

**VISUALISING CULTURE -  
DEMONSTRATING IDENTITY:  
DANCE PERFORMANCE AND IDENTITY POLITICS  
IN A BORDER REGION IN NORTHERN GREECE**

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# CONTENTS

LIST OF MAPS.....	vii
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS.....	viii
ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	xi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	xiii
NOTE ON THE TEXT.....	xviii
CHAPTER 1:.....	0
INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS.....	0
AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	0
1.1) The Object of Study: Constructing and De-constructing Boundaries Within Dance Events.....	0
1.2) Identity Formation Processes in the District of Florina: A Historical Perspective.....	6
1.3) Theoretical Framework.....	13
1.3.1) Conceptualising Identity and Difference in the Context of Greek Macedonia.....	13
1.3.2) Conceptualising Dance.....	19
1.4) The Structure of the Thesis.....	22
CHAPTER 2:.....	24
DOING FIELDWORK IN MY 'OWN SOCIETY'.....	24
RESEARCH METHODS AND ISSUES OF REFLEXIVITY.....	24
2.1) Introduction.....	24
2.2) Presenting Myself.....	26
2.3) Entering the Field.....	31
2.4) Strategies for Creating Distance.....	34

2.5) Shifting Identifications and Ethnographic Marginality .....	35
CHAPTER 3:.....	42
THE RESEARCH SETTING .....	42
3.1) Introduction.....	42
3.2) The Economic and Geo-Political Contexts.....	44
3.3) Images of the Place .....	53
3.3.1) The Town of Florina as a Place and a Social Space .....	53
3.3.2) The Defenders of the Borders: Perceptions, Symbols and Values of Greekness...	65
CHAPTER 4:.....	75
THE POLITICISATION OF DANCE IN FLORINA DISTRICT .....	75
4.1) Introduction.....	75
4.2) The 1990s: The New Context for the Political Use of Culture .....	77
4.2.1) Greece and its Diplomatic Actions in Relation to the Macedonian Controversy .	77
4.2.2) Reflections at the Local Level: Actions and Reactions, Conflict and Tension .....	79
4.3) Contexts and Strategies for the Appropriation of Dance .....	88
4.3.1) Making Dance a Product for Display .....	88
4.3.2) Dance Performances as Demonstrations of Competing Notions of Identity .....	98
CHAPTER 5:.....	106
THE CONSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE OF DIFFERENCE.....	106
5.1 Introduction.....	106
5.2 The Visual Representation of Culture .....	107
5.2.1 The Wedding Revival .....	107
5.2.2 Perceptions, Objectives and Strategies of the Main Actors .....	118
5.3 The Textual Representation of Culture .....	124
5.3.1 The Book Presentation.....	124
5.3.2. Perceptions and Interpretations of the Event.....	127
5.4 The Two Events in the Broader Context of Local Cultural Politics.....	129
CHAPTER 6:.....	136
‘TO DANCE OR NOT TO DANCE?’: .....	136
SIGNIFYING SELF IN PLURAL CULTURAL CONTEXTS .....	136
6.1) Introduction.....	136
6.2) Kiriakos.....	138
6.3) Savvas.....	144
6.4) Kir-Andreas.....	147
6.5) Froso .....	152
6.6) Yiayia Anastasia .....	155
6.7) Anthropological Accounts and the Construction of Individual Identities in Greek Macedonia .....	158
CHAPTER 7:.....	163

THE POLITICAL CHARACTER OF DANCE PERFORMANCE IN THE FLORINA  
REGION 163

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... 169

ABSTRAKT..... 184

## LIST OF MAPS

- 1.1 The Prefecture of Florina ..... 4  
(URL: <http://www.all-hotels-in-greece.com/mapzoom.php?carry=Florina>)  
(Courtesy of the the “All-Hotels-In-Greece” Team)
- 1.2 Geographical Macedonia..... 7  
(Cowan 2000)  
(Courtesy of the Pluto Press)
- 1.3 Balkan aspirations in 1912..... 8  
(URL: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/balkan\\_aspirations\\_1914.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/balkan_aspirations_1914.jpg))
- 1.4 Territorial modifications in the Balkans after the Treaty of Bukarest  
(August 1913) ..... 9  
(URL: [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/balkan\\_modifications\\_1914.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/historical/balkan_modifications_1914.jpg))  
(Courtesy of the General Libraries, the University of Texas at Austin)
- 3.1 The Prefecture of Florina ..... 44  
(URL: [http://members.lycos.co.uk/Vic\\_Stathopoulos/gr/Florina.html](http://members.lycos.co.uk/Vic_Stathopoulos/gr/Florina.html))  
(Courtesy of Vic Stathopoulos)

## LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

### CHAPTER 1

1.1	Tsiganoi [Gypsies] in Florina (1914-1918).....	10
1.2	Turkish inhabitants of Florina (1914-1918) .....	11
1.3	Refugees from the city of Bitola at the Florina train station (1917).....	12

### CHAPTER 3

3.1	Views from Florina (1914-1918).....	53
3.2	Views from Florina (1955-60).....	54
3.3	The bazaar in Florina at the beginning of the 20th century .....	55
3.4	Florina, part of the main square and the main pedestrian street, where volta takes place (2000) .....	56
3.5	Florina, part of the main square (2000) .....	56
3.6	Florina, main square (1933).....	57
3.7	Florina, main square (1957).....	57
3.8	Views from Florina (2000) .....	59

3.9.	Views from Florina (2000) .....	59
3.10	The ethnographer dancing in the Week for the Emigrant Floriniotes in 1992 .....	64
3.11	Pupils marching in Florina for the celebration of the OXI day (28/10/1999) .....	68
3.12	Members of the Injured and Disabled ex-Servicemen, Victims of War and Resistance Fighters opening the parade for the celebration of the OXI day (28/10/1999) .....	70
3.13	Army platoons marching in Florina for the celebration of the OXI day (28/10/1999) .....	71
3.14	The cross on the hill of Saint Panteleimon .....	71

## CHAPTER 4

4.1	Village dance troupes performing in the Konstantineia event in the Florina's football stadium .....	90
4.2	Female dancers of the Likeion ton Ellinidon dance troupe, dressed in tunics, performing in the mid-1960s in Florina .....	91
4.3	Male and female dancers of the Likeion ton Ellinidon dance troupe, dressed in Tsolias and 'Queen Amalia' costumes respectively, performing in the mid- 1960s in Florina .....	91
4.4	Members and musicians of the Alona troupe .....	92
4.5	The members of the Alona troupe .....	93
4.6	Male and female dancers of the Likeion ton Ellinidon dance troupe, dressed in Floriniot costumes, performing in 1966 in Florina .....	95

## CHAPTER 5

5.1	Members of the dance troupes waiting outside the school building for the revival to begin .....	109
5.2	The band hired for the event.....	110
5.3	The groom's parents starting to dance Sirtos at the schoolyard, the groom's house.....	111
5.4	Troupe dancers have joined in and dance Sirtos .....	111
5.5	The best man and his wife leading the dance in the main square, the house of the best man.....	113
5.6	The bride's father dancing Starsko Poustseno .....	114
5.7	Spectators at the wedding revival.....	115
5.8	The groom says goodbye to his father .....	116
5.9	The troupe from Ano Militsa dancing Sarakinsko .....	118

## **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

<b>ANFLO</b>	Anaptiksiaki Florinas [Regional Development Agency of Florina]
<b>CECDF</b>	Center for the Enterpreneurial and Cultural Development of Florina
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FYROM</b>	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
<b>GSWM</b>	General Secretariat For Western Macedonia
<b>MAKIBE</b>	Makedoniki Kinisi Valkanikis Evimerias [Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity]
<b>MIET</b>	Ministry for Industry, Energy and Technology
<b>NEC</b>	National Electricity Company
<b>NELE</b>	Nomarchiaki Epitropi Laikis Epimorfosis [Prefectural Committee for People’s Education]
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organisation
<b>NSSG</b>	National Statistical Service of Greece

<b>OAKKE</b>	Organosi gia tin Anasigrotisi tou Kommounistikou Kommatos Elladas [Organisation for the Reformation of the Greek Communist Party]
<b>OSCE</b>	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>PASOK</b>	Panellinio Sosialistiko Kinima [Panhellenic Socialist Movement]
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

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## NOTE ON THE TEXT

It may help the reader if I clarify the ways I use some of the terms throughout the thesis. Non-English words are written in italics and in some cases are translated within brackets the first time they appear in the text. Terms that refer to the population categories are used in both the singular and plural and in some cases in the male and female singular form; I designate these in the text in the first time each form appears. Names of persons, cultural associations, institutions and political parties, and titles of songs, though not in English, are not written in italics but begin with a capital letter. Pseudonyms have been used for persons and locations in Chapters 5 and 6.

In relation to the area of study, when referring to the administrative unit known in Greek as *Nomos Florinas*, I use the terms district and prefecture interchangeably. When I refer to the area where I conducted my fieldwork, namely the town of Florina and the surrounding villages, I use the term Florina region. The town of Florina is mentioned either as Florina town or simply Florina.

I use single quotes round scientific terms to indicate that I distance myself from their meaning, and double quotes to enclose direct quotations from references cited or informants' accounts. Longer quoted passages are set out separately, indented and single-spaced.

# CHAPTER 1:

## INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 1.1) The Object of Study: Constructing and De-constructing Boundaries Within Dance Events

On 20 July 1999 the village of Meliti in the district of Florina in northern Greece celebrated the annual *panigiri*<sup>1</sup> of Prophet Elijah, traditionally one of the most important days in the calendar. Whereas in the morning the whole village attended the church service and families lunched together with their guests, in the evening two separate dance feasts took place. It was the first time in the village's recent history that two different feasts would take place. Visitors and inhabitants of the village I talked to characterised the one as 'Greek', and the other as 'Macedonian'. The two feasts were considered each to represent one 'national category'.

The 'Greek' feast was organised, as every year since the late 1980s, in the schoolyard of the elementary school of the village. It was held under the auspices of the village council, representing the municipality of Meliti, and the local cultural

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<sup>1</sup> *Panigiri* or *panigiria* (pl.) is called the celebration of the village's patron saint. It is one of the most, if not the most important day in the villages' communal life.

association *Elpida*. As this was meant to be the official celebration, it was attended by the authorities, the media and lots of people. The association's dance troupe and those of associations from neighbouring villages performed dances from the region, accompanied by a local band. Their performance included the *Litos*, *Gerondikos*, *Kori Eleni* and *Chassapiko*, as well as dances from other parts of Greece. The programme was followed by the participation of the audience in dancing, in which all the above-mentioned dances as well as other dances were performed. It was attended by most of the spectators and the members of the dance troupes.

The 'Macedonian' feast was organised by the other cultural association in the village, *Morfotikos Sillogos*. The association's council members had withdrawn from the official celebration after the village council did not accept their request to have their own music band and sing songs in Slavic. They organised their own feast, which was held in one of the main squares and attended by lots of people but not by the authorities. The only political figures present were the president and members of *Rainbow*, the political party that claims to represent the members of the Macedonian national minority in northern Greece. Dancing by those attending the event was the main part of this feast, in which the audience and the association's members danced, among other dances, *Poustseno*, *Starsko*, *Leno Mome* and *Zaramo*. Here, as at the other feast, a dance troupe from the neighbouring region of *Ptolemaida* presented dances exclusively from the *Florina* region and its environs, accompanied by a local band.

Although the dances mentioned above refer exactly to the same step pattern and some of them to the same melody, they were announced in Greek at the 'Greek' feast and in *Dopia*, as people call the local Slavic dialect, at the 'Macedonian' feast. Similarly, songs were sung by both bands in Greek at the 'Greek' feast and in Slavic at the 'Macedonian' feast. Furthermore, identical melodies were played only instrumentally in the 'Greek' feast and were sung in Slavic at the 'Macedonian' one. Yet at both feasts, adult participants conversed with each other in both Greek and *Dopia*.

In fact, members of the same family participated in both feasts. Two first cousins whose mothers were sisters were among the main organisers of each feast. Grandparents watched their grandchildren perform at one feast and then went to meet other relatives at the other. As soon as they had finished their performance at the 'Greek' feast two dancers went to the 'Macedonian' one to meet their friends. Likewise,

when the performance was over at the 'Macedonian' feast one female dancer went to the 'Greek' one to meet her boyfriend. Another company of male dancers attended the 'Greek' feast before leaving for the 'Macedonian' feast, to "see if there were any nice girls there". Another male participant, who was dancing at the 'Macedonian' feast, came to the 'Greek' one to join his cousin to go to the club.

Apart from the dance troupes of the two cultural associations of the village, there was a third one consisting of villagers, men and women in their mid-forties and early fifties who performed at the 'Greek' feast the honorary role of ending the celebration. A troupe of adults was rather unusual since pupils and teenagers constituted the majority of troupe dancers in the Florina region. This troupe had been established a few months earlier, with the prospect of participating in the celebration. It operated under the aegis of and was financed by the municipality of Meliti. Most of its members were women who belonged to the *Dopioi* [in plural] and *Pontioi* [in plural] population categories of the village and their children were already members of the other two associations' troupes.

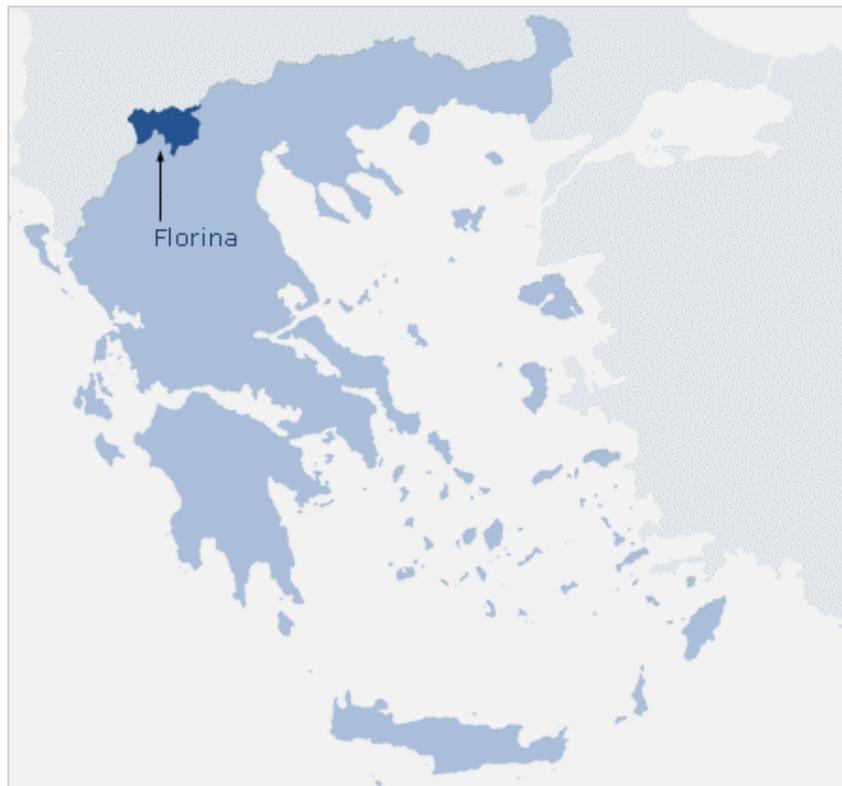
A member of this troupe told me that they formed it in order not to mix dance and joy with politics and to avoid to be categorised as members of one of the two national categories and identified with the connotations this labelling would entail. For this reason, they avoided asking the dance instructors of either of the other associations to teach them; instead they hired a dance teacher from Florina town. After their performance, some of the members of the troupe remained there, while others went off to join the 'Macedonian' one; yet others purposely avoided attending either. Many other villagers and visitors just strolled around, intentionally keeping away from both feasts. They perused the stalls of vendors, who were hawking their wares, selling everything from sunglasses, CDs and cassettes, to jewellery and antiques at half their usual price, or amused themselves and their children by riding on large, brightly lit roundabouts and winning prizes in games of skill or luck at a temporary fair.

At the same time, the atmosphere in the only music club in the village started to warm up. More and more young people arrived, standing close together in the club, drinking and talking, listening to the latest Greek and foreign musical hits, miming the lyrics and gyrating to the rhythm. Among them were members of the dance troupes that had performed that night, their instructors and many of the teenagers from the

village, the surrounding area and the town of Florina, who earlier had been dancing at the feasts. While both feasts lasted until late at night, the youths saw daybreak in the music club.

This thesis discusses processes of identification and categorisation during social situations related to dance in the district of Florina, a border region in north-western Greek Macedonia. It also examines aspects of the ethnographic process through which these issues were explored. More specifically, the project draws attention to the ways collectivities and individuals define themselves and are defined by others in relation and response to hegemonic discourses of cultural difference. In their efforts to deal with cultural difference, collectivities and individuals import the concept of culture in local politics and use dance, a cultural trait, as a marker of identity. Public occasions that include dancing are presented as expressions of these particular identities, and as demonstrations of the 'cultures' they are thought to represent.

I examine both what those involved say about dance and how they act during dance events in order to explore the meanings they attribute to dance, the symbols they use to achieve this and the way they perceive the result of this process. Additionally, I have been interested in other aspects of social life to the extent they help me to understand peoples' choices and actions regarding identity and dance. These processes involve assumptions of fixed and clear-cut collective categories, implicate various aspects of power relations, interweave simultaneously different levels and domains of social life, and use the semiology of domination. Dance is used as an 'optic' through which identification and categorisation are viewed and analysed.



Map 1.1 The Prefecture of Florina

The Florina district is an ideal site for the conduct of this study. The coexistence in the area until the early 20th century of different religious and linguistic communities; the emergence of nationalist movements in the late 19th century and their major impact on geopolitics as well as on the ways people perceive personal and collective identities; the devastating consequences for the region of historical events in the course of the 20th century; the various inward and outward migrations that brought together culturally diverse populations, in certain cases forcibly, and the politicisation of culture all have played their part in creating conditions for disputes between populations and villages and between neighbouring states.

Florina is a frontier region between Greece (and, thus, EU) and the two Balkan countries FYROM and Albania, the most significant for the political stability of the region. The region has been directly and multiply affected by political changes taking place in the Balkans in the last ten years. These transformations have brought with them an increasing number of conflicts over self-determination and nationhood, as well as political and cultural issues such as minority discourses and identity politics. Dance is used as one domain in which all these aspects are articulated and expressed.

Dance has great potency and high esteemed value in the area and constitutes a central component of many public events, annual and private celebrations. Moreover, as a cultural practice and an organized activity, it is accorded recognition as an element of the national culture and a symbol of national identity. As in other border regions, dance was used by the Greek state in the region of Florina, mainly after the World War II, as a means of stressing commonality and consolidating the national identity in order to avert potential threats to Greece's sovereignty. Although this was not always a conscious and deliberately planned policy it led to the manipulation of culture for nationalistic and political purposes.

Floriniotes tend in their oral and written accounts to attribute the local dances to the population categories they designate as *Dopioi*, *Pontioi*, *Vlachs*, and *Aroanites* [in plural]. In this way, the inhabitants distinguish themselves and recognise differences in terms of origin, modes of linguistic communication and other cultural practices such as dances, songs, and customs. These terms are also usually mentioned in anthropological accounts and other studies about the region. Parallel to them, locals use the term *prosfiges* [refugees], which carries a great deal of emotional baggage and political connotations, as is the case in other parts of Greece (Kokot 1996). This category usually includes the *Pontioi* (populations from the Black Sea Coastal region), the *Thrakiotes* [in plural] (from the European part of Turkey) and the *Mikrasiates* [in plural] (from Asia Minor) who settled in the Florina region in the 1920s. As they describe themselves and are described by others in the region, there are two other categories of refugees. These are the *Monastiriotes* [in plural] (populations from the city and area of Bitola, today in the southern part of FYROM) and *Vorioipiotes* [in plural] (populations from the city and area of Korça, today in central-eastern Albania) who settled in the region in the second decade of the 20th century<sup>2</sup>.

All these terms are used as “categories of ascription and identification” (Barth 1969:10) and organise certain political and social relations within the local society. Individuals, whole villages and groups of villages are ascribed to these categories. The appropriation and exploitation of these terms are manifested in the fact that they comprise persons and populations with different places of origin, historical and cultural

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<sup>2</sup> According to the records of the Florina city council, 450 families of Monastiriotes were settled in the city of Florina until 1930 (Iliadou-Tachou 1995:74).

backgrounds to whom certain cultural characteristics are attached. In addition, these categorisations exclude or ignore those that are the offspring of mixed marriages between members of the supposed categories, or between other Greeks who reside in the region but do not come from there.

The disputed category is that of the *Dopioi*. In the last years, they are also referred to as 'bilinguals', 'Slav-speakers' and 'Slavophones'. These terms designate a linguistic community. It has to be mentioned that there is no term used for this population which is devoid of political connotations. For this reason, I use the term *Dopioi*, which is used by the locals in their interactions. Its meaning derives from the Greek word *topos*, which means place. In this way they emphasise their long-standing connection with and historical rights to the place. The term stems back to political and economic conflicts over land use in the 1920s, between newly settled refugees and the existing inhabitants. The overwhelming majority identify themselves as Greeks and more recently as '*dopioi Ellines Makedones*' (local Greek Macedonians) in contrast to those *Dopioi* who identify themselves as 'national Macedonians'. This last category consists of *Dopioi* who claim to be members of the Macedonian national minority; a separate category which they claim has always existed in the region.

In my account, I challenge the notion that these are well-defined groups consisting of homogenous individuals who share a 'culture'. I argue that processes of identification and categorisation are "dynamic, historically grounded and politically responsive" (Cowan and Brown 2000:22). Furthermore, processes of identification and categorisation reveal very complicated social identities and raise theoretical questions about the nature of the person and the collectivities.

## **1.2) Identity Formation Processes in the District of Florina: A Historical Perspective**

The Florina district is to be found in the central western part of what is usually called geographical Macedonia. It acquired its geographical status and political importance as a border region of the Greek State in 1913 when the territorial boundaries of the new nation-states of Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, Albania, Romania and Turkey were fixed. Until that time it was part of the Ottoman Empire.



Map 1.2 Geographical Macedonia

During the Ottoman period, the region formed part of the rural periphery of Vitolia (the today's city of Bitola), the second largest and most important city of the Ottoman Empire in the southern Balkans after Thessaloniki. In the late 19th century, it was the administrative centre of the *kaza*<sup>3</sup> of Florina, which comprised 64 Christian and 30 Muslim villages. Slav-speaking peasants constituted the majority of the rural population. In 1890 the town of Florina was inhabited by Muslims, Christians - divided into those affiliated to the Greek Patriarchate and to those belonging to the Bulgarian Exarchate - and *Tsigganoi* (Gypsies). Several villages had been founded by populations that arrived as immigrants in the early 19th century from what is today southern Albania and Epirus (in Greece). In other cases, individual families had settled and been assimilated to Christian Slav-speaking residents. Villagers emigrated from the region to the major urban centres in the Balkans, where they established merchant houses, or travelled there on an annual basis to work as masons and manual labourers (Gounaris 1993:196).

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<sup>3</sup> The term designates an Ottoman administrative unit.

Local accounts from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century mention that residents of the region invariably spoke an array of languages. Population movements, cultural interaction, economic transactions and multiple affiliations were dominant patterns in the region during the Ottoman period. Most scholars agree that all over Macedonia until the end of the 19th century, religion was the principal factor taken into consideration by the Ottoman bureaucracy for dividing the population into administrative units; it was also the most important aspect of identity for most of the region's inhabitants. Family status, residence in a certain village and membership of a certain socio-economic class were other aspects of differentiation among the population (Danforth 1995:58). This does not mean that no national categories existed, but that cultural background was not the most important criterion for the ascription of an individual to a collective entity.

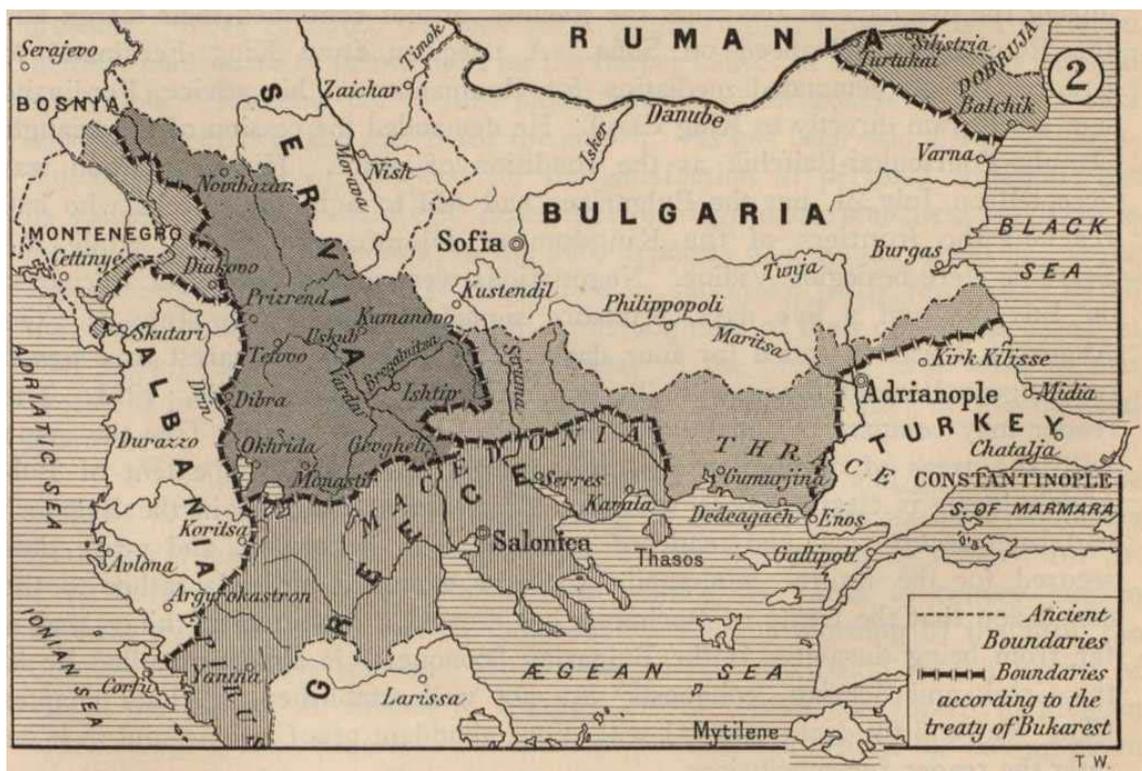


Map 1.3 Balkan aspirations in 1912

The emergence of Balkan national movements in the area changed the way people perceived personal and collective identities by imposing new meanings on terms hitherto used without any national connotations. Nation became the most significant category of belonging. From the end of the 19th century, Greece, Bulgaria, and, to a lesser degree, Serbia and Romania, laid territorial claims to Macedonia, based on the existence of brethren who, according to their nationalist ideology, were calling for liberation and, at a later stage, for union with the 'brother-state'. Proving the existence

of measurable and identifiable national categories that declared affiliation with the contender nation-states was their means for accomplishing these objectives. Balkan states used all available means, including violence and collaboration with the Ottoman authorities, in their efforts to muster the support of the people (Vakalopoulos 1986). Affiliation with the Greek Patriarchate or the Bulgarian Exarchate and the use of Greek or Slavic languages were interpreted in national terms, as Greek or Bulgarian, by propagandists of the national ideologies.

In the Florina region, and indeed all over Macedonia, the superficial hold of the national categories and their manipulation by the rural population has been documented and underlined by a number of observers (Abbot 1903, Brailsford 1906) and scholars (Vermeulen 1984, Gounaris 1993). The Florina region was at the centre of these conflicts. The decision to identify with one national category or another was a political one depending on material needs and personal priorities, often irrespective of the identities of claimants of a particular identity. The phenomenon of 'national mobility', whereby individuals and communities shifted their national allegiances in response to perceived threats or interests, in some cases repeatedly, has already been highlighted (Cowan 1997). Individuals, families, households and villages which had identified themselves as Greeks turned into supporters of the Bulgarian Exarchate and vice versa (Agelopoulos 1995).



