



European Territorial Cooperation Programme
Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013

INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

The Programme is co-funded by the European Union (ERDF)
and the National Funds of Greece and Bulgaria
FOLKLORE BRIDGE PROJECT



**THE NATURE
AND THE PEOPLE OF CHECHA**



Collection



Folklore bridge

The nature and the people of Checha

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.

*

*

*

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 get 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

The expedition to the Municipality of Satovcha

Gergina Toncheva

Founder and Director of National High School for Ancient Languages and Cultures from 1978 to 2010.

Expedition Leader

March 2012

Satovcha met us with a smiling sun. The green tenderness of the forest and the flowers in the garden filled the air with spring fragrance.

People moved thither and hither and everyone greeted us although we were strangers.

We arrived here in connection with the project Folklore Bridge:

Mrs. Kamelia Georgieva

Mr. Lyubomir Mateev

and Gergana Toncheva - me

First, in the proper way, we visited the Mayor Dr. Arben Mimenov. Mayor who belongs to that place. Expediently we made the first clarification and proceeded to our tasks.

Mr. Karakolev was the first who met us. He was informed about our arrival time. He waited for our visit to the Mayor and then we proceeded to the Museum. An impressive collection: nature, history, everyday life, ethnography, atmosphere... Created professionally and with much love.

The main topic of our talks was Veda Slovena of Stefan Verkovich. The colleague Karakolev here showed wide knowledge, beliefs and position. Obviously this is based on long-term studies and observations. He used the last two-volume edition of the book to confirm his words. We specified the details for our future work.

Our meeting with the teachers was pleasant and useful for the work of our summer expeditions:

- Purpose - collecting information about the cultural heritage.
- Place - Satovcha and the settlements belonging to it.
- Time - 28.06.2012 – 5.7.2012.
- Participants - local teachers and local historians, students and teachers from the National High School of Ancient Languages and Culture Konstantin Kiril Filosof and students from the high school in the Municipality of Satovcha.

Satovcha has its cosy centre - the square - flowers, greenery, shops and of course a fountain.

I love observing people at every new place, in Bulgaria or worldwide, where I go. I choose a convenient corner and I contemplate their faces, clothes, walk, how they talk... Thus I get to know them and I talk with them in my thoughts. Millions of questions rush on me and they will receive their answer from now on. The best thing in this contemplation

were the children who resounded the square with laugh and cry. Quite a while ago I hadn't met so beautiful children in one place.

And another thing I am used to - I would not leave a place without tasting the bread there.

Thank you Satovcha! Your bread gave us satiety, your children - joy and your people - hope. We will be back...

June - July 2012

And we came back as we promised - the group of students from the National High School of Ancient Languages and Culture and the teachers. This is the team, which will help the local historians and jointly with them will do observations, surveys and analyses on the five key topics:

- 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.

The programme of the expedition started with an outdoor folklore concert in the Dabrash area.

There were songs and dances; and then songs with dances.

The mountain, the human and the song joined together into a glorious harmony of the life, the joy and the beauty. You watch, listen and all of a sudden you feel that you are a part of that magic. It already conquered you.

You watch, feel happy and think over it. The mountain gives birth to a man, the man gives birth to a song, the song is the soul of the mountain. An endless circle, an indivisible and incomparable belonging.

The green meadow, these fragrant flowers and the generous sun - there is no lovely scene like this. The sun also enjoyed all that beauty.

It was a great honour to us. This was made only for us - just about twenty persons. The merry mood and the inspiration of the performers were capturing and flew into use.

That's how our expedition in the South-West Rhodopes started - at the Municipality of Satovcha and the settlements belonging to it.

And after the emotional onset with the concert in Dabrash, here we are - in Pletena village on July, 2nd. We made ourselves comfortable at the big terrace of the pleasant house of our kind hosts and the talk with the interesting interlocutors began. Ismail Ibishev - master of fountains and Rusi Kadrev - teacher of Bulgarian Language and Literature. The students interviewed each of them.

All the time Rumen from Satovcha took part in our activities constantly and actively. Having passed successfully the admittance exam, now he is a student in 8th grade at the National High School of Ancient Languages and Culture.

We visited the house of Vabiv & Zanela Anavidzhievi. That's how it looks like through the eyes of our student Radoslav Iliev: "This is an authentic two hundred years old example of a house, which once was rich and spacious house of the time of the Bulgarian revival. It all specific premises: poton (attic), big chardak (veranda) and amam (bathroom). However, only the main sitting-room and two other rooms are inhabited. The house is too big and difficult to maintain. Not only the building, but also the incredible wood-carved ceiling is decaying and twisting because of the falling walls. Especially in Pletena village, the number of the old and abandoned houses were quite a lot; in Tuhovishta and Godeshevo, famous with their stonework masters, there are several hamlets with houses from hewn stones and river stone, which also need better maintenance and some of them restoration too.

Then we went to the architectural reserve Dolen village. The stone houses stood lonely and stately quiet to the face of the time, keeping in their wombs stories, events, happenings, destinies and waiting for their new inhabitants. Just like they have their destiny, too.

In one of the quiet streets an old man met us. He humbly asked us to talk with him. We talked with him. His shining smile told us the most important - thank you. And this is destiny.

A good day. Full of impressions and experiences. This is destiny for us.

3 July, Valkosel

Baadin Musov met us here. We know him already from our talks and from his developments. He is a teacher of history. He told us the long 600-year history of the village. About its geographic location and the Mesta River valley, about the means of living of the population - agriculture and stock-breeding, for the dry area, which creates difficulties and complications for the peasants who are growing tobacco and the other crops.

Most inspiring was the story about the Community Centre Izgrev, which was established in 1950 and has 15 000 books. It carries out many activities with the tutoring group of the teachers, the choral group, the dancing group and the drama group.

The cultural life here is varied - social evenings, drama performances, working-bees. And the live speech and the ever-lasting song weave into it.

The culmination of his story was about the School Hristo Botev - conferring both elementary and secondary degree. He proudly shared with us that in Valkosel there are conditions for development of tourism. The most important factor about that activity are the people.

We are in Slashten. We went to the community centre, which was established in 1928. The secretary Albena Pashova met us there. To our admiration for the village, she added that there was growth in the population, the birth-rate was increased. This is good news - Congratulations! Smilen Manov - teacher of History and Bulgarian lead us competently and eloquently in the cultural layers of a Thracian settlement, the Roman bridges, the architecture, the bed of Mesta River, which moves and many other details about the hard life in Chech. People here are hard-working and hospitable. The main means of living are stock-breeding and vine-growing. The activities of the community centre are

connected with the folklore. The song dominates - it is open-hearted, melodic, sad and wise, it rises the spirits and give hope when people work and when they have fun.

The gradation of the story again was the school. It was established in 1926. It provides comprehensive education - both for primary and secondary degree. More than 300 students study there and the teachers are local. Students who complete 12th grade go to universities. Teachers, medical doctors and other specialists have started from here. The nature, the living and the people provide good conditions for the development of tourism.

On July 3rd the programme was intensive. The workshop Veda Slovena started at 02.00 p.m.

We are with the museum collection of Satovcha. A remarkable place that gathers the history, the way of living, the traditions and the spirit of this site. The conditions and the atmosphere here suppose more deep reflections and discussions. The study of Mr. Karakolev quickly caught the attention of all.

Veda Slovena is a major, eternal topic, which excites the admirers and the deniers of Stefan Verkovich for more than 150 years now. Some of the songs in the collection are connected with the region of Satovcha - Pletena village. That's why the interest is so big here. It offers favourable opportunities for future activities.

Kiril Karakolev is a teacher of history and a talented local historian with long-year experience. He is a profound specialist in the way of living, the traditions, habits, history and culture of the people from the region. He is tireless in his studies, explorations and publications. Thus he continues his educational activity among wide audience.

The museum collection is his deed. Being a teacher, a publicist, a public figure, a creator with a sense for duty, he embodies the mind and the spirit of Satovcha.

Chaya Koleva - a 17-year old student from the team of the National School of Ancient Languages and Culture expressed her opinion and position on the topic. She shared: "people here speak the language of Veda Slovena, they carry that world in their hearts...I urge my coevals to get acquainted with the huge work of Stefan Verkovich and make it live forever".

This message is a noble challenge for the future work on the topic of Veda Slovena. It should be put to a useful purpose carefully and competently.

On Jly 4th we visited our partners in Kato Nevrokopi.

The hosts welcomed us politely. They presented their activities by means of a video and comments on it. It was interesting, useful and pleasant. We felt the likeness, the common and the lasting, which connects us in the everyday life, the spirit and our fortune.

And the borders are fabricated and made only to hinder and restrict the communication between people. But the soul, song and birds know no boundaries. They just confirm the perfection of the nature. And we, too.

