

Folklore bridge

Means of living, customs, traditions of the life in Czech

Collection

The set of collections „Folklore bridge“ is elaborated in pursuance of the project **„Folklore Bridge“ within the European Territorial Cooperation Programme Greece - Bulgaria 2007 – 2013.**

The leading partner for the project implementation is Municipality of Satovcha and the other partners are Municipality Kato Nevrokopi, Greece and Community Centre Prosveta 1937, Pletena village, Municipality of Satovcha. The main project goal is to contribute for the long-term preservation of the specific cultural heritage of the cross-border region of the Mesta river valley. Preservation and popularization of the local traditions through common cultural and social events creates new image of the cross-border region, which undoubtedly increases the interest of the visitors of the cross-border region and contributes to the improvement of the quality of living of the local people.

The project activities contribute to, although partially and in a limited format, the documenting of the cultural heritage in the region. The region is known for the well-preserved unique culture, including folklore, way of living, traditions, local food and other cultural elements. This project not only aims to activate partnerships between communities on both sides of the border but also to rising the proud of the local residents by presenting the unique cultural heritage. The ultimate project goals is to put the foundations of a **cross-border school for the cultural traditions. It will operate within the Community Centre Prosveta 1937, Pletena village**, which will attract in future interest and resources for studies and for gradual overall revealing and documenting of the cultural heritage of that cross-border region. The school will develop further as one of the forms of activity of the community centre.

Surveys and expeditions were carried out in the region with the participation of local historians and historians from the Municipality of Satovcha, students from the municipal high schools and a group of teachers and students from the National High School for Ancient Languages and Culture St. Konstantin Kiril Filosof, Sofia and a culture expert from Greece.

Each collection in the set focuses on one particular theme:

- The nature and the people of Checha;
- Veda Slovena - a magic testament;
- Means of living, customs, traditions of life;
- The songs and the dances of Checha;
- The stone fountains of Checha.

It was very difficult to allocate the information and the materials between the five collections. The reason is that in the real life these are different aspects of the same thing - everyday life, culture, way of living of the people from that area. As the personality of everyone has its integrity and it is impossible to separate an individual's temper from the knowledge of that person or the way such person communicates, it is also impossible to separate the song from the dance, from the customs, the costumes, the nature and the everyday life and the history of the people from that area. Therefore the separation into five collections is only conditional.

These collections do not claim to be scientific work and to be exhaustive or ultimate. They provide only **the modest but successful attempt to involve the people from the project region in the process of studying and preserving the cultural heritage in order to reveal and preserve the identity of the local community with its traditions and overall**

cultural history. This attempt is only one of the ways to ensure the merited and the peaceful future in the cross-border region between Greece and Bulgaria as two European Union Member States. The collections aim to document a successful attempt for practical application of the European values for cultural diversity and identity of the communities not only as content but also as an approach for involvement of the local people for the preservation of the cultural heritage.

In the cross-border region of Mesta River valley live people with common roots, with their common specific cultural identity, which has its specificity from both sides of the border and thus in the course of years it has become richer and more various.

The merit of this project is that it is connected with the fact the local historian and students from the high school were not just involved by external experts in the collection of information. They were the actual implementers of the whole project and the external experts in the face of teachers and students from the National High School for Ancient Languages and Culture were their consultants. This approach is more complex and demands more efforts and time instead of a group of experts from a scientific institute doing all. However we are convinced that this approach gives the real meaning of the efforts because the preservation and the communication of the cultural heritage is necessary most of all for the life of those who carry it in themselves.

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The territorial scope of the expeditions is the geographic area Chech, but the specific interviews and records have been made in the settlements of the Municipality of Satovcha for Bulgaria and Kato Nevrokopi for Greece.

The set of collections is created to be **used in the next years by the project partners in their intention to continue organizing different schools for young people, for scientists and researchers**, who will explore and preserve the cultural heritage of the region. Information in the collections has the only purpose to serve as a reference point for deeper and long-term studies depending on the interests of the researchers.

In addition to the information from the carried out expedition in the summer of 2012, they are based on a series of studies made so far by academic institutes, universities and by different researchers.

These collections are intended to got to teachers, community workers, public leaders and educators from the project region, **so that the information in them is brought to the knowledge of the people who live in the region, especially the young people from the region.** They should obtain information about the cultural heritage of their kin and settlements so that they are proud and calm and with the spirits of deserving citizens of the diverse Europe.

From the authors

Way of living in the remote past

Baadin Musov

Local historian, teacher of history in Valkosel

Vasil Kanchov is a Bulgarian scientist, geographer, historian and politician. He is an author of many geographical research works, including about our land. In his first volume "Selected works" he gives data about the life and the means of living of the population from Nevrokopi kaasa (district), including for Valkoseltsi. Its population of 800 persons earns its living by stock-breeding and bee-keeping. In second place is agriculture and weaving. Hunting is also well developed. Rye, barley and oats are grown in the valleys and wheat in the lower lands. As there is shortage of food, they go and buy it from Dramsko or Sechensko. Bee-keeping in these lands is very developed, there are many beehives in every village. Honey is used instead of sugar. Beeswax is distributed to Seresko and Dramsko and is one of the main source of income for the population, Homespuns and mantles, which are distributed by merchants from Dolen / Dolen village/. Some people earn their living from the forest, which provided good means of living for the villages Zhizhevo, Kochan, Marulevo, etc. People from Debren village and Marulevo /Vaklinovo/ village made combs from horn and distributed them far away. The population of Valkosel, together with the population from Chech, carried on intensive trade with the Mediterranean region, the Dospat River valley; they travelled a lot along the busy roads to the sea.