Map 1.4 Territorial modifications in the Balkans after the Treaty of Bukarest (August 1913)

The Balkan wars (1912-1913) and the Treaty of Bucharest (1913), which terminated Ottoman rule in the Balkans, had failed to close the question of territorial claims upon Macedonia (Vakalopoulos 1988:215-19). Enclosed within the borders of a nation-state, the region remained multilingual and multicultural. This situation started to change due to the devastating historical events that followed. By the time the World War I was declared in 1914, most of those who declared themselves Bulgarians had left the region and many Greek and Jewish families from nearby cities and villages of Serbia and Albania had settled there, almost all of them in the town of Florina. Bulgarian and German troops occupied the region in 1916, but it was re-occupied by French troops within the year. The period of French occupation (1916-1918) is referred to in local history as one of great changes and reforms in all domains of social life, primarily in the city.



Phot. 1.1 *Tsiganoi* [Gypsies] in Florina (1914-1918)

In the mid-1920s, after Greece's defeat by Turkey (1922), a number of culturally diverse populations settled in the region. They were Christian Orthodox in faith and came from various parts of Turkey, replacing the Muslims who left the region for Turkey. These newcomers were categorised as *prosphiges* and were deemed Greek, even though they varied in dialect and cultural practice. Their lack of economic support and the long drawn-out conflict over the distribution of land between them and the locals were exploited by the politicians (Michailidis 1997:126-27), sustaining the fragmentation of local society created in the pre-national period.



Phot. 1.2 Turkish inhabitants of Florina (1914-1918)

The new reality of the Greek nation-state was the starting-point for constructing an exclusive national identity related to strict cultural characteristics. During the process of nation building, state policy-makers, in their effort to homogenize the 'nation', failed to understand that, at a local level and at least until the first decades of the 20th century, the choice of identification with a national category was often made for political and personal reasons that were irrelevant to the cultural practices of those who took the decision (Agelopoulos 2000:143).

Thus, *Dopioi*, due to their 'cultural difference', were perceived by the state and its agents as "potential identifiers with the neighbouring states" (Cowan and Brown 2000:11). Very often, they found themselves compelled to prove their conformity to the national standards through symbolic action and self-designation, that is, through their language, dances, songs and other cultural practices (Cowan 1997:157). Prohibition and punishment of their cultural expressions, which seemed to indicate 'non-Greek' affiliations (Cowan and Brown 2000: 11-12), happened during the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1940), transforming their difference into a marginalised and stigmatised 'identity' based on political and cultural criteria.



Phot. 1.3 Refugees from the city of Bitola at the Florina train station (1917)

This process both distinguished them from and opposed them to the other putative categories of local society, and created a sense of community among those who felt they belonged to the same ‘culture’. Daily life, interpersonal interactions and public events provide evidence that much of what is presented today as the ‘culture’ of *Dopioi* as well as of the other population categories in the region has been constructed and is used as a strategy to serve personal or collective interests. Even today, differences in costumes, songs, dances, in the dialects spoken in groups of villages and other cultural practices are employed in intra-category conflicts and differentiations. This point has received little theoretical consideration in most of the accounts relating to the region, which tend to stress the interaction between the state and the categories or between the categories and not within them (ibid: 13).

The decade 1940-1950 was one of the most turbulent periods in the region’s history. The political choices of individuals during the Second World War and the Greek Civil War that followed intensified tensions between the local populations. In the spring of 1941, German and Bulgarian troops occupied the region. Villages of *Dopioi* identified themselves as Bulgarians and collaborated with the Bulgarian army. Scenes similar to those witnessed at the beginning of the century were revived. Bulgarian propaganda and the supply of goods in a period when death from starvation was common were met by counter-efforts that stressed national values and the need for resistance against the

nation's enemies. At the end of 1944 the Germans left the region and a few months later, at the beginning of 1945, British troops arrived.

The outbreak of the Civil War in 1945 found friends, co-villagers and members of the same family fighting against each other. The town of Florina was attacked three times (once in 1947 and twice in 1949) by the left-wing forces, in their endeavour to occupy an urban centre and establish it as the seat of their government. In order to promote control of the region, the Greek Communist Party supported the idea of Macedonia as an independent state and created guerrilla forces consisting exclusively of *Dopioi*, who were referred to as *Slavomakedones*. Schools, newspapers, collective dance events and drama performances promoted the use of the Slavic language and the creation of a Macedonian national identity.

This move was supported by the Yugoslav Socialist Republic of Macedonia, which had been established in 1944 and tried to consolidate its existence by following the example of nationalistic policies set by the other Balkan states (Hill 1995). With the defeat of the Greek Communist forces in 1949, thousands of *Dopioi*, known as 'political refugees', left the Florina region and Greece for Yugoslavia and other countries in Eastern Europe. In the aftermath of the Civil War, an anti-Communist climate and the persecution of Communists prevailed in the region, accompanied by economic stagnation and the emigration of a great number of its inhabitants, all circumstances that quickly and drastically reduced its possibilities for economic development.

### **1.3) Theoretical Framework**

#### **1.3.1) Conceptualising Identity and Difference in the Context of Greek Macedonia**

The construction of the historically and socially complex identity of the populations residing in Greek Macedonia has been part of the public discussion that has been developed throughout the 1990s, and relates to issues of identity, nationalism, culture and rights in the Balkans. The existence of pure and discrete groups in the region is

taken for granted in various reports, descriptions and analyses published in the 1990s<sup>4</sup>. Local populations have been perceived as separable, culture-bearing collectivities on the basis of their cultural backgrounds and supposed or real historical or/and 'ethnic' differentiation. More importantly, they have been divided and represented in the form of nations, ethnic groups and minorities and as unitary actors devoid of internal contradictions and conflicts. An ethnic group as a discrete bounded entity, although essentially an analytical model of social organisation, has been conceived by various researchers, analysts and observers as a locally meaningful principle on which to base everyday practice. Ethnicity as the main analytic term used in the various accounts has been essentialised and fundamentalised.

The anthropological contribution to this discussion was initiated in the early 1990s through the publication of articles and books deriving from short and long-term ethnographic fieldwork. Using different approaches and analytical levels, researchers tried to understand the plurality of the current and historical experiences of the inhabitants of Macedonia. The construction of national identities, the relations between the population categories or between them and the state, and the formation of identity at the level of the individual have constituted the main focus of these studies.

However, one of the issues that has arisen, which reflected the diversity of views on the topic, concerned the existence of a distinct population category with a Macedonian 'ethnic' identity. Some of the researchers argue that it pre-existed before the emergence of nationalism in Macedonia by virtue of its culture and its rejection from the Greek state in the course of its formation (Karakasidou 1993,1994, Danforth 1993, 1995). Yet others remain critical in the terminology they use regarding the development of identity within the Greek state, the background of the population attributed to it, and their daily interactions with the rest of the inhabitants in the region (Agelopoulos 1997a, 1997b, Cowan 1997, Vereni 1996).

The inherent complexities and current developments in the politics of identity and difference in the context of contemporary Macedonia have been explored in the most recent anthropological text on Macedonia (Cowan 2000). In their introduction to this

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<sup>4</sup> See for example reports published by N.G.O.s and articles written by various analysts such as Amnesty International (1992), Greek Helsinki Monitor and M.R.G.-GR. (1996), Noel Malcolm and Mark Almond (1994), Pettifer (1992), Pettifer James, Poulton Hugh and M.R.G.-GR (1994), Poulton (1995).

volume, Cowan and Brown examine the issue of identity in terms of processes and representation. They see Macedonia both as a geographic area with multiple, ambivalent and often mutually exclusive meanings and as a site where different agents, global discourses and local, national and international political agendas intersect and compete with each other. This new approach challenges assertions of objective truth and various representations of fixed, homogenous and stable 'ethnic' and national categories, seeing ethnicity as "constructed, fluid and variably salient" (ibid:3). Questions of power, diversity within population categories and transnational dimensions are also emphasised in this attempt to de-construct identity in Macedonia.

Cowan and Brown stress the need to understand the issue in relation to current political and economic conflicts at both local and international levels (ibid:2). The international community's emphasis on cultural diversity and difference has placed minority rights at the top of the European political agenda since 1989. This has resulted in the expansion of international institutions<sup>5</sup> which both promote and monitor implementation of those rights (ibid:14). Macedonia's heterogeneity is seen as a phenomenon which should be preserved. Local communities with a distinctive cultural heritage are labelled as minorities (ibid:9-10). This notion sees people in terms of discrete, homogeneous and distinguishable groups, in which culture functions as the indicator of difference. It has been reinforced by a

significant body of opinion in the Western media and political establishment, which, working from assumptions hardly distinguishable from the claims of nationalist ideologues of the region...have facilitated the production, entrenchment and legitimisation of *new* and exclusivist ethnic and national identities (emphasis in original, ibid:2-3).

Cowan and Brown point out that a new context of cultural contestation has been created in the region, in which hierarchical social and political relations are now framed in terms of minority and majority rights. In this respect, power relations that concern all domains of social activity have been reduced to a simplistic dichotomy between dominators and dominated, oppressors and oppressed. In this way, the international discourse essentialises identities and see minorities as homogenous communities without considering difference within groups (ibid:13).

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<sup>5</sup> These include the OSCE, the Council of Europe and a number of NGOs oriented to the post-1989 Balkans.

Nevertheless, cultural difference itself has always been an inherent part of social reality and of individual world-views in Macedonia. Various agents have managed it politically to create powerful boundaries and mobilise individual and collective attitudes. Apparently similar phenomena have been observed in other parts of Europe and the world. However the historical causes of conflicts in Macedonia might have meanings to the populations and individuals that participate in them, that differ from the interpretations of the various 'outsiders' who observe and describe them.

In my thesis, I shift the focus from groups to social situations and practices in order to help us understand the circumstances under which people identify or distance themselves from collectivities. I primarily focus on the category of *Dopioi*, which is the most contested, and consider the other categories to the extent that they are involved in the issues I address. Following Cowan and Brown's suggestions, I point out diversities and tensions in order to address difference within the category. Rejecting the uncritical acceptance of common notions of purity and history and of the national community as a 'natural' entity, I attempt to de-construct not only the nation but also other collective categories. I see the construction of identity as a process that is fluid, context-specific, and never predetermined but often exploited by social actors. By taking a situational approach to identity, I draw attention to how individuals in the Florina region position themselves in relation to hegemonic discourses of cultural difference and the conditions under which they adopt these positions.

Following Richard Jenkins (1994), I understand identity as the product of the ongoing interaction of two interdependent social processes, an internal and an external definition. During the process of internal definition, actors communicate "to in- or out-group members a self-definition of their nature of identity" (ibid:198-99). Although conceptualised as internal, "these processes, whether individual or collective, are necessarily transactional and social because they pre-suppose an audience and an externally derived framework of meaning" (ibid:199).

In the process of external definition, "a person or set of persons define others. At one end of this range of possibilities, this defining may be the validation of others' internal definition of themselves" (ibid:199). At the other end, it can be the "imposition by one actor or group of actors upon another, of a putative name and characterisation and the categorised may be unable to resist" (ibid:199) internalising the language or the

categories of the oppressor. This defining affects their social experience in significant ways. During the process of external definition, the act of imposing a name and characterisation might be carried out those who have “the authority to categorise others by virtue of their superior status or knowledge” (ibid:217). Identity is then the outcome of the operation of both internal and external processes, whereby one cannot be understood in isolation from the other.

Further elaboration on the outcome of these processes entails the distinction between groups and categories (ibid:200). A group is rooted in the process of internal definition and a category is externally defined. “Social groups define themselves, their name, nature and boundaries, while social categories are identified, defined and delineated by others” (ibid:201). In my thesis, I use the term group in relation to the population categories when I refer to the informants’ accounts. Jenkins’ model allows for the inclusion of individual as well as collective identities within a unified analytical framework.

The nation-state formation involves processes of internal and external definition, inclusion and exclusion. State policy-makers and state agencies attempt to keep track of, manage and control their ‘populations’ with the purpose of defining the nation as a culturally homogenous entity. State subjects are frequently encouraged to have a shared culture and/or ethnic origin ‘in common’. Culture as defined by the nation-state becomes the locus of homogenisation and the focus of the production of differences. By instituting homogeneity as normative, the state gives socio-political significance to pre-existing cultural differences. It groups them as differences of ethnicity, locality, class and gender, each of these defined as a particular kind of difference with respect to its homogenising project. Those who do not ‘fit’ the national ideals are excluded and categorised as ‘Others’. Thus, the practises of state-makers not only produce these differences but also institute them in the form of ‘identities’. In this sense, groups and their respective identities are products of national(ist) ideologies rather than their origins. Culture becomes a zone of disagreement and contest (Verdery 1994).

As a result, asymmetrical relations and inequalities of power are created at sites where institutionalised differences are located. In their struggles to deal with each other and the state, categories and individuals identified as ‘Nationals’ and ‘Others’ turn cultural difference into political advantage. In the articulation of their discourse, culture

comes to have an ideological centrality. The assertion of cultural particularity is a way of declaring the existence of a distinctive collectivity. In the same vein, the existence of the group is confirmed by the existence of a particular culture (Handler 1988:39).

The understanding and use of the concept of culture in these processes reflects an essentialist view of culture, or what Susan Wright has called the “old ideas of culture” (1998). It is “bounded”, has “defined characteristics”, and is “unchanging”, with an “underlying system of meanings” shared by homogenous individuals (ibid:10). The increasing prevalence of the notion of culture as a rhetorical object has a central place in modern identity politics. Eric Wolf (1982) has associated the idea of a bounded and homogeneous culture with the national project. He suggests that culture is “a series of processes that construct, reconstruct and dismantle cultural materials, in response to definite determinants” (ibid:387), adding that “there are only cultural sets of practices and ideas put into play by determinate human actors under determinate circumstances. In the course of action these cultural sets are assembled, dismantled and reassembled” (ibid:391).

I perceive culture as an analytical concept that emphasises process, fluidity and contestation over the meaning of symbols and concepts, including that of ‘culture’ itself (Wright 1998). In adopting the view of culture as a political process, I focus on the ways that differently positioned actors define symbols and contests by drawing on local, national and transnational discourses. I also concentrate on the institutions and resources these actors use to make their meanings authoritative and to prevent competing meanings from being heard. In the process of claiming power and authority, categories and individuals are trying to assert different definitions that enable them to set the terms of their relations with the other categories in the region and the state and, at the same time, produce different material outcomes.

Drawing on what Sherry Ortner (1984) has called “practice anthropology”, I perceive individuals not as passive receivers, but as active agents who find themselves in a constant dialectical relation with their social setting. In this interplay they do not accept uncritically the meanings imposed on local society by the state and other agents, but make choices and develop strategies through which they accept, manipulate or contest symbols and change their meanings circumstantially or permanently. Within this framework, I direct my attention to the actions of individuals and the ways in

which they exploit dominant ideologies in order to give meaning to what they do. Additionally, by focusing on the way individuals accept or reject subject positions and identities assigned to them and shift from one possible position to another I am able to conceptualise the processes by which identity and difference are individually constructed and experienced.

### **1.3.2) Conceptualising Dance**

The practice of the Greek traditional dance (*ellinikos paradosiakos choros*) and its cultivation through established state and private cultural institutions are central social activities in modern Greek society. Dance and dancing are essential elements of many social and cultural activities, whether in Athens or in small border villages. Thousands of people perform traditional dances and hundreds of private cultural associations have been established for the “the cultivation and preservation of dance”.

In the town of Florina and the surrounding villages, dance and dancing as social and cultural activities are also essential parts of many celebrations and events. Weddings culminate in dance feasts that last whole nights, attended by hundreds of invited and uninvited guests. Formal dance evenings as well as spontaneous dance occasions are organised throughout the year by cultural associations. During the winter time, many cafeterias in villages hire a local band and organise dance nights. In addition, a large number of dance troupes, which constitute essential domains of activity of state institutions and private cultural associations, operate either continuously or temporarily for a few performances. Troupes from diaspora communities are invited to perform at ‘home’ and others from the Florina region travel abroad to participate in cultural activities and dance festivals. Local television stations regularly present staged dance performances and revivals of ‘old’ customs in programmes devoted to ‘tradition’ and to the activities of cultural associations. CDs and records with melodies associated with dances of the region are produced and marketed.

This thesis deals with the political dimension of practicing and performing dance (Reed 1998:505). Anthropological studies on the politics of dance have increased since the 1980s and have explored, among other issues, aspects of the relation of dance to nationalism, ethnicity and the nation-state (ibid:510-514, Wulff 2001:3211).

Anthropological studies on Greek dance were until recently very scarce<sup>6</sup>. Loring Danforth (1979) and Jane Cowan (1990) were the first non-Greek anthropologists who extensively studied aspects of dance in northern Greece. Their work has constituted the framework within which many subsequent studies were carried out since then, mainly by Greek scholars, including this one. At the same time, since the mid-1980s and particularly in the 1990s Greek scholars started to examine the social and cultural contexts of dance performance and publish their own research<sup>7</sup>. This recently published material has not been evaluated yet.

Despite the importance of dance in the Florina region, it has never been the subject of an anthropological study. It is no exaggeration to say that there has been unwillingness to study dance in the Florina region, due to the politically 'sensitive' situation in relation to the Macedonian Question and the heavily politicised past of the region. A small number of articles and books, especially in the 1990s, by amateur folklorists, educated villagers and dance teachers and researchers provide information about dance in the region. In the majority of the sources written by locals and documented so far, dance is mentioned simply as part of communal rituals, and names of dance patterns are given without any deeper examination<sup>8</sup>.

The authors of such sources take no critical distance from their information, mention nothing about the way they gathered it and present it as indisputably part of the social practices they describe. Where there is more detailed study, it follows the existing pattern of most Greek books on dance written by dance teachers, in which different dance forms, related to historical events and presented as originating from specific regions and villages, are classified according to a variety of morphological, musical and other criteria, and are verbally described<sup>9</sup>.

My study combines anthropological approaches to dance that examine its meaning and context as well as its choreographic form (Wulff 2001:3210). I use the concept of

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<sup>6</sup> According to Loutzaki (1992), a review of the literature about Greek dance produced until the early 1990s portrayed the lack of studies that approached dance as an integral part of the culture in which it belonged. In their overwhelming majority, these studies attempted to demonstrate the continuity of dance in the course of Greek history, describe it verbally and classify dances with a variety of criteria, and repeated already published information.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Aleksakis (1992), Bottomley (1992), Kavouras (1992), Loutzaki (1992a, 1999), Rombou-Levidi (1999). The

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Folklore and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia and Thrace (1994), Loustas (1996), Stiliadis (1993), Tsami (1994).

<sup>9</sup> See for example, Koufis (1994), Natsis (1990), Papachristou (1994).

dance in a twofold sense, as a series of movements and as an event, a sphere of interaction. In the first meaning, a dance consists of patterned body movements, combined with melodies played by musical instruments and very often choreographed and accompanied by poetic texts (Stillman 1996: 359). Dance as a structured movement system (Kaepler 1985) specifically refers to the so-called Greek traditional dances, rural dances considered as cultural idioms of the Greek provinces.

Following Jane Cowan's (1990:18-19) approach to the dance event, I consider dance and its practices not only as the context (sphere of interaction) of personal and collective expression but also as a means by which the participants conceptualise and present themselves and are conceptualised and evaluated by others. Social situations in which dancing is one of their activities constitute "scheduled and co-ordinated public occasions, temporally and spatially bounded and programmed with a sequence of activities" (Bauman 1992b: 46).

In describing dance events, I find the conceptual categories of participatory and presentational dances suggested by Andriy Nahachewsky (1995) very useful. Although Nahachewski proposes these categories to make a distinction between dances, I use them in the same way as Koutsouba does (1997: 67-76), in order to differentiate between dance events. Presentational dance events include staged performances of the Greek traditional dances by organised dance troupes in front of an audience. Participatory dance events, such as wedding ceremonies, private family celebrations, village fairs, formal dance evenings and other spontaneous dance occasions, are those in which the participants are actively involved by joining the dance without pre-planning and rehearsing. The concurrence of presentational and participatory dance events is possible when the audience joins in after a performance by dance troupes.

In both categories of events, various agents are involved, participate actively and interact with each other. These forces include state institutions, cultural policy makers, state officials, political parties and politicians, local administrators, local elites, cultural associations with dance sections, dance teachers, dancers, musicians, and individual members of the local society and diaspora communities.

The events contain various sets of symbols, achieve multiple goals, are attributed various meanings and interpretations, and shape the participants' perceptions of social

order in many ways. Dance events are “sociable, sensual and aesthetic experiences” (Cowan 1990:233). Not all of them are explicitly related to processes of internal and external definition, and not all are related to the same extent. Floriniotes simultaneously celebrate in them different forms of belonging, such as that of kin, village, church, population category, and many other affiliations depending on group age, gender, class, party and cultural institution membership.

However, in a context where cultural objectification and the politicisation of culture predominate (Handler 1988), such events comprise subtle political aspects and some of them are, indeed, organised to fulfil intelligible political aspirations and objectives. In this respect, they serve political interests and undermine others, mediate and influence peoples’ political understandings; they must be analysed in political terms (Kertzer 1988:87) and related to dominant ideas of cultural difference and questions of power. For the purposes of this project, these dance events provide an excellent locus for looking at the way identification and categorisation is enacted.

#### **1.4) The Structure of the Thesis**

I do not attempt in my thesis to offer either a full range of the dance praxis nor a comprehensive ethnography of the Florina region. I am concerned rather to examine issues of the politics of identity and culture by focusing on specific dance events as examples and on what people say about and do during performing dances.

In Chapter 2, I locate my self within the research setting and explore some aspects of this ethnographic endeavour. I present myself as a member of the local society and describe my efforts to realise my research project during the pre-research period and throughout my fieldwork, to manage to create distance and to confront emotionally my own process of self-definition. I discuss issues of reflexivity, research strategies, and dilemmas, choices and ethical commitments between the personal self and the ethnographic self.

Chapter 3 introduces various features of local social life that are relevant to an understanding of changes taking place during my fieldwork in the region. It describes

the socio-economic context of the town with a specific focus on everyday life, consequences of the globalisation of economy and culture, incidents connected with symbols of Greekness, perceptions of the locals about the cultural life of the town, and the role of the local religious institutions.

In Chapter 4, I describe the tense socio-political situation created in the region by the re-awakening of the Macedonian Question in the 1990s and its impact on the performance of dance, illustrating this process with ethnographic examples. I briefly outline in an interpretative way aspects of dance praxis which shape contemporary practices and perceptions about dance in the region. I address issues of cultural ideology and politics to reveal the processes through which concepts of dance have evolved as emotional markers of national identity. The roles of educational and cultural state and private institutions and certain individuals in the construction of the meanings of dance is highlighted.

In Chapter 5, I introduce the reader to the ways identity can be constructed and performed through dance and other cultural events. Local institutions and other agents belonging to the *Dopioi* category use established practices and symbols related to dance performance in order to articulate a coherent account of the category's 'culture'. In relation to this, I examine certain aspects of the organisation of dance performance which contribute to the constant transformation of those elements which are thought to constitute the cultural content of the demonstrated identity. Finally, placing the events within the broader context of cultural activities in the region, I show how the notion of 'culture' can be politically exploited.

In Chapter 6, I draw upon the narratives, actions and interpretations of several individuals to examine the ways they construct and experience their identity. Focusing on the ways they perceive and represent ideas about belonging and about collectivities and culture, I suggest that the incorporation in one's sense of Self of 'contradictory' elements ascribed to mutually exclusive identities is a very common pattern that has not adequately been addressed in the various accounts of the region. In Chapter 7, I reiterate in the form of a brief conclusion the dissertation's basic points.

## **CHAPTER 2:**

### **DOING FIELDWORK IN MY 'OWN SOCIETY'**

#### **RESEARCH METHODS AND ISSUES OF REFLEXIVITY**

##### **2.1) Introduction**

The study of the anthropologist's 'own society' constitutes a different enterprise than that of an 'unknown' and 'unfamiliar' society (Gefou-Madianou 1998, Hastrup 1993, 1998, Okely 1992, Strathern 1987). It poses an array of theoretical, methodological and epistemological issues related with the ethnographic process and the anthropological knowledge produced by it. Anthropologists who conduct fieldwork in their own society are described by different terms among which the most common is 'native' anthropologist (Narayan 1993). I did fieldwork in the town where I grew up and in villages where I had relatives and friends. Nevertheless I join Kirin Narayan (1993: 676-677) in denouncing the ideas of authenticity associated with the concept of 'native', either as a unified and homogenous category under study or as denoting the anthropologist who comes from the community under study and can forward an authentic point of view to the academic community. On the contrary, I believe it is more "profitable to view each anthropologist in terms of shifting identifications amid a field of interpenetrating communities and power relations" (ibid: 671) and to argue for the examination of the ways a 'native' anthropologist is situated in the research setting in relation to the people he studies.

This approach provides the framework within which I designed and conducted my fieldwork. First, it takes into account the advantages and disadvantages, the dilemmas and ethical commitments of being a 'native' ethnographer. Second and most important, it reduces the ethnographer's authority and places him within the research setting. It acknowledges the fact that the social reality within which anthropological knowledge is produced is the result of the interaction between the ethnographer and the locals that takes place under specific cultural, social and historical conditions. Although the 'native' ethnographer may be, or may at least be considered part of these settings, he cannot claim the existence of an objective reality of which he is the skilful describer and critical judge. This claim would pose theoretical problems and methodological difficulties since it would entail an essentialistic idea about the existence of a single unique truth and a privileged access to this truth by the 'native' anthropologist. The rejection of this notion enables a more critical look at the analytic categories of 'identity and culture', 'Self and Other', and 'groups and individuals' and challenges the ways they are perceived and represented.

Being a member of the society under study undoubtedly implies certain advantages and disadvantages. A 'native' ethnographer is thought to have exceptional access, in many respects better than that of any other researcher, to locations and social domains (Gefou-Madianou 1993a, Jones 1970, Stephenson and Greer 1981). According to this view, patterns of cultural behaviour even if they appear in a 'disguised' and complicated way can be, to a certain extent, unmasked and understood due to the ethnographer's familiarity with the local setting. In the same way, psychological aspects of behaviour can be culturally recognisable as part of his emotional world (Ohnuki-Tierney 1984). On the other hand, unlike an outsider the 'native' anthropologist is placed in one of the existing social categories and is required to conform with the social norms (Gefou-Madianou 1993b).

Some researchers, such as Mascrahnhas-Keyes (1987) argue for the creation and maintenance of distance between the 'native' ethnographer and those under study. This view holds that the ethnographer, doing research in his own society, has to distance himself from his 'own culture'. He has, on the one hand, to take advantage of his inside view and on the other hand, to maintain an outside view for the evaluation of his knowledge and acquired information. He, the 'Self', who studies the 'Other' has to

create distance from the 'Self' since he is part of the 'Other' (Gefou-Madianou 1998:394-395). It is a disengagement of the individual from the collective 'Self' and of the personal from the ethnographic.

Kirsten Hastrup's (1998:349-350) distinction between native and anthropological discourses of knowledge has been a very useful approach to conducting anthropology 'at home'. The native discourse of knowledge consists of being aware of the way things work in the society under study, and the anthropological discourse of knowledge consists of understanding this way. According to Hastrup, a 'native' anthropologist has to transform self-evident cultural knowledge into anthropological understanding (ibid: 356). Hastrup considers the creation of emotional and mental distance from those under study, as well as a knowledge as detailed as possible of the ethnographer's position in the social setting as two important presuppositions for the conduct of anthropological fieldwork and the production of anthropological knowledge (ibid: 356-357).