We came back tired but inspired. We had to prepare with all collected materials for our presentation the next day to the local leaders, public figures and media.

Everyone in a team or individually thrilled and craved for finding the correct word or expression in order to share most convincingly what they saw, experienced and learnt. And it

was much. The things that stocked our minds with knowledge for such a short time are incredible.

On July 5th the museum hall throbbed with excitement. Everyone rehearsed the text, the gesture, the facial expression, the intonation. Theatrical atmosphere. The students and the guests made a great team. Everyone aimed to be useful in the common work. Friendliness and amicability was seen in the eyes of everyone. This is promising for the future....

The presentation went off very well. It provoked interest and was highly appreciated. Dr. Arben Mimenov, the Mayor of the Municipality of Satovcha greeted them and thanked for the interesting and useful information about each settlement in the region.

And we are thankful for the honour and the trust to take part in the Project Folklore Bridge. Thank you for the conditions, which you created for our stay and for our activities!

Thank you for everything!

We express our gratitude to the project managers too.

At the end the women of Satovcha made a feast for us. The recipes, which they gave us while we were talking about their life and traditions, now were generously and skilfully visualized.

The women of Satovcha - open-hearted, communicative, responsive,
humble, elegant, inspired,
intelligent and hard-working,
mothers and wives.

What priceless wealth they are for the home, the kin, the settlement and the nation!

If you want to feel what beauty means, what joy and human kindness mean, then visit Satovcha!

Summary

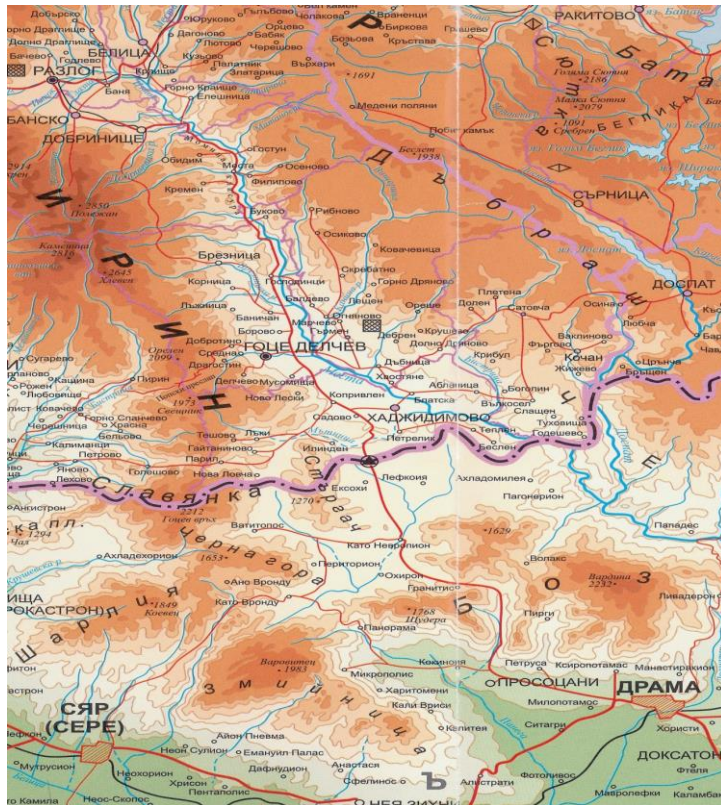
- Team selection - very adequate
- Idea, purpose of the expedition - clear and correct
- Team work - necessary.
- Organization - faultless for the short time - much work.
- Style of work - activity, responsibility, correctness
- Interrelations - correct, cordial, friendly
- Gained experience - endeavours - result, many ideas rose and the time will show.
- Conditions - favourable, conducive for serious work and creative ideas...
- Attitude of the costs - cordial, touching, considerate
- Conclusion for the most important - serious work was done, many friendships were born and ideas about future work

Checha and Satovcha

Ivan Ivanov

Teacher of Geography at the National High School for Ancient Languages and Culture from 1978 to 2010.

Georgi Georgiev, Maksimiliyan Vrabkov, Radoslav Iliev, students of the National School of Ancient Languages and Culture



Map of the historical and geographical area Chech

Municipality of Satovcha is located in the South-West part of Bulgaria, in the South-West Rhodopes, a.k.a. Chech or Chechko (or Checha if used with an article), which is historical and geographical area divided between Republic of Bulgaria and Republic of Greece. The region of Chech is a part of the geographical area Macedonia (Pirin and Aegean) and is located in the South-West Rhodopes and the North parts of Bodag (in Greek - Falakro) and its major part is in Greece. In historical aspect the region is divided into Nevrokopi Chech and Drama Chech, the Drama Chech being entirely in Greece and the Nevrokopi one is divided between the two parties. According to Vasil Kanchov, a famous researcher of Macedonia from the end of XIX and the beginning of XX century, the west boundary of Checha is Dospat River. Today all villages to the east of Dabnishka river are considered a part of this region. Thus the Bulgarian part of Checha comprises the villages from the Municipality of Satovcha and those in the east part of the Municipality of Garmen, along the Dospat River and Bistritsa River. The centre of the Greek part of Checha is Borovo village, nowadays named Potami, at the mouth of Dospat River. The villages from the Greek Chech belong to Dem Zarnevo (Kato Nevrokopi). After the Balkan Wars (1912), the World War One and the Treaty of Neuilly-sur-Seine (1919) and most of all the Accord Mollov-Kaphantaris, the Muslim population from the Greek Chech was expatriated to Turkey, West Thrace and a part of Bulgaria and in its place settled Pontic Greek refugees from Turkey.

The Municipality of Satovcha is located in the District of Blagoevgrad and borders to the East with Municipality of Dospat, to the west with Municipality of Garmen, to the north with Municipality of Velingrad and to the South with Municipality of Hadzhidimovo and with Republic of Greece (about 14 km of the state border).

The terrain is mountainous and hilly and comprises parts of the Mesta River valley and the Southeast Part of the Dabrashki ridge of the West Rhodopes. The average height above sea level is about 1000 m. Its highest point is Ungen peak (1668m), which since 1936 at the request of the local Bulgarian population has been named to the Swedish Minister of Foreign Affairs Prof. Josten Ungen (1896 - 1974) who resolved a boundary issue between Bulgaria and Greece. There is a bronze plaque on a granite rock on the peak, decorated with the Swedish and the Bulgarian national emblem and with the inscription: "In 1936 this peak was named Prof. Ungen in living memory of the just and philanthropic judgement of the Swedish Professor Ungen, nominated as judge by the Council of the League of the Nations, because thanks to that judgement a part of the South Rhodopes was declared property of Bulgaria".

The climate is Continental Mediterranean with marked mountainous influence in the higher parts. The average annual temperature is about 11,5⁰C and in winter in the valley falls there are temperature inversions. The average temperature in January is in the range of 0⁰C - 7⁰C depending on the height above the sea level. The summer is warm and sunny. The average annual maximum temperature along the Mesta River valley is 32- 36⁰C, and in the middle mountain part it is 23-28⁰C, with prevailing autumn-winter and spring-summer precipitation. The seasons are clearly distinguishable, summer is hot and winter - moderately cold. The influence of the Mediterranean climate is felt to 1200 m height above sea-level.

In geological aspect, the land of the municipality comprises most of all of rocks - granites, gneiss, rhyolites, sandstone. There are some deposits of asbestos and mica (Kochan village and Pletena village), magnesium (Zhizhevo village), talc (Pletena village) but they have no industrial significance. The gneiss on the land of Pletena village, Dolen village and Kribul village attracts interest for its very good decorative properties and grindability and weather resistance properties. It is used for wall-covering of buildings and a part of the population of the municipality earns their living with the production and processing of gneiss.

To the south on the land of Godeshevo village runs Mesta River and in the east parts of the municipality - Dospat River. From the ancient times the man bowed down before water and made cult of it. Assyrian fountain dating 5000 years ago was found in the canyon of Komel River (Mesopotamia) and it consisted of individual tubs, cut in the hard rock, descending to the stream in a step-like manner. The two cultures, which are the most significant for the civilization nowadays - the Greek and the Roman - also made a cult of water. Undoubtedly the cult to water has reached its apogee in the Muslim beliefs. Muslims attribute the most sacred properties to water as life-giving, life-maintaining and purifying means. The tradition for the construction of fountains for drinking needs became popular at the times of the Ottoman Empire. Fountains were built not only in towns, but also on the roads, where water was accessible and free of charge to all. Such are the fountains on the territory of the Municipality of Satovcha too (over 1300). Many of them are in memory of a person who was dead and others were made just to invite the traveller to take a rest. Only in this part of Bulgaria there are pavilions built to the fountains and the local people will tell you to which clan they belong.