In his first book Macedonia, Vasil Kanchov described our land in the first half of the fourteenth century. In 1348, devastating diseases raged in this region - the Black Death /cholera/, which to a great extent depopulated these area or the population forcibly moved from one place to another. Valkosel is also in the region, affected by the Black Death. The elderly people still keep memories for people who die from Black Death in a mass. The dead were so many that the alive could hardly bury them. The disease spread out so fast that the only rescue was to escape. Therefore a group of several households left Valkosel village to the west and settled 5 km away in Skaletto area, where they established a new settlement, which they called Bobolin, and according to V. Kanchov - Bogolin. May of the old people from Bogolin village still claim that their root is in Valkosel.

In the same book on page 194 Kanchov wrote: "For the Nevrokopski kaasa we had only the official data from the *salname* /Turkish register/ for 1413. For the population:

- Valkosel - 800 persons;
- Tuhovishte - 500 persons;
- Godeshevo - 650 persons;
- Kribul - 250 persons;
- Slashten - 700 persons;
- Bogolin - 63 persons;

Stock-breeding

Baadin Musov

Local historian, teacher of history in Valkosel

As a second sector after plant-growing comes the stock-breeding. Sheep and goats are mainly raised and to a less extent cattle - cows and oxen. Sheep and goats are in the field in premises named kashlak, which are П-shaped and have a hut connected with the kashlak. The kashlak was covered with straw and the hut with tikli (stone slabs).

NAMES /TERMS/

Pishtyalka (tin whistle) – the shepherd's musical instrument.

Korkumach – Sheep's milk is boiled with salt by stirring it all the time to prevent burning. When it is thickened, it is consumed with bread /crumbled/.

Pishtimal from fur – It is woven from fur with size 50 cm h 2 m. Shepherds carry it on their shoulders because it is not easily soaked with water and keeps warm. It is processed on water fulling mill.

Katrach– Curved thick stick with a hook, which is fixed in the ground in angular positions and holds the vessel in which the korkumach is boiled.

Arkuma – a copper vessel, which is used for cooking, milking, carrying water, etc.

Koritnitsa – soft food for sheep is put there.

Kutel – Wooden multi-purpose vessel.

Karmila – a place, where sheep are fed - salt and meal is given.

Stock-breeding is a very important sector by which the population in this area earns its living. It is used for meat, wool, milk and different dairy products - butter, cheese, etc.

The method of extraction of butter from the milk is very interesting. It is made in several ways by stirring in different vessels. The tool which is most often used is butilo – narrow and high wooden vessel with chirilka /stirrer/ with a wooden ring stuck on its end. When milk is more, it is stirred in a barrel in two ways. One way is by pouring the milk in the barrel and beating in by chirilka (a little bit larger than the one of the butilo and at the wooden ring at its end there are two holes/ at an angle. The other way is by handing this chirilka on a long rod /resilient and flexible/, it is fixed like on a scale and the children climb on the other side of the rod and start swinging. Thus the play is combined with stirring the milk.

The products of all that activities are butter and barkanitsa /buttermilk/. Butter is stored longer in wooden kegs or myahs (a kind of bag) made of goat's skin or lambskin.

Harvest

Baadin Musov

Local historian, teacher of history in Valkosel

The growing of grain crops is also very important for the population of Valkosel village - wheat, maize, rye, oats, etc. The most popular were wheat and maize. These crops are not very labour-intensive but the income per decare is too low. That's why harvest-time was eagerly waited for. When wheat became ripe, harvest started. People very often helped each other to prevent the grain from falling off. Harvesters reaped the field in posti - /2-3 m wide lines/. The reaped ears were put on the ground in rukoyka (a small sheaf). Reaping was made with a reaping-hook and a swaphook. The swaphook plays a double role - the harvester catches more ears and protects his hand from cutting. The swaphook is made of wood - wooden glove. The rukoyki are picked (usually by men) and are made in sheaves, which are tied with a special varzovachka (a tool for tying) - about 50 cm wooden tool, with diameter 3-4 cm and sharp at the end, with a ball on the edge. The ropes are made of rye /long/ soaked preliminary in water so that they were not torn upon tying. Sheaves are arranged in dokurdzhumi (stacks) by 9 sheaves in each. Grain faces the centre so that it is protected from rain and animals until carted. At harvest time, harvesting songs were sung.

Wheat is threshed on varshilo (threshing site), which is preliminary prepared - covered with coarse stone slabs /tikli/ with a sound wooden stake in the middle. A donkey, a horse or an ox is tied to this stake by a rope and the rope starts winding around the stake. When the whole rope is wound, the animal turns to the opposite direction. Thus it crumbles the grain with its hooves. Straw is separated from the grain and then starts winnowing - to separate grain from chaff. Grain is weighed by panitsa and shinik - 2 shiniks are equal to 1 panitsa (1 shinik = a quarter of a bushel).

The crafts in Valkosel

Baadin Musov

Local historian, teacher of history in Valkosel

Along with agriculture, craftsmanship is also well developed in Valkosel. They used to make by themselves almost all the things that they used - clothes, shoes, household goods.

