

Research

BORDERS AND BORDER ZONES: DIFFERENCES AND EQUALITIES

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BORDERS OF IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY – VILLAGE SLAVEYNO, SMOLYAN MUNICIPALITY

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Abstract. This article explores first results of fieldwork in villages Slaveyno and the neighboring village Vievo, Rhodop Mountains. People in Slaveyno are Orthodox Christians; Vievo is populated by Bulgarian Muslims (Pomaks). Acquainted with the peculiarities of the villages raised many questions but continued interest emerged because of constant construction and operation of identity, seen locally. Initially, my attention was caught by more "visible" markers of identity and collective memory, which can be distinguished in the surface layer of the local culture. In this layer falls the yearly repetition of the heroic past of the village with the celebrating of the anniversary of Ilinden-Uprising (1903), on the one hand and the celebration of so

called Chilov-days apart. Both events are very important for the local and regional culture, but claim demonstrate to expand coverage to national level.

Keywords: border, identity, Islam, Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Pomaks, places of memory

My interest in culture and everyday life of village Slaveyno, Smolyan municipality comes as result of almost four-year field work in the village and the region around it. The region consists of several cultural, historical and kin related villages (Kutela, Vievo, Ryaka, Petkovo, etc.). The village Slaveyno occupies a central place between them - the latter is definitely not so geographically as historically and administratively fixed. The process of getting known with the dimensions of the local culture has its real results in the face of the prepared and already published collection, dedicated specifically to the villages Slaveyno and the neighboring village Vievo. Acquainted with the peculiarities of the village raised many questions but continued interest emerged the construction and operation of identity, seen locally. Initially, my attention was caught by more "visible" markers of identity and collective memory, which can be distinguished in the surface layer of the local culture. In this layer falls the yearly repetition of the heroic past of the village with the celebrating of the anniversary of Ilinden-Uprising (1903), on the one hand and the celebration of so called Chilov-days apart. Both events are very important for the local and regional culture, but claim demonstrate to expand coverage to national level (Коцева, 2014).

This article was delayed in time. Starting a study of Christian rituals in one symbolically laden and historically burdened field of opposition between Christianity and Islam in one region where the presented village Slaveyno and the neighboring village Petkovo represent one of the few enclaves surrounded by Muslim villages, it seemed to be an impossible task. Standing on the field,

however, constantly brings to the fore a Christian rites, which geographically and culturally outlines and borders the perimeter of the local identity. I accepted as a working title to define a conditional name "Christian topography" for several reasons. On the one hand, Christian chapels surround the village and set it apart from the surrounding Muslim villages, not only symbolically but somehow physically. On the other hand, declining human resource of the villages and the lack of people to "serve" the cult associated with the cartridge holidays of these chapels, more emphasis on their physical presence than on the spiritual experience that they must call.

Even at first glance it was clear that Christianity works as a marker of identity in Slaveino. But behind the visible signs there are hidden deep layers that the anthropological work is called to discover - relationships, influences, mixed narratives that give the appearance of contemporary religiosity in the locus of the study village and the opening of which needs a long time of field research. I proceed to this analysis with the clear idea to make the first step towards one, intended as much more comprehensive and in-depth study of the local religion and its role in the functioning of modern village Slaveyno scattered "Slaveyno-diasporas" inside the country.

In the beginning I want to make some clarifications. The local and regional folk culture has been and continues to be permanent core research of Bulgarian ethnological/ anthropologist school. For us it is important to recall the clarification of Valchinova (1999), who draws attention to the fact that the Bulgarian scientific research traditions put the local and regional to national subjugation. The "national" therein is taken as a basic model, which have to 'adjust' the manifestations of local and regional culture, including the local religiosity (Вълчинова, 1999, p. 11). The village never loses its significance of "ethnographic workshop" for Bulgarian humanities. In this sense, our academic tradition is not suffering of a post-colonial "crisis in ethnology" turning its eyes toward complex societies and staying away from village culture

(Вълчинова, 1998; Бонева, 2001) The limitation of an article do not allow the introduction in details the problem of “local” and “regional” in Bulgarian culture, as this will also unnecessarily aggravate the exploration. Therefore is enough to notice that this study is completely logical consequence of long tradition of ethnological researches of the local manifestations of culture. Given the specifics of the study, it is important to notice the link between borders of identity (marked by holy places, temples, chapels, old villages, etc.) and the regional studies literature (Бонева, 2011, pp. 101-102), which is in enough in quantity for village of Slaveyno. This relationship proved to be of great importance for understanding the way in which local people “remember” and “imagine” (Hobsbawm et al., 1992) their “ancient” Christian culture and tradition.

Some clarification needs also the term "local religion." I accept it as working term in this study, because it seems to me that the others, proposed mainly by French sociological school, does not reflect as accurately for the researched case. Terms, such as "religious metamorphoses", "situational religion", "religious analogies", “religion of substitution,”¹⁾ in my opinion do not give clarity to local manifestations of religion, depending on the specific historical, cultural, social and economic development in the particular area.