The big wealth of Dabrash are the magnificent coniferous and mixed forests, some of them are preserved in the Konski Dol Reserve and the protected area of the State Game-breeding Station Dikchan. The Law on Protected Territories (1998) provides for protection of many endangered plants and animals among which *Echium russicum*, *Gladiolus palustris*, *Soldanella rhodopaea*, 41 medicinal plants, 63 kinds of birds and 33 kinds of mammals. The geographical location of the State Game-breeding plant Dikchan, the softer Continental Mediterranean climate, the proximity to Dospat dam lake provide opportunity for free growing some kinds of game. The Game-breeding stations comprises 2 facilities for intensive development and use: in the old Dikchan (area about 800 ha) the main kind, which is bred is the red deer (the males with antlers reach 235 kg average weight and their antlers reach 91 cm and weigh 3 kg each) and the wild-boar (it has solid stumpy body with V-shaped head and bristly fur) and in Osinski kolibi the main kind is moufflon (it has slender firm body and big twisted antlers. Males reach 40-50 kg and females - 30-35 kg) and deers – the most numerous kind of the hoofed animals. Males and females differ significantly in appearance.

From the Pletenski Chark place, just next to the municipal tourist centre starts the informative route (ecological path) "the unknown Dabrash", which could be passed for four years and a half and ends at Dabrash Hotel. Along the route from the information boards or with the help of a guide you may learn very interesting and curious facts about local customs, culture and the main plant species and animal species. On the territory of the municipality is located the biggest natural birch massif of 1150 dca on the Balkans.

The municipality has rich cultural and historical heritage and natural landmarks. The queer rocky phenomena and the Roman bridges will capture your interest. The natural phenomenon Provirachkata, which applies for recording as one of the 100 Natural Phenomena of Bulgaria, is a rock formation - rocky arch possessing curative power and that's why it is used for rituals and for healing many diseases. The superstition tells that one must come here at dawn, accompanied by someone older. The sick person wriggles through the rock opening, takes off the old clothes and leaves them on the rocks around the arch and then goes home with new clothes. The belief is that one will abandon his disease as he abandons his clothes.

Archaeological surveys and excavations show that the area of Satovcha was inhabited from ancient times. Near Kochan village Necropolis was found with wide chronological borders, used both during the Iron Epoch and during the Roman Epoch. Necropolis of IV - III century B.C was found on the land of Satovcha village. A bronze helmet, a spear, fibulae, applications from bronze vessel and coins from the time of Alexander the Great.

10 Thracian helmets were found in whole South Bulgaria, six of them in the region of Satovcha village and Pletena village. One of them was found here in 1996 upon restoration of St. Atanas Monastery and now it is kept at the National Museum of History. The last helmet that was found is one of the most beautiful. Its ornaments and decoration are very exquisite and gorgeous. It dates back from IV-III c. B.C. It is made of gold-plated bronze, there are also cheek-protectors and knee protectors and it is also located at the National Museum of History.

The Municipality of Satovcha is one of the administrative - territorial units in Bulgaria, which was established according to Decree 2295/22.12.1978 of the Council of Ministers and is a part of the municipalities from the District of Blagoevgrad. The major administrative centre of the municipality is Satovcha village. It is 130 km away from Blagoevgrad and to go there you must travel along the second-class road Gotse Delchev - Razlog - Predela - Blagoevgrad. From the town of Gotse Delchev through Ilinden Checkpoint you may easily and quickly go to Greece

and the Aegean Sea. A third-class road Gotse Delchev - Dospat, about 30 km long and built in the beginning of XX century, crosses the municipality. (1914-1916).

Railway transport was still unavailable at the municipality. The nearest railway station Dobrinishte is 65 km away. The Municipality of Satovcha occupies a total area of 332,6 km².

The municipality comprises 14 settlements, including the administrative centre. The population of the municipality according to the last data from the census in 2011 was 15,444, which compared to the data of 2003 - – 17 500 persons shows a trend of decrease due mainly to the decrease in the birth-rate and immigration of the population in reproductive (between 400 and 500 persons from the municipality earn their living abroad - Spain, England, France, Greece, etc.).

The allocation of population according to its employability is quite interesting:

- under employable age - 0-16 - about 19%;
- at employable age - 16-63 - about 63%;
- above employable age - 63 + - about 13%;

Compared to the average data for Bulgaria, the figures about the municipality show quite high percentage of population at employable age. Unfortunately the share of the really active population is quite low - they are engaged mainly in agriculture and that's why many young people go abroad to earn their living.

The Chech's cuisine in the settlements of the municipality uses mainly products, which are produced in the region - beans, potatoes, vegetables, corn, meat, cheese, eggs, etc.

Foods made of dough are very typical:

- Butter round loaf - it is made of flour, cool water, salt and cooking-oil. Soft dough is made of the salt, water and flour. It is divided in balls; the last one should be bigger than the others. Then these balls are flattened out to make sheets as thin as possible. They are folded in four and put one over another. The bigger ball flattened out last is put in a baking dish, where cooking oil is spread and the other balls are put on it. It spread with egg and then baked.

- Couscous - paste product, which is made in bigger quantities as it is non-perishable. The technology of making couscous is quite complex and requires skills and knowledge. It is made of wheat meal and maize meal. After the processing couscous is sun-dried until it becomes hard. It is easy to store and is fit for over one year.

- *Klyuknato/ Chuchnato* - a type of syrupy cake, which is made for feasts and Bayram. Products: eggs, sugar, dry yeast, milk, and wheat meal.

- *Trahana* - mix wheat meal and yoghurt and add peppers, onion and other vegetables. This mixture should stay at least twenty days. When the dough is ready, shape it in small rolls and leave it to dry and then crush it with hands. For consumption it should be additionally processed.

- Hominy - meal made of wheat or maize meal. Then thickening with butter is made, cheese is added, or honey.

- Halvah - sweet course prepared mainly for wedding days, circumcision, *myuvlyuts*. It is made of wheat and maize meal, cooking oil and sugar.

Meals from milk products:

- *Kurkumach* - it is made of sheep's milk in the autumn, which is boiled with salt.

- Pepper in cheese (very typical for Vaklinovo village). It is made of diced green peppers, salted in advance and then mixed with thick yoghurt or cheese.

Meat dishes:

- *Kapichki* - local dish made of dry beans, which is first boiled and then dried meat, salt and seasoning is added.

- Meat dishes are most often stewed.

In the region of Checha contrary to the expectations originating from its geographic location in the Rhodopes, various dishes are made of potatoes but the patatnik is not typical for the region.

The geographical characteristics of the municipality make it appropriate for development of agriculture and tourism. The main local resources include the soils appropriate for growing technical crops, forests and pasture-grounds, preserved nature, the existing reserve for hunting tourism and monuments of culture.

The most valuable resource of the municipality, however, are the people who live here - natural, friendly, hospitable mountain-dwellers, typical Rhodope people. Labour makes them strong and the cultural traditions (songs, dances, customs), which they keep and develop, make them proud and motivated to live here and to protect their native land.

The closeness to Ilinden Border Checkpoint and the opportunity to cross border quickly and easily are excellent preconditions for expansion and enhancement of the links between people living on both sides of the border, for establishment of a real "Folklore Bridge" between the Satovcha Municipality and Kato Nevrokopi.

Satovcha village

1944 residents, including 301 children up to 14 years old (data about the number of the population in the settlements of the municipality are taken from the census in 2011).

Satovcha is located in the valley of the same name, at 950 m above sea-level. The legend says that Satovcha existed yet before Bulgaria fell under Ottoman yoke, at that time it was named Svatovica or Satovica. Small settlements existed in the adjacent areas Chrest, Zhidovo, Trapi, Radevi livadi. The legend says that after getting married young people from the different quarters left them and thus the Svatovo village was established (svat - matchmaker). According to other version the name of the village probably originates from the Ancient Bulgarian word "sad" (honeycomb) or from the personal name Sato. It was mentioned in the Ottoman register yet in the second half of 15 century.

In the vicinity of the village many ancient necropolises and remains from ancient and medieval settlements were established, declared as monuments of culture. In 1844 was built the Sveta Nedelya Church. In 1873 was opened the first monastery school and in 1893 - Modern Bulgarian non-clerical school. In 1974 the school became a high school, where more than 410 students study. The Community Centre Saint Cyril and Saint Methodius was established in 1926 and today it is a centre for spiritual culture of the municipality. Its activities include dancing and choral groups and it has a rich library.

In 1947 in Satovcha was opened a hospital with maternity ward, however today there is only municipal emergency care centre. The people earn their living mainly with agriculture - tobacco, potatoes, beans, breeding cows, sheep, and goats. There is a workshop for gneiss processing, textile factories, logging and wood-processing. There are 3 hotels in the village; the rural tourism may be further developed in order to use the natural resources of the municipality.