They activities included the following:

1. Spinning of wool, cotton, hemp and fur - it was made on a spinning-wheel.
 2. Weaving wool and cotton fabrics - weaving was made on a loom (wooden) and every house had it. Wool and cotton of their own production is woven, fur from goats, cotton - goat's hair rug. After being picked from the field, cotton is processed with a tool named MANGAN. When cotton passes through the mangan, its seeds - small hooks are removed. Then it is carded by STAVASTAR - a special bow with a string from an animal tendon.
 3. Production of shoes - tsarvuli (sandals). They made them on their own by using calfskin.
 4. Carpentry - production of wooden ploughs and carts.
 5. Blacksmith's trade - blacksmiths made the tools and implements: ploughshares, hoes, pick-mattocks/ picks, spades - mattocks with two prongs, etc.
- Fleecy rugs and pishtimals (a kind of an apron). All these had to be processed on a fulling mill.

One forgotten product in our region

Kiril Karakolev

Local historian and Teacher of History from Satovcha

One of the most specific qualities of the people from our region (Checha) is the mutual help. It was demonstrated in all areas of life, especially in the agricultural work. Men helped each other when they ploughed, mowed and threshed. It looked like women lived together. All the year round young women joined their efforts for prashitba (pricking off), harvest, straw collecting. When they went home in the evening, despite of the fatigue, they stopped on a hill near the village and sang. The young men, hearing this song, called out with different intonation, the most erotic were the calls of the young men from Kochan village. Then they ran to meet them to see their sweetheart.

There is one tradition, which exists only in our region and which is not described anywhere else, even by our most competent ethnographer Hristo Vakarelski. If we go deeper in it, mixed feeling and thoughts will rise or to be more specific - astonishment about our present days' position about our morality, about the proverbial honesty of our ancestors. This tradition is called "predoy".

The village-criers are not like the other village criers all over Bulgaria. Village-criers in our region had no many sheep to hire a shepherd. For that purpose in order to make the syuriya (the flock) accepted the sheep of their fellow-villagers.

The products from the sheep were distributed very accurately between the villager who had sheep in the flock (the so called gardari). In the beginning of June, the flock went out to feed in the forest pastures or at the mandra (dairy farm) as they used to call it. Predoy was made so that everyone could get the right share of products from the sheep. For that purpose the flock was taken at a convenient place outside the village. The sheep of every gardarin were separated and the owner milked them in front of the village-crier and the shepherd. Thus an accurate account about the total quantity of milk from the flock will belong to the gardarin while the sheep are at the mandra.

The mandra usually was built at a source of water, near the pastures.

Butter, yellow-cheese, cheese and cottage cheese were produced at the mandra. For owners who had few sheep usually, at their request, was produced mainly butter and cottage cheese. Those who had about 20 sheep ordered to the dairyman to make them *drun*. And those who had up to 30 sheep, ordered ihliya cheese (white brined cheese).

When the turn of a gardarin comes, the village-crier told him to go to the mandra. For all the days in which such gardar would use the milk, the shepherd and the dairyman were at the maintenance of the sheep's owner. The gardarin sent one of his sons in the mandra who went there with his horse or donkey and with the required provisions for the shepherd and the dairyman. At that time he played the role of a karacher (he drove the sheep for milking).

The gardars most often ordered butter and cottage cheese. Milk was curdled in a wooden barrel with special elastic stick with an ear at its end on which the tool for milk

beating was placed. After separating the butter, cottage cheese was made from the mixture. The whey was stored and given to sheep or dogs.

A product, which has been already forgotten by our generation, was the so called "dran". Petar Mutafchiev - one of the village-criers of Satovcha tells about it in details (1961). Put the milk in a wooden or ceramic vessel (metal vessels are inappropriate) with different size depending on the quantity. If there is no much milk - in ceramic vessel - a big ladka.

The dairyman had several stones, different in size, with holes in them. Depending on the quantity of milk, he selected a stone with appropriate size and put it in the fireplace on the glowing embers. The knack was to know how much to heat the stone. When in the dairyman's opinion the stone was hot enough, it was taken with a special hook and was put in the milk. The vessel was tightly covered and again after some time, by instruction of the dairyman, the stone was taken away. The product was something in the middle of yellow cheese and cheese. The strained and cold product was cut into cubes and was mixed with the curds. The wealthier gardars didn't mix it with the curds and this product was known as dran or beaten cheese.

Once its turn passed away, the gardarin loaded the products and went back to the village. The honesty of our ancestors is a good example and worthy reference point for our relations nowadays.

Traditions in the clothes in the region of Checha

Kiril Karakolev

Local historian and Teacher of History from Satovcha

The dress is one of the most important things of a given ethnographic region. To a great extent this is valid for the West Rhodopes and mainly in the region called Chech. And here the classical rule is observed that the clothes, with their variety, refer mainly to women. She was the one who stole from her spare time, mainly in the night, and at the light of the paraffin lamp or the pine splinters, she started creating her art when preparing the prikya (trousseau) for her little daughter, she made formal clothes, which should differ with their beauty from the clothes of the other girls. In our region now, in the course of time, were confirmed the clothes connected with the religion - the Islam. This refers mainly to the shalwars (loose Turkish trousers) and the yashmak. Any other elements of the clothes remained unchanged. However there is something different in the original shalwars. Women from the villages Kochan, Satovcha, Pletena and Vaklinovo wear more wide shalwars, which legs end with 4-5 cm abundantly braided and twisted laces (vazi), named karmi. The colours of the shalwars are quite varies, in the beginning they were made of weaved fabric then from ready-made fabric, mainly velvet. When I studied this tradition, I found the following text of a song:

"The Big Bayram passed away, the May's one is to come. But I would not meet it since I have no kasachi. Kasachi or shalwars.

Nayle has shenly (beautiful, gorgeous, lovely) shalwars. And gold-laced kasachi. When she wore her shalwars, she trailed them on the ground and ground was on fire".