In recent decades the identity as researched object also took its rightful place not only in the world but also in the Bulgarian humanities. Identity is seen through the prism of national, regional, religion, power, kinship and others. (Андерсън, 1998; Вебер, 1992; Гелнер 1999; Смит 2000; Госийо 2004). The Bulgarian historiography in recent years also is oriented towards the study of identity - at local and national level (Вълчинова, 1999; Бонева, 2006; 2007; Лулева (ed.), 2013; Груев, 2008; 2011; Тепавичаров, 2008). In this sense, the proposed study can be viewed just as another "piece of the puzzle" in the analysis of the identity of the Bulgarians.

Village Slaveyno is an alpine village at an altitude of 1150 meters, which is located in Central Rhodope, situated along the river Malka Arda. As information and observations in the field shows, the village together with the neighboring village Petkovo remains for a long time a Christian “island” in the majority of Bulgarian-Muslim (Pomak) villages. This explains the presence of numerous markers of Christian identity, which in rough form enclosed the settlement and sets it apart from the surrounding Bulgarian-Muslim villages. Of course, this composition of boundaries now is very dynamic, since the confessional nature of the population of village Slaveyno began to change in the 60s of the last century with “Christianization” of Bulgarian Muslims, labor migrations, intermarriages and others. At the moment in the village are living Bulgarian Christians and Bulgarian Muslims, but differences between them stay hidden at first glance. Reports from the field show that often the only difference is reduced to symbolic recalling elements of Christian rituals, of which Bulgarian Muslims abstain. In the words of one informant "So my heart, my upbringing, I do not allow changing their names ... Otherwise you go to church and light candles - not out of respect"²⁾ From another perspective, however, it is interesting to trace precisely those "movable" borders of identity. At the time of the study the borders do not consist so much of canonical and cultural differences in the area of confrontation between Christianity and Islam. Their markers of formation and annually reproduction in line of symbolic prestige are themselves Christian churches and chapels.

Markers of Christian identity in the region of village Slaveyno

Data from local history books talk about the long history of Christianity in village Slaveyno and its environs. According to survey of Karapetkov (1991) in Slaveyno, nearby villages Vievo and Tikale, in the area Imaret Dere (today Haidushki polyani) and Bahtyaritsa were found the foundations of many churches and chapels, which were destroyed during the Ottoman inva-

sion in these lands. But in Karlukovo (the old name of Slaveyno) the Christian tradition never has been interrupted - on Sundays and on feasts people lit candles and pray. They build a primitive church next to the ruined old one, which was grown in large hip and weeds. The role of a priest was played by most educated local fellow. During the Kardzhali-times (late 18th century) a priest used to come from other places, but not for every occasion, as traveling was very dangerous. So rituals were often conducted without priest. These circumstances are certainly contributed to more tightly intertwine folk beliefs and practices in the body of symbolic actions in the practice of orthodox Christianity (Карапетков, 1991, pp. 77-79).

The first church in the village was built in 1836 but burned down 60 years later together with its documents for construction. Work on the construction of this church started immediately after the receiving of new documents. It was greeted with joy and enthusiasm from local residents; all - men, women, teenagers and children - got included in the construction. Work was done with great enthusiasm. During the construction works there were discovered foundations of an old church with a cross and ciborium, which further encouraged workers. The construction work was completed in three months, including carvings on the iconostasis and bishop's throne (Карапетков, 1991, pp. 77-79). The new church was rebuilt with the joint efforts and enthusiasm of local people (Карапетков, 1991, pp. 97-98).

In the time of the field work - 2014 the presence of local Christian community in the village Slaveyno is marked by one temple and ten chapels, located closer or more distant from the village, but always related to the history of the village lands in narratives.

The chapels around the village are: "Assumption of Holy Mary", "Holy Sunday", "St. St. Cyril and Methodius ", "St. Spirit", " St. George", "St. Atanasius", "St. Dimitrius", "St. Spas", "Assumption of St. John of Rila" and "St. Petka". For the goals of the study we have to pay particular attention to

every one of them, although information about their construction often blurred the boundaries of the historical and the mythological. That, however, will orient us in the way of creation and maintenance of identity at the local level.

The first chapel was named "Assumption of Holy Mary" and it is located in the famous area Hajdushki polyani. Patron feast is celebrated on August, 15. It is known throughout the whole Bulgarian ethnic territory as "Virgin Mary" feast. The oral history in Slaveyno claims that after the liberation of this region in 1912 famous Chieftain Peyo Shishmanov with his family - wife Sultana Shishmanova and their children come often in summer in the area of Hajdushki polyani. One such summer evening Sultana Shishmanova, while walking the meadows, was highly surprised and frightened by a vision. She saw a fireball, glowing with the figure of a man inside. It was shining for a few minutes and disappeared. Later in the night she dreamed a wonderful dream in which magically mysterious voice told her that the place where the glow appeared, centuries ago was located the former monastery complex "Assumption of Holy Mary". According the dream right there was buried and should be sought the grave of Patriarch Evtimii, the last spiritual guardian of the Tarnovo Kingdom. The thought of the wonderful sleep and "divine commandment" long kept her restless. Sultana shared her dream with the local publicist Vasil Chinkov. As a result of their talks in the summer of 1926 they began to collect donations from local people and gave their personal funds. They marked the beginning of excavations at the place where now is located the church "Assumption of Holy Mery". Sultana herself managed these "archaeological" excavations. According to local narratives several Bulgarian Muslims participated benevolently in those excavations. Very soon were found foundations of a large stone carved building. They noticed that the building is oriented east-west. Ongoing excavations revealed in the central part of the building a grave of a deceased monk. The legends say he was buried in a sitting position, which suggests the idea of high rank of the buried