Adopting these approaches, I address in this chapter issues related to the conduct of my fieldwork and the methodological approach I adopted throughout the ethnographic process. I introduce myself as a member of the local society, describe the methods and techniques I employed for the gathering of my information, and talk about the nature of my relationships with those under study. My account carries an autobiographical element since it is concerned with "lived interactions, participatory experience and embodied knowledge" (Okely 1992: 3).

## **2.2) Presenting Myself**

I was born in 1968 and grew up between the 1970s and mid 1980s in a neighbourhood in the town of Florina, called Tsifliki. This area was until the mid-1950s a marginal part of the town. It was at this time at the edge of Florina and its inhabitants were not integrated in the town's social structure and the local bourgeoisie. Some of them had come from villages and others were considered as *Yiftoi* {[in plural] Gypsies}. In the 1950s, it was linked to Florina after the town's residential boundaries were expanded. Linguistically, it was a complex area since one could constantly and simultaneously listen to Greek, *Dopia* and the dialect of the *Yiftoi*. The linguistic

plurality of the area has not changed much nowadays; it is probably the only area in Florina whose multi-lingual character has been preserved to a certain degree.

Linguistic plurality was also a main element in my family environment, more accurately at my grandparents' house. My grandfather was from the region of Aitoloakarnania, in central western Greece, but my grandmother came from the village of Kato Idrousa. In the local discourse she belongs to the Arvanites category and grew up in a village where *Dopioi* formed the majority of the population. In my family the terms *Dopios* [male, singular] and *Arvanitis* [male, singular] had never had any political connotations as different kinds of people and distinctive and opposing collectivities. Many of our blood and affinal relatives are *Dopioi* from the village and from other villages in the plain of Florina and the Prespes area. I was listening to Greek, *Arvanitika*<sup>10</sup> and *Dopia*, depending on who was visiting our house, and English when our relatives from the USA came. I was also visiting relatives' houses, wedding feasts and the village's panigiri and listening to them talking with my grandmother or with each other in *Arvanitika* or *Dopia* or both and using no or only a few words of Greek.

I spoke only Greek with my family but I used to speak *Dopia* and a few words of *Yiftika*<sup>11</sup> with my friends in our neighbourhood. I used to participate in conversations in *Dopia* at my friends' houses and we mostly loved jokes, nicknames and insulting expressions, which we borrowed and used against each other. Listening to women gossiping in *Dopia* about certain persons in the neighbourhood was a way for us to entertain ourselves and learn many things about familiar persons. After hearing them we would imitate and make fun in *Dopia* of the way these women talked. Speaking and/or listening to *Dopia* not only in our neighbourhood but also elsewhere was usual and ordinary for me. In certain situations, as for example in school, speaking *Dopia* was criticised as a mark of illiteracy and 'uneducated-ness' and at other times as a sign of 'non-Greek-ness'.

My involvement in dancing as a member of a dance troupe started in the early 1980s. In 1983 I joined the troupe of the Aristotelis cultural association. Until that time, I used to attend various events with my family where I also danced with them.

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<sup>10</sup> The dialect attributed to the *Arvanites* category. According to them, it resembles what is spoken in the region of Korça, central-eastern Albania towards the Albanian-Greek border.

<sup>11</sup> The term is used by outsiders to refer to the dialect this category speaks.

Aristotelis was the only troupe active at that time in Florina. A few months previously, in summer 1982, the members of the troupe had returned from a long trip to Canada where they performed local and other Greek dances for the Greek migrants and Canadian cultural societies. Their experiences on the trip were influential in Florina, giving us a strong motive to become members of the troupe.

Until the end of the 1980s, I participated with the dance troupe in numerous performances in Greece and abroad. In the meanwhile, in 1986 I had entered the university at Thessaloniki where I studied History and Archaeology and specialised in modern Greek and Balkan history. At the same time, my preoccupation with dancing had been intensified through my participation in various dance troupes in Thessaloniki. During that time I learned dances from many regions of Greece, got in touch with different viewpoints regarding the practice and presentation of dance, and participated in many dance festivals and other events in Greece and all over Europe.

My experiences in dancing led me to a more painstaking relationship with dance. My intensive involvement with dance activities in Thessaloniki had direct impact on the way I perceived the attitude and operation of the Aristotelis dance troupe and dance practice in general in the region of Florina. My problematic pertained to the fact that the way we performed the dances did not correspond with what one could see when dances were performed spontaneously. I observed that there were elements such as movements or steps we were taught that did not seem natural and did not match the overall feeling and nature of certain dances.

At the beginning of the 1990s, I and some of my co-dancers felt that we had reached a saturation point, where we needed something new in the way the troupe operated and a new dance repertoire. My emotional involvement with my co-dancers, our memories of past experiences and what we had achieved at a personal and group level through our participation in the troupe led me to the decision to become involved in the teaching of dances. I was elected as one of the eleven council members of the Aristotelis association, and appointed to be in charge of the dance section. I tried to turn our achievements to good account, to add new elements such as a new dance repertoire and new costumes, and to create contacts and opportunities for as many performances as possible in many places.

At the same time, I needed answers to my questions concerning the kind of dances we danced as a dance group in order to clarify the credibility of their performance and communication in the present. According to the dominant discourse on dance tradition at that time, the 'pure' and 'authentic' had existed in the past and we should document it before it disappeared completely. I felt that we should 'correct' the way we danced the dances of the Florina region, by following the way they were danced in the past by the elders. We had only to go out there and document them.

From 1992 to 1995 I organised a research team and we investigated aspects of dancing, singing and music playing in the region. Most of our information was acquired through participant observation and interviews, mainly with elders. We were interested in the way of dancing, general features about the local style, dances that had become extinct, the reasons for their extinction, and changes in dance patterns through time and under the influence of historical events. Through our contacts and the family networks of the members of the dance troupe we conducted around fifty interviews. Additionally, by participating in dance activities with our dance troupe we had the chance to observe and record individual male and female dancers while dancing. In the capacity of musician and in constant co-operation with other musicians, I had the opportunity to discuss these topics with them and obtain new information or cross-check material from other interviews. Imbued with the discourse on tradition and the need for documentation as long as the elders, the 'holders of tradition', still lived, I was seeking the 'traditional, authentic and the real'.

Although the concept of tradition dominated the discourse on the praxis of dance, it completely contradicted what was taking place on spontaneous dance occasions. Dancing formed part of a social process in which new elements were added, other elements remained or changed and others were rejected. In spite of this, dance troupes presented a constructed fiction of a stagnated society in which everything referring to dance remained unchanging. It appeared that the existing dance classification according to published sources and the dance programs that troupes performed did not correspond to the dance classification of the locals, or contradicted it to a great extent. The dichotomy was about the existence of two different levels of cultural knowledge concerning dance. Hence, the notion of the existence of a homogenised dance repertoire was revealed to be a construction resulting from the involvement of state and private

cultural institutions and dance specialists in the dance practice of the region (see Chapter 4).

Another significant dimension of our research was the reactions of one category of people we talked to, that is, many of the older people who lived in villages. When we said that we wanted to learn more about the dances in the region they seemed reluctant or frightened to tell us about dances, melodies or songs, which were, as they said, related to unpleasant experiences of the past. Some of them referred easily to that past but described their uncomfortable feeling and a period of disagreeable memories. Others who did not know us were suspicious and cautious in their utterances. Their answers were what they thought we wanted to hear, and they tried to avoid saying anything against the state.

For others, the place where we held the discussion was important. If it was outdoors and we recorded the discussion they did not speak much and seemed insecure. Others told us that they would speak to us if we went to their houses. At a village square, I approached a man who was considered to be one of the best dancers of the dance Paituska. He denied that he knew the dance, but after I insisted he asked us to go to his house where he and his wife performed the dances and told us many things about them. Others were complaining about the attitude of the state during the Metaxas dictatorship (1936-1940) and about the public servants after the Civil War (1946-1949). In certain circumstances where we attended dance events in villages, some villagers corrected the way we danced the dances but when we asked them to show us the 'right' way they said that they did not know the dance. Others in our discussion about Greek dances mentioned, apart from local dances, others such as *Tsamiko* and *Karagouna* which belong to a group of dances that are considered to be panhelennic.

These experiences suggested some questions to me. Why did these people try to avoid talking about the past? Why were dance elements seen as a stigma that they had to free themselves from? Being acquainted with the local history and the Macedonian Question, I realised that in certain cases, dances were being used to identify and to differentiate people from one another. This was only one dimension of a more general problem, which I decided to inquire into.

### **2.3) Entering the Field**

My fieldwork started in September 1998 and was officially completed in April 2000. Because I remained in the town after that period, I continued to be immersed in the process of fieldwork though I kept fieldnotes only selectively, not on a regular basis. Originally, I intended to conduct research in two villages, which would include more than one of the population categories and have cultural associations with dance troupes. At the time of my arrival in Florina for my fieldwork, the number of dance troupes had decreased. I decided to consider the town as my base and establish or renew contacts with cultural associations that had dance sections and dance teachers who were active in Florina and certain villages. Accordingly, I attended dance events organised in the city and the respective villages by those associations and teachers.

During the first months I tried to get a detailed view about dance activities in the region in order to narrow the focus and choose more appropriate research methods and techniques. Using the knowledge I obtained from my ethnographic research and documentation of dancing in the early 1990s, as well as insights from teaching dances and playing music and from experience I gained on matters of public interest through my participation on the board of the Aristotelis association, I created a diagram with possible research units.

I tried to include all the forces that participate in dance practice, based on their involvement in dance events. I divided them into different categories including local administrators, politicians and political parties, local representatives of state institutions and other intellectuals; cultural associations with dance sections as well as local institutions and their members of the board; dance teachers, dancers and musicians; and individual members of the local society, that is, persons who did not belong to the previous categories. Based on the diagram, I constructed interview guides including discussion topics for every category. During the first months the discussions I had were exploratory and I did not follow these guides intensively.

Participant observation, informal discussions, unstructured and semi-structured and biographic interviews, tape and video recording were the methods I used. In order to get more information on the activity of cultural associations I did research in archives

and local publications and attended events they organised not related to dance. For the same reason I interviewed some of their older members in order to get information about past years and activities and attended rehearsals of their troupes, where I also videotaped some of their activities. I also joined a local music band to see the way they work during a dance event.

I also participated in and observed all the above-mentioned categories involved in dancing in presentational and participatory dance events. Between August 1998 and April 2000, I attended, observed and participated in 83 dance events, 31 presentational, 30 participatory and 22 which combined presentational and participatory elements. They included official cultural activities, religious feasts, organised or spontaneous dance occasions, and weddings held in the town of Florina and the surrounding villages. I attended most of them with members of dance troupes and cultural associations, and other individuals who had no connection with dance troupes. In some of them, I participated as a musician and in one as a dancer with a representative troupe of the region, which participated in a cultural event in the city of Patra devoted to the Prespes lakes.

In all categories of the events, I tried to document the course of the event and identify the categories of participants according to the reason for their participation and the degree and power of their intervention, as well as the possible symbols used during their participation that might be related to any kind of identity. In addition, I tried to explore how they perceived and experienced the event. I distinguished the various components on which I intended to gather information. These were the organiser, the place, the reason for the organisation of the event, the participating dance troupes, musicians, official guests, spectators, main persons charged with specific responsibilities during the event and consequently having increased power, and audience (of presentational events) or guests (of participatory events). I also divided them into those who danced and those who just watched the event.

During the events, I tried to see and to experience for myself the circumstances that evolved while they were happening (Emerson 1995:1-4). I engaged in activities with them, in order to see from the inside how they responded to them and to appreciate from their perspective what they experienced in the action as meaningful and

important. What did they watch? What did they talk about? What produced strong emotions for them? What kinds of 'problems' generated deep concern? How did people interpret and deal with these problems? In this way I tried to elicit the particular meanings people attributed to these activities and to look for their perspectives and concerns as they expressed them in a 'naturally' occurring interaction. I also wanted to understand how the different people involved use terms in specific interactional situations and how they understand and evaluate the situations differently. I used my personal experience to observe incidents, impressions and interactions with care and reflection, trying not to interpret them by assuming that people respond as I do but to increase my sensitivity to the experience of others in the setting.

I tried to re-construct the dance practice of the region in the past in order to document the role of dance and the way local society had perceived it at different periods of time. I gathered various kinds of information through research in local newspapers and local archives about institutionalised cultural activities. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with previous civil servants involved in the organisation of the events, and biographical interviews with elders and musicians who attended or participated in them. I focused my research on the post-World War II period.

The understanding of the contemporary local social, economic and political context in which dance operated as a cultural element was an important part of my research. I attended all visits paid by important state officials such as the Greek Prime Minister, the newly elected Archbishop, members of the cabinet representing the government, and the secretary of the Ministry of Culture, who met representatives from the local cultural institutions. I also attended the activities organised by ANFLO in celebration of national holidays, and meetings of local administrators to discuss economic and cultural issues. Participant observation, semi-structured interviews, internet sources, archive and literature research, reading of the local newspapers and tape and video recording were the methods I used.

## 2.4) Strategies for Creating Distance

Throughout the preparatory period as well as during fieldwork, I tried to develop mechanisms to improve my ability to understand the difference between thinking as a researcher and a native. In the search for a balance, I followed an array of strategies and techniques. Living for an extended period of time in a different culture and visiting Greece for only a few weeks during the year, I had already come to see with new detachment the norms, values and ideas, which constituted my worldview. Experiences in Hamburg, a large, west-European and multicultural city, along with my training in anthropology, led me to a very critical attitude towards what I considered to be my 'own society'.

Gaining fieldwork experience in different and unfamiliar settings abroad before going home supported a reflexive approach. I did fieldwork in Western Europe in a region between Germany and the Netherlands about the perception of the border and its importance in the past and present to everyday life in villages on both sides. It was a project on the "Relationship Between Culture and Identity in Border Regions". The aim was actually to have the experience of a European border region which lies between national borders. Moreover, I could try out different research methods and get experience of the conditions of fieldwork.

The next step in my research in Greece would be to clarify the assumptions, incidents and associations that surrounded the topic in my mind and to define the problems I wanted to investigate. I did this by reviewing the literature about the region and talking with persons who had similar experiences. Examining papers written by anthropologists who had conducted fieldwork in Greek Macedonia and discussing with them the problems they dealt with enabled me to see the region through their eyes.

In addition, while carrying out fieldwork I took intensive courses on the official Macedonian language. From October 1998 until January 1999 I drove every day (Monday to Thursday) from Florina to Bitola (today the second largest city of FYROM, 30 Km. away from Florina) to attend a three hours private course. I spent the last two weeks of January in Bitola to improve what I had learned, experience everyday situations and get to know new points of view in my research. Spending almost half a day, four days a week, for 4 months in Bitola, not only taking language lessons but also

visiting relatives and talking about every possible matter including dimensions of the controversy between Greece and FYROM, helped me to counterbalance the effects of having grown up in the research setting. It gave me the chance to keep a reflexive and distanced attitude towards issues which otherwise I might have taken for granted.

Participating in dance activities in other settings in Greece and observing situations and patterns of behavior similar to those in my research site enabled me to make simultaneous comparisons regarding my research questions. I participated in dance courses, watched dance presentations in various occasions, played music at dance events, talked with dance teachers, dancers and musicians, and observed the dance troupes that would perform on the national TV channel in Athens for the celebration of the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire.

## **2.5) Shifting Identifications and Ethnographic Marginality**

The anthropologist's personal background is the most critical factor in the selection of the research questions, area, and methodology for conducting fieldwork in his 'own society' (Okely 1992:1). Reflexivity, the ability of Self to objectify the Self and to turn him/her into an object of study (Babcock 1980, Karp and Kendal 1982) proved to be the most appropriate strategy for me to follow. In Okely's terms, "reflexivity forces us to think through the consequences of our relations with others whether it be conditions of reciprocity, asymmetry or potential exploitation" (1992: 24). To a certain extent, I was acquainted with or a friend of the people I wanted to get in touch with. With the great majority of them I had often found myself in the same setting or had spent time together with them at various periods of my life and in different social environments. Due to the complex nature of these relationships I opted to conduct the fieldwork experientially. Fieldwork begins with experience rather than with dialogue (Hastrup and Hervik 1994).

I considered the ethnographer's task to be not to find the 'truth' but to reveal the process through which people construct multiple truths during their lives, and which emerge from ongoing and fluid patterns of social interaction. I would try to document the political, interactional processes through which people made categorizations. I tried to become as responsive as possible to what others were concerned about, in their own

terms, and sensitive to how I was seen and treated by others. I tried to subject myself to every possible relationship and social situation that would help me to gain fuller insight into peoples' lives and attitudes; in order to understand to what extent the different meanings and actions were the result of the idiosyncrasies and preferences of those involved or of their different positions in the local context.

My thoughts were focussed on integrating myself as smoothly as possible into the role of the researcher in the local society. I did not want to 'cause a stir' by declaring to everybody that I was conducting research. In any case, there were only a few, if any at all, who would understand. My intention was to obtain information as 'naturally' as possible without bringing people to a state of emotional strain or suspense due to the nature of my questions and the issues they raised, especially with elders, or to reduce the tension if any was created. I could refer to my absence for a long time and ask about the current state of issues related to dance and culture, in order to encourage them to present their views and to become aware of resemblances or differences in relation to the time before I had left and throughout my absence. It proved that this approach could only be efficient for a short time, with people who already knew me and with whom I was discussing such issues before I left for Germany. The more my presence became known the more the expectations and demands of those who knew me increased. They all placed me in certain roles, which they expected me to fulfil.

The fact that a person from the region was dealing with these issues, which were until recently thought of as 'hot issues', had clear implications for the research process. Discussing issues of identity and culture and the way they are expressed could generate multiple reactions and associations of ideas depending on the situation and the persons who participated in the discussion. Some considered my subject as dangerous, extremely difficult to handle and requiring great tact. Dance researchers in Athens were wondering if I could really collect information on such issues. The director of an archive in Athens regarded me with suspicion when I wanted to investigate files related to the region. After I went through several interviews and convinced them of my intentions I was able to start my enquiry.

Some in Florina were asking me jokingly if I would demonstrate proudly that Macedonians are Greek. Others were advising me to listen to all sides but to be careful not to be misguided. Still others were telling me to avoid any pitfalls or dangerous

topics that might create problems for me later. Some people were criticising my relationships with some of my informants, who according to them were unreliable persons and could betray my trust and my emotions. My father was wondering about the great number of video tapes I was collecting from my research. He considered that they were too many and that since I have been dancing so many years I did not need all of them. "Why you want to see how they dance? Go ask one-two elders in a village and you do not need anything else". He also did not consider it right for me to go to villages which were politically 'dangerous'. "It could have implications for my future", many were telling me. After 10 months of fieldwork and many discussions with them my friends could only understand to a degree my way of thinking and approach to my research topics. They often teased me, commenting on my attendance at village fêtes and my socializing with *choriates* [villagers] or 'Greeks'.

There were others who saw me as an agent who could contribute to the promotion of voices that had not been heard. Some were telling me to describe things as I see and feel them and to say "what we all know and discuss between us and which has never come down to the ears of those who must hear them". A school teacher told me not to be ethnocentric because "the official history has refrained from showing many events in our region and has encouraged the preservation of the dividing lines between people".

I also very cautiously examined the possibility of becoming active again at the department of Ethnography and Dance of the Aristotelis association or as an employee of a technical company organising a cultural association in one of the villages of the region. It seemed that in this way I could obtain easy access to persons and settings, which would anyway form part of my fieldwork. Especially in the case of the company, I could contact people in the village by participating in public affairs and observe first-hand the politics of culture in relation to dance. The disadvantage would be my identification in the eyes of a section of the population with these specific institutions, which were connected with the national ideology and the policy of the nation state as followed at certain periods in the region. Consequently, this would mean difficult access to persons ideologically opposed to these institutions. The primary problem was that I would be forced to make choices opposite to my personal views and beliefs. Additionally, I would have to become involved as a main figure in actions and activities

in which I wanted to observe the others and not be protagonist. So, in the end, I decided not to get involved in any of these institutions' affairs.

Gender, class, social status, cultural and political affiliation of the ethnographer and the natives are constitutive elements of the way both perceive their relationship and the position they take during every interaction (Gefou-Madianou 1998:402). Many persons who lived in the town of Florina knew me due to my previous activity in local public life. Unavoidably they saw me as a member of the same society. Consequently, my involvement in the ongoing interactions would have implications on people's behaviour.

In every interaction, I had to control and observe different levels of contact in order to evaluate the interaction. On the first level, I was the fieldworker and my interlocutor the interviewee. First, I had to organise an interview, prepare the topics, follow the person's utterances and thoughts during the course of the discussion, observe his or her behaviour and, at the end, write all this down in a protocol. Second, I needed to observe my own attitude during the conversation, the way I asked the questions, the themes I touched upon and the terms I used, and afterwards to reflect on them in order to evaluate my reactions and to know to what extent they affected the interviewee in what he/she was saying.

On the second level, it was an interaction between two people who lived in the same society and who knew or did not know each other personally. At this point, I needed to consider whether the interviewee knew me personally or knew about me, and if on the basis of his acquaintance with my previous activities in the region he would place me in a certain role with certain expectations. Furthermore, to what extent would the interviewee feel that I confirm this role and what would his reactions to this be? In case I accepted the position he placed me in, I had to decide if I should confirm his expectations in order to make the interview more comfortable and not to disappoint him. If I did not accept that role, I had to decide whether to continue to play it despite this fact, in order to understand more of his attitude to that role, or to reject the role and break the standards that were attributed to it, creating new conditions for the interaction and observing his attitude in a new situation with unexpected terms.

This ethnographic marginality was manifested interactionally when I constantly stepped outside and then back inside the talks, scenes and events in order to assess the qualities of both states. For example, during an all night dance I tried to observe either by recording with my video camera or by sitting and detachedly watching the scene in order to write down reports of the witnessed events afterwards. A friend of mine arranged a dance for the dance teachers in which I was invited to participate but I refused. He did not like my answer and insisted, commenting on my attitude of differentiating myself from the dance teachers since that was the role attributed to me in the event. Suddenly he came towards me, dragged me to the dance floor and I became the centre of the activity because of all that had taken place previously.

In these situations I had to take into consideration the expectations of the others towards me and the quality of the relationships I had with people in the setting. I did not want them to perceive that I was failing to maintain social relationships. At these moments I had to forget my writing orientation, accept the natural interaction and ethnographically to rely upon my memory for a fuller recollection of the event. At the end, I strongly felt the need for isolation and alienation in order to reflect upon my research activity and to (re)define my position in the setting.

The closest and most usual capacity with which people associated me was that of the folklorist and dance specialist. My previous activity as a dancer and dance teacher and the unknown term social anthropology from the peoples' vocabulary of sciences contributed to this. My intense participation in previous years in the dance activities of the Aristotelis association had made me known and this was sometimes an obstacle to approaching people and collecting information. Many people who saw me, the 'specialist', asking them about dances or recording dance activities with my video camera were bewildered and confused.

Approaching people from the 'dance scene' of the region, who might perceive me as an antagonist, was another difficult task I intended to accomplish. It was difficult for them to deal with the fact that I, the dance practitioner, was coming to them and wanting to learn from them about dances, dance events and their role in them. At times it was also embarrassing for them. This was a gap I had to bridge.

To others I was the representative of Aristotelis. For many the association was perceived as a right-wing, elitist and bourgeois association of the city, and I was consequently categorised as a right-wing affiliated person. According to their attitude towards the association and their perception of its ideology, opponents of Aristotelis either created boundaries and exercised power and control over me by rejecting me when I was in 'their setting', or they tried to behave in a way they thought I expected them to behave or to discuss issues of their own interest.

For others, I was an urban citizen, somebody who represented a life-style related to higher education, well off and with an acknowledged social status. Very often, when I wanted to attend events in the villages I dressed in a modest way that would make the people pay scant attention to me. Although the situation was formal, I did not wear suits, clothes of any expensive fabric, or clothes with vivid colours which might be appropriate for attending a similar event in the city. I tried to be dressed in a more conventional way with jeans and similar everyday clothes.

It is obvious that my relationships with many of those under study included a political dimension (Kokot and Drackle 1996:9). Every kind of interaction that was developed was part of a process within which constant negotiations were taking place: a negotiation between the interviewer who was trying to elicit information on a delicate and politicised topic, and the interviewee who negotiated his position as the informant. He was the one who had the knowledge; and at the same time he performed a certain image of himself and the part of society he felt he represented or belonged to.

Informants were thoroughly acquainted with the power they had as the ones who provided information to me and were very skilled in exercising their power in the form of controlling the amount and the flow of the information. The term Macedonia and its derivatives were ambiguous and easy manipulable. This attitude was more likely to be seen by elders. The informants' attitudes depended upon the way they perceived the interviewer. For example, an elder musician with whom I played music professionally for years on various occasions was visited by a non-Greek female anthropologist who was conducting fieldwork in the region. When he described the interaction to me, what she asked him and what he answered, he told me "I told her what she wanted to hear". This illustrates the way many locals, especially elders, deal with any kind of researcher or interviewer who appears in the region asking questions about 'hot issues'.

My awareness of such situations gave me valuable insights into informants' accounts and evaluations of problems and incidents. I knew that I shouldn't take a member's story as a factual account but as an expression of the speaker's experience and views at a particular moment and time, to a specific audience in order to accomplish particular purposes.

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In this chapter, I have briefly reflected upon issues of conducting fieldwork in one's own society. More specifically I have presented aspects of my personality relevant to my research enterprise, described the methodological approach I adopted and portrayed some of the ways people of Florina made sense of me and my research activity. Doing anthropology 'at home' is not an easy task. The ethnographer has to deal with extremely complex relations between him and those under study. These relations depend on an array of factors, which develop and change over time. Fieldwork in this situation entails a continuous process of reflection on the researcher's positions in the setting and a process of self-definition.

This ethnographic stance is expressed in the synchronised effort to identify as an 'outsider' based on one's scientific training and an 'insider' based on one's own experiences and views. It is a struggle to find the balance between privileging the informants' descriptions and categories over one's own. The ethnographer and his personal involvement with the people among whom he is carrying out his task are definitely part of the ethnography. This study does not claim to be conducted by an 'authentic insider'. Rather it explores actions and interpretations of the Floriniotes as mediated by my own anthropologically informed interpretations and understandings at a particular historical moment. Let us turn now to the socio-political and economic conditions that prevailed during the period of my fieldwork.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **THE RESEARCH SETTING**

#### **3.1) Introduction**

The objective of this chapter is to describe various aspects of social life in the town and region of Florina as I documented them during my fieldwork. A series of events of high political significance vitally affecting the whole prefecture took place locally, nationally and internationally during this period. Visits by the Greek Prime Minister, the President of Greek Republic, the new Archbishop and numerous ministers and politicians of all sides of the political spectrum, municipal, European and national elections as well as top-level meetings for the improvement of relations between Greece, Albania and FYROM left their imprint in all domains of life. I had left Florina in 1995, at a period when the effects of the war in Yugoslavia and the conflict between Greece and FYROM had created vast economic and social problems. By my return after living abroad for three and a half years, I felt that a lot of things had changed. The hangovers of a heavily politicised past, when national values were heavily emphasised in this traditionally unstable Balkan region, were challenged by the dynamic involvement of the region in processes of European integration. These latter processes supported and introduced discourses and values of western multiculturalist societies.

