
Book Reviews

Klaus Steinke and Christian Vosse, eds., *The Pomaks in Greece and Bulgaria: A Model Case for Borderland Minorities in the Balkans* [Südosteuropa-Studien 73]. Munich: Verlag Otto Sagner/Südoosteuropa Gesellschaft, 2007, 278 pp.

The introduction by the editors (pp. 7–13) contrasts the situation of the Pomaks with that of Bosniaks and the Albanians of Macedonia and Kosovo. They write that a basic thesis of the conference that produced these papers was the incommensurability of the Bosniak model of nation building with the experiences of other Slavic speaking Muslim groups. In fact, however, Bosniak nation-builders have claimed all Slavic speaking Muslims as Bosniak. Their success has spread not only to the former Sandžak of Novi Pazar but also to Gora in Southwestern Kosovo and, to a lesser extent, to the Republic of Macedonia. The authors point to the Pomaks' "flexibility" vis-à-vis Greece and Bulgaria in contrast to the national politics of Albanians in Macedonia and Kosovo or that of Bosniaks. Missing from this formulation is the pressure on Pomaks to assimilate linguistically to Turkish, an assimilation which has already occurred in much of Greek Thrace as well as on the Bulgarian side of the border.

The first section, *History and Ethnology*, contains Ulf Brunnbauer's "Ecology, Society and Culture in the Rhodopes: Christian and Muslim households in the late 19th and early 20th centuries" (pp. 15–47); Fotini Tsibiridou's "'Silence' as and Idiom of Marginality among Greek Pomaks" (pp. 49–73); Nikolaos Kokkas' "Tradition vs. Change in the Orality of Pomaks in Western Thrace: The role of folklore in Determining Pomak Identity" (pp. 74–114); Domna Michail's "Education and Power relations within a Slavic-Speaking Muslim Group in Greece: The Case of the Pomaks of Xanthi" (pp. 115–136). Brunnbauer's article examines profession and household size among Christians and Muslims in the Bulgarian Rhodopes, while Michail looks at access to education as a resource among Pomaks in Thermes (Lădžata) Community, Xanthi (Skeča) Prefecture in Greece. She paints a grim picture of the Thermes Gymnasium (middle school) as well as the hypocrisy of Pomak elites (hodzhas and imams), who discourage their villagers from sending their children to the local gymnasium but send their own children and grandchildren to the gymnasium in Xanthi (pp. 120–121). The problems encountered by students and teachers are exactly those encountered in many low income, minority schools in the United States, pointing to the significance of economic factors and social marginalization in producing comparable results in different societies.

Tsibiridou, discussing various magical practices, makes it clear how Pomaks in Greece suffer from both social and economic deprivation. She concludes her article on the hopeful note of the appearance of the Pomak newspaper *Zagalisa* 'love' in October 1997, which has given the Pomaks a voice in their own language. Kokkas's article is rich in interview material, tales and song texts given in both Pomak and English and also makes clear the difficulties Pomaks face as a minority within a minority, i.e. Muslims in Greece who do not speak Turkish.

The second section, *Language and Collective Identity* comprises Klaus Steinke's "Is There a difference between Muslim and Christian Rhodopian dialects?" (pp. 139–147); Georgi Mitrinov's "The Dialect situation in the Rhodopes" (pp. 149–159); Maria Manova's "Vocabulary Building among the Pomaks in Northern Greece" (pp. 161–175);

Christian Voss' "Language Ideology between Self-Identification and Ascription among the Slavic Speakers in Greek Macedonia and Thrace" (pp. 177–192). Steinke informs us, unsurprisingly, that Bulgarian dialectologists reject the idea that there is any significant difference between Christian and Muslim Rhodopian dialects, aside from some lexical items. The only data in the article, however, are from German, where in some dialects *Guten Tag* is the Protestant and *Gruss Got* the Catholic greeting formula.

Mitrinov's article gives concrete data, concerning lexical differences in mixed villages in Bulgaria, with a short list of phonological and morphological features. He makes the point that the dialects on the Greek side have been more conservative owing to the absence of influence from standard Bulgarian, and that items considered typical Pomak features in Greece are used by both Muslims and Christians on the Bulgarian side of the Rhodopes. He concludes by stating that the Rhodopian dialects constitute a unified part of the Bulgarian speech area and that the term *Pomak language* is based on extra-linguistic criteria.