person according to Orthodox Christian tradition. This gave rise to different assumptions. The most popular and beloved by the local people is that this is actually the tomb of Patriarch Evtimii. Local's argument says that the tracks of Patriarch Evtimii were lost in the nearby Bachkovo monastery. The legend is strengthened by the fact that for some reason all workers disappear and no one can confirm or reject the truth about findings. One version suggests that they stole gold ornaments which had adorned the patriarch.³⁾

This legend is repeated in local literature. For example Karapetkov (1991) writes that Vasil Chinkov and Peyo Shishmanov in 1926 with personal funds dig foundations of one of the buildings found there. They were found the foundations of a church altar, crosses, religious objects and to the left of the entrance - a lonely grave in which monk was buried in a sitting position. And although the author mentions that this is only a hypothesis, however, notes the potential connection of the buried monk with the last Bulgarian Patriarch before the Ottoman conquest - Evtimii (Карапетков, 1991, pp. 14-15).

It is believed that the feast of Assumption of Virgin Mary is one of the oldest festivals in the Christian calendar. It is believed that it was established by the Apostles and stories of miraculous ascension of the Virgin Mary in flesh of the sky date back to the 4th century. The holiday itself was established by Emperor Maurice in 6th century. Since ancient times, the Christian tradition recommends strict observance of fasting, preceding the holiday. The position has been established by the council of Constantinople in the 12th century. And is called Assumption fasting. It lasts two weeks.

Hagiographical literature says that after the death of St. Mary her body was buried in a cave by the apostles in Gethsemane village and its entrance was closed with a stone. On the third day after the Assumption (sleep) of St. Mary arrived Apostle Thomas, who was sorry that he could not forgive her. To his relief his apostles opened the rock of the cave, so that he bowed to her and forgive her. But where should be the body of Mary was left only her

shroud.⁴⁾ According to the popular belief on this day God-son himself comes down to pick up in heaven the soul of his mother (Стоилов, 1997, p. 40).

During the dinner, the apostles had custom to leave an empty seat and put some bread for the Lord Jesus Christ, lifted after eating this bread and called it "part of Christ". Then they divided the bread and ate it as a blessing from Jesus. During dinner on the third day of the Assumption of the Holy Mary they heard angelic singing and on the clouds in the sky they saw the Mother of God, radiant and surrounded by angels. Since then, the apostles believed that St. Mary was resurrected on the third day. It is in memory of her appearance before the apostles do "Panagia" ("Blessed") - elevation (oblation) of bread.⁴⁾

As everywhere in the Rhodope Mountains the feast of Virgin Mary is very popular and much loved event, known here as "Goljama Chyorkva" [Big Church] (Попов, 1994, p. 113). Much earlier in the middle of 20th century Romanska had registered that "... the death of Mary and her ascension to heaven presented a grateful and beloved story" (Романска-Вранска, 1940, p. 51), referring to the spread of apocryphal stories surrounding the hagiographical stories. Our tradition everywhere honors Mary as patroness of birthing women and mothers especially revered is her celebration of childless women who want to have a child with the help of God`s Mother. With this application and hope childless women traditionally spend the night here in the monastery or in other holy places and chapels, and in the morning they wash their faces and eyes in the healing springs. The all day after they have to wear wrapped around his waist snake killed by Hedgehog (village Petkovo). In the Rhodope Mountains this is also a holiday associated with livestock and economic circle. On this day is the second family lamb sacrifice after this on St. George`s day (6th May). Where there is a chapel or church of saint celebration is usually accompanied by a festive table-village, located near the temple (Попов, 1994, p. 113).

Popular image of St. Mary is associated with healing practices - especially for childless women. Many of the icons with its image are considered miraculous, as this is particularly true for Central Rhodopes, and perhaps one of the most famous icons is that of St. Mary of Bachkovo Monastery. Mary is called to help for health, usually offering her gift - towel, apron or silver parts for the icon - hand, eye, etc., which are made by goldsmiths. She is often presented as a healer, which has the power to chase away diseases. In folk believes she mediates between the healer and the other world (Георгиев, 2013, p. 94).

Undoubtedly the image of the Virgin Mary is one of the most symbolically loaded in both - in the canonical Christian literature and in the folk believes and practices. Her holidays in the annual calendar cycle are 10 and they mark key moments of her life. The most important among them is August, 15th. The book of Baeva (2012) is more oriented towards the study of the feast "Laying Honest belt of St. Mary", but still it says a lot in clarifying the syncretic image of the Virgin Mary (Баева, 2012).