Local administrative authorities and state representatives declared in their announcements on the celebration of national holidays the high morale of the region's

inhabitants in case they had to protect the country's borders. At the same time, the same institutions in collaboration with local trade unions promoted cultural and economic trans-frontier co-operation with neighbouring countries. While the Greek government was taking political action in the form of economic and cultural co-operation for the settlement of the conflict with FYROM regarding the name of the new state, Florinot Diaspora communities were adopting resolutions that opposed any 'compromise' that would threaten the 'national ideals'. Furthermore, statements and actions of local state institutions and cultural associations that supported the preservation of the local cultural heritage were attacked by statements and actions of local administrators and development agencies who sought to set the region on the path of industrialisation and modernisation. In this spirit, ANFLO that administrated EU programmes was financing the revival of 'old' customs thought to reflect the Florinot way of life, in order for them to be performed by cultural associations, thus contributing to their modification into touristic attractions. In the same way, the promotion of local artefacts went hand in hand with their transformation into commodities that were manufactured with modern means and techniques and exhibited for sale.

The emphasis on the protection of the local traditional architecture, as stressed in a conference organised in November 1999 in the town of Florina by the association of civil engineers, concurred with an impressive boom in building activity and the construction of houses and apartment buildings in which members of that same association played a leading part. The nostalgia for a village's bygone communal life, was expressed in a village photographic exhibition organised in the summer of 1999 by the local cultural association; in contrast were the statements of a villager and a former mayor, who declared themselves proud that their village was the first in the region to replace old residences with new modern houses providing all possible comforts. While many local farmers and stock raisers expressed concerns about the new forms of consumerism and stressed the need for support of local markets, new department stores opened up and masses of villagers as well as city dwellers streamed in to buy their products.

This chapter will bring out various spheres of the economic, cultural and social activity of the town of Florina and the surrounding villages that are relevant to understand the social context in which I did fieldwork. In my effort to capture the range of nuances, I run the risk of contributing to the creation of simplistic boundaries

between complex and ongoing cultural and social processes and reducing them to well-defined spheres of activity; or even of creating a picture of a stagnated society. No society is stable and fixed; it is not a clearly bounded and homogenous cultural entity. Political aspects of identification and categorisation through dancing can only be better understood if we look at their interrelationships with domains of culture and society which at first sight are not defined as political.

### 3.2) The Economic and Geo-Political Contexts

The prefecture of Florina lies at the north-western corner of Greece. Two frontier crossings connect this Greek territory with FYROM and Albania. Administratively, it belongs to the region of Western Macedonia; ecclesiastically it constitutes the diocese of Florina, Prespes and Eordea whose jurisdiction expands into the Prefecture of Kozani. According to the census of 2001, the population of the prefecture totals 54,267 inhabitants. A continuing recession in the post-World War II period had led to the emigration of a great number of its inhabitants<sup>12</sup>. Communities with populations down to double or even single figures are even today to be found. In the 1990s, around 70% of the population resided in the villages and the rest in the two towns of the region, Florina and Amindeo.



Map 5. The Prefecture of Florina

<sup>12</sup> Over the decades 1951-1991, the population decreased by around 26% (NSSG 1991).

In development studies produced by local agencies, local press reports and personal accounts the prefecture of Florina has been repeatedly portrayed as an economically isolated and underdeveloped border region<sup>13</sup>. The Chairman of the Chamber for Industry and Commerce stated in an interview that “the Prefecture has to come out of the quagmire and the abandonment. A series of delayed and mistaken choices have brought it to the dramatic situation it is in today” (APOPSI 2000, May 26). The local MP of the right-wing opposition party Nea Dimokratia expressed in a press conference in June 1999 his deep concern about the prefecture’s current course, reciting a list of problems (Adamou 1999). This viewpoint was confirmed by statements of government members who visited the region during my fieldwork and subsequently. Government and opposition politicians have frequently stressed that among their first priorities would be measures that would contribute to its economic development. The Minister of Macedonia and Thrace, in his visit in September 2000, said that “prefectures like Florina characterised by underdevelopment and unemployment are critical for the country’s balanced development” (Tsigarida 2000). According to a member of the local Chamber, local businessmen were particularly worried about the current economic situation and the continuing recession. They were pre-occupied with difficulties in dealing with increasing competition resulting from the internationalisation of the economy, the prospects of the local economy, and the expansion of the market.

The embargo placed by the Greek government in February 1994 on the export of transportation and goods to FYROM, as well as damage caused by two strong earthquakes in 1994 (1/9) and 1995 (13/5) deeply harmed the region’s domestic economy. Business transactions in the period before the embargo ran to 450-600,000 Euros weekly in the Florina region. This amount constituted nearly 40% of the turnover of trade in Florina and gave work to 1200 persons in part-time jobs (CECDF 2000:69-71). Every shopping day, the town of Florina was overrun by cars and tourist busses from southern parts of ex-Yugoslavia. The national government supported the region financially by indemnifying local merchants and other inhabitants hurt by the embargo and the earthquakes. Nevertheless, officials of the Chamber of Commerce told me that

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<sup>13</sup> The prefecture ranked 25<sup>th</sup> in 1991 and 28<sup>th</sup> in 2001 among Greek prefectures and second among those in Western Macedonia as regards per capita income (CECDF 2000:4). Yet, in relation to the country’s average, the per capita income decreased around twenty percentage points (20%) from 1991 to 1999.

the delayed deposit of the money had led to the loss of its value due to increased inflation.

Unemployment and low income were the most serious social problems throughout the 1990s as well as in the period of my fieldwork. I personally experienced this situation when in the early 1990s as a university graduate I struggled to find a job. The age group between 20-29 years old was the hardest hit<sup>14</sup>. At the time of my fieldwork, things were more difficult. In 1998, the unemployment rate in the prefecture was among the highest in Greece<sup>15</sup>. The reason for this was related to the inability of the local economy to create new jobs and to keep the ones that already existed (CECDF 2000:16). Relatives and friends were telling me during my fieldwork that there were either too many university educated candidates seeking a few jobs, or a lack of specialised people for available places.

In relation to this, there was a considerable decline of the primary sector of economy. In 1996, according to the official annual report of the local branch of the agricultural bank, there was low productivity in stock-raising and unwillingness and decrease of investments in cattle-breeding due to the high prices needed for new shelters. Subsidies in that year were higher than in the previous year but lower than the region's needs. The report mentioned as reasons the low educational level of the inhabitants, the conservatism of the people, the isolation of the region from the big urban and decision-making centres and the migration of many young people. It concluded that this decline would vastly and negatively affect the economic and demographic development of the region. Although between 1996 and 1998 different investment programmes were put into practice that had helped the mechanisation of the branch<sup>16</sup>, there had been a transfer of the working population from the primary to the secondary sector throughout the last decades and an impressive increase in the tertiary sector<sup>17</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> In the two-year period 1992-1993, around 1800 people of the active population became unemployed (MIET 1994:i). In 1993, out of 2689 unemployed 1377 were at the age of 20-29, which is more than 50%. Another 768 (ca. 30%) were at the age of 30-44 (CECDF 2000:13).

<sup>15</sup> From 9,02% in 1992 rose to 26,94% in 1998.

<sup>16</sup> 645 projects were approved of a total amount of 50 million Euros. In 1997, 4000 milking machines were bought and 10% of the overall equipment was renewed (ANFLO 2000:22).

<sup>17</sup> In 1991, almost 39,77% of the active population were working in the primary sector. The same rate was much higher (64,39%) in 1971. The percentage of the active population that worked in the secondary sector increased from 13,70% in 1971 to 20,01% in 1991 and from 21,91% in 1971 to 40,42 in 1991 in the tertiary section (CECDF 2000:13).

As regards the industrial sector, despite the dynamics of investments in the previous decades based on development acts and the prospect of economic transactions with Yugoslavia, industrial activity seemed to be in a state of stagnation. In 1997, the situation remained in the same position as in 1973 in terms of industrial units<sup>18</sup> (CECDF 2000:57). Most of the units were small family-scale businesses, strongly dependent upon the local market (ANFLO 2000:33). The inadequate road network and problematic access to the inland increased the transport costs of the products produced in the region and negatively affected the establishment of new industrial units<sup>19</sup>. Administrators and members of the local economic community very urgently pointed out and asked for the improvement of transportation and communications.

On the contrary, trade had been increasingly developed to an important activity in terms of the number of stores and employees (ANFLO 2000:34). By 2000, there were more than 3000 registered private enterprises in the prefecture of Florina, most of which were small family-scale businesses with a very limited number of employees (CECDF 2000:74). They engaged in simple kinds of trade and ran small stores. In relation to the population of the region, there was one businessman for every twenty inhabitants (CECDF 2000: 76-77). Many of the businesses were related to leisure time, food consumption and clothing. Opening a private enterprise was supported by different investment programmes of the Greek state and the EU<sup>20</sup>. Many businesses opened and operated as long as the subsidies ran<sup>21</sup>. Such businesses were seen by many as suiting the needs and standards of modern life and as a channel to make 'easy' money. However, it was emphasised to me by the chairman of the Chamber that the existence of more businesses of one kind than the market could bear constituted a potentially great problem in the local market.

The role of the Florina prefecture as the gateway of Greece and EU to the Balkans was the keyword around which discussions, negotiations, political initiatives and actions revolved while I was conducting my research. As early as October 1997, the

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<sup>18</sup> There were only 9 units in the industrial area of Florina, 4 of which had less than 10 employees, another 4 between 10 and 30 and only 1 more than 30 employees (CECDF 2000:60-61).

<sup>19</sup> In 1994, the travel expenses of a truck to Munich were tripled in relation to the pre-1989 period (MIET 1994:8-55).

<sup>20</sup> 280 applications were submitted in 2000 related to programme for the invigorating of the business making (ANFLO 2000:36).

<sup>21</sup> In the period between 1994-1997, the number of those businesses that closed was much bigger than of those that opened (38 were closing yearly and 10 were opening) (CECDF 2000: 76-77).

Greek Prime Minister himself had announced during his first visit in the region the government's policy regarding Florina region and the Balkans. He presented the government's determination to support the region's development in order to overcome the impact of past events:

Our presence in Florina signals our determination to reverse a chronic actuality of isolation in a region, which experienced for many years the feeling of insecurity, injustice, and downgrading. Our choice to help Florina to respond positively to the challenge of being one of the gateways of Greece to the modern Balkan inland and to Europe is firm. The rapid developments in the region give us the opportunity to transform the disadvantage of a frontier region into a comparative advantage in the modern Balkan and European reality.

In the same speech, he presented the keystones of Greece's Balkan policy which included, among other issues, the consolidation of stability and security in the region, the promotion of co-operation for the development of infra-structures, and the support of humanitarian, and social and cultural collaboration. He concluded by saying:

regarding the infrastructure, we will implement a series of projects that will take Florina out of isolation, and open perspectives of multiple co-operation with neighboring countries and new conditions for its integration into the national economy. We intend to minimise the structural disadvantages and maximise the comparative advantages.

Florina region became the place in which the gradual smoothing out of the relations between Greece, Albania and FYROM was initiated. Regional diplomatic initiatives and growing cross-border investment, mainly from Greece<sup>22</sup>, were placed within economic and political negotiations among the three countries. A meeting between the Foreign Ministers of the three states took place in the Prespes area in July 1999. Among the topics discussed were the initiation of a trans-frontier park and the creation of a free trade zone extending 20 Kms from the frontier line. The Greek minister characterised this historical first meeting of Foreign Ministers between the three countries as a sign of the overcoming of the cold war era and the beginning of political, economic and cultural co-operation. In August 1999, the Prime Ministers of Greece and FYROM met in Florina and continued discussions about co-operation between the two countries. Finally, in February 2000 the Prime Ministers of Greece, Albania and FYROM met again

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<sup>22</sup> As a result, Greece's exports to Albania and FYROM covered in 2001 55% and 36% respectively of the overall EU exports to these countries (Kamaras 2001:68).

in the Prespes area and announced an official agreement on the creation of the Balkan Park of Prespes for the protection and study of the local eco-system.

At a symbolic level, these meetings had a profound impact on the local society. They were perceived as a step forward that kept the local society in anticipation of a permanent resolving of the economic crisis. Much emphasis was laid on the historical ties, long tradition and accumulated experience of trade and social contacts with the neighbouring countries (CECDF 2000:31). The local MP of PASOK, the ruling socialist party, stated during the celebration of his 10-year parliamentary term that “Florina has to become the inland of the Balkans through the development of relations with the neighbouring countries and the exploitation of its natural resources” (ETHNOS 1999, 30 December). The region’s location was its great advantage according to the Chairman of the Chamber for the establishment of industrial units, which supported by a commercial centre and a free trade zone would constitute the investment keystone for FYROM, Albania and the Balkans in general (APOPSI 2000, May 26).

Cross border tourism and shopping, among other economic transactions, were placed within a wide spectrum of activities between the citizens of the Florina region and those of the neighbouring countries. Co-operation in the form of meetings and exchange of views on the development of economic and cultural exchanges took place during 1998 and 1999 between representatives of the cities of Florina, Bitola and Korça. Businessmen from Florina opened new businesses in Bitola. Eleven Floriniot enterprises participated in the third exhibition of Greek enterprises held in Skopje in February 2000. The event was perceived by the Floriniot economic community as a major step towards an increase in economic transactions with the neighbouring state (ETHNOS 2000, 25 February). Travel agencies resumed tourist excursions to holiday resorts of FYROM. In the same way, citizens of the Republic started again to come shopping in Florina despite the severely damaged economy in their country, and in some cases to arrange their holidays in Greece through the local travel agencies.

The promise of job opportunities was increased by the expansion of the NEC’s activities in the region to exploit lignite and produce electricity. “We [the inhabitants of the prefecture] have connected our dreams for development with these two factors”, a leaflet published by the ANFLO in Florina said, in which the prefecture was briefly presented. The electricity production unit that was being constructed near the village of

Meliti was characterised as the biggest development project in Western Macedonia and one of highest national priority and importance. Various meanings were attributed to the project that illustrated its significance for the locals. The foundation stone was laid in a ceremony in September 1998, attended by the Minister for Development. The Prefect said that this work was the reward of the peoples' struggles and it proved the minister's and the government's commitment. He added that "it was the work of the century, a work of life for us and our children that would fight unemployment and give work to the local work force without exclusions". The local MP of the Socialist Party stated that the project was undertaken in the Florina region for obvious national reasons. "The stopped clock of the Civil War had started to work again".

The chairman of the NEC said that more than 5,000 people would work during its construction. The Minister of Development said that the heart of Greece should be in Florina and that other projects should be done here. The distrust of the people was fully vindicated since the state did not stand by their side. But today, the state was on their side. She added that "a territory is nationally strong when it is economically strong. We will do our best so that people from the Florina region will be hired. Such works contribute not only to the development of the area but to the establishment of peace".

However, members of ANFLO and the Chamber were pointing out the lack of an overall concept of the correspondence between the NEC's activities and the local economy and the need for the development of parallel and supplementing activities to those of NEC (CECDF 2000:137-38). They stated that a "danger runs through the local economy due to its one-sided orientation towards the production of electricity and its dependency on the NEC" (CECDF 2000:56). A serious conflict had started at both local and national levels, which interwove different levels of political decision-making concerning the number of the future workers, the assignment of tasks to private businesses to supplement NEC's activities, and the status of the mines.

By September 2001, 67% of the work had been completed on the electricity production unit and 1000 to 1800 people had worked on different stages of its construction; however only 50-70 highly skilled workers were going to be hired when the unit started to operate. Another 130-150 workers were to be hired in later phases. According to local trade unionists, the small number of employees would generate reactions in the local society. Despite the fact that the Company tended to assign tasks

to local private businesses, the region hadn't benefited much up to the summer of 2001 from the NEC's activities. The Florina region had taken a very small portion of these tasks: only 5% were assigned to Florinot businesses. 50% went to businesses in Athens and Thessalonica and 44% to the neighbouring districts of Kozani and Ptolemaida<sup>23</sup>. The surrounding municipalities claimed their right to participate in their exploitation of the mines and the hiring of the workers.

The effects of the participation of Greece in the EU started to become tangible in the late 1990s, providing ample opportunities in various forms of funding to the inhabitants of Florina prefecture. European investment programmes such as the 'LEADER', the 'INTERREG' and the 'CULTURE 2000' offered economic resources for the increase of employment and incomes and improvements to living standards. Developments in the provision of services and in agriculture, exploitation of the region's natural wealth, support for new farmers and businessmen, tourism and the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage were the main targets of the contemporary policies undertaken at a regional and national level and assisted by the EU. However the participation of local private businesses in investment programmes was until 1994 characterised as rudimentary<sup>24</sup> (MIET 1994:v).

State and other public and private agencies started intensively in 1997 to administrate these programmes, accepting applications by public organisations and institutions, whole communities, cultural associations, individual businessmen and private enterprises. Applicants were receiving financial and organisational support for the completion of their projects. In relation to the practice of dance in the region, a partnership was established by female seamstresses who manufactured traditional dresses for the dance troupes of the region. Subsequently, cultural associations with dance sections applied for the making of dresses for their troupes. Among them, two

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<sup>23</sup> The 5% of these tasks equated with an amount of 850,000 Euros yearly. Regarding the supplying of the mines with any kind of material, from the total 10% that was assigned and equated with an amount of 1,470,000 Euros only 1% ended to businesses of the Prefecture. Another 400,000 Euros gained the prefecture from the transportation of the 650 employees that worked in the old works of NEC (CECDF 2000: 63-64).

<sup>24</sup> It was as early as between 1985 and 1990 that the first development act (1262/82) concerning Florina, among other prefectures, passed on in 1982 by the state legislature was put into practice. It aimed to provide motives such as subsidies and tax exemptions to new and old investors. In the period of its enforcement, only 96 projects were submitted and 72 were assented to. As a result, 92 new jobs were created (CECDF 2000:97). In the period 1995-97 seventeen projects were assented and 154 new jobs were to be created due to a second act (1892/90) that funded investments in the secondary sector. Yet, the number of unemployed increased up to 570 people (CECDF 2000: 101). A third act (2601/98) enforced in 1998 had negligible results. It attracted only 5 projects (CECDF 2000: 108).

village cultural associations applied for the financing of the revival of an old dance custom, which took place annually in the village. As a result, an array of individuals related to the performance of dance financially benefited from the participation in such events.

Tourism, though described in 1994 as a sector with moderate services,<sup>25</sup> was considered by the late 1990s to be a rapidly developing one. From the early 1980s until a few years ago, the lack of money and the very few projects submitted led to poor results regarding the promotion of tourism. Nevertheless, it was thought to be a new perspective for solving the region's underdevelopment (GSWM 1994:7). As a result of various initiatives taken by the ANFLO, local hotel owners and businessmen from the tourism industry supported financially by EU programmes, the region has been included in recent years in many travel agencies' tourist trips. Local state and private institutions have published brochures, information leaflets and CDs presenting the region's sightseeing attractions, landscape and monuments. Magazines and newspapers of national scale have published extended articles and provided tips for visitors to the prefecture of Florina. Many visitors were spending their weekends travelling across the region.

For Athenian visitors, coming to Florina and visiting the surrounding areas had become a 'must', a hostel owner in the Prespes area told me. Another local resident, the owner of the most famous hostel in the area, on the island of St. Achilles, said to me that he had visitors every weekend. Especially during Christmas and Easter holidays, it was impossible to find an empty room in the area. People made reservations at least six months ahead. Yet, the lack of overall co-ordinated exploitation of the advantages of the region, problems of infrastructure and the non-specialisation of the work force did not allow full development of this dynamic sector (ANFLO 2000:40).

In evaluating the management of the EU programmes and their implications for the region's development, the director of ANFLO told me that it was the first time local institutions conducted the management of the projects in the region and adapted them to regional geopolitical characteristics and economic conditions and needs. However, the district displayed weakness in taking advantage of these programmes, apparently

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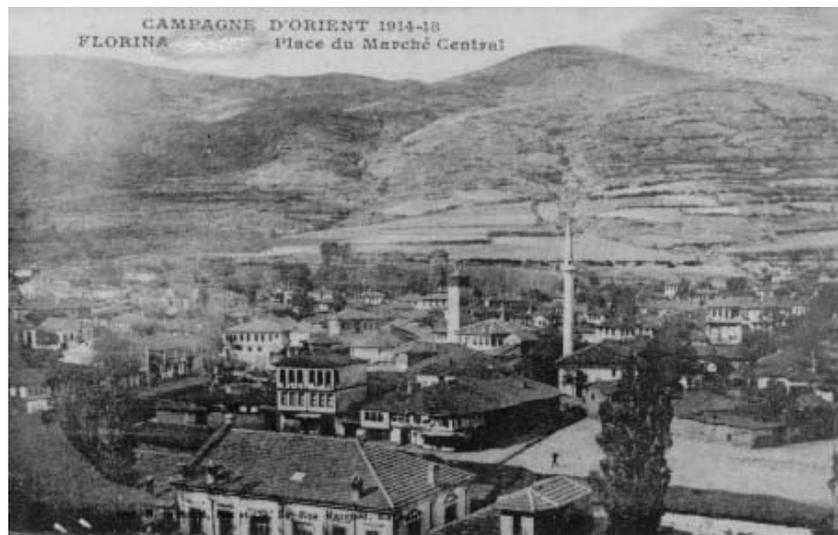
<sup>25</sup> From the early 1980s until a few years ago, the lack of money and the very few projects submitted led to poor results regarding the promotion of tourism. Only 32% of the expected outcome was achieved (MIET 1994:8-75).

due to the lack of information from local potential investors and their inability to keep up with the pre-conditions set by the programmes. The exhibition of local traditional products organised by the Office for Industrial Change of the ANFLO did not receive the attention it needed from the local producers. As a result, it did not continue after its first two years.

### **3.3) Images of the Place**

#### **3.3.1) The Town of Florina as a Place and a Social Space**

The town of Florina was the administrative, economic, political and cultural centre of the prefecture, where all decisions were made. It operated as an agent between the local, and the national and international level. The town formed part of the municipality of Florina, which consisted of the town and seven villages located around it. 13,825 registered inhabitants reside in the town and a total of 16,585 in the municipality (NSSG 2001). The real population of the town, comprising those who lived there but were not registered there, came to 15,000 inhabitants.





Phot. 3.1, 3.2 Views from Florina (1914-1918, 1955-60)

Florina town's structure was simple and due also to the short distances one had to cover everyday activities were a lot simpler and less time-consuming than in the big cities. Streets and squares, coffee shops and taverns were public places for socialising and communication. The people had known each other ever since they were children and unconsciously observed each other's lives. It often happened that when a letter was sent to a wrong address the postman knew the addressee and would bring it to the right address and right person. In their discussions, in order to identify someone they referred to information such as "in what area he lives", "who he is socialising with" and "where he frequently goes".

Wednesday was the day of the bazaar. The town was full of people and cars. Older and younger married couples, entire families with children and grandchildren gathered to sell or buy consumer goods. Farmers from the region, refugees of Greek origin from the ex-Soviet republics, *Yiftoi* residing in Florina and traders from other districts participated in this colourful and bustling co-existence. Older women wearing typical black clothes and others dressed in traditional dresses of their village created an unusual scene for visitors unfamiliar with the local reality. The oriental and multicultural character of the scene was complemented by the variety of languages used by the people and in many cases by the same persons. A visitor could hear Greek, *Dopia*, Pontic Greek, *Arvanitika*, Albanian, *Yiftika*, Russian, English, German and French during the summer.



Phot. 3.3 The bazaar in Florina at the beginning of the 20th century

The pedestrianising of the main road and the remodelling of the main square had made this central area the focal point of social activity. Modern cafeterias and clubs with foreign names co-existed with the traditional *kafeneio*, a male-dominated coffee shop. People of various social categories based on their professions (such as teachers, builders, civil servants, musicians), age group (such as pupils and students), village of origin and nationality (such as Albanian migrants) had their own favourite hangouts. Much of the night-life was oriented towards the youth, especially students. Married couples and even singles over 30 years old complained that they had no choices for entertainment and that it took courage to go out at night because they had to deal with the indiscreet or surprised gazes of their fellow citizens. 'Social critique', as gossiping was ironically called, was an inherent element in the small town's social life. During the summer time, *volta*, the ritualised walking in the main pedestrian area which had been taking place since the inter-war period, remained a central activity. Men and women, elders and children walked up and down in the one-hundred-meter road. The rest sat at the cafeterias on both sides of *volta* and talked, watched and commented on every possible issue.



Phot. 3.4 Florina, part of the main square and the main pedestrian street, where *volta* takes place (2000)



Phot. 3.5 Florina, part of the main square (2000)

Taking a walk in and around Florina, one has the feeling of a prosperous place. Luxurious houses in and around the city, new settlements at its edges and apartment buildings newly constructed or in the process of construction, were perceived in locals' accounts as signs of the city's quick entry onto the stage of Greece's modern urban culture. The boom in building activity after 1996, the result of the state subsidies given after the earthquakes for the reconstruction of the region, had been manifested in the town as well as in the villages. The demolition of detached houses and the construction of apartment buildings in their place along with the lack of a specific building concept, had altered Florina's character and created building blocks with architecturally unlinked elements (Sechidou 2000:40). The only part that had maintained its old

character was the riverside area, which had been the historical commercial and social centre of the town. There neo-classical along with Macedonian style houses formed a traditional setting.



Phot. 3.6, 3.7 . Florina, main square (1933, 1957)

Serious traffic problems, lack of parking places and illegal parking, limited areas for public use, unsuccessful exploitation and marginalisation of specific locations, and pollution were some of the problems the city was dealing with (Gogos 2000:44). The environmental pollution of the region due to the burning of lignite was characterised as tragic in a conference held in Florina in February 2000. Florina was described as a cement town in which there was only one square meter of green for every resident; the World Health Organisation target is up to ten square meters per resident (ETHNOS

2000, 11 February). The inhabitants had complained and a mood of deepening pessimism was manifested in their accounts.

Prestige consumer products such as mobile phones and expensive clothes and aspects of 'youth culture', like pop CDs and modern haircuts, were to be found among the residents of the town. The owner of the new branch of a store that is very prestigious and famous across Europe said to me that many people came to buy not only the most practical articles but the most expensive as well. More than ten stores provided mobile communication services, and according to the owner of one of them it was unusual to find a person without a mobile phone. Five computer training schools operated in the town with branches in the villages of the region, and were highly competitive. It was an established notion among the parents that children had to learn to work with a computer as soon as possible. The first Info-Café opened in the mid-1990s and youth and older people could have access to the Internet. Hundreds of households had satellite TV stations, according to the owner of an electric appliances store.

The opening of the franchise shop of *Germanos*, a company specialising in services related to mobile phones, computers and other electronic devices, was broadly discussed among the inhabitants as proof that the region keeps pace with modern scientific achievements. The opening of Goody's fast food restaurant, the Greek version of McDonalds, in the pedestrian zone of the city was considered another sign of the economic upgrading of the region. People interpreted in the same way the impressively fast rate of construction by local standards and the opening of three great supermarkets owned by Greek, German and Spanish companies. The Greek one opened first, in the central pedestrian zone a few weeks before Christmas 1998. During that time, I heard lots of residents of the town complain about the operation of the new store and the fact that it did not fit into the area aesthetically, but primarily because it did not belong to locals.



Phot. 3.8, 3.9. Views from Florina (2000)

Citizens expressing their disapproval about the situation published articles and letters in the local newspapers. “We are streaming with our whole families into the new store, unconcerned that the whole market goes through economic hardship and without showing the sectional social solidarity which neighbouring cities show to their honour”, a respected lawyer and former chairman of the city council wrote (Mitkas 1999). According to a local trader, 60-70% of the local market was hit due to the new store. Yet, the queues from the customers were many meters long. When rumours about the construction of the German store went around, the editor of a local newspaper wondered ironically if Florina was a wealthy area and its residents prosperous, “something that we did not know and the foreign entrepreneurs found out” (FONI TIS FLORINIS 2000, 21 January). Local groceries and supermarkets started to close.

However, new possibilities for work were created and new practices related to the advertisement and promotion of goods were introduced. A feeling of satisfaction had come upon the local consumers because choices were increasing and prices were dropping due to the competition. Floriniotes could now buy the same goods as the inhabitants of Germany or Spain.