Municipal museum collection was made after the idea of Kiril Karakolev, local historian and teacher of history at the school in Satovcha. Many people donate exhibits and tell about the history, the customs and the culture of their birthplace. The museum collection presents several topics, which are interesting for the visitors: The Thracian heritage, the campaign of Alexander the Great, Orpheus, Veda Slovena, the religions, the Roman bridges and fountains, etc. In 1957 the Football Club Rhodopes was established, which took part in the local municipal and regional championships. Municipal competitions in volleyball, chess and other are organized.

Kochan village

In the today's centre, where the nursery building is located now, there was an inn (han), with the river and a Roman bridge nearby. At that place was the market of rams (koch is the Bulgarian word for a ram) with which the region was famous. And since the consonant "h" is not typical for the local Bulgarian speech, the sounding Koch-han, Kochan came out. There is also a legend about the three brothers Kocho, Valcho and Slavcho, who gave the names of the villages Kochan, Valkosel and Slashten. Some people connect the name with a corn-cob (kochan is the Bulgarian word for corn-cob) because the whole valley provided favourable conditions for growing maize. Actually the maize from Kochan in the years of hunger and drought was sold as far as Hadzhidimovo and Gotse Delchev. The stems of the plant reached the windows of the houses and all gardens were watered. However such etymology is not very credible.

Kochan village is a part of the Upper Chech, together with 6 nearby villages: Brashten, Vaklinovo, Lyubcha, Tsrancha, Zhizhevo and Osina. This is the largest village in the region. Initially the settlement was annexed to the Bulgarian state at the time of Khan Presian. After falling under Ottoman rule, the village became a part of the so called Dramska kaasa; the Ottoman rule continued until 1912 and the contacts with Greece gave the name of the kaasa (the district).

Three rivers run through the land of Kochan village - Dospat (Rata), Kochanska and Marulevska. The largest birch massif on the Balkans is also located here and the area features great biodiversity - 17 endemisms.

The village was described in details by the monk Parteniy and was also mentioned by Ami Boué, Felix Kanitz, James Bourchier, etc. Community Centre Prosveta was established in 1938. It has a library, computer hall, amateur dancing and choral groups, which take part at local, municipal, regional and national fairs, festivals and feasts. On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the community centre in 1998 was presented "Wedding of the Old Days in Kochan", which recalled the memories about the life, traditions and customs in the region. The village keeps also rich folklore - songs, legends, local culture and crafts - rope-making, bee-keeping, hemp-growing, fruit-growing, stock-breeding, etc.

There is a high school in the village, where about 350 students study from 1st to 12th grade. The Sports Club Kochan was established in 1960 and there are sections in football, chess, volleyball, etc.

Valkosel village

This is the oldest village in the region, as judged from its mentioning in a Turkish document issued 600 years ago. In the vicinity of the village were recorded 7 settlements from the Antiquity and remains from Roman military camp, which is located in the Kaleto place and dates back from II century. Another evidence about the ancient roots of the settlement is also a bridge, built at the Roman times, which is located over Bistritsa River.

The village is located 5 km away from Mesta River and the terrain is hilly. The population is about 2500 and it earns its living with agriculture, tobacco production, and in the past cotton-growing, too. Wheat, rye, beans and potatoes are also grown here.

In 1950 the local Community Centre Izgrev was established, quite later compared to other settlements. A dance group and a choir develop great activity here. Since 1974 the community centre has a library with 15 000 books. The School Hristo Botev was established in 1922 and in 1974 it was transformed into a high school. In the village there is also a kindergarten and a football team - Strela. One of the ways by which local people earn their living is also the development of textile industry on the territory of the settlement.

Slashten Village

Slashten Village is located in the South-West Rhodopes, 2 km away from the border with Republic of Greece. The name Slashten comes from the word "slasten (lustful)". The settlement is located in the lower part and torrential waters run freely down to it in the two gullies near the village.

In the past the village was located in the nearby locality Gastalaka. The region was inhabited yet from the Thracian time. Three Roman bridges were found nearby. In the past the road from Pazardzhik, through Nicopolis ad Nestum to the Greek town Tapir, passed through the village. The school in the village was established in 1926. First it was an elementary school but now it is a high school. The population is 1879 living in more than 360 houses, few of them are old. People earn their living by agriculture and particularly tobacco growing. In the past many vineyards were also grown.

Pletena village

Pletena is one of the oldest villages in the region of Checha. For the first time it was mentioned in a Turkish tax document from the second half of XV century with the name Pembekyoi (kyoi-settlement). But actually the land of the village was inhabited yet from the Ancient times. It is localized in the Ilinden locality. 6 Thracian helmets with skilful workmanship were found there. The settlement is located at 1000 m above the sea-level and the highest peak nearby is St. Peter near the Orpheus place. Thracian helmet was found also in Stanovica place.

Centuries-old trees could be seen in the Konski Dol Reserve. The largest river passing through the village is Bistritsa River, and in its valley are developed stock-breeding, agriculture, tobacco-growing, logging and gneiss processing.

The total arable areas on the land of the village are 3500 dca. There are few textile workshops, small workshops and a bakery in the village. In the mixed coniferous and broad-

leaved trees there are wildlife species such as bears, wolves, foxes and other representatives of the forest fauna.

There is a nursery, a kindergarten, a school and a community centre, which was established in 1937 and is named Prosveta 1937. It carries out various activities: from the Bulgarian amateur art activities to the male and female choral groups. There are 2-3 old-time houses in the village that are very interesting and in one of them is preserved a wood-carved ceiling, which is more than 200 years old. Another typical thing is that there is a bathing corner (amam) in each room of the house. The village is proud of the sport successes of the local football team.

Vaklinovo village

In the past the village was named Marulevo but in 1953 it was renamed Vaklinovo in honour of the late border guard Vergil Vaklinov and for him all people from the nearby village mowed the meadows so that the sanitary plane from Sofia may land.

The population is about 1100 and the number of houses is over 300. People earn their living here from tobacco-growing; there are also 4 textile workshops, one of which makes uniforms for the German army. In the past in the village there were 6 chief - shepherd with over 1000 heads of cattle but now there are not big herds. The craft "comb-making" was typical for the village. Men took part in the making of the combs for the looms by making the frame and women made the braiding of the comb. The products were sold from the Danube River to the Aegean Sea. With the abandonment of the looms, the local craft disappeared. There are preconditions for rural tourism development as there are several hotels but for the time being it is poorly developed.

Godeshevo village

Godeshevo is located in the far south part, in immediate proximity to the Greek border. The village was established in the beginning of 20th century. Its name is connected with the fact that it provides favourable conditions for stock-breeding and with the many spouts. About 14 km of the land of the village coincide with the Bulgarian - Greek border. The highest peak on the land is Babela peak - 1200 m. The local population makes its living mainly with tobacco-growing. The village has an elementary school, a community centre and a local football team Granit. Typical for the house is the building of stone houses, which has been preserved until nowadays.

5 km away from the village is the Banite place with a mineral spring with naturally fizzy water, which flows into Mesta River. An interesting place in the region of the village is a deep gully with high rocks known as the Cheshmata na Dyadkata (The Old Man's Fountain). The landmark of the village is the plane-tree, which is more than 400 years old and is located near the mosque.



A stone house in Godeshevo village.

Dolen village

Dolen village is located in the west part of the Rhodopes, 26 km away from Gotse Delchev and 128 km away from the district centre Blagoevgrad. This is a high mountain village at 1020 m above the sea level.

Dolen village was established in XVI century by Bulgarians who tried to escape from the forcible conversion to Mohammedanism. At the time of the Bulgarian National Revival (XVIII - XIX century) the village flourished and the local people were engaged in tobacco-breeding and stock-breeding, goldsmith's trade and carter's trade (transportation of goods). For the preserved houses from the time of the National Revival, in 1977 the village was declared Historical and Architectural Reserve. The Reserve includes 70 buildings that are monuments of culture. Typical for the houses in Dolen are the projecting part of the upper floor and the wood-carving on the ceilings of some houses. Among the landmarks of the village is also the St. Nikola Church, built in 1834, along with monastery school, which is impressive for its iconostasis and its icons. The narrow cobblestone streets are very attractive and look just like two centuries ago. Other interesting sights are the Kavalite crossroad, the Nikolovska fountain and the market street. Dolen is preferred destination for tourists who seek quietness and contact with nature. The village offers accommodation in old authentic houses.

Tuhovishta village

The village is near the Greek border. The origin of the name is unknown. Some time ago on one of the heights near the village there was customs point and now a part of the land of the village coincides with the state border. Here comes the name of the road, which passes by the village - "Greek path".

The holiday of the village is Pryadoy, which is celebrated on the third Saturday of June (the first Saturday - Valkosel; the second - Slashten; the third - Godeshevo).