The next chapel is located in the "Inoglovo"-mount and is called "St Sunday". The official celebration of St. Sunday is associated with the day of her death in 289 years – July, 7th. According to local people, however, the day was floating, but is usually in early July.⁵⁾ It can be assumed that it is a phenomenon of the time after the second half of the twentieth century. At this time the majority of the local community is scattered inside the country or abroad. In order to be able to gather the people, feast probably shifted to a more comfortable weekend, close to the date of the religious holiday.

Mount Inoglovo on the other hand is associated with settlement of the old village Slaveino. It was located about 12 kilometers from the present village. In the 60s of 20th century there have been conducted archaeological excavations, which discovered graves with cremation, but with Christian symbols in them, such as bronze crosses and others (Хрисчев, 1964). It is be-

lieved that in the past in the area Inoglovo was a settlement consisting of eight neighborhoods and a population of about 800 people. When working on the fields people often find bronze crosses, thuribles, marble trays, iron chandelier with iron chain etc., it is considered that there was a church "St. Mary", as a part of monastery complex. The destruction of the village is associated with Ottoman invasion. The new chapel of "St. Sunday" in Inoglovo-mount being built in 1990 on the initiative of Chilo Karaivanov who realize the wish of old village`s leaders. He was supported by Momchilovci priest - pop Cano. According to the words, attributed to him "who came to help, is very welcome. When it`s ready, I will find out and will give the bell". Chilo Karaivanov himself decided to name the chapel "Holy Sunday". As an explanation for this decision he emphasizes the connection with the folk song - "Gathered are gathered/ in high mountains of /St. Peter, St. Sunday and big feast Ilinden".

According to the life story of the Martyr St. Sunday-Kyriakya was born in Asia Minor as a long-awaited and desires child in a family of devoted parents. From early childhood Sunday-Kyriakya was dedicated to God and vowed to chastity. Despite that many young people wanted to marry her but she always refused. One, offended by her refusal young men reported to the emperor Dioklecian that she and her family are followers of Christ. Sunday-Kyriaki was exiled and subjected to immense torture, but late in the night Christ himself healed her wounds. She was sentenced to be beheaded, but before the execution of the death sentence it fizzled out in prayer without slain.

The most popular legend of the saint in Bulgarian Christian tradition is associated with the name of Patriarch Evtimii, who writes and translates the name Kirakiya on Sunday. The movement of the relics of the saint associated with the most glamorous period of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom - time of the Asenevtsi-family (13th century). They bring back her remains in Turnovo.⁶⁾

Although folk beliefs associated with Holy Sunday are not very widespread yet, her image is associated with the image of saint-healer. Traditionally her feast is celebrated by women, bringing cakes to church or chapel, bearing her name and light candles. It is believed that Holy Sunday helps against bad eyes, blisters, broken bones and others. In some cases she appears in dream of the patient with a recommendation where to go for help or simply recommend the appropriate medicine (Георгиев, 2013, p. 354).

The next chapel is located in Lanichkata-area and its patrons are "St Cyril and St Methodius". Their feast is celebrated on May, 11th. Near the chapel there is a healing spring. According to the legend, narrated by Chilo Karaivanov when his grandfather was 13 years old, he drove goats in the Chukata- area. This evening started mountain storm, preceded by strong thunderstorms. At one time he heard a loud rumble of thunder fall near a beech. On the place where the thunder was fallen, later spewed water. People take this as a godsend. Subsequently, water was tested for chemical composition and was proven its healing properties. Feast of Saints Cyril and Methodius is one of the "new" holidays codified in the period of the development of Bulgarian national identity - the period of the Bulgarian Revival. As an official holyday it was celebrated for the first time in Plovdiv in 1851 on the initiative of Nayden Gerov and gradually over the years established itself as the "most Bulgarian" holiday.⁷⁾ Suffice it to review the publications devoted to the celebration. In this sense, it is difficult to outline the role of the holiday to form a Bulgarian national identity.

The actual celebration of the day of Saints is associated primarily with the church characteristic of the holiday. Historical and hagiographic literature focusing on their contribution to the conversion of large miscreants during their mission among the Khazars, the Great Moravian and Pannonian mission, as the passionate defense of the right of the Slavic people to worship God in

their own language. No doubt the fact that they are the authors of the Slavic alphabet is relevant to the gravity of the holiday as "the Bulgarian holiday."

The next chapel is called "St. Spas". The chapel is located in the area with the same name. Saint with that name is not known in Orthodox Christianity. In the internet forum pravoslavie.com was pronounced a connection between St. Spas and Savior, Jesus Christ. In Orthodox hagiography reveals the life of St. Anastasius from Strumitsa or Radovich but its patronal festival falls in late summer – August, 29. In this sense, we cannot assume that this is the same saint. The name of the popular Bulgarian lands in St. Spas is derived from holiday Ascension, which is detachable and falls 40 days after Easter.