This text of a folk song is enough to assure us that the woman from the Chech was seeking beauty in everything.

The Christians in Satovcha and Dolen preserved the typical "sayana" costume with all its specific elements. But if we look deeper in the chests in the villages Vaklinovo, Kochan, Satovcha somewhere in the corner we will find a costume typical only for our region, which has not been described even by our greatest ethnographer Hristo Vakarelski in his huge work "Ethnography of Bulgaria" - Sofia, 1977. Although this costume has the features of the common national "sayana" costume, still there are some specificities, which distinguish it from other national costumes. One can find it difficult to describe it unless one looks at it and in the course of time due to the existing circumstances; it hasn't undergone any changes and has preserved its authentic look. It is made of home-made fabric or ready-made fabric (interia or aladzha) with wide vertical stripes, coloured mainly in warm colours: red (alino or giviziyno) with a tint of orange (kamenichavo). The pattern is like the typical dress "saya" however unlike the saya it has two deep cuts almost reaching the hip and these two cuts transform the front part of the saya into two individual elements. The ethnographers are still expected to explain this fashion element. Considering the whole costume of the woman in our region, we could make the following conclusion. A long white shirt was worn under the saya. As in our region there are no characteristic features of the embroidery, the shirt was decorated according to the liking of every woman and it always finished with copious lace.

Still the main colour of the shirt was white, which could be connected with the heritage left by the Thracians and the Slavs. These two cuts reaching the hip - specific only for our region, underline the beauty of the body of the woman from the Rhodopes, the two cuts clearly outline the hips of the woman but they are not considered an erotic element but most of all show the figure of the Rhodopes' woman. These clothes are characteristics mainly for the taller women, which gives us ground to consider that the Bulgarian woman was quite high.

On the saya was put the so called kasak, which is still preserved. It usually comprises two patterns. For the unmarried women it was buttoned with one button at the lower end so that the bust of the woman shows up. For the married women it had several buttons. The kasak was copiously decorated with woollen braiding and gold-lace for the formal clothes.

The next elements of the clothes, which exists until today was the decorated woollen triangular scarf, which was put on the waist and outlined the hips of the woman. It was girder with vaza (string) in different colours. Then a belt is put, which is also knitted or weaved, copiously decorated with beads, tiny silver coins and then it ends with belt buckle. In front, at the place where the two parts of the interia (saya) join, a long woven apron descends, in which the Bulgarian woman revealed her creative fantasy upon combining colours and forms. The apron is the piece, which first attracts the attention in the front with the combination of different colours from the environment. Usually the pattern of the woven apron was formed with coloured luri (horizontal stripes), the prevailing colours were dull yellow to giviziyno (intensive red). Then followed the green colour in its variety. Further the knack is how to weave in the apron blagoto (the pink colour), kamenichavo and other colours, which the Rhodope woman knew from nature. She put on knitted multi-coloured woollen socks reaching a little bit above the ankle, with special patterns and colours. Only during holidays unmarried women wore konduri (shoes). The head cloth was also multi-coloured. In Kochan, Vaklinovo, Zhizhevo and to a less extent in Satovcha women wore teplatsi (a kind of small hat), which is put only on the pate. They were made of silver or another material and a special felting was put beneath for more comfort. At the side of the metal part there were small holes, on which different decorations were hung, mainly silver and golden coins and in the centre above the forehead was put a big gold coin (usually pendulira), which was a token of the property status of the woman. The head was covered with an ordinary kerchief (ashmaka, shamiyata) and was actually a square woven fabric with dimensions about 1-1.5 m, folded in triangle and tied under the neck.

An echo from the past Wedding in Valkosel

Baadin Musov

Local historian, teacher of history in Valkosel

Every person has one motherland - the one he was born in. Every person has one native place - the place in which he grew up, lived and keeps memories from his childhood deep the heart.

Deep in me I keep a memory about a wedding in Valkosel. The wedding is a feast not only for the young family but also for the whole village. It lasted three days and was accompanied with music - zourlas and drums. The well-to-do-families hired more musicians for the celebrations.

The clothes of the newlyweds were very interesting. The groom was with pants (poturi - full-bottomed breeches) made of homespun or frieze, with narrow legs in the lower end and often had woollen braiding around the pockets and from the knees to the ankles on the left and on the right.

The shirt was woven from cotton without collar. The jacket or the coat with decorated with woollen braiding. The belt was woven from wool with tassels on both sides. Woollen socks, decorated at their ends (overshoes).

Depending on his property status, the groom was wearing konduri (shoes) or hand-made tsarvuli (sandal) and on the head - a fez or a cup. Some of them wore also kistek (a watch with a chain on the belt).

The bride wore potouri made of cotton print, deftin (carded cotton), silk or other fabrics. At the lower part of the legs, the potouri ended with papki (pleated frill around the leg). They were tied with uchkur (string). Other formal clothes were:

- Fota (apron) - weaved from wool in different colours. Colours were woven with parti pattern (parallel light lines of fabric, etc.) and the most often are yellow, red and brown. There were other woollen aprons too - with makazki pattern (scissors) and trupcheta pattern (a kind of pattern) with weaved silver and gold threads. It is tied with voza (knitted string from yarn) around the waist;
- Jacket - made of fabric, cotton print and other (similar to the nowadays jackets);
- Setre (short jacket) - made of fabric with cotton lining (similar to the nowadays jackets);
- The kondak had rectangular shape with popki (lace or fringes) at the edge, which were made by the young girls. It was folded in triangle and was put on the head in a special way so that fringes fall freely on one side of the face;
- the shamia is put on the head in a special place so that the fringes of the kondak were seen (kerchief).