The population is about 900, many famous masters of stonework were born here. Almost all houses are made of stone, the first floor is always made of stone. The population makes its living mainly with tobacco-growing. The variety Nevrokopska basma was replaces with the

variety Krumovgradski as the Krumovgradski variety has lower nicotine and tar content. The land of the village is the largest in the municipality (28 000 dca) There is a textile factory, a kindergarten and a primary school in the village. Ecological path is also built: Tuhovishta - Pchelina - Beloto dere (Dospat River). There is local football team Cranichar, established in the middle of the 70ies. Chess tournaments on local level are organized:

Literature:

1. Travel notes of Vasil Kanchov - Trip along the valleys of Struma, Mesta and Bregalnitsa, Bitolsko, Prespa and Ohridsko.
2. Guide book - Informative route - the Unknown Dabrash. Project: Satovcha - Bridge between Countries and Tourist Destinations
3. Andon Iskrenov - Kochan - short review
4. Brochure - Municipality of Satovcha

Ethnography and traditions in Kato Nevrokopi

Constantinos I. Karipis

Bachelor in Social Anthropology and History. Master of Tourism Planning, Management and Policy

1 General Information About Kato Nevrokopi

Nevrokopi "Lower Nevrokopi" as it is known in Greek, (Bulgarian: Зърнево, Zarnevo) is a municipality and town within that municipality in the northwest section of the Drama region and a part of East Macedonia and Thrace, Greece.

Before the 2011 local government reform, it was the largest municipality in all of Greece, covering an area of 873.552 km² (337.28 sq mi). The municipality of Kato Nevrokopi at the 2001 census report had 8,026 inhabitants and the town of Kato Nevrokopi has a population of 2.072 inhabitants.

Kato Nevrokopi, borders with Bulgaria at its North, with the municipality of Protsotsani (Drama) at South and at the West with the Prefecture of Serres.



The most important villages at Kato Nevrokopi are:

- Kato Nevrokopi (capital city) with 2.072 inhabitants
- Volakas with 1.190 inhabitants
- Perithori with 833 inhabitants
- Lefkogeia with 573 inhabitants
- Kato Vrontou with 528 inhabitants
- And Ochiro with 510 inhabitants

On the territory of the municipality are located several abandoned villages, including Monastiri and Mavrochori

Natural Heritage

Kato Nevrokopi has a unique Natural Heritage due its basin (known as the Basin of Nevrokopi). The whole area of Kato Nevrokopi is called "a monument of nature" as it is surrounded by high hills, with

rich flora and fauna. It is also known for its polar cold weather, and temperatures in winter fall to minus 20 degrees Celsius.

In the centre of the municipality rises Mount Falakro 2.232 metres (or Bozdag in Bulgarian), one of the highest mountains in Greece, from where you can see neighbouring Bulgaria.

Kato Nevrokopi Municipality has a great Natural heritage and some areas are still virgin. This makes the municipality to have a great resource to use for the future generations and it can increase its economy with sustainable development. The goal is to develop an new form of economical development at the municipality that respects and uses sustainable the natural recourses.

Economy

The municipality of Kato Nevrokopi is mainly an agricultural Municipality based on the production of potato and beans. Those two products are known all over Greece and especially Kato Nevrokopi's Potato have the reputation of the best Potato in Greece.

One more figure of the local economy is the Marble. The Marble at Volax is one of the best Marbles in the world. The mining of the Marble has many benefits at the local economy, but it has been criticized due to the major damage that it causes to the Environment.

The last years Kato Nevrokopi has started to attract many visitors due to the Snow Resort of Falakro and its unique Natural and Cultural recourses. Many local festivals attract visitors all over Greece and the tourism sector at the municipality has developed impressively the last ten years.

Culture

The municipality of Kato Nevrokopi is a cultural Mosaic that includes traditions and cultures from many areas and many cultural groups. Each cultural group has its own rituals, gastronomy, festivals even and linguistic differences. This makes the Municipality of Kato Nevrokopi a very interesting area and has a very rich cultural heritage.

It is very important to understand that the cultural rituals are connected with the nature and the rebirth of it. The symbolism and the connection between Mother Nature, religion and rituals have to do with the Natural Heritage of the area that it is seen at most agriculture societies. The characteristic of an agriculture society is that people and nature live together and is connected in everyday life. The bond between Nature and Society can't be broken. Religious rituals that take place and repeat them self every year are for keeping this bond between the two basic parts.

Rituals also are taking place for other reasons more practical and not so symbolic. One of the most important reasons that rituals take place at the Municipality of Kato Nevrokopi is to keep social bonding together. It makes the people of the local societies of Kato Nevrokopi to feel that they belong in a Cultural group that has basic differences than the other once in the region. In several cases like at the Cultural group of the Pontiac origin populations and the Minor Asian populations the rituals have to do and with the nostalgia of there lost mother land and have a great didactic role for the future generations.

Impressive is that the population of the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi participate at the local fests, rituals and for many of them it is a part of there every day life. Cultural Heritage and every day life is one at the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi. The local authorities try and support the local cultural union's fantasia and with other type of support it can. Local

authorities and the people of Kato Nevrokopi are trying and succeed to keep there unique traditions alive.

2. Cultural Anthropogeography of the Municipality of Kato Nevrokopi

The cultural groups of Kato Nevrokopi

The municipality of Kato Nevrokopi has a grate variety of cultural groups that live at the region. The most important cultural groups of Kato Nevrokopi are the Pontiac Origin populations, the Native populations and the Minor Asian populations.

All the cultural groups of the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi have there own traditions, festivals, gastronomy, musical identity and linguistic differences. We could say that the area is a cultural mosaic. This mosaic was created after the Balkan wars at and the treaty of Lausanne at 1923 between Greece and Turkey. With the treaty of Lausanne Greek populations that lived at Minor Asia and the Black sea region had to leave Turkey and immigrate at the Northern part of Greece, specially the Macedonian region and Thrace.

As a result of this population exchange was that the area of Kato Nevrokopi become a mixture of cultures that keep there identity and heritage living until today. Kato Nevrokopi municipality can easily be said that is one cultural mosaic form populations that lived for thousands of years far and now live and coexist in the small geographical region that is Nevrokopi

The Pontiac Origin populations

The Pontic Greeks known and as Pontian Greeks is an cultural group who traditionally lived in the region of Pontus, on the shores of Turkey's Black Sea and also Crimea region which referred to as 'Northern Pontus' which Pontus proper 'South Pontus', together unite Pontian Greeks as a whole. The Populations at the black sea region spoke the Pontic Greek dialect, a form of the standard Greek language which, due to the remoteness of Pontus, has had a process of linguistic evolution different from that of the rest of the Greek world. The Pontic Greeks have had a continuous presence in the region of Pontus from at least 700 BC until the population exchange at 1922.



Map of Pontus Region

The culture of Pontus has been strongly influenced by the region. The most important cities of the Pontus region were Trapezunda, Samsunda, Kerasounda and Sinopi. The populations there were highly educated and cosmopolitan.

The Musical tradition of the Pontian region populations retains elements of the musical traditions of the Ancient Greece, the Byzantium Empire and the Caucasus region of Kars especially. Possibly there is an underlying influence from the native peoples who lived in the area before the Greeks as well, but this is not clearly established.

Musical tradition, language patterns and other cultural traits, were influenced by the topography of Pontos. The mountains and rivers of the area impeded communication between Pontian Greek communities and caused them to develop in different ways from the rest of the Hellenic world due to their isolation. Also significant in the shaping of Pontian music was the proximity of various non-Greek populations on the fringes of the Pontic area. For this reason we see that musical style of the east Pontos has significant differences from that of the west or southwest Pontos. The Pontian music of Kars, for example, shows a clear influence from the music of the Caucasus and elements from other parts of Anatolia. The music and dances of Turks from Black Sea region are very similar to Greek Pontic and some songs and melodies are common. Except for certain laments and ballads, this music is played primarily to be danced to.

A very important part of Pontic music is the Acritic songs, heroic or epic poetry set to music that emerged in the Byzantine Empire, probably in the 9th century. These songs celebrated the exploits of the Akritai, the frontier guards defending the eastern borders of the Byzantine Empire. The municipality of Kato Nevrokopi the last years has started a festival at the summer time and has named it Akritia festival, where traditional and cultural groups from all over the Municipality dance and make other cultural events. This festival has shown that tradition is not a static fact and changes and evolves like the society does.

Musical instruments of Pontian origin populations

As we said before, music is very important for the Pontian populations. The musical difference has to do with many factors and their music is easily recognized from other traditional music of the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi.

The most popular instrument in the Pontian musical collection is the kemenche or lyra, which is related closely with other bowed musical instruments of the medieval West, like the Kit violin and Rebec. Also important are other instruments such as the Angion or Tulum (a type of Bagpipe), the davul, a type of drum, the Shiliavrin, and the Kaval or Ghaval (a flute-like pipe).