Folk believe embodies the image of St. Spas auspices of healers. According to it, he visits sick people in their dreams and gives them guidance how to proceed (Георгиев, 2013, p. 475). In Saturday after Ascension Day it is one of the largest temple feasts during the year, known as Cherry All Souls. On Ascension Day in the Rhodopa-mountains women color red eggs as for the Easter, in honor of the dead (Попов, 1994, p. 106). Since this day is associated with Healers, all over Bulgarian ethnic territory was spread the practice to sleeps around healing springs, leaving threads of clothes on the surrounding trees and leaving gifts for Health (Георгиев, 2013, p. 475).

The next chapel is named "Holy Spirit" and is located on the height with the same name - "Holy Spirit". In Christianity this holiday brings more names - Holy Pentecost or Holy Trinity. The feast remains the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles in the form of tongues of fire, which gave them with graces. Since this happened on the day of the Old Testament Pentecost, fifty days after the Jewish Passover. Russian Orthodox Church, in turn, calls this day the Holy Trinity.⁸⁾

In folk tradition there are two separate holidays located respectively Holy Trinity - on Sunday fifty days after Easter, and Holy Spirit - the day after - Monday (Попов, 1994, p. 106). In the folk tradition this celebration also

shows connection with the cult of the dead because according to some regional manifestations of that day or of Holy Trinity, like the Ascension, on this day were collected free souls of the dead. Led by the desire to communicate with their relatives, women bring walnut leaves into the church, spread it, and kneeling, with their eyes closed praying, hoping to come into contact with their dead relatives. Then they apply that walnut leaves at home, place them before the house icon and if necessary burn incense against diseases. On Holy Spirit's day it is common practice patients to sleep in churches and chapels, hoping to get healed. In some areas of the Middle Rhodopa-mountains exists the belief that herbs picked in the early morning on Holy Spirit's day are the most healing (Попов, 1994, p. 107).

The local celebration of the feast of Holy Spirit's day has shown some characteristics of a celebration of some professional groups. The day before the feast shepherds, tailors and masons from Slaveyno surroundings sacrifice animals and take them to the Holy Spirit chapel (Бонева, 1994). The animals were sacrificed and prepared the night before, so that the meat is ready for the next day. In the morning 4-5 cauldron are placed with the meat for cooking. Lungs of slaughtered animals are imported into the chapel and there is scolding from the priest who mentions in a pray all the people who have given sacrificial animal for their own health. Women wore special bags with bread and cheese pie. Each family prepared special bread. The last one, as well putting a candle in the middle of the bread is made as a tribute of the holiday.

The hole area in which is situated the "Holy Spirit" chapel is associated with the conduct of the Rhodope Congress (5-6 of July 1903), which delegate Hristo Karamandzhukov announced the decision to lift the uprising, taken at the Congress in Petrova Niva. The area is mythologized as "Rhodope Oberishte"⁹⁾ and it directly connects with mythology about the national liberation movement. At the end of June 1956 on this place was opened a memorial plaque in honor of Peyo Shishmanov and rebels from the Ilinden Uprising.

The next chapel is with patron "St George" and it is located near the village. Ubiquitous throughout Bulgarian ethnic territory feast of the saint is celebrated on May 6th. For St George feast is written a lot, so I will not rehash. I will only remind that St George, along with St Demetrius, who is patron of the next chapel (located in the area Bartsata) near the village Slaveyno, are some of the most popular saints in the folks calendar of the Bulgarians. Around the chapel of St Demetrius near Slaveyno in the past also was a spring, which is dry nowadays.

Ethnological literature dedicated to St George and St Demetrius is impressive which is explained by the meanings of both feasts in the folk calendar. However, in surface appearance should highlight those features of both saints that I think contribute to building local identity defining them as "Bulgarian" saints or "saints healers." According to R. Popov (1991) the two saints show signs of a twin pair, marking the division of the year into two semesters related to the economic and social cycle (Попов, 1991, p. 9). In the couple St Demetrius-St George the first one is considered as the older brother (Попов, 1991, p. 10). St Demetrius shows connection with the cult of the dead, as its celebration day is centered near one of the greatest Soul's Day – Dimitrova Soul Day (Попов, 1991, p. 10). Both events are also relevant to human health. Typical for St George is the ritual bathing for health (Попов, 1994, p. 108). Both feasts are closely related to cattle-breeding, particularly characteristic for the Rhodopa region in the past. It has been the subject of numerous studies, so we will not dwell on it (Колева, 1981). I will only mention that in the Rhodopes is also widespread the idea that St George starts the "shepherd year" and St Demetrius finishes it (Попов, 1994, p. 82). Both feasts are among the most beloved by the whole Bulgarian ethnic territory for village offerings and family meetings. In this sense they are important for the preservation of family memory and local identity.

In terms of hagiography of the two saints also is written a lot. What is important is that the holidays of the two saints are celebrated and beloved of the main ethnic groups prevalent in our lands - Bulgarians, Turks, Gypsies (Съботинова, 2009). In some Orthodox websites St George is defined as "the saint of the two religions."¹⁰ The latter is particularly relevant in a region with confessional mixed population. Undoubtedly coexistence of Christians and Muslims require symbolic markers of integration as holidays of St George and St Demetrius. Joint celebration of iconic holidays is a symbolic marker of build for centuries model of coexistence between Christians and Muslims, became known in the literature as "komshuluk" (Георгиева, 1999).