And again, depending on the property status of the bride, she would wear konduri (heeled shoes) and a stick (string) of gold coins on their breasts. The biggest was the pendolira. Finally the yashmak (mantlet) was put on.

The wedding in Valkosel included different customs and rituals: kalesvane (inviting), sharene (making up) the bride, konene of the bride, race, catch-as-catch-can (gyuresh), haulage of the prikya (trousseau) of the bride, pampur (mummer), libene na roka, vozvratki, fencing in the vozvratki and the prikyota.

The first ritual was kalesvane. It meant inviting to a wedding.

The sharene of the bride was a part of her beauty. Special women did it. The materials used for that activity were: lipstick, creams, powder, pulcheta (small round metal strips with different colour) and wire (silver or golden threads). Sharene was made on the bride's face. Often the red colour of the cheeks and lips prevailed. Cheeks, chin and forehead were also decorated by sticking on them pulcheta in the form of a ring, a square or other. The pulcheta had different colour. From the two sides of the face were put big wire pieces, which reached the ground. The sharene of the bride was made for beauty and to hide the blushing of the bride during the konene and the wedding in general.

Once the bride was ready after the sharene, she was taken out in the poton (corridor), if any, or in the yard and then she stepped over a piece of furniture to be higher than the others, usually near a wall of the house so that she may see the people and they may see her too. The konene include playing ring dances accompanied by songs of the bride's relative and friends.

At the second wedding day, people went to the bride's home to take the prikyota (the trousseau). A relative of the bride stood next to the trousseau, usually this was a child, and asked "a ransom" for it. After paying the ransom, it was allowed that the trousseau was taken. It was loaded on a cattle with packsaddles on their backs.

Once the bride's trousseau was loaded, the wedding-guests set off to the groom's house, accompanied by music, dances and ring-dances. The bride on a white horse with red fleecy rug was at the front.

There were competitions on the third wedding day - kushia (races) and gyuresh (wrestling).

The kushia took place early in the third day outside the village. A sloping area was chosen and young men, at any age and in any number, start racing under the sounds of a special melody. There were three rewards at the final: the first reward was a lamb or money, the second - a head of cabbage and the third - kokareva glava (onion).

After the kushia (the race) would start the gyuresh (wrestling). The competitors were dressed in special outfits - kaspeti (narrow leathers) and spread olive oil on their bodies. There was an animal for the basha (the winner) - a lamb, a ram or a calf.

During all wedding days there was a man dressed in goat-skins, with a hood on the head, with chanove (sheep bells), tembeletsi (a kind of dumpy bells) and hlopatarki (cow-bells) around his waist and wearing a bag full of ash. All the time he stood near the bride and the musicians and entertained the wedding-guests with his activities. He played tag with children and "threw" ash on the people. The superstitions say that it was made to protect the bride from evil eyes and casting a spell on her. Such person is named pampur (mummer).

The wedding ends on Friday. On this day the closest relatives gather together at the home of the bride and the groom. Food is cooked and in the evening they all go to the bride's home and there ends the day. When they entered the house, someone hid the shoes

of the groom. He had to pay to get them back. The bride and the groom would spend the night here and in the morning he had to go for firewood. Thus he proves that he deserves that bride.

St. George's Day

Baadin Musov

Local historian, teacher of history in Valkosel

On this day people get up early. It is important who will be the first that one meets. If this is a hard-working man, you will also work hardy during the year, and if this is a lazy man - you will be lazy too. Then before the sunrise people go outside the village and find a big and strong cornel-tree. You have to hang on it and swing and at the same time make a wish for much health. Then you must pick green grass, herbs, and tree blossoms and when you get home, you have to mix them with flour and salt and feed animals with them so that they give good offspring as the trees give blossom.

On this day the children chase each other and beat each other with nettle and this is considered good for their health.

In addition to swinging on a cornel-tree, people step barefoot on the grass or roll in the grass to become wet from the morning dew. The purpose is that people feel the strength of the nature on this day and the belief is that it helps people continue their life.

Nikya

Narrator: Fatma Kehayova, Pletena village

Recorded by: Irina Boshnakova, Pletena village, a member of the team from Satovcha Municipality

"Nikya" is written so that marriage is solemnized by Allah. How does the ritual take place?

The groom first takes the bride from her home and brings her to the home of his parents and his parents call the imam. The bride first kisses the hands of her parents-in-law and steps in a large baking tin. Corn is also put there so that their marriage is fruitful and wealthy. Two witnesses must be present - one from the bride's side and one from the groom's side.

The imam sings a dua (a prayer). Then he asks three times the bride whether she will marry the groom. When the bride answers positively, the imam asks the groom whether he will marry the bride. The father-in-law and the mother-in-law declare what presents they will give to the bride: gold coins, money, field and meadow. These are present for her virginity. These gifts are special: if the husband expels her, all presents given on this day would remain property of the wife and no one will have title on it however if she leaves her husband, she will get nothing.

The imam writes a document describing the presents of the groom's parents, the witnesses sign it and thus it is announced that "The Nikya is written".

It means that their marriage is solemnized before Allah and before people.

Walking around the village to protect it from hailstorm

Narrator: Antoaneta Boshnakova, Pletena village

Recorded by: Irina Boshnakova, Pletena village, a member of the team from Satovcha Municipality

In Pletena village people used to earn their living mainly with agriculture and this is valid nowadays too. They grow potatoes, beans, maize but mainly tobacco. That's why a ritual was performed to protect the crops from hailstorm.

