were received, welcomed, and hosted by the Afrogreeks and other Muslims of the area known as Beyköyü because the Beys used to own the land. When the forest transformed into a living village, the Unpassable place kept its name and included Beyköyü as well.

1

THE DIVIDE

From the outside and from formal administrative perspective, it seems like Avato is one village, like as we discussed above, with a rich mix and peaceful coexistence of cultures, religions, and ethnicities. However, if one visits the village, they will immediately be encoutered with a separation between Avato and Beyköyü or New Avato and Old Avato. The one is Christian and mostly White, where the other is Muslim and also Black.



The Nestos River of Bulgaria and Greece. Its delta is located between Xanthi and Kavala, near Avato.

Notes from the Field:

Presently, as I witnessed it with my own eyes, the New Avato has a very welcoming center which I reached on the main road as I entered the village: I saw the medium-sized square with a playground in its middle. Right behind I could see the church and the primary school called Primary School of Avato. Across the square, I found a bank, a community center, a mini market, and the Cultural Center of Avato. Inside the center, there is an adequate display of old systems of weaving, wheat grinding, sifting, and more. The cultural association has managed to safeguard older traditional dance costumes, photos on the walls, informative historical maps, and many musical instruments. Some board members welcomed me and gave me a tour at once, they were very hospitable. As soon as I arrived, they asked me 'What is the occasion of your visit?'. I replied 'I came to learn about the history of the place' and immediately a woman clarified 'Are you here to see the Blacks?', I said 'Well, them too.'. The woman's husband added that I would need to walk down the vertical street to find them but to beware of the stray dogs while I am walking to Old Avato. The next day, as I entered Old Avato, I came across a bus stop, a small refreshments shop, a mosque, and a large tree with a bench. Next to the shop, I noticed a much smaller school, the Minority Primary School of Avato. I was welcomed by people who were sitting under the tree and was told that not many children go to this school anymore because they rather go further away to schools that teach Greek more intensively. Just a few minutes after my arrival, it was time for the first prayer of the evening. By clicking on the recording, you will hear:

Allahu Ekber	*God is Great*
Eşhedû en lâ ilâhe illallah	*There is no god but God*
Eşhedû enne Muhammeden resulullah	*Muhammed is the Prophet of God*
Hayya ale-salah	*Come to prayer*
Hayya alel-felah	*Come to salvation*
Allahu Ekber	*God is Great*
Lâ ilahe illallah	*There is no god but God*

Transliteration and translation were found via turkeytravelplanner.com



One of the oldest photos of the Old Avato with many faces unidentified. Courtesy of the residents' photographic archive.

2

STIMULUS MATERIAL



Above, the aforementioned cultural center located in New Avato.
On its balkony you can see the greek flag and near the entrance a small, miniature Christian Orthodox church.

The official name is Center for the Cultural Heritage of Avato. As an informal community group it was founded in the 50s and it became a legal entity in the 90s.

3

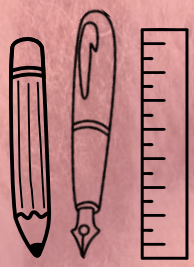
SKILLS, PRACTICES AND EXCERCESES

After reading about the two Avatos and looking at the **STIMULUS MATERIAL**, think of Greek citizens of african descent as an indigenous group.

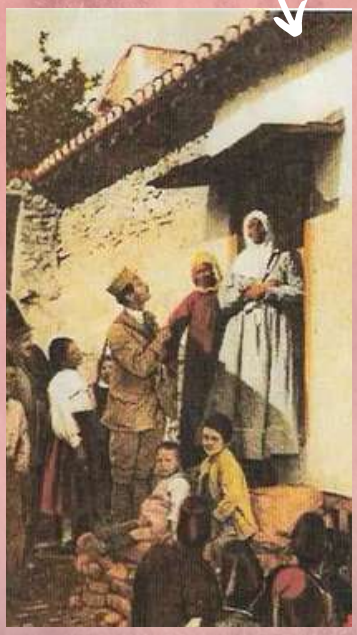
Can you identify elements of colonialism, europeanisaiton, christianisation, whitewashing, even in its slightest form? Is it systemic/institutional or societal ? Are there signs or racist intentions behind the actions or maybe ethnocentrism, possibly ignorance?