The next is the chapel "St. Atanas", which is located near the village temple and whose feast is traditionally celebrated on 18 January. Christian legend of the saint testifies about his great erudition, not only in mastering in theological literature, but also in the field of ancient science. It is alleged that he well knew the classics and especially Plato. His life is associated with the fight against heresies and in particular against the Arians and the defense of Orthodox faith.

People's beliefs connect St Athanasius with the warming of the earth. The saint appears in the triune pair with St Antonius (Anton) and St Timen (17, 18 and 19 January). The holiday of St Athanasius is associated with the resurgent nature but on a symbolic level with the transition from death to life, from youth to old age (Попов, 1991, p. 58). In Southern Bulgaria St Athanasius was regarded as a master of the plague (Попов, 2008, p. 155) and therefore ranks in the pantheon of saints healers that are relevant to human health. In some parts of the Rhodope Mountains the day of St Athanasius is associated with the legend of farm-patron of the settlement and named "agriculture" (Попов, 1994, p. 95). Obviously, St Athanasius, and others listed above holidays tended to the unification of generic agriculture on community-level.

The next chapel named "Assumption of St John of Rila" is built from set 1951. This is the newest chapel around the village. It's feast is celebrated on August 18. Undoubtedly, if you need to seek the "most Bulgarian" saint in the pantheon of Christian saints, then without doubt the league will be held by St John of Rila. The fact that the largest monastery in Bulgaria bears his name is not accidental. In this sense, if one can speak of "ethnic" marker in Bulgarian saints, it undoubtedly St John of Rila has the characteristics of "Bulgarian saint." In this sense, I believe that the appearance of the chapel with his name in the current situation of rising tension on the line between Christianity and Islam is not accidental.

Followers of the saint connect his life with greatest flowering of First Bulgarian state during second half of the 9th and first half of the 10th century -- the time of Boris, Tsar Simeon the Great and King Peter. From early childhood he devoted himself to God, long touring Bulgarian lands, until finally settled in Rila and where he founded the famous monastery. His life is famous with many miraculous deeds done during his lifetime and after his death, associated with healing the mentally ill, of pious people and others. The saint died on 18 August 946 year and was buried in the narthex of the church. He got canonized as saint around the end of the 10th century. Today, St John the Baptist was named patron of Bulgarian people called to keep and protect all Bulgarians and enjoys enormous tribute through whole Bulgarian ethnic territory. The latter is further proof of choosing exactly this patron saint for the newly built chapel around the village Slaveino.

The next Chapel is devoted to "St Petka ". The church holiday is celebrated on 14 October. It is also has been a relatively "new" chapel in the region. It was consecrated in 1997 at a temple celebration of Father Boyan Sariev who became known with his activity in the Rhodope by conversion of Muslims.¹¹⁾ The construction of the chapel started two years earlier, the first stone was laid by the local priest Canyo. He was a very popular figure from a

remote, but also Christian village Momchilovtsi. He carried the aura of educator and missionary. In some newspapers articles from the region the priest Canyo was called "Rhodope Sofronii"¹²⁾ because of the extremely voluminous for a local history research essay "The past of village Momchilovtsi, Smolyan municipality", he wrote. Obviously, priest Canyo is that symbolic figure for the region that reflects enlightened patriotic state and in this sense it is no coincidence that it was he laid the first stone of local chapel. The very construction of the chapel is connected as common practice, with a vision. It was received by Rositsa Simeonova who dreamed the place for building a chapel. She shared this dream with her mother in law, who remembered that there was a place for sacrificing animals and were baked and distributed small breads for health was a practice. This prompted the family of Ivan and Rositsa Simeonovi to donate land there in order to build a chapel dedicated to St Petka. It was built with donations from many people from Slaveyno, many of whom participated also in voluntary construction work.

The choice of St Petka as a patron for the chapel is not random. This saint is one of the most beloved by the entire Bulgarian ethnic territory and is called "The Saint from Tarnovo"¹³⁾ (Вълчинова, 1999, pp. 52-56). People's idea of St. Petka connects her with Holy Sunday (Nedelya) and says they were two sisters. The day is often celebrated as generic and the folk cult connects it with the snake-stop, patron of the genus (Попов, 1991, p. 133). G. Valchinova (1999) was focusing on the life of the saint, so I will not dwell on it. She draws attention to the fact that the cult of St Petka, and the cult of Virgin Mary and several male saints combine different elements and dimensions (Вълчинова, 1999, p. 59). Although not as common in the Rhodopes, as in Western Bulgaria, the cult of St Petka shows association with local and regional identity and in particular "Christian", respectively "Bulgarian" identity of the population.

The last place marking local Christian identity is "St Elijah the prophet", located in the center of village Slaveino. The church's holiday is on July 20th. The village church with patron "St Prophet Elijah" with its gilded dome gives recognizable and visible skyline of the village. The church is located in the center of the village. The saint's day is one of the biggest holidays in the village, which collects many people. Especially, for the celebration from the village Momchilovci, a priest comes who reads liturgy and consecrates the sacrificial food. The sacrificial food is donated by local residents who donate money to buy meat. It has to be prepared the night before and stays overnight in the church. The meat is not boiled, as is the usual practice, but is baked in pans. This meat has to be distributed to all people in Slaveyno and to guests of the village (Канев, 1975) .