It took place as follows: Three imams went to the river and picked pebbles. They sing a dua. Then they start going around the village from borun to a borun (borun=hill). They sing duas (prayers) and throw pebbles to protect the village from hailstorm. While they sing and go around they talk to nobody. When the ritual ends, they go to the river and bury the pebbles there.

Manyukeri

Baadin Musov

Local historian, teacher of history in Valkosel

Ritual for breaking spells, mind manipulations, etc. Grandma Geza Mutafchieva from Satovcha village had manokeri and when people had to to break a spell put on them or on their animals, went to her and she used the manokeri to perform this ritual.

What do the manokeri look like? These are small pebbles, collected from holy places (monasteries, sanctuaries, etc.) The Grandma Geza's collection of such pebbles included also several mussel shells, which Grandpa Petyo brought from the Aegean Sea (the coast of the Athos monasteries).

She handed down this ritual to her daughter-in law Zlata and now her granddaughter Geza Burov performs it.

What is actually the ritual?

"Aunt Zlata, I want you to wash down manokeri." - A story by Zara Dospatlieva:

"We bought a young cow. We looked after it with great yearning and everyone in one family was worried when the time came for calving. All was well. I took the arkomichka (a kind of vessel) and went to milk it. Oh God! The cow didn't allow anybody to touch it. Now what?! And a neighbour told me "go to Aunt Zlata and ask her to wash down manokeri". I went to her and told her about my problem. She said: "Bring me water from three springs (or from three fountains). I brought her the water, she put some small pebbles and several mussel shells in a pan and started mumbling incantations and to make gestures wit her right hand. As far as I noticed she made something like cross but I am not quite sure. Then she gave me that water and told me to leave the cow thirsty for a while and then to give it to drink that water. Several hours later, we put the water in the bucket and the cow drank it.

What a wonder! It cried so loud that all the neighbours heard it. She looked at me, I took again the arkomichka and the cow stood still.

Now the manokeri are kept by Gezka Burova.

The butterfly's song

Narrator: Gyulzar Karadalieva, Pletena village

Recorded by: Irina Boshnakova, Pletena village, a member of the team from Satovcha Municipality

There are years with heavy draught without rain for weeks and even months. In such years special ritual is performed so that it makes rain. An orphan girl must be found and she must be dressed in white dress and must be decorated with willow sticks like a butterfly (sticks represent the wings). Then the butterfly, accompanied by an elderly woman, goes around the village and sings the song of the butterfly:

"Yamur, yamur ver Alla." (Let it rain, God, let it rain). While they go around, people pour water on the butterfly and give her something they have heart for: flour, beans, fruits, vegetables, and even money, etc. Thus the butterfly must go around the whole village.

While I was going around like a butterfly, it started to rain.

Syunet

Narrator: Mehmed Shehov

Recorded by Baadin Musov, Local history expert, teacher of history from Valkosel

The syunet (circumcision) of boys is a religious ritual. It is also considered a family feast. Actually in most of the cases this was a very expensive feast and not everyone could afford it. The feast was the expensive thing, not the circumcision itself. Therefore few people could afford it.

For that reason until twenty years ago, the feast for the syunet was organized by few people, mainly by the wealthier ones. It was celebrated in different days and lasted from three to six days depending on the wealth of the people. Generally the syunet lasted 3 days. This feast had to be allowed by the Mosque board /the Mosque management/ and at that time they had the last word. It should be thought about the big number of guests who would be invited - where will they stay for the night, where will they eat, etc. The feast was accompanied by music (zourlas and drums) and many entertainment games - kushia (horse racing) and free wrestling.

That's how the feast run:

Day one

The guests arrive, sometimes they are many. To support the feast, they bring presents and in many cases home-made goods (flour, wheat or whatever they have). The fellow-villagers of the dyunsaybiya (the host of the feast) do the same. A part of the relatives and friends, and the guests too, go for firewood with cattle with packsaddles; the firewood would be used for cooking. The one who would be the first to bring firewood, would get a round loaf.

Day two

The second day of the feast is only for games. Early in the morning would start the kushia (the race), which was often carried out with horses. Musicians stand at the final and play a special melody to this end (fast and rhythmic). The winner gets the big reward - a lamb or money and the other participants get smaller rewards - a shirt, a towel, socks and other. After the race, all go to the home of the dyunsaybiya and there the preparation for the wrestling starts. Wrestlers are dressed in special outfits (kaspets). These are leather pants with narrow legs and all covered with olive oil. In the yard of the dyunsaybiya they start demonstrating wrestling. They cross their hands two by two and start running in a circle by clapping their hands on their thighs and from time to time throw ground over their heads. Two by two they demonstrate different clutches but without hurting each other or throwing each other on the ground (to entertain people). At the same time in the house of the dyunsaybiyata were prepared big feast with presents on them - towels, shirts, socks, cotton prints and other. The wrestlers, musicians and the people make alay (tour) around the village. The musicians, the wrestlers, the flag bearers and the guests go to the place where the gyuresh (the wrestling) will be carried out. The wrestlers are grouped in categories and then wrestling starts accompanied by music especially for that purpose. When wrestling is over, all people go back to the home of the dyunsaybiya. There again demonstrations of wrestling are made and then the rewards are given. The biggest reward, which is an animal -

a kid, a lamb, a ram or a calf – goes to the basha (the winner). The other participants get cash or tangible rewards.