TOO DIFFICULT?

Initiate a small research project of the African history of Greece. Use visuals, such as posters, images from newspapers, propaganda items, photos from open archives, to map out different timelines/eras and its interaction with Greek populations.



THE FOLLOWING MATERIAL MIGHT HELP:



Ev. Hekimoglu writes: 'Negro residents of Thessaloniki who were registered of turkish ethnicity during the demographics.'



Afro-Greek history and culture video all the way from the Minoans to the present day that even mentions how ancient Greeks refered to all Africans as 'Ethiopians' and the word Ethiopia comes from the Greek words for 'burnt face'.



Documentation of some of the Afrogreeks of Avato from a greek reporting channel (2016)

For further information and stories on broken roots, take a look at *Ngugi wa Thiong'o's Decolonising the Mind*
https://www.uibk.ac.at/anglistik/staff/davis/decolonising-the-mind.pdf

> *Just because a community might have 'broken roots' (to use Ngugi wa Thiong'o's phrase) does not mean that they lack the opinion of self-identification.*

How can anthropological fieldwork help us decolonise the way we look and write about people?

What ethnographic methodological tools can one use in order to better understand a heterogeneous population to their own ?

Search for different ways of interviewing, different ways of documenting and different ways of analysing .

Do your best for your in-depth research to empower the community in question in the near and far future, offer a platform for advocacy and representation and create allies across geographical boundaries ?

The radical absence of the 'other' not only postulates an atomistic image of social existence in general; that is, it denies the idea of the social totality. As European colonial practice was to show, the paradigm also made it possible to omit every reference to any other 'subject' outside the European context, i.e., to make invisible the colonial order as totality, at the same moment as the very idea of Europe was establishing itself precisely in relation to the rest of the world being colonized.

Anıbal Quijano



QUESTIONS & IDEAS FOR DISCUSSION, DEBATES, REFLECTION

How would the acknowledgement of the existence of the AfroGreek population help current incoming African migrant and refugee populations feel less of an outsider or an intruder ?

See coloniality as a trace after the colonial project, i.e. the educational system that remains. How could the history books in greek schools try to be more inclusive of Greece's full history?

There always needs to be a story to convince one to be an advocate of decoloniality. Certain narratives are being funded from states, what do you think about the case of the history of African Greece?

More quotes from the Black residents of Avaton:

If I come out and tell them that I am a descendant of Democritus, they will freak out...

Our grandparents were brothers. After that I do not know where it (history) goes…

Something that is not cleansed with soap, can be cleansed over generations…

An Ottoman bey, took my grandfather to work in his fields…

My motherland will always be Greece…

Xanthi is our country…

Even though I give them ID, some police do not believe I am Greek.

In other countries people are excited to know that I am Greek. In my country, I never received this joy.

Do not forget:

The AfroGreeks or African Greeks or Black Greeks of Avato and Evlalo were given this title from online and offline media outlets such as newspapers, television shows and documentary type interviews. These labelling names do not represent the community and their self-identification.

READING TIPS

Karakasidou, A. N. (2009). Fields of wheat, hills of blood. University of Chicago Press.

Tools for Citizens (2017) civilsocietytoolbox.org

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: BEGINNERS

DISCOVERING AFROEUROPEAN HISTORIOGRAPHIES

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage a group of beginners with little knowledge about Afroeuropean communities, identities, and histories.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, ideally students of junior high or high school either from the same country or various.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities

OBJECTIVES

- Familiarise with the history and identities of Africans around Europe
- Reflect critically on knowledge of the existence of African histories in each participant's country
- Understand and come to know the high level of diversity of each participant's country along with a series of different ontologies and cosmologies in from a historical aspect
- Stimulate critical thinking and develop research skills through easy-to-handle pieces of minority history, such as: People of Color in European Art History (https://medievalpoc.tumblr.com)

MATERIAL

Internet connection, laptop, projector, flipchart posters, handouts

PREPARATION

- Make sure to review the Greek case study before kicking off the different activities.
- Organise activities in two 45 minute sessions : first half is for research and second half is for each group to present in plenary.
- Divide participants into small groups of the same (imaginary or not) country in order to initiate research activities and have diverse findings to discuss as a follow-up activity.
- Prepare links in advance for the activity.
- Be prepared to open up the discussion among the participants about sensitive topics, such as nationalism, ethnicity, and religion. Throughout, make sure that none in the group will feel marginalized or discriminated against.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

If possible, organize a one-day trip to one of the areas that you might be close to based on the research/country results mentioned in this section. For example, if you are having your session in Marseille, France, pay a visit to Musée des Beaux-Arts where one can find Blacks depicted in the Baptism of the Eunuch .