The feast is in the middle of summer in vacation season, and it gathers most of the so called "Slaveynovska diaspora." In the village gather not only people from the surrounding villages, but people who left the village a long time ago and are living for years inside the country and even abroad, as well as the and friends of the residents. So, the church holiday turns into a kind of collection center, which annually reaffirms the identity of people involved in one way or another with the village. Then they "recognize" themselves as "slaveynovtsi" or as associates to them. This is evidenced by the fact that an immigrant from Slaveyno, which has significant financial resources, donated money for the development of mural for the church dedicated to the Ascension holiday. It is envisaged that the panel is with 3 sizes of 2.5 meters and includes 20 figures depicted in small tiles of various colors, and in its center is the image of Jesus Christ. In the church are placed boxes with the name of each chapel so that whoever wants can donate funds for the maintenance of concrete chapel.

People's beliefs connect St. Elijah with power over thunder and lightning. The lamb sacrifice aims to protect people from drought, thunder and

hail. In some places in the Rhodopa Mountain after the act of sacrifice and the liturgy the priest toured with the villagers agricultural land to protect the village from diseases (Попов, 1994).

Church undoubtedly has much to do with the local identity of the community and in particular with its Christian characteristic. Near the church is built a memorial stele with bas-reliefs of the priests from the village Slaveino. This visually focuses on the Christian past of the village and gives a visible image of a Christian, local identity. On one side of the village square is the stele of the priests and on the other side are the busts of Nikola Shishmanov and Peyo Shishmanov prominent participants in the national liberation movement and in particular in the Ilinden Uprising (1903). So the outlook of the village, in its central area, are marked both signs of the local identity - the Christianity and that of movement for national liberation from Muslim Ottomans.

Thus Ilinden (St. Ellijah`s day) is formed as a celebration of special importance for the village. On the one hand, because it is a temple celebration, it is connected with all-village sacrifice, celebrated on July 20th. On the other hand, memorizing the anniversary of the Ilinden Uprising, celebrated annually on August 2, and collecting local people and guests of the village and officials as well. It is connected with national liberation struggles and in particular with their most dramatic part - abandoned the dream of Macedonia and Thrace, which directly affects residents of the village Slaveino.

By analyzing the role of the local temple as mark of the Christian identity is important to notice another image of St Elijah. According to some legends, popular in Macedonia, he comes into direct duel with Mohammed in which the Christian saint is the winner (Лафазановски, 2000, p. 160).

The borders of Christian identity show several key features. Before proceeding to their generalization, however, it is important to recall the finding made by Valchinova (1999) that fully describes the situation of demon-

stration of Christian identity in village Slaveyno by building and maintaining belt of church and ten chapels surrounding the village. According to the author "the choice of the patron of the church can be seen as a set of purely religious and social strategies in which last but not least is the care of efficacy of a saint or another." In that way the author draws attention to the relationship between people and the patron saint (Вълчинова, 1999, p. 57). This relationship is often a cross section of local traditions in business models, professional culture, confessional situation and demographics. It thus creates a model of local identity, observed by me in this case of village Slaveyno.

In conclusion I would like to highlight the main features, presented in the Christian topography, whose main role, according to my observations, is to build and maintain alive the identity of the inhabitants of village Slaveyno.

There are several key things that make an impression. First is the desire to capitalize on the antiquity of the Christian tradition in the village. This is done by a country with a semi-mythical, overexposed in the local literature, and today part of the oral history of the village, stories of the presence of many old traces of Christianity in the region. These include stories about the discovery of the remains of the old churches under the foundations of the chapel "Assumption Virgin" and in the area of Inoglovo, where today the chapel "Holy Sunday" is located. To this must be added and the statement found in local literature describing the Ottoman period in which the local community due to lack of church were forced to perform services and their prayers in an underground room. In this semi-mythical information is not difficult to find the link to the period of early Christianity, when the followers of Christ were forced to secretly practice their religion in a confessional different management within the Roman Empire. It can easily draw also an analogy with the Ottoman Empire, where, though not persecuted Christians were disadvantaged if compare to Muslims. Relationship between mythological self-perception of local people as fighters for the faith in terms of foreign political

and religious power of the symbolic level can be found with the Christian saints and martyrs who gave their lives to defend their faith in Christ.