Day three

The third day is the core of the syunet because then the circumcision of children is made. Not only the child of the dyunsaybiya is circumcised but also other children, whose parents could not afford organizing individual feast for syunet. When the circumcision is made, musicians play all the time so that the crying of the children is not heard outside. After the ritual, the child's relatives bring him parents (candies and other sweets at that time).

The preparation and the organization of this feast costs too much and that's why often several families join together and make syunet and those who could not afford it, circumcise their children at such syunets organized by their fellow-villagers.

If the feast lasts more than three days, greatest attention is paid to the music in the next days. Musicians place in the centre of the village and the villagers and guests have fun and play various ring dances.

THE BREAD IN CHECHA

Kiril Karakolev

Local historian and Teacher of History from Satovcha

"Nobody is bigger than bread" This maxim is a part of the national psychology of the Bulgarians. It expresses the great admiration of the Bulgarians to the most important part of their food - the bread.

But in the region of Checha bread is even more important considering the aforesaid historical and geographical reference. Soils are too unfertile, difficult to process and yields are low. That's why the attitude to bread has become a criterion for morality, system of values and a measure for the security of life. In Checha "Nobody is bigger than bread" has no place in the lexical fund. You may not speak of something, which many generations have confirmed in their conscious. That's why in our region there are other wise saws, which are quoted all the time. "If there is bread, there is everything."

When someone starts work and he is asked how much the pay is, he would answer "Enough for bread". In the years of transition (after 1990) a great part of the population started producing tikli. In the colloquial speech appeared the saying "There is bread in this job". "He ate sweet bread, he missed it as he had no brains" - when someone missed a good job/ "How is the new farmhand?", if the master is pleased he would say "He deserves his bread". In the last 15-20 years, the wisdom of the people of Checha gave rise to another saying: "He took the bread in his hands". This is about those who have gained pension as in the last year the most certain means of living is the pension.

Since we were small children, we were habituated in admiration to bread. Our grandmothers often warned us: "Watch out, do not trample crumb, God will punish you. Take the crumb, enjoy it and then eat it".

The bread in Checha is produced mainly of rye. Rye was grown in the huge areas near Satovcha (Padini, Armurovo, Usoeto, Selskite nivi, Brosnitsa, Dzhikovoto, Karudere, etc.), Kochan (Marasha, Belyovitsa, Visoka mogilitsa, Trifode, Iztok, etc.).

On 24 October 1896 the population of Satovcha (at that time our region was a part of the Ottoman Empire) go to law at the Rupchoski court because Arnaud Adem aga, through the same court, seized the area Selskite nivi. On behalf of the whole population of Satovcha with the seal and the signatures of Myurteza aga Tahir - myudyurin (superintendent) of the Satovcha nahia (municipality), hadji Hismet aga Ademov - a farmer from Satovcha village and Kolyo Mitov - Mayor of Satovcha village filed a petition to the Rupchoski court against Arnaud Adem aga. After hearing of the case lasting two years, by Decision No. 2 of the Rupchoski court on 23 March 1898, the fields were returned to the Satovcha villagers.

Once the rye is harvested and threshed, the grain (in our region grain means rye) is milled at the flour-mill karadzheyka (a small watermill). The Karabunarovska watermill, the Velieva watermill, the Nebieva watermill were the most famous. The Vlaykovska and Kartalovska watermill worked only seasonally. The Koemdzhieva watermill in Rata was famous too.

Hunger always accompanied the life of the people in our region, however the most difficult times were the years of the World War One. At that time bread was made from some flour mixed with whole boiled potatoes. The corn-cobs were milled together with the grain and thus bread was made.

Making bread was a kind of ritual. If the family was big, bread was prepared for about a week. The required quantity of flour was kneaded with leaven (a part of the dough from the previous bread making). Once the dough rose (increased its volume), it was kneaded again and then shaped. In our region a loaf of bread with weight about 2 kg, with round shape is called peshtnik. It was left to rise again and then these peshtniks were put in a special oven, which was most often located in the yard of the house, and only in some cases inside the house. The oven fired. When the specified quantity of firewood burns, the embers were drawn with a special tool called grabal. Then ash was wiped with a wet cloth. Thus oven was ready to bake the bread. The peshtniks were arranged and at the opening of the oven were put small thin loafs, called tenkachi. They were baked earlier and were given away to neighbours for good health. The smaller families made a loaf every two or three days; it was baked under a device called saach. It was made by sheet metal. It was dome-shaped with a handle on the top. The loaf was put on embers in the hearth, this device was put over it and then it was covered with embers. The bread that was made without leaven was called polyota pita. In Kochan village, where mainly maize (misir) was grown, the bread was made with maize flour mainly and it was called misiren leb (maize bread).

The path from the wheat grain, seeded in the field, gained from the environment with hard work and love, from the tender green field, from the waving gold sea of the wheat-ears, through the labour of the harvester, the thresher, from the processes of milling, winnowing, kneading, baking on the embers of the oven and finally the sharing between all people sitting down to the family table - every single moment of making the bread has a symbolic character and presents to the people of Checha evidence about the path of its culture.

Local recipes

TRAHANA

Trahana is made of the following products:
wheat flour, yoghurt, fresh or dry peppers, onion, other vegetables may be added too.

Knead the wheat flour with yoghurt and add peppers, onion and other vegetables. Leave this mixture (dough) to sop for at least 20 days and stir it every day until it is sopped fully. When dough is ready, make little rolls of bread and leave them to dry, then crush them by hand and sift out.

Cooking: In a vessel with water put gradually the trahana by stirring all the time. Stir until the required density is obtained. Then fry it with cooking oil and different vegetables. Chilli may be added too. Trahana is preferred food for breakfast and it is consumed while warm. It may be mixed with leftovers from the dinner. It best matches the beans.