The rise of the Greek Stock Market from the second half of 1998 until September 1999, which led to an explosion in the trading of shares, was one of the main activities and main discussion themes in the region of Florina during my fieldwork. Every day, early in the afternoon radios in the cars and taxis were tuned in to the financial reports from the Stock Exchange. Public offices were literally emptying and people were gathering at the stockbrokers' to listen to the financial news of the day. Bank loans and sales of real estate were employed by the gamblers to obtain money for buying shares. Villagers whose main income came from agriculture and stock-raising were selling part of their livestock. Albanian migrants who lived in the region invested their savings and managed to buy even small apartments. Stockbrokers were opened in a very short time. This lasted for about a year. In September 1999 the Stock Market started to crash. The impact on the local economy and the stockholders' personal lives was very damaging.

In recent years, despite the lack of official statistical data, local accounts and personal observations indicated there was an intensive and continuous migration from the villages in Florina. This had led to an emerging conflict between the town's bourgeoisie and the new residents. Already in 1991, a local intellectual was mentioning the need for the preservation of the city's urban 'culture' through the creation of ballet troupes (Souliotis 1990) and the creation of a Floriniotes club to which only 'pure' citizens could claim membership (Souliotis 1991).

In this case as well as in other mundane interactions, population category affiliation was transected by political, professional and class interests and affiliations. Urban citizens who considered themselves townsmen independently of their cultural background and population category membership were commenting negatively on the attitude of the newcomers. They accused them of 'invading' Florina. They called them *choriates* [villagers], implying that they lacked polite manners. Businessmen were complaining about the opening of stores owned by newly settled citizens. Members of

the town's administrative elite were concerned that it was becoming more difficult for them to establish relations with the newcomers in order to be re-elected in their offices.

Yet, cultural difference as well as political membership could have been used politically for the achievement of personal or collective objectives. In municipal or national elections the strongest candidate of all parties belonged to or definitely had some common bonds with the *Dopioi* category; the second strongest would be *Pontios*. Businessmen used their origin instrumentally to attract customers. A female student who came from the Prespes area and was the offspring of a *Pontios* [male singular] father and a *Dopia* [female singular] mother used the connotations of her surname and regional origin to get better grades from her lecturers. She used her surname, which indicated origin from the *Pontioi* category, to a professor of the same origin to emphasise that part of her background. In other cases, she used her origin in the Prespes area, which hinted at an affiliation with the *Dopioi* category, to another lecturer of *Dopios* origin.

Nevertheless, the sense of difference between the population categories and other groupings within them was performed on certain occasions. Cultural institutions organised annual events, very often dance evenings or custom revivals, in which they gathered to celebrate their 'common origin' and sense of belonging. The Efksinos Leschi, the cultural association of the *Pontioi* category, organised and performed with their dance troupe a wedding revival in the summers of 1999 and 2000. In the same way, village cultural associations of the *Dopioi* category organised their own revivals of customs, among which was, as we will see in Chapter 5, the enactment of a wedding in 1999. Although they are categorised as *Dopioi*, the union of the Prespians (those who come from the area of Prespes) was another institution that organised their own annual events related to protection of the environment, inviting other dance troupes to perform along with theirs. Certain customs had been revived by the inhabitants of the Flambouro village, which were attributed to the *Arvanites* category. Dance troupes that belonged to the panhellenic union of Vlachs performed along with a Vlach troupe from the city of Bitola at the Vlach village of Nimfeo during the visit of the President of the Greek Republic in September 2000. The *Monastiriotes* cultural association, as well as the

associations of *Mikrasiates*, *Kioutachialides*<sup>26</sup> [in plural] and *Vorioiplotes*, organised annual lectures on issues related to their 'place of origin' and occasionally formed dance troupes that performed on these occasions.

The presence of the *Yiftoi* community supplemented the multifaceted cultural diversity inherent in Florina's everyday reality. They were scattered in some of the villages but the most cohesive category had been living in the town of Florina for decades now and was relatively integrated in the local society. The language they spoke was called *Yiftika* by outsiders. They were an endogamous category in the sense that they chose spouses within this community or from similar groups located in other parts of Greece. There was a wide-scale baptism of them as Orthodox Christians in the late 1960s and they were housed in a settlement constructed for them by the bishop. The men were mainly traders who hawked fruit and vegetables and the women worked mainly as office-cleaners.

Albanian migrants were also part of the life of the town and region. A few thousands of them spent half a year working legally or illegally in Florina; others resided there permanently. They constituted the main corps of manual labourers as well as an unofficial community which tried to incorporate itself into the local Greek society. During my fieldwork, they interacted little with the local society. They remained socially marginal, outside the social structure of the communities in which they worked, despite playing an integral role in the local economy and doing unskilled but necessary tasks. Most of them accumulated enough money to send back to their home communities and to prepare for their eventual return. However, some of them have been in the region for 10 years and their possession of consumer goods and luxury items was evident. The cafes in the main square and a side street of Florina where they spent much of their time were sites where they were hired and negotiated payment with those who needed a hand worker for a short time.

Inhabitants of the region regarded Florina as a town of artists and intellectuals. Nationally and internationally recognised painters, sculptors<sup>27</sup> and opera singers came from Florina. "In Florina everyone is satisfied: poets, novelists, fishermen, patients and

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<sup>26</sup> A group of the refugees that settled in the Florina region from the area of Kiutachia in Turkey.

<sup>27</sup> For more information on the development of plastic arts in the region see Bessas (1993).

every whim is pleased and satisfied” said an information brochure of the Prefecture of Florina that promoted various forms of tourism. “The gentle green that soothes the soul, the abundant oxygen for those who visit it, the nice taverns with their songs, its sweets (pastries) and the generous hospitality of its people” were some of the elements mentioned in the brochure, constituting the image that Floriniotes projected of their region and themselves. Speaking to foreign diplomats and entrepreneurs in a conference for the economic development of the region in November 1998, the Mayor said that there was an artist in every family in Florina.

An archaeological and a modern art museum, folklore collections, private artists’ ateliers, six university departments and institutions<sup>28</sup> and three libraries had created the conditions for an intense cultural life. One state-owned and two private radio stations operated in town and five weekly and two daily newspapers were published. Around thirty cultural institutions with various activities enriched the cultural life. Lectures, photographic competitions, choir festivals, exhibitions of books and paintings, concerts, theatre performances, conferences and sport and dance events were organised and books and journals were published throughout the year in hundreds of major and minor events. The “Prespes” cultural activities, which took place every August across the prefecture, had become a major cultural and political event that attracted thousands of visitors, distinguished artists and top-ranking officials from all the Balkan countries.

Dance had a central place in the region’s cultural life. It was an artistic activity highly appreciated for its public appeal. In the town of Florina alone 6 troupes operated on a regular basis, participating in various events organised in the town and the villages. Cultural events with dance as a central activity had been organised in the town since the 1950s. Since the 1980s, the *Evdomada Apodimon* [Week for the Emigrant Floriniotes] has been the most prestigious event within Florina. The performance of village and town dance troupes was the principal element. I started participating in these events in 1984 as a dancer of the Aristotelis dance troupe. The demonstration of the troupe’s artistic quality in front of thousands of Floriniotes and visitors was a very strong motive to rehearse throughout the whole summer and prepare for the event. In

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<sup>28</sup> Around 1500 students had been enrolled until the autumn 2000, who constituted about 10% of the town’s population. Once fully expanded in the coming years, they were expected to have more than 2000 students.

the same way, the 1998 and 1999 events included many dance performances from local dance troupes.



Phot. 3.10 The ethnographer dancing in the Week for the Emigrant Floriniotes in 1992

Internal conflicts and disagreements were an inherent part of the local cultural politics. Most of the cultural associations, if not all, had council members affiliated with and actively involved in political parties. Many of the region's elected officials had been chairmen of cultural associations. The performance of a dance troupe during the visit of a state official or at the closing ceremony of the summer events was the object of various negotiations and manipulations. Different ideologies and various personal and group interests clashed with each other during the preparation periods.

In 1993, for instance, the sculpting of an equestrian statue portraying Alexander the Great to be installed in the town of Florina divided the citizens into opposing groups<sup>29</sup>. Various intellectuals, members of the political and religious authorities and cultural associations argued on the form of the statue. Following the issue in the local newspapers, one viewpoint claimed that it had to be the result of the personal inspiration of its creator without impositions of other views and ideas. This view was shared by the sculptor, a distinguished artist descended from a village of the Florina region and recipient of national and international prizes. The other side claimed that the statue had to clearly depict Alexander in the image in which he had been known over

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<sup>29</sup> The sculpting of the statue had been assigned to the sculptor by the city council in 1958 and had undergone many and in some cases tensed stages without being completed until the 1990s

the years. In this way, according to this view, he could explicitly form a national symbol devoid of pejorative distortions, especially during that turbulent period.

### **3.3.2) The Defenders of the Borders: Perceptions, Symbols and Values of Greekness**

The role of the defender of the state's northern border has been attributed to the region throughout the course of its recent history and after its incorporation into the Greek state. Monuments and busts scattered around Florina and across the region related to events and local heroes symbolise the region's contribution to the nation's struggles. Town streets were named after major events and heroes of Greek national history. The main road has been named after Alexander the Great and Pavlos Melas<sup>30</sup>. The main square has been named after Georgios Modis, a local fighter during the Macedonian Struggle, subsequently a successful politician, whose origins are in the city of Bitola.

In the brochures and leaflets which describe briefly the region's history, it is always mentioned that Florina region is the home area of the grandmother of Alexander the Great. At the entrance of the city a circular junction was built in the mid-1990s with a fountain in the centre surrounded by grass, flowers and little trees. Its cement lanes form the Macedonian star, one of the most important symbols employed by both sides in the conflict between Greece and FYROM during the 1990s. As a demonstration for support of the Greek claims, the local taxi drivers' union changed the colour of their cars from grey into blue to symbolise their Greekness as residents of Macedonia.

Every Sunday morning and afternoon during the summer, the military band escorted by an armed platoon crossed the city playing military marches all the way up to the main square. There it performed in a very official and ritualised way the hoisting and lowering of the Greek flag. The national anthem was played; the soldiers presented

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<sup>30</sup> Pavlos Melas is considered the most prominent hero of the modern Greek History and the period of the Macedonian Struggle (1904-1908). The early twentieth century and, in particular, the period between 1904 and 1908 was marked by the armed conflict between Greek and Bulgarian bands for supremacy in Ottoman Macedonia. These bands of guerrilla fighters were composed by local men, Cretans and, more often than not, under cover Greek army officers supplied by the government of Athens. Pavlos Melas was a Greek army officer, son of an influential Athenian family, that had long been committed to the annexation of Macedonia into Greece and its realisation. He was appointed commander-in-chief of the Greek bands in the areas of Kastoria and Bitola in August 1904 and was killed there by Turkish troops in September of the same year. Melas' death is thought to have incited many officers to lead armed bands into Macedonia.

arms, all the passing cars stopped and customers at the cafes stood up and remained still together with the passers-by. After the national anthem was completed, the band and the platoon followed a different route, marching through the pedestrian zone in the centre of the city on the way back to the camp.

Values such as 'the pride of being Greek', 'love of the homeland', and associating the 'role of Akritas<sup>31</sup>' with high morale have been attributed to living at the frontiers of the state. This was very expressively illustrated in the speech of a female pupil representing Florina, given in the Greek Parliament in the fourth meeting of the adolescents' parliament in the summer of 1999 (FONI TIS FLORINIS 1999, 23 July).

I come from the Florina of Macedonia, from the Macedonia of Greece. In all frontier regions of our country, vigour and fortitude are more than enough. That may be the reason that our politicians have invented for the residents of these regions the slogan "Borders are not a punishment but an honour". This slogan weighs heavily on the shoulders of the Akrites.

In another point of her speech in relation to national issues she said:

We have our antennas tuned to what touches upon our national sensitivity and with patriotism, which we allow nobody contemptuously to call nationalism...we have to armour economically and militarily regions like Macedonia, Thrace and Cyprus...we ought to agitate for the Greek positions.

Florina region has very often been referred to as the *esxatya*, the 'end' of Greece, the remotest point of the national territory. The term is emotionally loaded and Floriniotes use it and its connotations as a political argument in their negotiations with the state. For their part, politicians who visit the area rhetorically transform this apparent impediment into a potential advantage. The Greek Prime Minister, in his visit to a Floriniot border village in May 1999, began his speech by saying that "Greece starts from Florina and does not end here".

Local administrators emphasised their sense of being marginalised by the state administration, expressing feelings of being left abandoned and forgotten and thus deserving a more privileged treatment than other regions in Greece. These ideas had permeated to a great degree and in various contexts the relationship of the region with

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<sup>31</sup> A defender of the border appointed by the emperor during the Byzantine period

the administrative centre of the state and other agents and, in certain cases, the relationships between groupings or individuals in the local society.

Floriniotes were expecting the state to support them in their struggles with the prefecture of Kozani, initiated in 1999 to claim for the region the administrative centre of the future University of Western Macedonia. According to the committee members representing the Florina prefecture, the securing of the central offices of the university would basically increase the sources of income, allowing for the founding of new university schools. Moreover, during autumns of both 1998 and 1999 there was a lot of discussion in everyday interactions as well as many official public meetings about the price of heating gas. Local MPs raised questions in the parliament, demanding special measures and lowering of the prices.

In 1999 the Minister of Education repealed the law establishing a quota for pupils of border regions trying to enter a military school. Those affected by this decision perceived it as an injustice. The Prefect sent a letter to the Prime Minister asking for it to be redressed, pointing out that this was another blight to the region together with abandonment and underdevelopment. One of the pupils hurt by this measure appealed in his letter to the Prime Minister to his love for Greece and Florina, his national ideals and the medals of his grandfather who fought against Bulgarians during the Macedonian Struggle (FONI TIS FLORINIS 1999, 17 September).

The celebration of national holidays was another domain that contained symbols of the Greek national ideology. According to the national discourse, they tend to symbolise the preservation of the high morale of the people. This was a notion frequently emphasised by the teachers during my elementary and high school years. Two national holidays and a local holiday were officially celebrated in the region. They were the anniversary of the Greek War of Independence in 1821; the OXI day, that is, Greece's involvement in World War II; and the 'liberation' of the region from the 'Turkish yoke' in 1912. Many other similar anniversaries were established and/or abandoned according to the ideological premises of the various regimes that governed Greece in the 20th century. The so-called 'battle of Florina', the victory of the state army over the communist forces in 1949 in Florina, was one of the major holidays during the post-Civil War era. It was abolished after the accession of PASOK to the government in

1981. Yet this and other anniversaries were unofficially celebrated by military societies, political parties and individual citizens.

Associations and unions established by the participants in periods of war in the 20th century or their descendants, were still active in the Florina region<sup>32</sup>. Their presence reflected different and often conflicting ideologies and political opinions as well as different interpretations of recent historical events. The Reservist Officers union, for example, which was considered as a right-wing organisation, promoted and celebrated every August the victory of the 'national forces' on Vitsi mountain at the end of the Civil War in 1949. On the other side, the Fighters of the Resistance union, which was deemed a left-wing organisation, conducted memorial services for those who belonged to the left-wing forces and were killed during World War II and the Civil War.

Carrying the Greek flag during the parade as the best pupil of the school meant great honour and wide social recognition. Pupils and students admitted in their accounts that the importance of the national holidays was constantly diminishing for them. That was also my feeling when attending the parades during my fieldwork. The celebration had merely a formal character. Pupils seemed uninterested, even embarrassed, to march in front of their relatives and friends. Be that as it may, these celebrations had not lost their public appeal and still played a crucial role in shaping peoples' sense of national belonging.



Phot. 3.11 Pupils marching in florina for the celebration of the OXI day (28/10/1999)

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<sup>32</sup> Those were the associations and unions of the *Sillogos Makedonomachon* [Fighters of the Macedonian Struggle], *Efedron Aksiomatikon* [Reservist Officers], *Travmatikon kai Anapiron Polemou* [Injured and Disabled ex-Servicemen], *Thimaton Polemou* [Victims of War], *Enosi Agoniston Ethnikis Antistasis* [Fighters of Resistance], and *Travmatikon kai Polemiston Opliton* [Injured and Infantrymen].

The celebration of the 86th anniversary of the region's 'liberation from the Turks' in November 1998 can serve as an example to illustrate this. Special gatherings, speeches and cultural activities were organised by all levels of schools on the preceding day. Pupils laid wreaths at busts and monuments. The Greek flag was hanging from many houses and apartments<sup>33</sup>. In the evening, the unveiling of a memorial dedicated to the Reservist Officers took place in one of the city's squares. All political, military, civic and municipal authorities and the media along with representatives of the government attended the event. The military band escorted a platoon. The monument, a sculpture made by a local artist, portrayed Alexander the Great and a Greek soldier of World War II fighting side by side. The sculpture was said to symbolise the unbroken continuity of the region's contribution of soldiers between the two events. The square was renamed the Square of Reservist Officers. Later on, speeches were delivered in a city theatre. Choirs sang songs about the event.

The celebration reached its zenith the next day. A special liturgy took place in the Cathedral and a memorial service followed in front of the monument in the Square of Heroes. There was then a great parade through one of the main streets. Thousands of people streamed to watch the spectacle. At the beginning, all official guests and members of the authorities arrived, walked in the street in front of the spectators and took their place on a grandstand covered by a roof, made especially for the occasion. Then the municipal band passed, playing national marches, and took its position across the street from the authorities' stand. The first who led the parade were the members of the Disabled ex-Servicemen union who had fought during World War II. In recent years, they have been escorted by the Fighters of Resistance union.

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<sup>33</sup> In March 1999, in the celebration of the Greek War of Independence in 1821, a local newspaper prompted everybody to hang a flag for the most important historical event since the creation of modern Greece. In its front page it said that it is the least we can do to honour those who liberated part of Greece and gave us our national existence. It is our sacred and national duty (FONI TIS FLORINIS 1999, 19 March).



Phot. 3.12 Members of the Injured and Disabled ex-Servicemen, Victims of War and Resistance Fighters opening the parade for the celebration of the OXI day (28/10/1999)

Members of the associations of Fighters of the Macedonian Struggle, dressed in what is considered to be a Macedonian fighter's dress, followed them. Pupils from all schools and educational levels followed, dressed in their uniforms. The Macedonian star along with the name of the school was printed upon the uniforms of the some of the schools. Members of cultural associations dressed in traditional costumes and little children dressed as *tsoliades*<sup>34</sup> passed by. The parade, as always, finished with the military band replacing the municipal band and escorting the military detachments, the latter the most loudly applauded by the crowds. The celebration ended with a reception given by the local military commander at the officers' club.

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<sup>34</sup> *Tsoliades* or *Evzones*, are the fancifully dressed soldiers (former royal bodyguards, now of the President of the Greek Democracy) who stand guard outside the Presidential Palace and Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Athens. They are dressed with the characteristic uniform based on the Greek national costume, the skirt-like *foustanella* and the *tsarouchia* (pom-pommed slippers).



Phot. 3.13 Army platoons marching in Florina for the celebration of the OXI day (28/10/1999)

One of the first things that strikes everyone who approaches the town is the imposing, 30-meter tall white cross that stands on the hill of Saint Panteleimon, at the foot of which lies the south side of the town. Its image is much more arresting and impressive during the night when lit. It looks as if it is hanging from the sky. Very often residents of the town say, it “protects the city and the whole plain”. It was built around 1970 under the administration of the bishop Augoustinos Kandiotis. In written and oral accounts of local history, members of the clergy occupy a prominent position either as key personalities in the course of important events or as martyrs that have been killed because of their beliefs. Hellenism and Christianity have always been presented as two parts of one entity in recent Greek national history.



The town and the region of Florina have been widely known because of the above mentioned bishop. His presence in the region over the last 35 years has pervaded all aspects of social life. His beliefs and actions have considerably shaped peoples' beliefs and attitudes, and strengthened religious feelings. He was appointed in 1967. His main objectives during his office were the further education of the existing priests and the ordination of many others, the preaching of sermons and the publication of books and journals, the organisation of many charities, the construction of an old people's home and a boarding school, and the operation of Sunday schools, summer camps and a radio station. He aimed at the uprooting of 'paganistic' customs such as villages' dance events on the occasion of religious celebrations, Florina's Christmas bonfires, and the carnival.

Moreover, he tried to reduce emigration and the number of abortions, to fight against multinational enterprises and the casino that would operate in Florina, and to deal with 'instruments of corruption' such as beauty contests and night clubs, and 'anti-national' films<sup>35</sup>. He also strongly promoted 'national issues' such as the struggle against the claims over Greek Macedonia by neighbouring countries, the violation of human rights of the Greek minority in southern and central Albania, and the liberation of Cyprus by the Turkish occupation troops. He resigned due to his age in 1999. In his letter publicly announcing his resignation he said that "two stars were shining and still shine in the sky of my soul...the beloved star of Jesus Christ and the star of our dearest homeland Greece".

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Contrasting forces co-existed during the period of my fieldwork in the Florina region. Established power structures competed with new ones in a dynamic way where. Various forces were seeking to set its traditionally rural character on the path of industrialisation and modernisation, whereas, on the other hand, others were trying to preserve some of its long-established values and ideals, despite the socio-economic changes that challenged them. This social environment had multiple implications for the Florina region.

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<sup>35</sup> He did not hesitate to resist any state policy or political decision which he felt was against the ideals of Christian Orthodox religion. In the 1980s, he had argued against the civil wedding, which was legislated by the socialist government of PASOK.

The construction of the new electricity production unit and the development of tourism were the basis upon which the local population placed its expectations for economic prosperity. The region's geopolitical role in relation to Greece's policy in the Balkans increased and its trans-frontier co-operation with neighbouring countries seemed to be an encouraging prospect. Different forms of consumerism were perceived as signs of economic prosperity and formal and informal arenas of social life were created around them. Yet, not all Floriniotes profited from these developments, and they did not all profit to the same extent.

The consequences were twofold regarding issues of belonging. The importance of ascription to a collective category acquired new cultural meaning. The real issue at stake was not who belonged to what group, but how one dealt with the new challenges, which went beyond group membership. In certain cases, the political significance of the cultural affiliation of the inhabitants was diminishing. Working in Florina as a technician in a specialised store with electric devices, as a teacher in a computer learning centre, as a hairdresser, or even as an employee in a super market depended mainly on one's qualifications and individual capabilities. In other cultural projects, such as hanging out for a drink or flirting it was other 'means' that mattered rather than any cultural affiliation.

In other cases, though, socio-political and economic conditions brought together competing actors who attempted to fulfil their overlapping or opposing political agendas while/by participating in local politics. In their effort to compete with each other and the state apparatus they used, among other things, their perceived cultural particularity by turning it into a political advantage. Group membership could then become a determining factor in local interactions and power relations. On the pretext of practising my/our 'culture', dance was imported as a significant symbolic capital with different functions and value in various socio-political contexts for all agents involved.

This thesis examines the ways and the conditions under which dance has been used by people of the Florina region in processes of identification and categorisation. In this respect, it is necessary now to direct our attention to the ways the performance of dance has been introduced in the region and operated within the social context described in

this chapter, as an instrument for the creation of boundaries and for distancing from, or identifying with, specific collective identities.

## **CHAPTER 4:**

# **THE POLITICISATION OF DANCE IN FLORINA DISTRICT**

### **4.1) Introduction**

The transformation of the district of Florina from a peripheral area of a great urban centre during the Ottoman period into an isolated border region of a nation-state was a decisive factor in the development of a strict state policy of the national identity. Early anthropological studies of state borders have shown that they are places where, perhaps more than in any other area of the national territory, people are subjected to the national project and the power of the state (Cole and Wolf 1974). These zones are characterised by intensified political as well as cultural negotiation and contestation. The state has a dialectical relation with its regions and populations, attempting to impose itself on them and demanding linguistic and other kinds of homogeneity. However, the state need not be seen as an unquestionable power structure in its own right as many anthropologists have assumed (Nagengast 1994:116). It should rather be perceived as an institution that does not operate as a cohesive entity. The state has “internal inconsistencies and contradictions” (Donnan and Wilson 1999:154).

On the other hand, local populations in border areas play the role of actively receiving and affecting policy formation by using and manipulating for their own ends the ideas imposed on them by the state (Sahlins 1989). Individuals and groups that live on state borders often “subvert or support the state in such roles as victims of the abuse of state power or agents of state policy” (Donnan and Wilson 1999:4). This transaction between national and local levels is always to be seen as a two-way process, the

outcome of centralist policies as much as a bottom-up process generated by the reactions of local societies. This chapter fully accords with the view that an anthropological focus on aspects of culture as they are experienced and expressed by the citizens of a state at its borders can make a significant contribution to our knowledge about the nation and the state and the role of culture in identity formation processes (Donnan and Wilson 1999). It attempts to provide contextual background information that will help us understand the role of dance in processes of identification and categorisation as I documented them during my fieldwork.

The chapter focuses on the ways and the conditions in which ideas and patterns of dance performance observed during my fieldwork were introduced in previous years by state institutions in the Florina region and then appropriated and reified by local actors. In the beginning, I describe the tense socio-political conditions created in Greece at both national and local levels by the re-awakening of the Macedonian Question in the 1990s. I touch upon the political and diplomatic actions of the Greek governments of the 1990s with respect to the conflict with FYROM over the name Macedonia as well as their impact on domestic politics, in order to clarify what was taking place at the same time in the region of Florina. At the local level, I refer to the emergence of political movements promoting the protection of human rights of the Macedonian minority in Greece and some of the counter-actions this generated.

Subsequently, I interpret the role of educational and cultural state and private institutions and certain individuals since the 1950s in the construction and fixation of the meanings of dance. In addition, issues of cultural ideology and politics are addressed in order to show the processes through which ideas about dance were related to notions of national identity. In conjunction with this, I focus on the impact of these developments upon the performance of dance throughout the 1990s, illustrating it with ethnographic examples.

My decision to start from the 1950s relates to my research questions as well as to practical reasons. I was led to it by the results of the research I did in the early 1990s and the information provided to me by many informants during the fieldwork. Additionally, it was the period I managed to inquire about within the given time of my fieldwork. I must underline though that the existing evidence does not yet allow us to acknowledge fully the role of dance in identity formation processes in the Florina

region in the post-Civil War period. Additional research is needed to complement and evaluate the existing information. In re-constructing the period after 1990, I was guided in my selection of events and dance occasions by informants' accounts, reports in the local newspapers and my own memories from that period.

## **4.2) The 1990s: The New Context for the Political Use of Culture**

### **4.2.1) Greece and its Diplomatic Actions in Relation to the Macedonian Controversy**

During my fieldwork, the region was still experiencing, though with a much lower intensity, the tension created by the conflict between Greece and FYROM after the declaration of independence by the former Yugoslav Republic in September 1991. Old problems had been posed anew. Greece's objection to the use of the name Macedonia by FYROM and the Republic's claim, on historical, linguistic, and cultural grounds, that a suppressed Macedonian minority existed in northern Greece launched diplomatic offensives and initiated economic blockades. Some extremists even talked about going to war.

FYROM was the only republic that managed to withdraw from Yugoslavia without going into battle. The use of the name Macedonia in the designation of the new state in its effort to gain international recognition was translated by many Greeks as a 'stealing and falsification of Greece's history' and as a territorial claim upon the part of Macedonia incorporated into Greece in 1912-1913. This position enjoyed widespread support in the Greek parliament<sup>36</sup>. Mass demonstrations were organised and great tension was generated in Greece. The main focus of Greece's diplomatic efforts was to prevent any international recognition of the newly formed state under this name. Greece wouldn't accept any name for the neighbouring state that included the term Macedonia or any of its derivatives. The reason, according to the official line, was because the name was regarded as the main vehicle for FYROM's irredentism against Greece. Its policy towards FYROM, between the end of 1991 and September 1995, very much centered on the name issue. Greek state's terms for recognising the new state

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<sup>36</sup> The only party represented at the Greek parliament that disagreed with that position was the Greek Communist Party, as it was exemplified by the meeting of the leaders of the political parties represented at the Greek parliament, in April 1992.

were that it should renounce the use of the term Macedonia in its designation (the name of the new state), and its territorial claims, and cease its allegations that a Macedonian minority existed in northern Greece<sup>37</sup>.