Manova spends the first part of the article discussing whether or not Pomak is a "language" and if so what kind. She then turns her attention vocabulary Nikolaos Kokkas' 2004 elementary school grammar *Úchem so Pomátsko* (not *se* as in the text, and not Kokkas' reader, which appeared the same year, with the same title but different subtitle).

Voss's article attempts to demonstrate that "Language turns out to be a crucial factor in hampering transnational identifications." (p. 190). In order to support his claim, Voss ignores all manifestations of Macedonian linguistic nationalism from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (see Friedman 2000). He likewise fails to mention active eastern Bulgarian opposition to Macedonian dialects as well as the campaign of terror directed by the Greek government against Macedonian-speakers on the territory it acquired in 1913 (Lithoksoou 1998). Voss's attempt to portray Rainbow as alienated from standard Macedonian is an exaggeration, judging from my consultants in that same party, and is belied by VINOŽITO (2006). Voss's claim that Pomak "is not threatened at all" is downright wrong as made clear by both my consultants and many published sources. The successful linguistic oppression that Greece has imposed on its Macedonian speaking minority and that the Turkish minority in Greece has exerted on the Pomak minority makes it more accurate to conclude that language is a crucial *target* in hampering or creating transnational identifications.

The final section, *The Comparative View of Balkan Muslims*, comprises Xhelal Ylli's "Language and Identity among the Slavic Speaking Gorans of Albania: 'Nie sme našinci'" (pp. 193–200); Jordanka Telbizova-Sack's "Between Hammer and anvil: The Slavic Muslims of Macedonia" (pp. 201–225); Thede Kahl's "The Presence of Pomaks in Turkey" (pp. 227–234); Johannes Holsten's "Change in Settlement and Agricultural Geography in the Province of Bursa (Turkey) during the Exchange of Populations 1923/24" (pp. 235–278).

Ylli's article gives a detailed survey of the Slavic speaking villages of Albania and a brief demographic history of Gora. There follows a brief discussion of the various names Gorans use for their language and for themselves. The article closes with a few linguistic observations, including the toponymic evidence for an older Aromanian layer and two tables with historical demographic data from the Goran villages in Albania. Steinke and Ylli (2010) now gives a detailed description of the Goran dialects of Albania.

Telbizova-Sack provides a detailed, balanced, and nuanced discussion of both the history and the present of Muslims in the Republic of Macedonia with a substantive footnote on the Gorans of Kosovo, many of whom have migrated to Macedonia in recent years.

Kahl gives a brief survey of Pomaks in Turkey and notes "Pomak was spoken with fewer misgivings than in the Pomak villages in Greece." (p. 323). He also observes that some Pomaks in Turkey can write their native language freely using the Turkish alphabet, as opposed to the situation in Greece, where Pomaks have been convinced by the Greeks that Pomak and other minority languages "are impossible to write." (p. 233). The article concludes, however, with the observation that Pomak language and culture are disappearing in Turkey as the younger generation assimilates to Turkish identity.

Holsten gives a detailed account of the emigration from and immigration to Bursa Province as a result of the 1923/24 exchange of populations – mandated by the Treaty of Lausanne – in terms of demography, ethnicity, and economy, with a series of statistical tables and five maps.

The book's subtitle "A model case for borderland minorities in the Balkans" raises the question of whose model is being invoked. Apparently not one that is concerned with the preservation of linguistic diversity and minority rights. The history of Bulgaria's treatment of its Pomak minority is appalling (see Neuberger 2004), while Pomaks are afraid to speak their own language in Greece. Unlike the study of Macedonian dialects in Greece, which the Greek government continues to discourage and even prevent, in Greek Thrace it is the Turkish minority authorities who harass the study of Pomak dialects. My own Pomak consultants have also complained about this. The articles in this collection, especially those on Greece, repeatedly point to the marginalization, deprivation, and assimilation of Pomaks. Still the articles contain much valuable data, and the book overall is a very important contribution to the study of Southeastern Europe as well as to discipline-specific areas of study.

VICTOR FRIEDMAN

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