KURKUMACH

Kurkumach is made of sheep's milk. The process is as follows: Put the milk in a vessel on the fire and stir it all the time, add salt to prevent burning. It is ready when it becomes thick enough. Kurkumach is made only in the autumn when sheep graze ripe grass with seeds and their milk is thickest. Crumble bread in it. Preferred breakfast.

KACHAMAK

Kachamak is a meal made of wheat or maize flour. Thicken it with butter and then add cheese or honey. How to cook it? Put the required quantity of flour in a pot with water. By wooden vareyka make several holes in the flour so that it is boiled well. Then stir it with the vareyka until the mixture becomes thick. Then put balls of the mixture in a baking dish and press it with the back of a wooden spoon to thin it; the spoon should be dipped in the preliminary fried butter. This is to prevent sticking the dough on it. Thus spread it on the baking dish by making small holes (lochki) to retain the butter which is spread over. Put grated cheese or honey on the top.

Preferred breakfast.

PASTRY - ZELNIK - /KLIN/

Products: wheat flour, maize flour, cooking oil, cabbage /or spinach/, wild plants may be also used: dock, nettle, sorrel, etc.

Preparation: Chop cabbage fine. Make thick mess from maize flour /valki/. Roll out big and thin round sheets of pastry from the wheat flour. When the first sheet is ready, put it in a big baking-dish /sinia/ with butter /cooking oil/ spread on it. Spread the chopped cabbage and the valki on the sheet. Then put the second sheet. Baking is made on open fire /as the sinia is big/ or over the stove. While baking it, turn it in a circle all the time and be careful to prevent sticking. Then put a big ring on the top (the same ring on which the sheets are rolled out) and turn it upside down to place the banitsa on this ring. Then spread butter

on the sinia. Put the banitsa back in the sinia and continue baking it by spraying it with a mixture of water and oil from time to time. The purpose is that it becomes soft and mellow.

HALVA

Halva is prepared as a sweet course most often for weddings, syunets (circumcision), myuvlyuts /memorial services/ - every time when a big quantity of food is prepared and sweet course is needed.

Products: Wheat flour, maize flour, cooking oil, sugar. Preparation: First cooking oil is fried and then adding flour start gradually. The flour is a mixture of maize and wheat: 3:1. Stir continuously while adding the flour because the frying temperature is very high. When the mixture becomes light brown, add hot water with sugar /shirbet/ and stir until you get a very thick mixture.

Sweet course.

GRUDA

Fried meal, which is made of maize flour and butter. When butter is fried hot, add slowly the flour by stirring it all the time. Stir until mixture becomes very thick and corns are formed.

DRINKS

Local drinks: Buttermilk /barkanitsa/, oshav (stewed dried fruit/, langyur (fruit drink/

Oshav: It is made of dried fruit and is served as a sweet course, when sweetened enough or filtered as a drink. It is good warm and cold.

Langyur: Different type of fruit is collected: apples, crab-apples, pears, grapes and other and they are put in a big vessel with a tap. Pour water and leave it for a week. There is a specificity when making langyur - mustard seeds are put in it and this stops the fermentation of fruit and no alcohol is produced. Drink it cold.

CHUCHNATOTO

Narrator: Antoaneta Boshnakova, Pletena village

Recorded by: Irina Boshnakova, Pletena village, a member of the team from Satovcha Municipality

"Chuchnatoto" is a kind of sweet, which is often cooked in our region and mostly for the feasts and Bayram. This is how to cook it:

Products: 5 eggs, 5 spoonfuls of sugar, 1 sachet of dry yeast, 1,5 l milk, flour (about 1,5 kg).

Syrup: 1 kg sugar, 1 litre of water, 1 vanilla

How to cook it: Mix all products. Add flour until the dough becomes soft and able to roll it out. When the dough is well kneaded, it is divided into small balls, which are also well

kneaded. Take one ball and roll it out to a thin sheet. Spread fried butter (put cooking oil in a deep pan and put it on the stove until boiling, then leave it to cool) and roll the sheet. Cut it into small pieces of 3 cm each. Then press them with two fingers in the middle and arrange them in a baking dish. Bake it in moderate oven until it becomes pink. When it cools down, pour the syrup.

How to prepare the syrup: Put water and sugar to boil. Stir until sugar melts. After it is boiled and before removing it from the oven, put the vanilla. Leave it for 2-3 minutes and pour it over the "chuchnato".

The rule is: If the chuchnato is warm, the syrup shall be cold and vice versa - cold chuchnato - warm syrup.

BUTTER BREAD

Narrator: Antoaneta Boshnakova, Pletena village

Recorded by: Irina Boshnakova, Pletena village, a member of the team from Satovcha Municipality

Products: 3 kg flour, 1 l cool water, a pinch of salt, cooking oil

How to cook it:

Knead soft dough from the salt, water and the larger part of the flour. Divide it in balls, the last one should be bigger than the others. Pour cooking oil in a baking dish with average size. Flatten out the balls to make sheets as thin as possible. After flattening out, spread with cooking oil and fold it in four. Process all balls in this way and after folding them, put them one over another. Flatten out the last ball (the bigger one) and put all other balls in the middle. Cover them and turn them down in the oiled baking-dish. Then press it so that the baking dish is full. Spread egg and then bake. In our region this bread is served with pepper cheese.

Chop fine green peppers, grate cheese, pour thick yoghurt and then salt it. Stir it and eat it with pleasure with the bread.