Both sides rejected a mediation plan known as the 'Pineiro Package' produced by the meeting of the EU Foreign Ministers in Lisbon in 1992, which included the name 'New Macedonia' for the former Yugoslav republic. The entrance of FYROM into the UN, in March 1993, under the provisional name of 'Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' (FYROM) signified a new stage in diplomatic efforts to resolve the differences between the two states. From the end of 1991 until the beginning of 1993, the source of these efforts was primarily the European Community; from the spring of 1993 onwards, with the entrance of FYROM into the UN, other actors, including the UN and especially the USA, became actively involved. In May 1993, another plan proposed by Cyrus Vance, the UN representative, which included the name 'Nova Makedonija' was rejected by the two states.

Greece's policy towards FYROM became entangled in 1991-1993 with internal disputes in the governing party. Although the Greek Prime Minister Mitsotakis, not unlike FYROM's president Gligorov, was preoccupied with the cost of his political choices on the internal scene it seemed that considerable progress was made towards a negotiated solution. Disagreement on this perspective was expressed by the former Foreign Minister of the ruling party, Samaras, who was seeking to promote his political ambitions; he advocated an uncompromising stance over the name issue and stated his intention to object by any means to a solution that would include the name Macedonia. That stance brought him into open confrontation with the Prime Minister in the spring of 1992 and eventually caused his expulsion from his position as Foreign Minister, in April 1992. In September 1993, the right-wing government fell and early elections were declared<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> This point was related to Greece's objection with the Constitution adopted by the F.Y. Republic of Macedonia in November 1991. Greece objected to the preamble of the Constitution and to articles 3 and 49. The preamble states that the constitution is founded on the principles and statements of the Anti-Fascist Assembly of National Liberation of Macedonia, made in August 1944, where, among other things, those statements and principles, refer to the unification of the whole Macedonian people and Macedonia's part that were divided by Balkan imperialists, Greece and Bulgaria in 1913 and 1918. Article 3 mentions the possibility for changes in the borders, and article 49 to the interference of Macedonia's in the internal affairs of neighbouring states, under the pretext of protecting the rights of the Macedonian minorities.

<sup>38</sup> It has to be mentioned, though, that the failure to find a solution over the problems with FYROM was not the reason for the fall of the Greek government.

The Socialist Party that then came to power imposed a trade embargo on FYROM in February 1994 as a pressure strategy, to raise the stakes of recognition and to revive the interest of the supranational organisations and the USA in the issue. An Interim Accord between the two states under the mediation of the USA was signed in September 1995 and led to the lifting of the embargo. Greece would recognise the new state and FYROM would change the Macedonian star marked on its flag, which was considered a Greek symbol. Additionally, the Accord allowed for constitutional changes and improvements that would disclaim irredentist aspirations by FYROM towards Greece. The Accord was seen as a temporary solution, to be followed by a permanent settlement of FYROM's name<sup>39</sup>.

From 1995 onwards, Greece's relations with FYROM and Albania improved significantly. Greece's position as the economically most developed country and only member of the EU in the Balkans made her a source of support for the countries of south-eastern Europe. Furthermore, Greek businessmen established themselves in all the Balkan countries. As regards the relations between Greece and FYROM, their mutual interest in political stability in the region, the situation in Kosovo, the internal problems within the Republic relating to the Albanian minority's political demands and the Republic's devastating economic situation led both countries, as we have seen in the previous chapter, to choose co-operation as their main priority<sup>40</sup>.

#### **4.2.2) Reflections at the Local Level: Actions and Reactions, Conflict and Tension**

Concurrently, at a local level, political movements emerged in the early 1990s that claimed cultural rights on behalf of an oppressed Macedonian minority existing in the Florina region. Their emergence signalled the outbreak of the conflict on cultural issues and rights and created a hostile atmosphere which became apparent in various domains of local social life. The political movements claimed and represented as their potential

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<sup>39</sup> For the period 1991 - September 1993, see Skylakakis (1995). For the whole period, from 1991 until September 1995, see Kathimerini (28 April 1996). For the Interim Agreement, Rozakis (1996). For a critical examination of Greece's policy towards FYROM, see Kirkos (1993), also Valden (1994).

<sup>40</sup> In a report released on 11/10/2001 by the A3 Department of the Greek Foreign Ministry, Greece supported fully FYROM's territorial integrity and its integration into the European and world supranational organisations. It was stated that "our country has repeatedly stressed that she supports FYROM's efforts for its gradual integration into the Euro-atlantic structures and that its unified character and territorial integrity constitute condition of stability in the region". At an economic level, Greece was the first foreign investor country and the second after Germany among the partner countries of FYROM (Milakas 2002).

members the category of the *Dopioi*. Hierarchical social and political relations were framed in terms of minority and majority rights. The new situation, with implications for an array of interconnected scenes, gave opportunities for the practice of identity politics and the political use of culture.

In January 1990, 21 people from the Florina district submitted an application for the establishment of a cultural association called the Home of Macedonian Culture. The application was rejected by the local court two months later. According to the judicial decision, no private organisation had the right or the power to preserve the territorial integrity and national independence of Greece and to promote human rights in the country, as Clause 2 in the association's memorandum aimed to do. A new application was submitted on 12 June 1990 without the Clause 2 statements but the court again refused it. According to the court, some of the association's members had participated in the OSCE's conference in Copenhagen in June 1990, where they presented themselves as members of the Macedonian national minority in Greece whose rights were being violated.

The application of the House of Macedonian Culture was appealed to the Appellate Court of Thessaloniki in September 1990 but was again rejected in May 1991 on the basis that the motives of the organisation were against the 'national interests' and 'territorial integrity' of Greece. The temporary administrating committee of the association, explaining the reasons for their initiative, stated in a open letter that the members of the association, "making use of their rights as Greek citizens as they derive from the constitution and being sensitised to issues of culture and tradition, decided to make an effort towards the preservation of our folk culture and our customs which by general consent either are becoming extinct or their genuineness is being distorted". The objective of the association was "the pursuit of our cultural identity, our ties with the past, issues which one sees in every association across Greece, of *Pontioi*, *Arvanites*, *Vlachs* etc."

The publisher of a Florinot newspaper criticised the members of the association for the procedure they followed for its establishment. He pointed out that there was no open meeting to establish the organisation, as the law prescribes, nor was there any public announcement on the intention to establish the association before the memorandum was submitted to the court in the first instance. According to the

publisher, although it was established by a closed procedure, the members of the association had declared that their objectives represented all Floriniotes. Following the application's rejection by the Appellate Court of Salonica, the members of the association appealed the case in June 1991 to the Supreme Court of Greece<sup>41</sup>.

Any kind of action or statement that would oppose the official Greek position on the existence of a minority was perceived by local state representatives and certain cultural institutions as a challenge to the Greek national sentiments of the Floriniotes. An article published in the Rizospastis national newspaper stated that citizens of 'Slavic origin' lived in the Florina region. Rizospastis was the organ of political expression of the Greek Communist Party. The article mentioned an incident that took place in the *panigiri* of Meliti in 1990, in which the Prefect had forbidden the musicians to play certain dances and melodies which were thought of as anti-Greek. Arguments and an exchange of public letters and accusations between the Prefect, the local MP of the socialist party, the Sinaspismos [Coalition] left-wing party committee and private institutions in Florina were released in August 1990 as a result of the report. Diverse readings of the incident and the newspaper report reflected different, conflicting points of view about the situation, albeit between those who were thought to represent and promote the Greek point of view.

The local Socialist MP condemned the attitude and actions of the Prefect. He stated that the Prefect was dangerous to the nation, crucially damaged local pride and hurt the tranquillity of the local citizens, which had only been restored with great difficulty after the Civil War. He also said that the Prefect expelled the socialist party from his political initiatives. Reciting the actions of the Prefect, the MP concluded that they were reminiscent of the nationalist radicalisms of the extreme right governments in recent decades. The Sinaspismos local party committee accused the Prefect of dividing the citizens into protagonists and stooges. Under the pretext of defending the national interest, he prohibited local dances, threatened local musicians and forbade cultural events; he also referred indirectly to the decreased national consciousness of the local

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<sup>41</sup> In May 1994 the Greek Supreme Court denied the registration and upheld the arguments of the previous courts. In May 1997, seven members of the "House of the Macedonian Culture" took the case to the European Commission of Human Rights. In July 1998, the European Court of Human Rights found Greece in violation of Article 11 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

population; and he “saw everywhere ghosts and agents from Skopje and violated basic constitutional freedoms. The raising of such problems would lead to undesirable results, especially during a period of crisis of the local market, which was to a great extent dependent on transactions with Yugoslavians”.

The Prefect, representing the state, condemned in his letter the content of the article. He blamed the views of the members of the Socialist and Sinaspismos parties as “nationally dangerous”. He claimed that “it was historically proved that since the very depth of ancient times Greeks and only Greek Macedonians resided in Florina”. He would have expected vigorous protests against the article and instead he received an accusation by the socialist MP against him. He also challenged anyone who did not agree with his position that Macedonia is a part of Greece, which the locals and the state had to protect from FYROM’s propaganda by declaring this publicly. He ended his letter by saying that he believed in the importance of the prefecture’s cultural development and the need for the preservation of its Greek tradition.

In addition to state representatives and political parties, local private cultural institutions participated in the debate. The Aristotelis cultural association released a letter in which it rejected the “provocative” article of Rizospastis and condemned the attitude of the Sinaspismos party and the local socialist MP. The council board mentioned that “the association’s activities were a reaction to FYROM’s objectives and its pawns who polluted the sacred soil of Macedonia”. It concluded that it “supported any Prefect, especially of Macedonian origin, whatever political side he belonged to, who would fight to defend the sacred values of the nation”. The association’s letter ended by declaring that Aristotelis was proud of the actions of the Prefect and the uncompromising attitude of the Bishop regarding ‘national issues’.

Finally, in another letter, released by the association of scientists “Blaise Pascal”, which was established by members of local religious groups, it was stated that there were no citizens of Slavic origin in the region; only Greeks of Greek origin. It added that “nobody prohibited the customs of the people; on the contrary we all wanted their preservation. We did not differentiate between *Dopioi*, Vlachs, *Arvanites* and *Pontioi* and we condemn any discrimination. The dances and the songs of Florina are Greek and our local dances are not danced in the neighbouring countries because they have not been created by them but are connected with the Florinot social life. The people of Florina

will preserve its customs, dances and songs". The letter also referred to the language spoken in the region and said that no other language than Greek was spoken. "What part of the populations speak is not a language but a local dialect with no letters. No serious scientist would consider it as a sign of identity. We consider the attitude of the bishop and the Prefect as proper and in accordance with the national interests and we support them. Thus, the article of Rizospastis wounds our national self-esteem".

The existence of a 'Slavomacedonian' minority in the district of Florina was mentioned in the Annual Report of the US Department of State in January 1991. The report mentioned the existence of a Slavic-speaking, Orthodox population in northern Greece, mainly rural and economically underdeveloped and ranging between 20,000 and 50,000 members, which constituted part of a broader population that migrated before and during the Greek Civil War to Yugoslavia and other countries. According to this report, the Greek government denied that this population had a minority consciousness, imposed restrictions on it and encouraged its assimilation. The report referred to the rejection by the Greek authorities of the application for the House of the Macedonian Culture. It described the actions of the Prefect as discriminatory.

As I recall and as it was described to me by informants, people in the Florina town in their talks thought the report revealed the existence of an axis between Washington, Skopje and Ankara which aimed to exercise pressure on Greece concerning significant issues of Greek policy. They also were scared by the reference to the term 'minorities', which they thought was made in order to show that human rights were being violated in Greece and Greek Macedonia and that there were unresolved minority problems. Others imputed the content of the report to visible and invisible enemies of Greece. A right-wing lawyer who belonged to the category of *Monastiriotes* wrote in a newspaper that Greek Macedonians would fight together against anybody who challenged their Greek consciousness. The editor of another local newspaper published in the same period, a left wing intellectual and member of the Socialist party and of *Monastiriotes*, wrote in an article that "the Balkans would face difficult days".

In a symbolic move on the night of 24 March 1991, Greek flags hanging on all public buildings in the village of Meliti for the celebration of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 were taken away. The village council denounced these actions as

insults against the national symbol and the national sentiments of the inhabitants<sup>42</sup>. The members of the council considered them an attempt to create the impression that Meliti was the centre of anti-Greek propaganda and a hotbed of agents who challenged the national sovereignty. The council's statements concluded that "the events were provoked by those who insisted on the same recipe to divide the people and the villages into nationalists and national enemies, ignoring the consequences".

In August 1991, a Florinot newspaper exclusively published a letter sent by Christos Sidiropoulos, a key minority activist, to Achmet Faikoglou, a member of the Greek Parliament and of the Muslim minority in north-eastern Greece (KOINI GNOMI 1991, 21 September). In it Sidiropoulos, a public servant living and working in Amindeo and a founding member of the House for Macedonian Culture, based in Florina, introduced himself as a member of the unrecognised Macedonian minority and chairman of the House for Macedonian Culture. He asked Faikoglou to arrange his transfer to his office so that he could participate in the next OSCE conference in September 1991 and be able to "work for the human rights of minorities in general".

In response to this letter, the Florinot MP of the socialist party, publicly condemned Sidiropoulos' "anti-Greek actions" and asked for his expulsion from the socialist party. He also asked that the people of the Florina region "despise and isolate those acting in an anti-Greek way". In the same way, the editor of a local right-wing newspaper declared the determination of the Macedonians to defend their soil and appealed to Greeks' ancient history, in a front-page article entitled "The Anti-Greek Conspiracy" (FONI TIS FLORINIS 1991, 27 September).

In September 1991, a political movement appeared in the Florina region under the name 'Macedonian Movement for Balkan Prosperity' (MAKIBE) (Chotzidis 1997:146). The reasons for the emergence of the Movement were described as the urgent need for the Macedonians to participate more actively in events taking place in the Balkans, and the desire for respect for their rights and restitution for injustices against them. The periodical *Moglena*, which was first published in 1978 in the region of Aridea (Pella

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<sup>42</sup> As mentioned in Ch. 3, the celebration of the anniversary of the Greek War of Independence in 1821 is considered the most important historical event of the modern Greek History.

Prefecture) as a newspaper dealing with local issues, became the organ of its political expression<sup>43</sup>.

MAKIBE accused the Greek state of “practising an inhuman, racist and unjust policy towards the *Dopioi Makedones* [local Macedonians]” by restricting or prohibiting Macedonians’ rights to cultivate their particular culture, among other things. Appealing to the Greek constitution and the declarations of the then OSCE, EU and UN, it fought for respect for the basic freedoms and human rights of the indigenous Macedonians of the Greek territory; in addition to the inviolability of borders and respect for national, religious, linguistic, cultural and social minorities. It demanded the creation of associations and clubs for the cultivation of the authentic local Macedonian culture (Moglana 1993:15-16).

When I asked people to recall their reactions and discussions upon the emergence of the Movement, views were varying. An old man from Polipotamos, a *Dopioi* village, told me that people in the village were afraid of what to expect after the emergence of the Movement. “The situation looked like the Civil War”, he said. A middle-aged man from Armenochori, *Dopios* as well, approved the initiative and anticipated that at last the situation would be improved for the *Dopioi*. A person in his late twenties, active in the dance group of Pedino and Ksino Nero, said he was satisfied that the issue of the recognition of Macedonian rights had been raised. Others rejected and strongly condemned the Movement’s actions. The latter point of view was also supported and emphasised by Prime Minister Mitsotakis when he visited the region in November 1991<sup>44</sup>.

In the months that followed MAKIBE’s emergence, local unions and associations irrespective of their political affiliation announced successive resolutions that Macedonia was united and Greek and that they were and had been self-evidently Macedonians. They all condemned the appropriation of the name Macedonia by FYROM and the ‘falsification’ of Greek history, affirming the hellenicity of Macedonia and their will to fight against those who would raise claims on Macedonia. One of them also accused FYROM of negating for the rights of the other minorities residing in its

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<sup>43</sup> In 1989, it had already been transformed into a journal concerned with the promotion of the claims for rights of the Macedonians of northern Greece.

<sup>44</sup> It is noteworthy that the Prime Minister prior to his arrival in the town of Florina in a move with apparent symbolic connotations visited the Niki border crossing.

territory. The resolutions asked the European Community not to recognise a state with the name Macedonia in order to help consolidate peace in the region<sup>45</sup>. In the same spirit, a mass rally organised in Florina by pupils of local schools was attended by all local authorities. These reactions, representing or claiming to represent large numbers of residents, tended to show the local society's determination to oppose MAKIBE's actions and its identification with the nation.

1994 was the year that the political party Rainbow<sup>46</sup> was founded. The party, which succeeded the MAKIBE, was established for the purpose of participating in the European elections of that year. At the same time the Moglena journal was renamed Zora [Dawn] (Chotzidis 1997:146-148); in 1997, after internal conflicts and splits, it was renamed again as Nova Zora [New Dawn]. Rainbow was supported by the MAKIBE and the European parliament group Rainbow. Its election declaration was based on the MAKIBE's manifesto. In giving reasons for Rainbow's decision to participate in the Greek elections, Dimitris Lithoksoou, a candidate for the party's ballot, mentioned that "in the frame of united Europe there is space for the political expression and development of small nations and minorities" (Lithoksoou 1994:3).

Rainbow sustained and intensified the claims for the protection of Macedonian culture and the recognition of Macedonian identity in the region. As it asserted in its manifesto, it "function[ed] as an organisation of the Macedonian national minority resident in Greece" (Nova Zora 1997:4). By referring to a common historical past, the persecution of the *Dopioi* and the existence of a common language and culture, as well as to contemporary social discrimination, the movement attempted to establish the existence of a social entity, the Macedonian minority, as a social fact. It also sought to force its recognition by the Greek state (Cowan 2001). As a political party, it participated in all national and European elections held in Greece from 1994<sup>47</sup> to 1999. In the 1994 European elections it received 7,263 votes country-wide and 2,332 votes in the Florina Prefecture (6% of the total votes). In the last European elections in 1999, it received 1145 votes and lost approximately 40 per cent of its power, compared with the

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<sup>45</sup> The council of the Florina town representing the people of Florina, the town council of Amindeo, seventeen mayors and chairmen of city councils from Western Macedonia, the association of the *Vorioipirotes*, the Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the Cultural Centre of those working in the NEC, the Union of Teachers of Amindeo were some of them.

<sup>46</sup> Ouranio Tokso in Greek, Vinozhito in Slavic

<sup>47</sup> In October 1993, a candidate, member of the MAKIBE participated in the national elections representing the national Macedonians in the region. He received 367 votes in the Florina Prefecture (0.83 per cent).

votes it had taken in the previous European elections. This proportion represented 3.61 per cent of the total votes in the Florina prefecture and was probably one of the reasons for the non-participation of the party in the national elections of April 2000<sup>48</sup>.

Supporters of the movement accused the Greek state and local institutions of distorting the 'real' tradition, which was, they said, one of the keys demonstrating the distinctiveness of the minority. In measures taken to present the distinctiveness of the minority, they created or patronised already existing cultural associations and dance troupes and organised dance activities, including staged dance performances and free dancing. The members of the party tried to create a new collectivity with its own symbolism through both rituals and symbols rejected by the Greek state and others introduced by them. As stated in the party's political manifesto, "[the] immediate political objective in terms of developing national culture [was] the systematic participation of Rainbow members in manifestations and cultural clubs – particularly in places where the Macedonian song [had] positive impact in terms of national self-perception" (Nova Zora 1997:5).

The Florina region was acknowledged in Greek and international public opinion as the focal point of the Macedonian controversy at that time and as an area in which human and minority rights were violated. Rainbow, although a political institution with a specific agenda to promote, came to be seen as a 'new actor' distinct from the established political parties. It gained international attention which contributed to its recognition as the representative of the Macedonian minority in the Florina region and northern Greece.

From the official Greek standpoint and that of those identified with it, this situation was interpreted as a denial of the national ideology's most basic assumptions. From the perspective of the movement and its followers, the distinct culture of the minority existed and had to be manifested. To meet this challenge, nationalists from both sides employed an account of a unique culture attached to and stemming from the people who possessed it. Dance became a strict boundary marker dividing the 'Nationals' (Greeks) and the 'Others' (Macedonians).

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<sup>48</sup> It also participated in the municipal elections of the 1994 and received around 100 votes. In the 1996 national elections, Rainbow co-operated with the OAKKE and received, on a national scale, 3,485 votes and 746 votes in Florina region (1.71 per cent).

Participatory but primarily presentational dance events became the context and the medium for the construction and demonstration of difference. They were transformed into political events and as such were exploited by all the forces struggling to impose their meanings. Dance practices operated as instruments of exclusion and inclusion, and were presented as demonstrations of Greekness or Macedonianness.

### **4.3) Contexts and Strategies for the Appropriation of Dance**

#### **4.3.1) Making Dance a Product for Display**

By the early 1990s in Greece, dance was seen as a malleable and easily manipulated 'cultural product'. Dance troupes were thought of as the guardian angels not only of the dance tradition but also of the Greek national culture. The learning of dances through participation in dance troupes run by cultural associations was an established practice and one of the basic means of socialisation for children and youth in both towns and villages. Activities that included staged dance presentations were considered as collective representations of culture. This mode of thought was transmitted to the younger generations which participated in the dance troupes and to the older ones that attended the events as spectators.

The conditions and prerequisites for the emergence of this model had been set initially by the state itself a few decades earlier. In the deeply politicised atmosphere of the post-Civil War period and after the establishment of the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greek national values were stressed and employed in the strengthening of national sentiments, especially in northern Greece. After a period of deaths, suffering and pain, during which country had been threatened with disintegration, the Greek state and its agents sought to promote national homogeneity and to link the northern region with the 'national life'. Their aim was to make local individuals feel part of the same political entity, the Greek nation. In addition, the collective cultural practices of the local populations were to be interpreted as parts of this entity and considered as expressions of life at the national level, in order to be integrated into the national culture. Dance was one of the means that was used by the state and other private cultural associations for the accomplishment of these purposes.

State representatives appointed by the state, locally elected politicians and members of the local elite contributed to the creation of dance troupes, the teaching of dances and the organisation of activities in which villagers were brought together to perform their dances in front of the town's audience. Educational institutions and scholarships provided the framework and mechanisms for the attachment of meanings to dance and the organisation of the context of dance performance in which those meanings were articulated and communicated (Bauman 1992a:xvii).

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Vasiliki Pronia [Royal Welfare], an institution supported by the Queen of Greece, was charged with educating young people in the villages, in order to provide them with means for improving their living conditions, but primarily to inspire national loyalty. Dancing was one of the activities offered by the female teachers of the institution. The so-called 'national' dances were the main ones taught and performed, along with local dances, in cultural activities held in the villages and the town of Florina. The 'national' dances were dances from the southern parts of Greece, already standardised as a 'school repertoire' and disseminated all over the country by school and gym teachers. These dances had already been presented in books and identified as typical Greek dances (Atzaka and Loutzaki 1999).

Their inclusion in the Royal Welfare's activities reflected, on the one hand, a policy of avoiding the use in public official events of local dances whose names did not sound Greek and which were associated with Bulgarian and Communist propaganda of the past decade and were, thus, deeply politicised. On the other hand, the exclusive use of 'national' dances indicated a lack of interest in any systematised approach to the dance phenomenon of the region. 'National' dances were ready-made, easy-to-deliver material, taught and presented according to pre-existing dance performance patterns.

In addition to the activities of the Royal Welfare, sport and cultural activities under the name Konstantineia<sup>49</sup> were organised in Florina town under the auspices of local administrators and state and cultural institutions and supported by the state. Groups representing the villages of the district competed with each other in various sports and demonstrated co-ordinated gymnastic exercises. Towards the end of the event, dance troupes from all the participating villages dressed in the village's traditional clothes

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<sup>49</sup> The name derived from the Greek name *Konstantinos*, which was the name of the prince and later King of Greece.

performed dances accompanied by recorded musical arrangements or by a group of local musicians. The activities culminated in an award to the winning village team and a performance of the Greek national anthem. Konstantineia were held for the first time in 1955 and continued yearly until 1967<sup>50</sup>.



Phot. 4.1 Village dance troupes performing in the Konstantineia event in the Florina's football stadium

At this time too, in the early 1950s, a cultural association called Likeion ton Ellinidon [Lyceum Club of Greek Women] was established in Florina town by a group of women belonging to the urban elite. It was a branch of the central Likeion ton Ellinidon, founded in Athens in 1910 (ibid:332). The Floriniot branch's memorandum described the aims of the association as "the preservation of the folk tradition...the revival of Greek customs within the framework of our national life...the uplifting of the Greek woman and moral support to the mother and the child". The creation of a dance troupe, a small library and a private school for learning French were the association's first activities.

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<sup>50</sup> Local newspapers mentioned that 10,000 spectators attended the event in 1957 and 600 male and female young people participated in the event in 1963.



Phot. 4.2 Female dancers of the Likeion ton Ellinidon dance troupe, dressed in tunics, performing in the mid-1960s in Florina



Phot. 4.3 Male and female dancers of the Likeion ton Ellinidon dance troupe, dressed in *Tsolias* and 'Queen Amalia' costumes respectively, performing in the mid-1960s in Florina

Until the mid-1960s Likeion ton Ellinidon, supported by the State, organised its own activities such as the celebration of Mother's Day, gave financial help to poor young women, and visited the local hospital and the border guard houses during Christmas and Easter holidays to offer presents to the patients and the soldiers. The association's troupe participated in many dance activities in the district of Florina and other places in Greece, parades during celebrations of national holidays, and receptions for the King and the Queen of Greece and members of the government during their visits to Florina. The troupes consisted originally of female dancers who also performed

'national dances' at certain events, often dressed in tunics, which symbolically represented the link between modern Greek dances and the ancient Greek past. In other performances, they wore 'Queen Amalia' costumes<sup>51</sup> or local dresses. In the mid-1960s, male dancers began to form part of the troupe occasionally and participate in its performances.

In 1954, Simos Konstantinou, a man from Alona, a *Dopioi* village of the region who had left the country in 1949 as a political refugee, returned to Greece and became a member of the Dora Stratou theatre for Greek dances in Athens, which is regarded as one of the two private dance institutions that defined and influenced the course of Greek folklore dance after 1950. Between 1949 and 1954, Konstantinou had been a professional dancer in the 'Kolo' dance ensemble in Skopje, one of the best ensembles in post-war Yugoslavia. During the 1950s, he came to Florina and organised a troupe of male and female adult dancers from his own and a neighbouring village. Under his instruction they rehearsed and presented the dances of the two villages, choreographed and with their names hellenised, at various public dance events. According to him, "We couldn't call them publicly by their real names at that time". Translation of the names into Greek for their public presentation to people not from the Florina region and to state officials was a strategy adopted to avoid potential problems.



Phot. 4.4 Members and musicians of the Alona troupe

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<sup>51</sup> For more details on the 'Queen Amalia' costume see Papantoniou (2000).



Phot. 4.5 Members of the Alona troupe

The troupe's performances at the Thessaloniki International Trade Fair brought them and their dances popularity and success. They were acknowledged by the local and national press as the best representatives of the Florina region. The dances and the way the troupe danced them spread all over the region and were identified as the 'dances of Florina', although they originated only in one population category, that of *Dopioi*. They overshadowed the dances of the other population categories in the region and essentially prevented them from being considered as representative dances.