Part of the markers of Christian identity around the village Slaveyno shows a direct link with the years of the Ottoman conquest and subjugation of the Tarnovo Kingdom. For example, the chapel "Assumption of the Holy Virgin" is linked to the legend that there is an open grave of Patriarch Evtimii, the last defender of the Tarnovo Kingdom. In turn the life of St Sunday, which is the patron of the chapel next to it reconnects Evtimii who translated its name from Greek into Bulgarian from Kyriaki on Sunday [Nedelya]. The movement of her remains from the other hand connects with the heyday of the Second Bulgarian kingdom and royal family Asenevtsi which carried them to the capital Tarnovo. Similarly patron of the next chapel is St Petka, which bears the name of Tarnovo and likewise is connected with Bulgarian statehood before the collapse of the country under Ottoman rule. Attitude to glamorous periods in the history of Bulgarian statehood shows chapel dedicated to St John of Rila. According to his life story he lived at the time of the First Bulgarian Kingdom and his life and work are connected with the Christianization and the adoption of as an official of Slavic literature at the time of Boris and his greatest political power and cultural rise during the reign of Tsar Simeon (893-927). In this sense, the emergence of the newest chapel dedicated to Saints Cyril and Methodius is also not accidental. Undisputed is their contribution to the spread of both Christianity and the Slavic alphabet - both essential marker of "Bulgarian identity."

Other signs of the local identity show respect to the main element of the new history of the region, namely the participation in the national freedom revolts. For example, the chapel "St Spirit" is located in the area with the same name, which is called also the Rhodope Oborishte - direct analogy with the April Uprising, the peak of the national liberation struggles. Here we can point also the central temple of the village Slaveyno dedicated to St Elijah, the

prophet. Ilinden celebrated in old and new style,¹⁴⁾ in two consecutive occasions - on 20th of July as patron local and generic holiday, and on 2nd of August as marking anniversary of the outbreak of the Ilinden Uprising are emerging as the most important element of the collective memory of the local population.

Public understanding of the patrons of the chapels attached to almost all the characteristics of generic saints associated with the myth of farmers and therefore cartridge protector holidays become generic and family meetings. The latter is of particular importance in modern times when the local community is spread all over the country and abroad in search of work and opportunity for survival. In such turn cartridge holidays of "St George", "St Dimitrius", "Holy Atanasius", "St Petka", "Holy Spas" and that the central temple "St Elijah, the prophet."

As for the Saints George and Demetrius it is not without significance that they are saints, revered by all faiths represented in the Bulgarian lands. Specifically in the area of study village is important to be fathered by the surrounding predominantly Muslim population not only as markers of cutoff, but to unite.

The proposed above study shows the construction and operation of the identity of the local level. Markers of identity are dependent on the specific historical, economic and cultural parameters in which they have the opportunity to develop. Specifically in the case of village Slaveyno identification with the glorious past of the First and Second Bulgarian state and the heroic mythological past experience mainly in opposition Christian Bulgarians of Turkish Ottoman Muslims is reflected in the choice of cartridge Saints to build a Christian boarder of chapels around the village. The choice of saints cartridge listed chapels is determined by the specifics of the region, which is mixed in confessional terms. The active participation of the population in the liberation struggles related to Macedonia and Thrace are also an essential part

in the development of specific local mixed image of religiosity in the region. Essential in the process of its construction themselves on the one hand the historical events that leave the region within the Ottoman Empire for about another 35 years after the liberation of the rest of the Bulgarian lands. This provides additional strength in the functioning of the myth of defending Christianity and "the Bulgarian" by locals.

In conclusion, it can be noticed that local and religious identity of the local population in village Slaveyno is another proof of mutual influence and interweaving of images and elements from the area of the historical and mythological, as well as in the field of popular culture. They all more or less hid under the Christian image of a galaxy of saints and events related to the life and death of Jesus Christ. In this sense, this research is another small story relative to a Bulgarian national identity, whose local parameters gives us a greater density of picture and helps us to see behind the visible side of an otherwise heroic and patriotic, and therefore "tempting" identity. In this connection, it is not difficult to think about the identity of the village Slaveyno as a consciously "invented" identity whose physical projections appear above described borders of Christian identity.

NOTES

1. Стаматова, М. Култът към Св. Иван Рилски. Културно-антропологично изследване на религиозни феномени (ръкопис).
2. Respondent R.K., Muslim, living in village Slaveyno.
3. By the describing the chapels and its celebration days I use the information, which Yordanka Andreeva and Siika Kasabova gave me.
4. http://www.pravoslaviето.com/calendar/feasts/08.15_Uspenie_Bogorodichno.htm#
5. Respondent Y. Andreeva.
6. http://www.pravoslaviето.com/life/07.07_sv_Kiriakia.htm
7. http://bolgari.net/24_mai_nai_bylgarskiyat_praznik-h-238.html
8. <http://pravoslaviето.com/calendar/feasts/podvizhni/Petdesetnica/index.htm#>

9. Oborishte is the place in the Middle Balkan Mountain where on a congress held on 9-10 of April 1876 was decided a revolt for liberation from the Ottomans.

10. <http://dveri.bg/38w3>

11. I must notice that between the Bulgarian Muslims in Slaveyno not many were converted into Christianity by Boyan Saraev. I succeed to talk only with one man. By his words he takes care for the chapel of St. Petka, cleaning it up and prepared it for the feast.

12. <http://literaturensviat.com/?p=1589>

13. St Paraskevi (Petka) was one of protectors of the Second Bulgarian Kingdom (11-14 century) with the capital Tarnovo.

14. Gregorian and Georgian calendars

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