The Violin was very popular in the Bafra region and all throughout west Pontos. One more very important musical instrument is the zurna that existed in several versions which varied from region to region, with the style from Bafra sounding differently due to its bigger size. The Kemane, an instrument closely related to the one of Cappadocia, was highly popular in southwest Pontos and with the Pontian Greeks who lived in Cappadocia. Finally worth mentioning are the Defi (a type of tambourine), Outiand in the region of Kars, the clarinet.

The most popular musical instruments from the Pontus Population



Lyra

Zournas

Tabul



Aggion or Touloum

Kaval or Gaval

The Pontiac dances

Pontian dance retains aspects of Persian and Greek dance styles. The dances called Horoi (Greek: Χοροί) and it means literally "Dance" in Ancient Pontian, Modern Greek languages and modern Turkish, are circular in nature and each is characterized by distinct short steps.

A unique aspect of Pontian dance is the tremoulo, which is a fast shaking of the upper torso by a turning of the back on its axis. Like other Greek dances, they are danced in a line and the dancers form a circle. Pontian dances also resemble Persian and Middle Eastern dances because they are not led by a single dancer. The most popular Pontian dances are the Tik, Serra, Pyrecheios (war dance) and the Kotsari or Omal dance in Turkish.

Minor Asian Populations of Kato Nevrokopi

The minor Asian populations of Kato Nevrokopi are not homogenous, they are mostly coming from various places of the Minor Asia. Some populations are coming from west Minor Asia and some other came latter from the interior part of Turkey, know as East Anatolia. All this populations had major cultural and linguistic differences and between them self and after with the native populations that lived in the Municipality of Kato Nevrokopi.

All started after the Greek Turkish war and the 1923 population exchange agreement between Greece and Turkey was based upon religious identity. It involved the Greek Orthodox citizens of Turkey and the Muslim citizens of Northern Greece and the island of Crete. It was a major compulsory population exchange, or agreed mutual expulsion.

Around 1.5 million Anatolian Greeks and 500,000 Muslims in Greece, most of who were forcibly made refugees and de jure denaturalized from their homelands.

The Cappadocian Greek Populations of Kato Nevrokopi

Cappadocian Greeks are an ethnic Greek community native to the geographical region of Cappadocia in **central-eastern Anatolia**, roughly the Nevşehir Province and surrounding provinces of modern Turkey. The Cappadocian Greeks traditionally spoke the Cappadocian Greek language, however after centuries of Ottoman rule there were many bilingual Cappadocian Greeks such as the “Kouvoukliotes” who were always Greek speakers and spoke Turkish with a strong Greek accent, and there were Cappadocian Greeks who only spoke the Turkish language and had given up the use of Greek centuries earlier, known as the Karamanlides. These Greeks had been living in Cappadocia since antiquity and following the Greek-Turkish population exchange of the 1920’s a majority of the Cappadocian Greeks were relocated into the borders of modern Greece. Today their descendants can be found at the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi, keeping their traditions from generation to generation.

The Cappadocian Greeks had been isolated from the rest of the Greek-speaking world for centuries and this has made their culture, way of life, and customs somewhat distinctive.

Their culture has been strongly influenced by the topography of its different regions. The Cappadocian Greeks have distinctive traditional songs and dances which are still performed in the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi and other areas of Northern Greece.



Map of Cappadocia

2.4 Native populations of Kato Nevrokopi

The Native populations of Kato Nevrokopi geographically are found at the villages that are at the mountains. Most of these villages are farming communities that were isolated due to the natural characteristics of the area. Some similarities are found in traditional events and in music with the south part, near by Bulgarian populations. The lack of borders that existed for more than 400 years at the Ottoman empire made these populations, Greek speaking,

Bulgarian speaking and others to develop an homogenous cultural background, exchanging and adopting cultural characteristics from each other.

Traditions and events of the area are seen and at other municipalities of the prefecture of Drama and some of them are common and at the other side of the border line in Bulgaria. That shows that the cultural connection between the native populations in Greece and Bulgaria are very strong, even if they were isolated at the cold war period. From 2007, when the Bulgarian Republic joined the European Union and the populations can travel from one side to the other this cultural bond that for so many years was cut, can now develop again. It is a change for the populations of the region, Greeks and Bulgarians to let the past back and understand that they have many things in common. The lack of borders that provides European Union can develop again the natural balance that for so many years existed and created a very interesting and unique cultural mosaic in this small region of Europe.

3. The Cultural Heritage of Kato Nevrokopi

The Cultural Heritage of Kato Nevrokopi is connected with the Natural Heritage of the area and the traditions and beliefs that brought with them the variety of cultural groups such as the Pontians and the minor Asian populations. All year long cultural events take place and have to do with:

- The re-birth of Nature,
- The Agriculture production and
- Religious events and beliefs.

One of the most important characteristics is that the majority of the local population takes place at this traditional event and rituals. The connection between tradition and every day life is very strong at the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi.

Most of the traditions and rituals at the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi are based at the ancient Dionysian ritual that for thousands of years took place at this area and still has many remains at the today's rituals

The Dionysian ritual has 3 basic steps that each participant has to pass:

- Ecstasy
- Methexis
- Lytrosis

Ecstasy for the Religion is an altered state of consciousness characterized by greatly reduced external awareness and expanded interior mental and spiritual awareness which is frequently accompanied by visions and emotional/intuitive (and sometimes physical) euphoria.

Although the experience of ecstasy is usually brief in time there are records of such experiences lasting several days or even more, and of recurring experiences of ecstasy during one's lifetime. Subjective perception of time, space and/or self may strongly change or disappear during ecstasy.

At the philosophical view ecstasy usually means "outside-of-itself." One's consciousness, for example, is not self-enclosed, one can be conscious of an other person, who falls well outside of one's own self.

In a sense, consciousness is usually, "outside of itself," in that its object is not itself. This is in contrast to the term enstasis which means from standing-within-oneself which relates to contemplation from the perspective of a speculator.

This understanding of enstasis giving way to the example of the use of the "ecstasy" as that one can be "outside of oneself" with time; In temporalizing, each of the following: the past (the 'having-been'), the future (the 'not-yet') and the present (the 'making-present') are the "outside of itself" of each other.

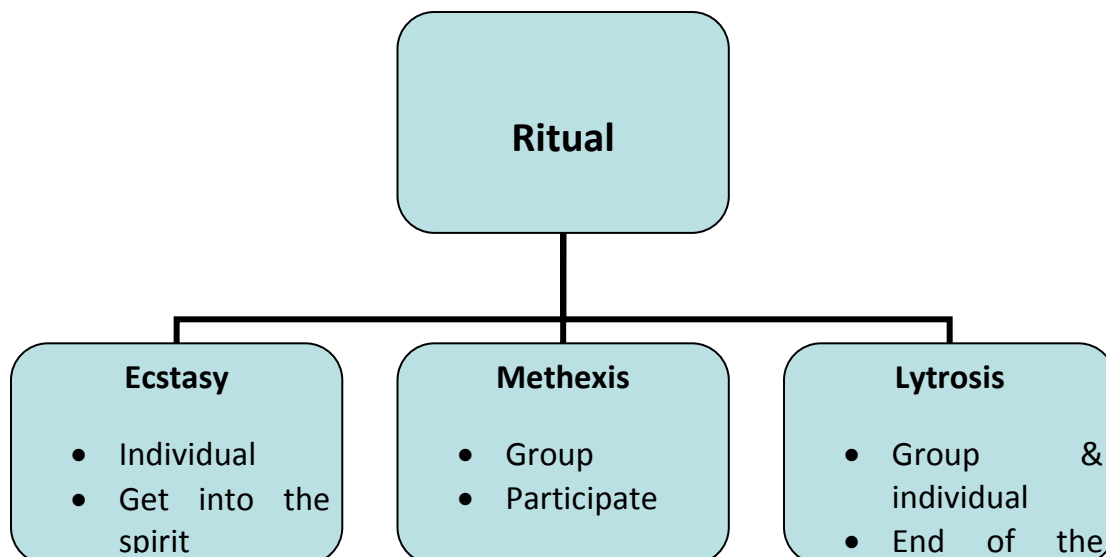
At the rituals of Kato Nevrokopi we can see clearly that Ecstasy has to do with the part that the participants are trying to state of consciousness characterized by greatly reduced external awareness and expanded interior mental and spiritual awareness which is frequently accompanied by visions and emotional/intuitive. All this can be done with the help of ecstatic music and dances. The participants try to go "in" the part of the "hero" and the drama that the ritual symbolizes.

Methexis, has to do with the "group sharing" at the ritual. Ecstasy is and emotion that is private but at the other hand Methexis is a sharing emotion. At most of the rituals at Kato Nevrokopi we can view that, Methexis is been used when the participants play all together parts of the role that they have to do. Originating from Greek theatre, the audience participates, creates and improvises the action of the ritual and the same think is and at the modern traditional events and rituals of Kato Nevrokopi.