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: MEDIUM

DECODING COLONIAL LEGACIES

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage an audience who is already familiar with minority issues on Black/African populations in Greece and Europe and both history and legacies of colonialism in the region and beyond.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, foreigners and locals, ideally university students, activists or practitioners already engaged in the NGO/CSO sector, youth organizations, or collectives.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities

OBJECTIVES

- Understand and come to know the difference between Historical Colonies vs. Coloniality as a trace after the colonial project
- Stimulate critical thinking on colonial traces in educational systems, citizenship issues, emigration flows of locals
- (Re)think of decolonial practices in the political history of Greece and its minority groups vis-à-vis ongoing strategies of decolonization worldwide.

MATERIAL

Internet connection, laptop, projector, flipchart posters, handouts, world map

PREPARATION

- Make sure to review the Greek case study before kicking off the different activities.
- Organise activities in two sections of 45 minutes each. Make sure to have enough time to restore participants' attention for the second session.
- Divide participants into small groups in order to initiate critical thinking on the above bullet points and have diverse findings to discuss as a second half.
- Make sure to have a stable internet connection in order to use Google Maps or Google Earth.
- Be prepared to open up the discussion among the participants and related sensitive topics, such as religion, literature, and history. Throughout, make sure that none in the group will feel marginalized or discriminated against.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- If you are in Greece, visit the northern part, specifically Macedonia and Thrace;
- Try to engage with people on what they know about their region and if they can recall an African history of the area, either old or new.
- If you lead a group of Greeks, reflect on how much or how little the public school system raises the issues of African histories and legacies of colonialism either on a local or global level, national identity, ethnonationalism or ethnocentrism, and cultural homogenization at the expense to minority groups in general, and AfroGreeks in particular.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TRAINERS AND EDUCATORS

LEVEL: ADVANCED

DECOLONISING METHODOLOGIES

COMPLEXITY

This section is meant to engage an audience of people with an advanced level of knowledge about minority groups, colonialism, and post-/de-colonial perspectives.

GROUP SIZE & TYPE

8-15 participants, foreigners and/or locals, ideally MA or Ph.D. students from social sciences or humanities, professionals who have worked as researchers, journalists, or educators in the Balkans or South Eastern Europe and beyond.

TIME

90 minutes or 2 hours in case of the need to wrap up and/or set a follow-up activities

OBJECTIVES

- Reflect critically on how scholars and activists often refer to decolonial methodologies "as a cure" against patriarchy, colonialization, and racialization;
- Understand decolonial best practices on a transnational level;
- Stimulate critical thinking on knowledge production and intellectual property
- Juxtapose decolonial practices worldwide with decolonial practices in the Balkans
- Identify healthy and meaningful ways to raise visibility about a minority group.

MATERIAL

Internet connection, laptop, projector, flipchart posters, handouts.
Read Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples by Linda Tuhiwai Smith

PREPARATION

- Make sure to feel comfortable with all the above exercises and levels.
- Organise activities in two sections of 45 minutes each.
- Divide participants into small groups in order to initiate in depth research and have diverse findings to discuss as a follow-up activity.
- Discuss Linda Tuhiwai Smith's quote: "when indigenous peoples become the researchers and not merely the researched, the activity of research is transformed."
- Be open to critical perspectives from the participants, especially in relation to most-debated issues of colonisation, knowledge production and race. Throughout, make sure that everyone in the group feels heard.

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- If this activity is taking part in an academic institution, bring in the marginalised people you are focusing on as experts where they are compensated for sharing their knowledge
- Open this visiting session or all students so they can get extra study credits
- Refer to the book above in order to stimulate further the discussion and research activism among the audience
- Arrange a follow-up meeting by cross-referencing all the knowledge produced so far by inviting more community members as consultants in your institution/university.

TAKE YOUR NOTES HERE ...