This common dance 'culture' of the *Dopioi* earned its place in the national 'culture'. *Dopia* villages acquired a reputation of having a rich dance tradition and many good dancers. Even though dance elements of *Dopioi* and the other population categories were excluded, they became an important marker for the cultural identity of the *Dopioi* in particular, and of all Floriniotes in general. Konstantinou, an excellent dancer by all accounts, was identified as *the* teacher of Floriniot dances, which he taught until the early 1990s in numerous dance seminars all over the world, in Greece and to many dance troupes in the Florina region.

The urbanisation of Greece in the 1960s led to the transfer of rural dances to the city as a spectacle, causing an increased interest in dance and the massive creation of dance groups. In the early 1960s many Floriniot village dance troupes formed by adult villagers travelled to Athens to present dances from their village at performances staged by the Dora Stratou theatre for Greek dances. The increasing staged presentation of these dances contributed to the homogenisation of the local dance repertoire. At the

national level, a Floriniot dance repertoire which included the dances promoted by Konstantinou was performed by numerous dance troupes all over the country. Its most frequently performed dances were (names are given first in Greek and then in *Dopia* in brackets): *Litos* or *Levendikos* (*Poustseno*), *Gerontikos* (*Starsko*), *Simpethera*, *Omorfoula* (*Litseno*), *Arravoniasmata* (*Tsetfornata*), *Gaida* (*Zaramo* or *Tesko*).

In the 1960s the only active dance troupe in the town of Florina was the Likeion ton Ellinidon, which, as its members recall, did not perform any local rural dances. The employment of Vasilis Papachristou, a nationally recognised dance teacher, who came from central Greece, to re-organise the troupe, signalled the incorporation of the local rural dances into its dance programme and their transfer to the urban context. This prominent teacher had studied dance at the Physical Education College<sup>52</sup> in Athens in the late 1940s - early 1950s, where he was taught by one of the two most influential dance teachers in the development of Greek dance in the 20th century<sup>53</sup>, and participated in the Dora Stratou theatre for Greek dances. Papachristou was one of the first to write books about Greek dance and to create dance troupes in many parts of northern Greece. From the late 1960s onward he taught dance in almost every cultural association with a dance section in the town of Florina. In addition, as a school councillor in the mid 1980s appointed by the Ministry of Education and Religions, he supervised the progress of secondary school education throughout the administrative department of western Macedonia.

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<sup>52</sup> The Physical Education College has been the only officially recognised university institution in Greece where one, among other sports, can study dance as a physical activity. Greek dance teaching was upgraded with the establishment of the Physical Education and Sports Department in 1981 as an academic department in the university, offering specialist courses in Greek dances.

<sup>53</sup> Charalambos Sakellariou, dance teacher at the central Likeion ton Ellinidon in Athens for over 40 years (see Atzaka and Loutzaki 1999:332-33).



Phot. 4.6 Male and female dancers of the Likeion ton Ellinidon dance troupe, dressed in Floriniot costumes, performing in 1966 in Florina

In his writings and lectures<sup>54</sup>, Papachristou argued that the Greek dances were unadulterated until the 1950s-1960s and that he was able to document them in a pure condition. After that period, the creation of numerous dance troupes and the tendency of dance teachers to impress led to the alteration and falsification of dances. Research had to be undertaken to document their form in earlier times. Moreover, in order to make the dances accessible to urban citizens, he emphasised the need to 'take the village dances to the city'. Furthermore, all possible means of bringing people into contact with traditional dance had to be found. Teaching of dance at school, dance seminars in every region, lectures, dance presentations by dance troupes on the TV, and local and national dance festivals were some of the measures he proposed to promote this.

By attaching a national value to dances as historical proof of their continuity from ancient Greece to the present day, and by stressing the similarities between contemporary customs and those of the first inhabitants of the region<sup>55</sup>, he restructured the dance troupe and innovated by recruiting male dancers on a regular basis. He taught a new dance repertoire with many dances from all over Greece, which for the

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<sup>54</sup> See Papachristou (1960, 1972, 1994).

<sup>55</sup> At a lecture given at a conference in the town of Florina, he referred to this issue as follows: 'We speak the same language as the ancients, we sing in the same rhythms and melodies; we dance as they did, with the same motivation and the same expressional thoughts and movements. Consequently, we have a perfect hereditary succession and incontestable Greekness...Through this we can prove to our bitter enemies that we are not only the poor descendants of a golden age but also its historically pure successors' (NELE 1989:14-18).

first time included the already recognised and widely known Florinot dances as well as dances from many other regions of Greece. He conducted fieldwork in the region in the spirit of finding and preserving the dance tradition, and he kept the Greek-sounding names of the local dances.

Despite his research activity, he did not incorporate any local dances that remained politically 'problematic', such as for example *Kori Eleni (Leno Mome)*, which thus remained unused by dance teachers and dance troupes. Cultural continuity and the direct linking of the region's modern dance culture to Greece's ancient past were the principles established by Greek folklorists in response to the ideological needs of the Greek state in the 19th century (Herzfeld 1986 [1982]). We could say that up to this time these were the prevailing ideas that shaped the ideological context of the public discourse about dance and its practice.

From the early 1970s onward, the economic development of the provinces and the industrialisation of the country put Greece on the path of economic development. Many traditional artefacts such as costumes, household objects and musical instruments were sold by villagers to peddlers, or exchanged for blankets and carpets. The peddlers re-sold these objects in the urban centres. The notion was becoming central that the new forms of living brought by industrialisation led to the loss of dances. It was seen as 'the loss of national identity'. Thus it was considered imperative to find and preserve what still survived of dance. The slogan 'preservation of tradition' started to dominate dance discourse and to diffuse from the cities to the countryside. Researchers, members of dance associations and dance teachers began to visit different parts of Greece to document what survived of folk culture. Outsiders brought their perceptions of the study and the meaning of dance to local societies and imposed these on those who lived there. For researchers, dance was a part of the 'culture' that had to be preserved and expanded through its presentation by dance troupes and its documentation in books, photographs, tapes and records. The rural population was perceived as the ideal type of 'traditional' society, in contrast to modern urbanised society.

The Florina region, like many other places in Greece, was overrun by folklorists, researchers and all manner of dance practitioners, all looking for the dances, costumes, melodies and songs that were still 'alive'. The elders and villagers were considered to be authentic sources, who had experienced the 'old' way of life and could help widen

knowledge of it. From the perspective of the locals, this activity began to change the way they conceptualised themselves. They felt they were the holders (keepers) of 'tradition'. As a consequence, local communities and population categories imported the discourse on 'tradition' into local politics as a significant symbolic capital with different functions and values in different socio-political contexts. Mottoes such as 'we have our own culture' or 'the sacredness of our dance tradition' became a determining factor in local interactions, in power relations between the members of the population categories and in their relationship with the state. The politics of dance had started to flourish.

The accession of the PASOK to government in 1981 had further implications for the politics of culture in the Florina region. The party's effort to establish its own mechanisms of control resulted in the creation of counter mechanisms<sup>56</sup>. The target of the NELE, a state cultural institution, became economic assistance to the rural population for its advancement through the implementation of various projects,. Dance was one of the main activities of NELE in the Florina region between 1980 and 1990. Quarterly dance lessons were given in the villages by hired dance teachers. In most cases these projects initiated the founding of a cultural association and a dance troupe as its first activity. Many cultural associations were established in this way in the villages during the 1980s.

In the town of Florina, the only active dance troupe in the 1980s was that established in 1979 by the Aristotelis cultural association. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, Aristotelis was considered a bourgeois cultural association and the most powerful private institution in the Florina region. According to its official policy in the 1980s, national sentiments should be strengthened by cultivating cultural elements and celebrating national anniversaries that reinforced the nation's existence and the region's Greekness. Dance was one of these elements. The association's dance troupe became very active and participated in many cultural activities in the region, as well as elsewhere in Greece and abroad.

As a result, a restricted and typified group of dances classified according to specific step patterns, with names deriving from the local Slavic dialects but translated into

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<sup>56</sup> It was the first socialist government in Greece in the post-World War II era.

Greek, was established as representing dances from the Florina region. It was performed by all troupes in the region whether in the town or the villages. These dances were attributed to the *Dopioi* population category. However, dances from the *Dopioi* and the other population categories, as well as others considered to be part of the town's urban culture, were excluded for various reasons. This constructed idea of representative dances obscured the multifaceted and varying perceptions of dances and dance practices as manifested in people's accounts and actions.

This situation is an example of what Richard Handler (1988) has called "the institutionalisation of cultural objectification and the politicisation of culture". Dance was regarded as a recordable element and removed and isolated from the social setting in which it operated (and, probably, originated); it was then modified to fit the national ideology's standards. It could be photographed, video-recorded, analysed into step patterns, taught and presented at an organised performance. Dance elements that were thought to resemble those of neighbouring countries were excluded or changed, and local culture 'refined' and 'purified' to include only elements representative of the national culture. These ideas about dance and culture were used in the new context of cultural contestation that was created in the region after 1990.

#### **4.3.2) Dance Performances as Demonstrations of Competing Notions of Identity**

The new stage which the Macedonian controversy entered after 1991 had a great impact on the performance of dance. Participation in dancing acquired immense political importance and was perceived as a statement for or against the State, although it was often no more than a tribute to family ties and communal loyalties. Floriniotes had to deal with a difficult choice: to dance or not to dance. Population categories and individuals found themselves, according to the situation, the agents' locations and affiliations and multiple other contingencies, alternately included in the dichotomisation of 'we' or 'they', 'right' or 'wrong', 'legal' or 'illegal'. Under these conditions, they were forced to make choices between exclusive identities and their contingent qualities and characteristics, each time they attended either one event or the other, or danced one dance and not the other, or neither. From the perspective of individuals, the latitude for choosing categories of belonging became very narrow.

There was a proliferation of public occasions where organised dance troupes performed. The occasions varied: the celebration of a national anniversary or a local saint's day, a reception for a political or religious leader, the revival of a local custom, a dance festival, larger cultural events or formal evening dances organised by local cultural institutions, the dinner of a symposium held in the region or a speech on any topic organised by the local authorities. The settings of performances could be public squares, outdoor stages, theatres, hotel dining rooms - any kind of dance floor. The political, military, civic and municipal authorities and the media attended the events as official guests and, depending on the occasion, there could be other persons invited as honoured guests. Dances accompanied by live or recorded music were performed with the help of special paraphernalia (costumes, choreographies) and exposed to examination and evaluation by an audience as well as to collective participation.

Dances that symbolised Greekness started to appear in dance occasions. The most prominent was the *Makedonia*, a pro-Greek dance, which included a specific melody and Greek lyrics expressing a nationalist spirit, presenting Macedonia as the land of Alexander the Great and glorifying its history and struggles to become part of the Greek state. According to available information, the dance had been taught in previous decades in schools and was linked to a specific step pattern originating in the Florina region; veteran musicians called it *Tsetfornata* in *Dopia*.

The dance became a basic element in many participatory events. It was also introduced either as a beginning or closing dance in presentational events. I remember that in May 1991 when I attended the *panigiri* at the Neochoraki village, all six dance troupes from the surrounding villages that participated in the cultural activities danced *Makedonia*. It should be mentioned that around the same time, the same melody was appropriated by Macedonian nationalists in FYROM. Even versions of this melody with Slavic lyrics were to be found on Internet pages with national Macedonian music and on records published by FYROM.

Similarly, in the 13<sup>th</sup> panhellenic meeting of the Department for Cooperation of the Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts held in Florina in June 1991, young children of a Florina town dance troupe began their performance with the *Makedonia* dance. A person who had accompanied the troupe and recalled the event, told me that all 300

participants in the feast stood up and applauded the young dancers<sup>57</sup>. On 30 May 1992, the annual conference of the Union of Greek Insurance Companies was held in Florina. They visited the Niki border crossing, offered presents to the soldiers of the guard house based there and watched the performance of a dance troupe. *Makedonia* was among the dances performed. Before the performance the person in charge of the visitors said that the district of Florina was chosen this year due to the particular circumstances in relation to the issue of Macedonia. The presence of the Greek insurers in Florina, the frontier region of Macedonia, “proved the national sensitivity of Greek insurers about contributing to the resolution of the national issues”. He concluded by congratulating all those who had attended the trip.

For those identified with the Greek project, within this spirit of emerging tension, the performance of dances such as *Makedonia* acquired meanings including the manifestation of Greek national culture, disapproval of the activists’ claims and the demonstration of loyalty and allegiance to the Greek national ideals. For others who did not identify with the Greek national ideology, it was a direct challenge. Moments of tension were unavoidable at the dance events. Two statements about the *panigiri* of the Meliti village in 1993 illustrate not only the atmosphere prevailing on such occasions but also the polarisation that had been created<sup>58</sup>. In the first, a female dancer of the Aristotelis dance troupe described to me, six years later, her memories of the situation:

That night, we experienced a lot of tension and conflict in the village. There must have been over 3,000 people that day attending the main event of the *panigiri*. Before we left Florina, we were joking with our co-dancers that we should all take our passports, implying that we would cross the Greek border and leave the Greek territory. There were around 20 dance troupes invited to perform from various parts of Greek Macedonia. The applause of the audience differed from troupe to troupe. For some they were loud; for others tame. For us who were off

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<sup>57</sup> In the speech at the beginning of the feast, as mentioned in a local newspaper, the representative of the Florina section of the association said that the visitors should take just one message with them. That the prefecture of Florina, “which is the bastion of Greece was and will be the corner stone, the stronghold of our homeland full of struggles, sacrifices, holocaust, heroisms. Below of every stone there is a fighter of the Macedonian Struggle who was immolated so that we, the Greek Macedonians can live free in the bosom of mother Greece”.

<sup>58</sup> The village of Meliti, from which some of the most prominent minority activists came, and the celebration of the annual feast of Prophet Elijah had acquired a central place in the conflict for the demonstration of the existence of the Macedonian minority. The *panigiri* became the context for intense struggles and conflicts between various actors who promoted ideas of Greekness or Macedonianness. Thus, it received a lot of publicity in the early 1990s. Numerous newspaper articles reports by NGOs on human rights contributed to the representation of the village as the centre of the Macedonian activism in the Florina region. The 20 of July apart from its religious meaning had historical and, thus, political connotations. On this day, in 1903 took place in the Ottoman Macedonia the Ilinden uprising against the Turkish occupation. The event is celebrated in FYROM national History as the highest expression of the liberating desires of the Macedonian people. In a similar way, it is celebrated in the Bulgarian History as conducted by the Bulgarinas of Macedonia. Consequently, the symbolic meaning of the uprising of the Macedonian minority against the oppressing Greek state was aimed to be communicated.

the stage it seemed pretty clear that the *aftonomistes*<sup>59</sup> were received with enthusiasm and the Greeks not. When it was our turn to get on the stage, we were very tense. Among the dances we performed was *Raikos*. But we danced and sang it. We also danced *Kori Eleni*. At the end we danced *Makedonia*. The applause of the audience was very strong.

In the second account, a man who was among the founding members of the House for Macedonian Culture, but whose son was performing on that day with the Aristotelis troupe said:

When the troupes danced *Makedonia*, I was so angry I gave my hand to a friend of mine who stood next to me and told him to bite it. I couldn't keep standing in my place. Some others wanted to get on the stage and stop the musicians and the troupes. But I felt relieved in the end when our band started singing our songs and the officials were leaving quickly. Then it was our time to dance.

Other dances thought to be non-Greek and seen as promoting ideas about the existence of a Macedonian minority were excluded from dance occasions and when performed were very strongly criticised and rejected. *Kori Eleni* (*Leno Mome*), *Tsourapia* and *Raikos* were the three most disputed dances. Elders and veteran musicians I talked to associated the first two dances with the Bulgarian occupation during the WWII. As for the *Raikos*, they said that the dance and the melody had appeared in the region in the last few years. These three dances were excluded from many dance occasions, both presentational and participatory. A Floriniot journalist who worked for a nationally circulated right-wing newspaper told me that in one of his reports at the end of 1987 he had accused the state television of letting a dance troupe perform *Kori Eleni* and *Raiko* in its programme. The former, he said, described the nostalgia and the desire of those who identified as national Macedonians to return to the Greek part of Macedonia. *Raikos*, he continued, also made claims against the Greek Macedonia.

From the point of view of those who identified themselves as national Macedonians, prevention from performing these dances was seen as a form of oppression. A dancer from the Ksino Nero dance association who declared himself a member of the minority, recalled that at a celebration in their village in 1991 their dance teacher was arguing with a government official over the programme and the dances that were to be danced: "We wanted to dance *Leno Mome* and the official did not let us".

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<sup>59</sup> The term *aftonomistes* [separatists] is used by Floriniotes to refer to the activists and those who see themselves as members of the Macedonian minority in the region of Florina and implies that one of their objectives is the separation of part of the Greek Macedonia and its unification with FYROM.

In other cases, dance events were associated with Rainbow. If one danced at a fête in which activists or members of the party were present one could be stigmatised. A *Dopios* villager, inviting me to his village feast, told me that he was anxious in case members of Rainbow would attend it. He had participated and danced at a feast a few years ago, and relatives of his in Canada who saw the videotape of this event criticised him for supporting the Macedonians. In 1996, the village of Triandafillia celebrated its religious day of St. Paraskevi. A friend of mine, *Dopios* as well, who comes from the village but lived in the town of Florina visited the village that evening. When I spoke to him about my research topic, he described his memories of the event.

It was August and there were not many people. I do not remember why but we postponed the *panigiri* from the 26th of July and did it in August. Although it was the village's feast, it was members of the Rainbow who came from Meliti who suggested what was to be done. They had invited a dance troupe from a village in the plain and also hired the band. Moreover, there were many people from abroad from our village and others. The village was divided into those who were dancing and those who were just looking puzzled over what was taking place. Songs in Slavic, most of them political, were ordered by villagers, migrants from abroad and members of the Rainbow.

Participation in dancing that was accompanied by references to the Slavic names of the dances or by singing in Slavic was seen by state institutions and many of those identified as Greeks as an 'anti-Greek' action. When a person or a troupe performed a dance as *Chassapiko* this was seen as Greek. When the same dance was performed as *Zaramo*, this challenged the dance's Greek character. When a person wanted to dance *Tsetfornata*, it was immediately characterised as nationally 'suspect'. When the same dance was called *Aravoniasmata*, there was no problem. When a dance troupe performed *Kori Eleni*, the meaning communicated was that the dance was Greek. When another dance troupe performed the same dance as *Leno Mome*, then it was not Greek. In September 1993, local dance troupes performed in the main square of the town of Florina for a Greek state television programme organised and recorded in Florina. No dance was announced in a way that would challenge the national ideology and the official Greek position on the Macedonian issue. The speaker, a very famous broadcaster from southern Greece who presented it for many years, had rejected any mention of the Slavic names of local dances.

However, if a dance or a specific melody for a dance was disputed, the dance might be accepted depending on which institution or person performed it. Although *Raikos*

was considered by some of the urban citizens of Florina as a non-Greek dance until the late 1980s, its performance by the city's troupes in the early 1990s made it part of the local repertoire. In another case, one of the Greek state television channels presented dances from Floriniot villages performed by local dance troupes<sup>60</sup> in November 1991, in a programme entitled "Florina, rhythms and dances of the Macedonian Hellenism". The co-ordinator and speaker, a distinguished journalist of Vlach origin descended from the Nimfaio village in the district of Florina, used in his narration the names of the dances as well as phrases and other words in Slavic. Male and female dancers danced *Eleno Mome* and *Poustseno* but also *Makedonia* and dances from other parts of Greece. It was probably the first time on Greek state television that words of *Dopia* were publicly used and heard and local dances presented in that way.

Many of those involved in dancing in the Florina region avoided using polarised terms that referred to dancing, either because they were promoting the Greek official view or afraid of being characterised as acting against Greece. However, dances were announced in other contexts in Slavic terms. The performance of Floriniot dances by dance troupes in Athens was taking place without any kind of tension. The Lyceum of Greek Women in Athens, during its participation in the Athens Festival in September 1992, presented songs and dances from Macedonia and announced their names in Slavic.

Often, due to the situation and political choices of the people the meanings were switched. A young musician from a *Dopioi* village used the existence of dances to prove the Greek identity of the region's residents. At the same time, his father asserted that he was nationally Macedonian while his grandfather declared himself Greek, even though he did not speak Greek. Very often those who in one context promoted the 'purification' of dance or used dance as a sign of Greek national identity were the ones who discredited these actions. A *Dopios* member of a cultural association endorsed the fact that the association's troupe danced *Litos*, while at the same time he insisted on calling it *Poustseno*.

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<sup>60</sup> The programme was publicly announced by the Prefecture of Florina and described as "the presentation of traditional dances, villages and places of Macedonia, which formed an inestimable wealth of the national cultural and historical heritage". It would be basically a part of the soul of the "bilingual defenders of the nation" and would be shown in 300 TV stations of the USA, Australia, Canada and Europe.

In other cases, dance practices were attributed no specific political meaning or were perceived as a mode of social memory (Cowan 1997). A 60-year-old man asked the musicians to play *Makedonia* and straight after this he asked for a dance devoted to Gotse Deltsef, a national hero of FYROM. A 55-year-old woman was keen to learn *Kori Eleni* and asked a dance teacher to teach her the dance. She said that she liked it because her mother used to dance it. And she added, I still remember her telling me how nicely they danced *Leno Mome* in the village. But when the dance teacher asked her if she wanted to dance *Kori Eleni* or *Leno Mome* she said emphatically *Kori Eleni*.

Dance also facilitated transcendence to a highly emotional state. In these moments certain dances lost their political significance as markers of boundaries among the population categories. At a wedding in a *Dopioi* village, *Dopioi* residents, at an important moment in the ritual, the escorting of the bride to the church, asked the musicians to play *Kazatska*, without paying any attention to the fact that this dance is attributed to the *Pontioi*, their 'opponents' in other contexts.

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The period from 1990 until 1998 was characterised by the existence in the Florina region of political movements, parties and private institutions, which for the first time in the post-World War II era openly and publicly challenged the official version of the Greek national project. Its members belonged to the disputed population category of *Dopioi* and claimed it to represent the 'Macedonian people', a national minority which differed from other population categories in the region due to its distinctive cultural characteristics. In order to demonstrate this, they employed practices and terms which hitherto had been stigmatised, being loaded with negative connotations by the state and its agents. Their efforts entailed the repetitive use of emotionally charged symbols, for example announcing the dances and singing in *Dopia* on significant occasions like the *panigiri*. However, in contesting claims of national homogeneity, activists and members of the political movements constructed their own versions of national identity. They used the same means, that is, local dances, music and costumes, as well as others that did not originate in the region and were deliberately imported, to create difference as symbols of commonality or distinction.

These actions generated counter-movements which promoted the state's views and led to a period of extremely intense disputes between social groups in the region. The organisation of rituals that had a standardised and repetitive nature was used as efficient means through which all agents involved aimed to socialise the participants to the values and expectations of a 'culture'. The 'dances of Florina', as we saw in the first part of the chapter, formed the 'raw material' used for the politics of identity as practised in the 1990s. The local dances, whether presented as Greek or Macedonian, not only constructed a certain view of the situation but also produced an emotional response which connected it with notions of right and wrong.

Those identified with the Greek project promoted the Greek state's version of national culture. Others who felt excluded or oppressed by the Greek national project were offered new opportunities for negotiating their position and status within the nation-state. Some of them identified themselves as Macedonians in the national sense and pursued recognition of a distinctive Macedonian identity and culture. Others were forced to choose between exclusive identities and contingent qualities. Still others wanted only to assert their right to practise their culture apart from any national connotations. In the remaining two chapters of the thesis we shall examine some of these different standpoints, as they were articulated during my fieldwork through peoples' actions during dance and other cultural events and through their narratives.

## CHAPTER 5: THE CONSTRUCTION AND PERFORMANCE OF DIFFERENCE

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter examines two cultural events organised by six private cultural associations in the Florina region in the summer of 1999. All of them were located in villages around the town of Florina that are considered to belong to the population category of *Dopioi*. The first event was a re-enactment: the revival of a traditional wedding ceremony. The second was a book presentation written in Greek but entitled in the Slavic language; its title, "*Makedontseto*" [The Macedonian boy], was loaded with political connotations. The events are examined and discussed as performative ways of constructing an identity as a response to socio-economic and political conditions at a particular historical moment. In my description and analysis, rather than offer an exhaustive analysis of the progress of the events I focus on certain features and stages of their evolution.

My primary aim is to present the different strategies, dilemmas and actions taken by the participants which reveal conflicting perceptions and interpretations of the objectives of these activities, the content of 'culture' presented and the meanings ascribed to it. I also focus on issues of dance performance such as step patterns, dance melodies, costumes, and names and choreographic presentations of dances to show how the 'content' of culture employed by the main actors in the wedding revival, though presented as static and unchangeable, is manipulated and transformed. Thus,

the role is highlighted of key actors and other participants, who had the ability to define the course and the outcome of these events and to introduce and manipulate symbols related to notions of identity. Subsequently, I place both events in the broader context of the region in order to show that the actors appropriate practices and manipulate symbols in ways determined by the context and their interests.

## 5.2 The Visual Representation of Culture

### 5.2.1 The Wedding Revival

It was around six o'clock in the afternoon when I entered the village. On that day, the 26<sup>th</sup> of July 1999, Plagia<sup>61</sup> had its *panigiri* and celebrated its patron saint. That year's *panigiri* comprised a major cultural event, the re-enactment – revival of a traditional wedding. It was organised by six village cultural associations of the region including that of Plagia, and was expected to be attended by many people. Although it was still early in the afternoon, police were regulating the traffic on the main street, which led to the center of the village.

The schoolyard of the elementary school of the village had been transformed into the central setting that would host the event. Desks and chairs from the classrooms had been taken out and together with small round and bigger square tables, wooden and plastic chairs, they had been placed along the front and the two sides of the school building forming the three sides of an imaginary parallelogram. Villagers and visitors who would attend the event could comfortably sit, watch and order drinks and food. The fourth side of the schoolyard was lined by an ordered sequence of tables. These would be the tables for the official guests: members of the local political, municipal, police and military authorities. The chairs were placed on only one side of the row so that the guests would look at the inner side of the parallelogram towards the school building. The middle of the schoolyard remained unoccupied. It would provide the dancing area where a great part of the event would take place and where the performers would dance. It would also be the place where the audience and all

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<sup>61</sup> Plagia is a small semi-mountainous community around 15 Kms at the south-west of the town of Florina. According to the latest census data (2001) its registered population came up to 400 people but the permanent inhabitants mainly elders were much less.

participants would get actively involved by joining the dance. This would continue for the rest of the night. For the moment, little boys and girls were running around the schoolyard and chasing each other.

A few young men from the village, who had volunteered or were appointed by the association to work as waiters for the night, were laying light blue and white table cloths and little labels on the guests' tables indicating the places where everybody would sit according to their office. Behind them, older women were already seated, either on the ground, on chairs placed there by the local cultural association or on seats brought from their houses. At the moment they were not very many, and were talking to each other in both Greek and *Dopia*. At the tables for the audience, a young couple had already arrived, placed their pushchair next to them and sat with their children. The cameraman and a journalist from the local section of the state television and reporters from the local newspapers and radio station who would cover the event were already there as well. Further back, at the side of the school building, two other young men were preparing and grilling great quantities of *souvlaki*, the famous Greek skewered meat, which would be sold and served to the audience.

The dancers were arriving with their suitcases in which they carried their costumes and getting ready to prepare themselves. All were pupils and teenagers, as is usually the case in dance troupes in Greece. In addition there were some adults, residents of the villages who were not troupe members, who had been recruited to play the key characters in the revival: the parents of the groom, the bride, the best man and his wife. Scattered in small groups, which also comprised young people not dressed in costumes, young dancers were chatting with each other, drinking cans of Fanta or helping their co-dancers put on or tie parts of their costumes. The girls had their kerchiefs, (a square scarf folded into a triangle) worn over the head or on the shoulders and back. Dressed in their different costumes, they were intended to represent their different villages of origin. A young man with long hair was among the dressed dancers, and a woman in her early forties wearing chic clothes and sunglasses and sitting in the company of black-dressed old women, completed the scene.