Methexis has to do with the participation of the audience at the ritual. It is one of the most important steps of the Dionysian ritual that has to do with the Drama and the Theater. The participants get a "part" role play. In one way they are the "Actors" of the ritual.

The last part of every ritual taken hold at the area of Kato Nevrokopi has to do with the Lytroisis. Lytroisis is the third and the last of the Drama. The actors- Participants finish the story and the "Hero is winning" The story- Ritual finishes like it should be. The Balance of Nature and the circle of live continue like it should.

All rituals at the area of the Municipality of Kato Nevrokopi have this 3 basic parts. Some rituals have to do with satiric events and some other more religious events. The most important is that all rituals have to do with the bond that has to exist between the Society. All rituals have a basic role to socialize individuals and make them a part of the social group.



4. Cultural Events at the municipality of Kato Nevrokopi

The cultural events and rituals at the Municipality of Kato Nervokopi take place all the year. Some villages such as Volakas, is famous for its unique and very interesting cultural events. Volakas is the second biggest village of the municipality. For many years it was isolated due to the area that it is, at mountain Falakro. This isolation made it a unique place to develop traditions and rituals that are not found in the rest of Greece.

The most traditional events take place at the period of Christmas, New Year and seven days later (Theophania period). Most of the events maybe connected with the Orthodox religion but they have origin from the ancient Greek period and the Dionysus worship.

Most of the traditional events have to do with the re birth of Mother Nature and the Agriculture calendar. Some of the traditions are satiric and some of them are to create a bond between the local society.

During the two weeks between Christmas and Epiphany there are series of rituals and customs that revile in the village of Volakas. This period is connected and with the modern Orthodox religion rituals and with ancient traditions that for thousands of years exist at this area.

Arapides (black man)

The custom of Arapides is a well known and takes place annually on the 7th of January. It includes impressive masquerades that take the viewers back at the Dionysian times. The custom of Arapides is a Satiric ritual, for this reason it has to do with fun and the enjoying of life.

Activities that are taking place at the time of the Arapides is endless teasing, dancing eating and of course drinking. Most historians believe that this tradition comes from the time of the ancient God Dionysus and has to do with the re-birth of Mother Nature. Rooted in ancient worship, the ritual involves performances by four groups: *arapīdes*, masked men in black capes holding wooden swords; *gkiligkes*, men wearing women's local

dress; *pappoudes*, men wearing men's local dress; and *tsoliades* or *euzōnoi*, men dressed as guards.

Starting in the morning, the assembled troupe visits each house in the village and dances with the head of the household, who then presents a donation. In the afternoon the troupe performs in the village central square and then the attendees join in the dancing, which lasts into the night.

Arkoudes

At the 8th of January takes place the satirical representation of a local wedding and the custom of the arkoudes.

This fest has to do with the happiness of life and fertility with a satiric way that takes us back at the Dionysian ancient rituals.

Mami (midwife):

At the same period takes place and the tradition of the old lady mami, a fact that shows that these customs are related to the wish for fertility and a good beginning of the agriculture production. This custom represents the birth of spring and nature and the end of the winter.

Holy Spirit day festival

The Holy Spirit day is a very important day for the Village and the residents of Volakas. During this day, the locals celebrate on the homonymous chapel at Mount Falakro.

The events include the Kourbani (traditional food that they cook and share all the people together) songs and dances. The most impressive is the horserace's that day form the young's of the village. The horse ride starts from the village of Volakas, it continues until the chapel at Mount Falakro and after they return at the central square of the village where the riders make a horse riding contest.

The Borderland's celebration (Akritia)

The Borderland's celebration is the latest festival in Kato Nevrokopi, that has started the last years, were a series of parallel athletic and cultural events take place. Traditional songs, dances and fests are taking place at the period of the Akritia festival.

Period of the Epiphany Christmas and New year's period

Traditional rituals and customs also revive during this period and at the village of Pagoneri. The custom that takes place in the village of Pagoneri is the custom of Arapides. The Arapides are animal masquerades that hang bells around their waist. Characters of this masquerades are the Gifissa (gypsy woman), the Nifi (Bride, wich happens to be the only character with the face uncovered) and the Giatros (the Doctor).

The events end under the deafening sound of the bells, the pipes and the drums. Everyone dances during the fest and a symbolic theatrical event takes place during the ritual such as the kidnapping of the child , the injury of one Arapides etc. the feast continues until very late.

Annex

Traditional costumes of Kato Nevrokopi

Cappadocia Origin populations



Female Costume (pic1)



Male Cappadocian Costume (pic2)



Traditional dance Cappadocia (pic3).

Pontus Origin populations



Female traditional costume from Pontus (pic4)



Male traditional costume from Pontus (pic5)



Traditional costumes from Volakas (pic6)



Arkoudes traditional festival (pic7)



Arapides traditional costumes (pic8)



Traditional festival of Holly Spirit day (pic9& 10)



Bibliography

- **Μάριος Δ. Μαυροειδής**, *Ανθολογία ελληνικής παραδοσιακής μουσικής*. Εκδόσεις Fagotto 1994.
- **Christopher Moseley**: *Encyclopedia of the world's endangered languages*, **Abingdon 2007**
- **Τσάτερ Μέλβιλ, 1925**, «**1922: ο μεγάλος ξεριζωμός**», στο National Geographic, (Νοεμ). Ανατύπωση 2007 από το ελλ. τμήμα.
- **Τζάκης Δ. 2003**, «*Το Κλέφτικο και το Ρεμπέτικο τραγούδι: εθνικοί Μύθοι και Λαογραφικές Αναζητήσεις*» **στο Τέχνες II: Επισκόπηση Ελληνικής Μουσικής και Χορού**, τ. Γ, ΕΑΠ, Πάτρα
- **Γκέφου - Μαδιανού, Δήμητρα**, *Πολιτισμός και εθνογραφία "Από τον εθνογραφικό ρεαλισμό στην πολιτισμική κριτική"*. Επανέκδοση: "Ελληνικά Γράμματα", 1999.
- **Samuel Baud- Bony**, *Δοκίμιο για το Ελληνικό Δημοτικό Τραγούδι*, Πελοποννησιακό Λαογραφικό Ίδρυμα, Ναύπλιο 1996.
- **Picken, Laurence**, *Instrumental polyphonic folk music in Asia Minor*, Proceedings of Royal Musical Association 1953
- **Picken, Laurence**, *Folk musical instruments of Turkey*, Londers 1975
- **Konstantinos I. Karipis, Emmanouil N. Tsimitakis and Sofoklis G. Skoultzos**. *The Contribution of Visitor Information Centres to promoting natural and cultural resources in emerging tourism destinations*. International Journal of Tourism Policy, Vol. 2, No. 4, 2009.
- **Karipis I. Konstantinos, Tsimitakis N. Emmanouil and Skoultzos G. Sofoklis**. *The contribution of Visitor Information Centres (VICs) in promoting Natural and Cultural recourses in Emerging Tourism Destinations. Case study: the Prefecture of Drama, Greece*. The 4th World Conference for Graduate Research in Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure Antalya, Turkey, April 23 - 27, 2008

Presentation of students from
the National School of Ancient Languages and Culture

Visit to Pletena village

Presentation by Chaya Koleva

We are in the beautiful Bulgarian region in the heart of the Rhodopes i.e. in the Municipality of Satovcha. The morning is quite breezy, the first sun rays sneak past the slopes and it seems that the sun, the sky, the mountains, the air, the whole nature welcomes us. We are at the onset of our scientific expedition and from the mother land we draw inspiration along the way of fulfilment of our noble and beneficial mission - to get to know the life and the spirit of people who live here. The place is not casual and now I understand why there are so many legends, myths and songs that were born exactly here and why these lands are so special. It is not difficult to feel the divinity of the place, it is not necessary to have super abilities, we just have to be people.

To establish the ling nature - human most of all we have to be humans within the real meaning of that word. And what does a human mean? To be human means to be able to feel, scent, open your sensation and it would happen most strongly when we are close to the nature, when its beauty satiates the spiritual hunger. It is a sacred moment when facing the majestic Rhodopes, breathless to the remarkable view, we merge with the nature and leave this overwhelming beauty pass through our whole body and now we are one. The greatest magic - when God and human merge under the power of something unexplainable.

Our first stop is Pletena village, located in the north part of Satovcha Municipality. According to the local people there are several theories for the origin of its name. The first theory is that it comes from the Russian work "pleta", which means stove and the second is connected with the Bulgarian language and the word "plet", which means the traditional technique of building houses. We are kindly and hospitably welcomed in the village, we have the opportunity to meet two native inhabitants, both very interesting in their own way. There is the local teacher of Literature Rusi Kadrev and self-taught master of fountains - Ismail. They are visibly excited and flattered with the interest to their life.

Master Ismail looks somewhat coarse at first sight but at the same his eye express real goodness. He studied until 7th grade and built with his own hands more than 100 fountains on this land. Actually the numerous fountains impress even the most unprepared tourist, all of them are as lovely as could be and none of them look alike. This positively speaks about the cult to water that exist in these areas. Water as life-asserting power, water as a witness of human destinies, of the history and of time. Obviously the local population has felt the specific function of the natural element. The master shares with us the secrets of his craft. Building a fountain is not a random act, it must be always preceded by a particular occasion, often in memory of a late, in honour of someone, for good luck. The fountain is built at a place, specified by the boss. It is made "without key", which means that although made and financed by one person, the fountain is for common use by all people. Everyone

may use the benefits of water and no one may "lock" it and take power over it. When the fountain is ready, a small feast is organized - offering for health. While master Ismail speaks, he uses a very lively language, different dialect, words, which I have never heard. In the local dialect the sound "ya" becomes "e" and the letter "h" is often being missed.

The last message of Ismail Ibishev is noble i.e. in every creation and in every building one must put such values as love and faith, otherwise it would not live long. The builder builds in his creations himself, his own spirit and his own thoughts. In other words he says that every deed, which is not based on goodness, is sentenced to failure.

When we ask him for a photo with him, master Ismail cordially smiles and "to refrain from giving his airs" and "not to mix with himself" he adjusts his hat.

Our second interlocutor is Rusi Kadrev, the teacher of Bulgarian Language and Literature. His face is expressive, with warm and kind features. My first impressions are that this is a man who really cares for his native land. A proof about that is his old register, in which he carefully collected every article for the village and has made up a sort of vocabulary of the dialect words. His life is devoted to studying and protecting the reading and writing.

Provoked from my questions about Veda Slovena, the teacher told me the following:

In the beginning of 1980ies, the Minister Aleksandar Fall sent to Pletena a man to study the authentic folklore because Pletena village was designated by the prominent Stefan Verkovich as the place where unique Bulgarian folklore songs were created. It proves that there has always been scientific interest to the village.

In one song, which has 5000 lines, the name of Ali Asanov - Valkodeletsa is mentioned. This man was a Bulgarian Mohammedan born in Pletena. The song was sung in the autumn, when shepherd set off with their flock to the Aegean area. They sang this song all the time, they started in Pletena and finished at the end of their journey.

While speaking the teacher Kadrev makes pauses, looks at the gorgeous hills and starts again and it looks like he draws energy from them. The thing that really makes me happy is the idea of the local intellectuals for the celebration of the 140 anniversary from the publication of Veda Slovena. This event will involve all young people in the region. The teacher has assigned to his students in the form of competitions to collect as much as possible folk songs connected with that region. The role of the teacher is the role of an enlightener - the one who shows the path to his students and here thanks to Rusi Kadrev the path to nobleness of spirit is clearly marked.

It is getting dark and the day passes away and fatigue is felt at its end, but sweet fatigue from what we have seen, many impressions and the meeting of a new world. I am tired but inspired! My mind still thinks over the whole information, which the day gave me. The feeling that in my home country there are such places that keep the memory of the kin, makes me proud. And in this moment the sacred words of the great Bulgarian writer Aleko Konstantinov would sound full of meaning and energy i.e.

"Know your motherland to love it!"

Meetings with Tsanko Sokolov Madzhirski, Kochan village.

Presentation by Trendafil Krastanov

This is Tsanko Madzhirsko whom we met several days ago in Kochan village. He acquainted us with the songs of this region, which are an integral part of its life. He was the leader and a singer of amateur groups in the village for over 30 years - since 1970. Uncle Tsanko inherited the music and the singing from his sisters, who always sang while they worked. With great excitement and tears in his eyes he told us how the amateurs fames the village at holidays and feasts with their ring dances - the male dances that were always performed to the accompaniment of *zourla* (a kind of clarinet) and a drum and the female dances, which impressed with the special fleetness of movement.

In his hands Uncle Tsanko turned over the pages of two collections with songs from the region, which he collected or wrote. At present the collections are kept in the community centre of Kochan village.

Meeting with Grandma Ivanka, Satovcha village

Presentation by Mihaela Boyadzhieva

This is Grandma Ivanka from Satovcha who is 85 years old and is one of the first forewomen. She takes up music for 50 years and is the founder of the group for "high singing". She started signing while she was 5-6 years old, while listening her mother, who was singing while working on the field. She learnt how to catch second voice of the songs, the so called "dragging". She knows 4-5 songs "in the high", which she learn on her own and additionally she recorded about one hundred songs in a notebook. She explained to us that these melodies are sung by three women and may not be sung alone. These songs are never recorded but they are kept by the singers, shared Grandma Ivanka.

She told us about the ritual "Butterfly", which they performed in the years of draught and the interesting thing is that in this area the ritual is performed not only by orphan girls but also by boys.

The best thing, which we learnt from Grandma Ivanka is that the traditions, the values and the old songs are transferred to the generations. The singer boasted that she taught her elder granddaughter to sing one very beautiful song - "Kitchitse, Kitchitse"

Meeting with Maria Chobanova, Satovcha village

Presentation by Mihaela Boyadzhieva

Maria Chobanova is a singer of today of the songs "in high". She was born on January 1st in the region of Dikchan. For 10 years now she has been leading the group for "high singing" in Satovcha. She managed on her own to gather a group of talented singers and they won gold medal at the Sofia Spring Festival. For these songs Maria tells us that they used to sing them on the field, while hoeing, on Petrovden and when forests were planted. They also sing songs for the bigger feasts such as Lazarovden, Easter Day and St George's Day. The songs are so many that their number is unknown. They sung them in groups, alternating with each other and if there were 4 *vikachki* ('high' singers), they started singing "in high".

Maria was 10-11 years old when she heard the first song from her mother. This song was for the feast Lazarovden. The other songs she learnt from her grandmother from her aunts and from Iliya Terziev, who has great contribution for this musical phenomenon - the "high" singing. The singer shared that the songs were recorded so that their melodies are remembered. She spoke in all sincerity that in the sleepless nights these songs are her therapy. This is a proof of the spiritual wealth, represented by the "high" songs in this region.

Meeting with Gyilezara and Tinka, Vaklinovo village

Presentation by Krasimira Shantova

In Vaklinovo told us about music and amateur groups, as well as for the local customs and recipes. During the Bayram, as Gyulezara and Tinka from Vaklinovo told us, the girls played two by two and sang songs (the most famous of which is "Zagalil se") by holding each others arms. They also made cradles on their own on a poplar tree.

During the Bayram days in this village beans is boiled, stewed meat with rice is prepared, because according to Gyulezara "these are liked most". Banitsa is also made. "We call it banitsa and it is very good! If you want leeks, you put leeks in the rice and it is even better!"

They told us about these recipes and they treated us to "pepper cheese" and we must admit that we enjoyed it. They told us the recipe too. In the next day I was touched because our kind friend Simona from Kochan village prepared and treated us to the banitsa for which the two women told us.

In Vaklinovo we learnt about the traditions and the customs related to the St. George's Day, which is named here Gergiden. Girls join the round dance. Early in the morning women go to the Chukata area, pick up crane's bill, and roll down the grass for health. Cradles are made on the trees and they rock there so that their back is healthy. A green stick is tied to the people in the village who breed sheep and cows so that they may be healthy until the next Gergiden. All people - young and old - join the feast. Thus there is succession and the traditions are kept for the next generations.

About the language in the region of Checha

Presentation by Georgi Mitov

The language in the region of Satovcha is influenced by the speech of Pirin and the West Rhodopes, as well as the speech of the Aegean immigrants. The language here has several typical characteristics:

- Letter "h" in the beginning of the words is omitted.
арно (arno) instead of харно (harno)
леб (leb) instead of хляб (hlyab)
- The letter Ъ in the words has transformed into "e"
место (mesto) – from мѣсто
леб (leb) – from хлѣбъ
- The accent goes on the first syllabus

на́черта (nacherta) - draw
па́стра (pastra) - *clean*
че́шма (chesma) - fountain

Example:

Чешмата се строи за хаир. Водътъ, която тече у чешмите е пастра. (Fountain is built for good luck. Water from fountains is clean)



European Territorial Cooperation Programme
Greece-Bulgaria 2007-2013
 INVESTING IN OUR FUTURE

The Programme is co-funded by the European Union (ERDF)
 and National Funds of Greece and Bulgaria





ΓΕΦΥΡΑ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ • FOLKLORE BRIDGE
**ΦΟΛΚΛΟΡΗ
 ΜΟΣΤ**