Phot. 5.1 Members of the dance troupes waiting outside the school building for the revival to begin

Grilled *souvlakia*, dressed with lemon and oregano, were starting to smell and sharpen peoples' appetites. An older lady was taking care of her granddaughter by adjusting her traditional costume. A young man was taking pictures of some of the dancers. More members of the dance troupes were arriving at the schoolyard and discussions between the council members and dance instructors of the co-organising associations were taking place. Following the norms of these religious celebrations, people were wishing "*Chronia polla*" to each other in Greek, which is roughly translated as 'Many happy returns'. Some of the old women spoke in *Dopia*. One was asking a man of her age "*So prais, aren si?*", meaning 'How are you, are you all right?' Another one was asking her friend "*Imas nekoi dete tua?*", 'Do you have a child here?'

The performance started a few minutes before seven o'clock. The musicians hired for the occasion, all of them men, were standing on the street outside the schoolyard and waiting to start playing. A clarinet, a trumpet, two saxophones, a snare and a bass drum were the band's instruments. This was the sort of loud and imposing band that the organisers wanted and the audience was used to, especially for outside occasions. Panayiotis, a council member and dance instructor of the Perivoli association, told them to begin by playing *Karsilamas*. They moved on, walking from the street towards the

schoolyard. They entered, stood in the middle of the yard and were greeted by the father and mother of the groom. A boy dressed in a man's local costume welcomed the musicians by offering them something to drink. The state television cameraman approached the parents of the groom and started recording. Many other people, among them members of Florinot diaspora communities in Australia and Germany, recorded the event with their private cameras.



Phot. 5.2 The band hired for the event

The groom's parents started to dance *Sirtos* and asked the young members of the troupes to join the dance. Apart from *Karsilamas*, which was danced individually, all the other dances that would be performed were round dances in which the participants held each other hand by hand by their palms or across shoulders and moved always counter-clockwise. Panayiotis waved his hand towards the troupe dancers and urged them to start dancing. The groom's father led the dance at the front position. At the same time, the circle of those dancing was filled with male and female troupe dancers. The state television cameraman stood in the middle of dance circle recording the reactions of the audience as well as the dancers.



Phot. 5.3 The groom's parents starting to dance *Sirtos* at the schoolyard (the groom's house)



Phot. 5.4 Troupe dancers have joined in and dance *Sirtos*

When the dance finished, the young dancers split into small groups and started chatting. A few minutes afterwards, Panayiotis said "Let's go". Dancers and musicians

stood near the exit of the schoolyard. Playing another *Karsilamas*, they headed toward the village hall and to the main square that would act as the house of the best man. According to the procedure, the groom invites the best man by visiting him at his house. Dancers were dancing in front of the musicians. They were supposed to be the friends of the groom, who would escort him in all his actions throughout the ritual. Many in the audience stood up and followed the dancers to the main square, situated across the street from the school. The officials who were there at that moment, mainly members of the municipality council, remained at their table talking to each other and eating.

In the main square, villagers and visitors from the surrounding villages and the town watched the dancers approaching the house of the best man. Members of the dance troupes from the Anarachi and Thira villages, the supposed friends of the best man, were waiting for the dancers and musicians. When the *Karsilamas* ended, talking took place between the dancers and members of the associations about the next steps of the event. Again, Panayiotis, urged all the dancers to dance by saying "All the troupes now". Then the band started *Poustseno*. The best man danced first at the front of the circle. He then gave his place to his wife. Almost all the dance troupes joined the dance. After *Poustseno*, Panayiotis suggested they leave the square and go to the bride's house. "Well, now we'll go to invite the bride, right?". But the groom's father disapproved and said he and the second best man wanted to dance too. Panayiotis, although he did not expect this, did not disagree. He just told the musicians to play *Sirtos*. The second best man danced at the front. The dance troupes joined in again.



Phot. 5.5 The best man and his wife leading the dance in the main square (the house of the best man)

The state television cameraman was again in the middle of the dance circle. The spectators commented on incidents and scenes of the event. A woman pushed a little girl dressed in a costume to join the dance and another ran after her to fix her kerchief. It was a quarter past seven when this dance ended and the dancers again broke into groups, talking informally with their friends and waiting for the next steps. A couple of minutes later, the musicians started a new *Karsilamas* heading to the bride's house. Dancers and spectators caught up with them. Some dancers danced and others just walked. The troupes from Anarachi and Thira remained in the main square.

At the bride's house her parents waited for the groom, the best man and the musicians. The setting was a basketball court opposite the main square and in the same estate, only a few meters from the schoolyard. The music stopped a little while after they arrived. Both parents-in-law talked with the guests and then wanted to dance. The bride's father asked for "*A Starkso Poustseno*". When the music stopped the dancers and participants started chatting again. The groom's mother said to the bride's father, "Prepare the bride and we are coming back". They turned to go. But Panayiotis proposed to dance *Sirtos*. This was the next dance, in which some members of the troupes joined as well. After that, the musicians played a previous melody of *Karsilamas*

on Panayiotis' instruction. Dancers dancing individually ahead of them left the basketball court.



Phot. 5.6 The bride's father dancing *Starsko Poustseno*

At the same time, those who were sitting at the schoolyard waited for the performers to return. The deputy prefect, a doctor descended from the Anarachi village, had arrived. The deputy Chief of Police was there too. It was half past seven when the dancers and musicians re-entered the schoolyard. The music stopped and it was time for a break. The musicians left their instruments on the ground and went for a drink. People were eating *souvlaki* and buying beers and Coca Cola. The state television cameraman asked a girl and boy to stand in the middle of the schoolyard and pretend to talk to each other. He recorded the scene.

Fifteen minutes later, the musicians entered the middle of the schoolyard carrying their instruments. Panayiotis told them to start. They played *Sirtos*. Further chatting followed the end of dance. In response to Panayiotis' instruction, the dancers and musicians playing *Karsilamas* headed back to the main square, to the best man's house. They danced *Raikos* on arrival. They returned with him to the schoolyard and the groom's house. Waiting in the schoolyard, Froso, the dance instructor of the Thira association, asked if her troupe could perform *Sirtos*. Panayiotis agreed and musicians

played *Sirtos*. The troupe from Thira performed a choreographed *Sirtos*, watched by the other troupes, the audience and the guests. The performance ended, the troupe was applauded and *Poustseno* began in which all the performers danced together. The music stopped and dancers joked and teased each other.



Phot. 5.7 Spectators at the wedding revival

It was now time to enact the custom where the groom says goodbye to his father and leaves his father's house. The music started to play a sad melody. The state television cameraman asked the groom to sit down on a chair in order to record him for a few minutes. The best man brought the bread specially kneaded for the occasion and a glass of red wine. He gave them to the groom's father, who sat and waited for the custom to be performed. Then the best man circled the groom three times and placed him next to his father. They were greeted by the dancers, and by the supposed friends of the family, who passed, kissed them and offered their presents. People around sat, talked to each other and watched. The musicians waited for the next steps. A girl held the bread on her head and danced *Zaramo*. "*Karsilamas*", Panayiotis said again to the musicians. Then they all headed back to the basketball court, the bride's house. Panayiotis started shouting at some dancers who were either talking or stayed in the school and did not follow the others.



Phot. 5.8 The groom says goodbye to his father

Parts of the audience approached the bride's house and the dancers entered the dance circle. The local MP of the ruling socialist party arrived at that moment and was greeted by those present. The second best man danced *Sirtos*. The next dance was a *Poustseno*, which only lasted a few seconds. It was short because the bride had to welcome the important guests, her parents-in-law and the groom. They were sitting at a table waiting for her. She approached wearing a veil which covered her face. She kissed her parents-in-law and gave them socks and aprons as gifts. After that, they all raised their bottles and wished her happiness. The men drank beer and the women lemonade. Then the groom performed *Sirtos* and another *Poustseno* followed. During the intervals between the dances, all the participants got chatting. Someone said "Come on, bride, the forgiving of the bride". The bride would be forgiven by her parents before leaving their house. The music started for the enactment of this part of the ritual. Friends of the bride came and greeted her and she kissed everybody. *Karsilamas* started again and everybody headed to the yard.

It was now nine o'clock in the evening. It was getting dark and the special spotlights placed for the occasion on the walls of the school building had been turned on. The table with the official guests was full. Amplifiers and big loudspeakers stood on

the ground. The performers entered the schoolyard. After a while, the music stopped. Then musicians played *Poustseno* for the bride who danced at the front, and then *Sirtos*. This was the last scene of the revival. All the protagonists posed for a few minutes in front of the cameras, satisfied and happy, and commented on moments in the event. People talked to each other while the musicians were preparing their equipment. Ana, the chairwoman of the Plagia association, spoke with the microphone and thanked the audience, the guests, the women of the village and the associations who helped to perform this wedding revival. Then she said that each of the troupes would perform a short dance. The musicians tested their microphones and got ready. Ana announced the dances that were to be performed.

The Thira association danced *Poustseno* and at the end they dropped a low bow of greeting to the audience. The Perivoli troupe danced *Sire-sire* from central Greek Macedonia. The Anarachi dancers performed a choreographed *Sareni Tsorapi*. They greeted the audience with a bow too. The troupe from Ano Militsa danced a choreographed *Sarakinsko*. The Kontopouli association danced *Poustseno*. Finally, many of the official guests were asked by the organisers to join and lead the dance, as is customary in these occasions. They danced *Poustseno*. At a quarter to ten the official event had ended.



Phot. 5.9 The troupe from Ano Militsa dancing *Sarakinsko*

### 5.2.2 Perceptions, Objectives and Strategies of the Main Actors

The event of the re-enacted wedding ceremony can be seen as a form of rhetoric, the production and dissemination of a message through a complex symbolic performance (Kertzer 1988:100-101). The main actors challenged and re-defined key symbols of the dominant Helleno-centric view by employing and promoting a visual image of their 'culture'. The Greek national culture includes only Greek dances with names and songs in no other language than Greek. This official version has been sanitised of harmful elements and cleansed of unpleasant features to fit a model of cultural continuity and a direct link to Greece's ancient past. By contrast, the version of culture performed in this event brought to the foreground step patterns, dance names and songs in a non-Greek language and melodies that have been identified as 'anti-Greek' statements. In this way, the organisers demonstrated the difference between them and other cultural categories in the region. In this social context, a culture-bearing group can have a wide array of potential boundary markers and effective means of

negotiations in dealing with the state and other groups. Thus, the organisers seek to symbolically represent and collectively celebrate their group identity.

This aim was demonstrated in some of their statements about the event. Ana, the chairwoman of Plagia, stated in one of the local newspapers that the objective of the Plagia's cultural association was the preservation and perpetuation of the pure customs of the village, which constitute the authentic expression of folk tradition. In the same pattern, Panayiotis, trying to represent or to create a consensual version of the category's culture, wrote in the association's monthly newspaper about the event that "all the customs of the wedding were preserved precisely with order and respect as it suits our tradition, our cultural heritage". He also pointed out that "many associations revive and promote customs from the rich folk tradition our place has and which have survived until today".

The evolving strategies and means used by the protagonists of the event have been shaped in response to the structures created in the past by the state and its institutions to implement its hegemony (Gledhill 2000:88). The rhetoric deriving from the national discourse about the need for the preservation of tradition constitutes the ideological framework in which these actions are legitimised. Cultural activities are the context for the accomplishment of this task. They also form occasions of 'artistic' and cultural expression. Their contemporary form has been shaped and consolidated in recent decades.

Cultural associations are considered the institutions that promote every form of cultural expression. They cultivate dance through their troupes. Dance teachers are the significant 'experts' on dance. They are in charge of the repertoire presented at each performance and thus play a major role in determining the meanings communicated through dance and forming the associations' social prestige. The dancers are the ones who demonstrate the cultural heritage on stage. The musicians are one of the most necessary components for dance performances and, in many cases, some of the most powerful and important figures for the progress of the event, since they control the flow of musical information.

However, although it was implied that 'authenticity' was one of the messages communicated, it seemed that it was not a prime aim for those involved. The event

could be read more as an illustration of contemporary practices performed by actors who were detached from and unfamiliar with the situations it purportedly represented. A picture of a supposedly traditional setting and atmosphere was intermingled with features of the modern way of life. Some of the young dancers dressed in their traditional costumes wore various kinds of modern shoes, different colours of tights, and fashionable watches. Regular everyday clothes such as dark blue jeans, a white shirt and a black vest were the costume of one male young dancer. Visually it looked similar to the costumes that his fellow dancers wore. The female dancers wore lipstick and together with their male fellow-dancers were drinking cans of Amstel beer, one of the most popular brands in the country. Even the way female dancers were sitting and waiting in front of the school reflected different cultural and social patterns in comparison to the older women and men.

The event was designed to appeal to the spectators. Its explicit performative character was demonstrated in numerous instances by the words and actions of the organisers and main participants. Savvas, the instructor of one of the troupes, was very straightforward about this when he said to me "I imagined it differently and it has come out differently. I thought we would have some form of direction, without any cars, people or anything. I thought, it [the village] would have some old house. And I see now, we' ll go to the school and from the house to the village hall. 'Where are the houses?', I ask. 'There aren't any', they tell me. 'Well all right', I reply, annoyed".

The revival also formed the context for the articulation of various personal performances. The groom's parents provoked the applause of the spectators with their gestures. Fellow villagers applauded the groom's father for doing variations while dancing at the front. When the groom's mother took the front position, she danced in an affected way, looking at her female fellow villagers in an attempt to impress them. They responded by watching and applauding her intensely. The moment the state television cameraman approached to film the best man, he intensified his movements, lowered his gaze and seemed entranced with the music. Moreover, the young pair of dancers, as well as the groom, were recorded by the state television cameraman pretending to visually represent old forms of social life. At the end, the main protagonists posed in front of the cameras. Finally, each troupe performed a dance in some choreographed artistic form not only at the end, but also during the revival.

These performances even carried out the breaking of gender-defined patterns of behaviour. Both the best man's wife and the groom's mother threw money to the musicians while dancing, a move rarely done by a woman in a real wedding. In the same way, they drank from bottles at the bride's house, although it is unusual or even inappropriate behaviour for women to hold bottles, raise them up and drink from them.

The dance instructors leading the key characters performed the role of specialists in front of the spectators. They guided the young dancers in how to perform, what to do, and where to stand. One of them made remarks about a female dancer because she had her kerchief on her shoulders and not on her head as was the case in dance troupe performances. When the bride arrived in front of the groom he stood up, pulled the veil away and prepared to kiss her. Everybody yelled, laughed and prevented him from doing it, shouting "No, no". One of the instructors pulled the bride away before the groom could kiss her. It was a forbidden gesture according to the ritual's rules, which the young protagonists obviously did not know.

The troupe dancers seemed to perceive the event as a way of life associated with their daily life. They nibbled on seeds while performing or made fun of their gestures when they were not being recorded by the state television cameraman. They appeared unprepared and unconcentrated to follow the course of the ceremony and were scolded by the dance teachers and association members. They did not know the norms of the supposedly surviving custom and in addition they parodied parts of it. A female dancer, remained solemn by keeping her gaze towards the floor as the spirit of the ceremony would demand, when being filmed by the state television cameraman. But after she left the camera's she moved her hands and those of her fellow dancers circularly in a humorous way and broke into laughter with them. A friend of the bride kissed and hugged her when she was saying goodbye to her, putting her hands on her shoulders and pretending to be very sad. When she took her hands away both laughed at the gesture.

For the musicians, the event, particularly the part after the revival, was a task of work. In a spirit of demonstrating professionalism and maintaining respect and prestige for their activity, they were all dressed in the same way, wearing black trousers and light yellow shirts. One of the saxophone players was wearing sunglasses. During the performance of the revival, they seemed to be detached from the supposedly traditional

atmosphere. At the best man's house, they did not immediately start to play after Panayiotis requested them because the clarinet player was talking on his mobile phone and the saxophone player was smoking a cigarette.

Panayiotis was upset, saying that the only thing the band thought about was when to sit down. As Ana told me, this was because they wouldn't be paid extra for the performance of the custom. This lack of commitment was also illustrated by the words of the snare drum player who, towards the end of the revival, said "Now it is time to get to work". At that moment, they would play in the ordinary way, sitting or standing but positioned at one place in front of the school. They would also use their expensive microphones and supportive electronic devices. People who liked to dance would individually give money to the band. This would be the main source of income for them, and often a very profitable one.

As far as the theatrical presentation and performance of dances are concerned, the event did not present a multigenerational continuity of practice, as the statements of the association members suggested. The fact that some of the dances presented did not originate in the region seemed unimportant to the organisers. Their primary purpose was to present the material to the members of the supposed group and other categories of participants. In this way, transcending the constraints or limitations of local existing dance forms they were initiating the introduction of new dance patterns and furthermore, melodies and poetic texts newly composed and written in manuscripts and printed sources.

*Raikos*, which was danced at the best man's house, doesn't come from the region but was introduced by local dance troupes in the last 10-12 years, as mentioned in the previous chapter. It has become very popular and has been established as one of the dances performed by local troupes and danced in participatory events. Furthermore, although no songs were sung during the revival, one could trace recently imported elements. Many of the melodies played had been imported as recent compositions from FYROM or from Macedonian national diaspora communities; other melodies came from other parts of continental and insular Greece. The *Sirtos* musicians played after the break in the schoolyard is a melody known as *Litsna Moma Lerinka*. It has lyrics in Slavic and talks about a beautiful young girl from the region of Florina. It was introduced in the local dance events in the last 3-4 years.

The *Sirtos* the Thira troupe performed in the schoolyard during the revival is usually called *Domakine*. Its lyrics are in Slavic and it refers to the host of the house who receives nice guests. They bring him good news that his wife has given birth to a son. This is a newly introduced melody and song arranged by the Elita, a music band in the city of Bitola, in the mid 1990s. The *Poustseno* that followed has been introduced in the last 5 or 6 years as well. It is usually referred to as *Egeiki Maiki* and has an explicit political meaning referring to national Macedonians who live outside FYROM.

In another stage of the event, the melody played at the end of the revival, when the bride and groom dance together, has lyrics in Greek which refer to the joy and happiness of the wedding. This song, an established melody played in real weddings, is usually requested as the “*sirtos* of the wedding” or “*na zisei i nifi kai o gambros*” [“Long live the bride and the groom”]. That song too doesn’t originate in the region. The dance pattern announced as *Sarakinsko*, that was performed by the Ano Militsa troupe at the end of the official event in the schoolyard, comes from the region of Aridea (Pella Prefecture). The music of the dance is referred to as *Rum Dum Dum*. The melody, introduced in the region in the last 5 or 6 years, is a recent composition. Its lyrics, in Slavic, describe the way a shepherd is dancing and the way *gaida* and drum sound.

It becomes evident that fundamental transformations are brought about in dance. The sense of differentiation that was once important between villages, considered to day to belong to the *Dopioi*, has diminished or disappeared. Earlier generations tended to perceive certain melodies as well as the execution of certain movements as a marker of difference within the same village or between groups of villages, whereas they are seen today as the same dance. Villagers and musicians over 70 years old were telling me in the early 1990s that every village had certain melodies of *Poustseno* different from those of the neighbouring ones and connected with certain circumstances and places.

The contemporary dance practices that are introduced and established as the living and preserved tradition become an integral part of a group’s identity. This was demonstrated in the way Panayiotis was asking the musicians to play *Karsilamas*. According to many musicians, no *Dopios* has ever used the term *Karsilamas* to request a dance. This is not to say that there are no longer standards of “right” and “wrong”, to claim that no old practices are transmitted from the past, or to dismiss peoples' need to perform them. Rather it is to argue that a redefined or even new meaning of the same

dances, steps and artifacts (instruments, songs and costumes) is used to support the claims for the existence of a distinctive preserved culture without necessarily relating it to preexisting elements.

The intent and/or the result is to produce a sense of difference and articulate a feeling of common belonging by affecting the emotional state of the dancers and other categories of participants and stimulating them to become involved in cultural expression. Performing the local dances is imposed and/or perceived as an act of situating oneself within the group and its respective 'culture'. Doing this on stage is an acknowledgement of the stage's significance for the performing of group identity.

## **5.3 The Textual Representation of Culture**

### **5.3.1 The Book Presentation**

Twenty days after the wedding revival, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, the group of cultural associations organised another cultural event in the village of Perivoli, where one of the associations was based. It was the presentation of a book written in Greek with the Slavic title "Makedontseto", [The Macedonian boy]. Its author was a biologist who came from a village in the region. He described in the book his daily life within his family and the village in 1948, when as a six-year-old boy he experienced the Greek Civil War. The presentation was not announced publicly and people were invited selectively by the organisers though anybody could come. I was invited by Panayiotis, the secretary and dance instructor of the local association. The event was also attended by the local MP of the socialist party, members of the municipality's council, the leader of the Rainbow party, an associate Professor for Greek literature at the local university department, two journalists from a local newspaper, members of the Rainbow party and around 80-100 other people.

The presentation was moderated by Spiros, the chairman of the host cultural association. In his opening speech he welcomed the audience and then read some biographical information about the writer. Apart from the book's importance for its historical data on a fratricidal war, Spiros pointed out the valuable information it gave about the local culture and the customs it described, which were not in use any more. The main speaker, who came from the region, was a university lecturer in history at the

local university department. He stated that he was not specialised to present a piece of literary work with such a misunderstood title. He said that the presentation had been delayed since more than a year had passed since the publication of the book. It was originally presented in Athens by important personalities of modern Greek literature.

In the main part of his presentation, he referred to the historical conditions in the region since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the context of the Greek Civil war. He read excerpts from a document written in 1904-05, during the Ottoman period, by the Greek consul of the city of Bitola. The excerpts mentioned that the rural population of the Florina region in the periphery of Bitola was forced to migrate in order to avoid reprisals caused by Greek and Bulgarian guerilla armed bands. The situation was the same, according to the speaker, during the Civil War. He considered the book significant for including phrases and dialogues from the local dialect in its narrative. In addition, he characterised the narration of historical events as emotionally strong and the description of folk material as not dry but pure and seen through the eyes of a child's soul.

Next a young anthropology doctoral student, who came from the town of Florina and was doing her fieldwork in the region at that time, gave an anthropological approach to the historical events. She pointed out the role of the individual as an active agent within the society and emphasised the constructive character of an autobiographical novel seen both through the eyes of the 56-year-old writer and the 6-year-old child who was the main hero. She concluded that such a personal narrative was another account of history placed next to similar personal histories that were as important as the official version of history. Subsequently, a relative of the writer presented aspects of the personality of his mother, who was a central figure in the book. A bookstore owner in the town of Florina talked about the sales of the book in the region, calling it a 'best-seller'. He mentioned an incident that took place in his store when a woman looking for the book told him that she went to four bookstores and nobody had it. She had experienced a strong reaction to her queries because the book was considered 'anti-Greek'.

At the end, the writer himself expressed his happiness that he was among Macedonians and thanked the cultural associations that organised the event in order to promote the region's cultural significance and honour him. He characterised the book

as a 'deposit of soul'. He said that he had presented himself as a child in order to gain the sympathy of the readers. Ending his contribution, he declared himself ready to respond to questions from the audience.

A man asked if the 300 words of the local dialect mentioned in the book represented a dialect or a language. The writer said that in simple terms, when two people say something which both understand, then it is a language. Then the main speaker remarked that there was no reason to talk about the term Macedonia and its connotations. Answering the question, he referred to a professor of linguistics at the local university who said that a language is spoken by a nation-state and a dialect by populations in it.

Another man said that he had read the book many times and he was touched by it. He also felt bitterness. He said that "we should return to the nice old times because the modern way of life has distorted our life". Another man said that this book was a motivation for our people to return to our traditions; it was the beginning of an effort, which had to be carried on. At the end of the meeting, the literature professor pinpointed the fact that the writer's work was significant because he was the third Florinot writer whose literary work had been published and presented outside the region's boundaries<sup>62</sup>.

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<sup>62</sup> It is important to mention, especially for the accounts included in Chapter 6, that Spiros announced a third event, a flute competition, that would be organised by the associations two days later, on the 15 August. The flute competition took place at a mountainous landscape. Despite the fact that it was announced as a co-organisation of the cultural associations, it was already an established event held every year in the same landscape and organised by the writer of the *Makedontseto*. Although I did not attend it, I spent part of that day in the writer's village from which my uncle, the husband of my mother's sister comes. Fellow villagers who visited the event described it as 'not successful' since there were only three candidates. As it appeared, persons who participated every year had chosen to distance themselves this year. My uncle's best man who participated and won prizes every year had told him that he did not want to go this year. He based his decision on the fact that "the organiser got involved with the *aftonomistes* and some associations". He even hid in his house and sent his wife to answer when the organiser himself went to invite him. He also lied to my aunt in the previous day saying that it wouldn't take place.

A different interpretation of the event was conveyed by the description that was given to me by two German friends who had come to visit me from Hamburg. They managed to find the place and attend it. They told that there were about 50-60 people present. At the end, they were invited by the chairwoman of the Plagia association to join them. She told them that they try to keep their customs alive but not to mix them with politics. As in the case of the book presentation, the flute competition was presented in a report of the journal *Makedonsko Sontse* as carried out by the national Macedonians who live in northern Greece (*Makedonsko Sontse* 1999b, 20 August). Special meaning was attributed to the landscape, which was only 100 meters from the border and at the place where "as the folk tradition says" there are ruins of the castle of the tsar Samuel. The report continued that the competitors played Macedonian songs in front of people from all over Greece and some European countries.

### 5.3.2. Perceptions and Interpretations of the Event

The impact of the event echoed around the region. A presentation of a book with a Slavic title organised by a group of local cultural institutions and attended by members of the local political and academic elite was seen as having deeply political connotations. Anxiety and puzzlement were expressed in the accounts of people who attended or heard about the event, but also satisfaction and positive feelings about the beginning of a new era in the Florina region. Panayiotis told me that he was originally planning to present it but at the last moment he regretted it because he was concerned about being accused of promoting Rainbow's agenda.

Spiros told me that he decided to replace Panayiotis because for him there was nothing to worry about in the book. On the contrary, he said that the writing of the book and even its presentation in the region were encouraging signs that the past and its negative consequences were beginning to be erased. In discussions I had had with both of them in previous months, they often told me that they wanted to contribute to making it possible for the *Dopioi* to dance their dances like the other groups in the region, call them by their names in *Dopia* and speak their language freely. However, they did not share this viewpoint with all of their co-villagers or others from the region.

A friend of mine and former chairman of Perivoli's cultural association whom I met in the village before the presentation talked about anxiety in the village caused by the title of the book. He added that few of the villagers would attend it. A great part of them were unwilling to do so and did not want it to be held in the village. "You see", he said, "the *Dopioi*, the right-wingers are divided from the left-wingers. The former support the one side and the latter the other side. The right-wingers wondered about this title. Why this title? It had to be in Greek. And the other side, if you were to ask some of them, they are inveterate supporters of the use of this dialect. The past has not yet been erased in our village. For example, a part of the village disagrees and reacts against the use of *Dopia* words in the association's newspaper". He also talked about internal conflicts and attitudes in the village itself. "Our villages have a particularity. When one group of people organises an activity the rest do not participate in it because they disagree politically, ideologically and on many other issues".

During the event, a man from the village said that the writer was crazy to write the book and so were the members of the association who agreed to present it in the village. Another man, who came from the writer's village, did not think that the writer had any intention of associating his book and its presentation with actions against the Greek state or of relating it to the discourse on the existence of the Macedonian minority. It was likely that he preferred to see himself as an intellectual who was interested in the old customs. Another villager from Perivoli, who was sitting next to me while waiting for the presentation to start, commented ironically on the arrival of the president of the Rainbow party, "Now we are full".

Others were glad that the time had come in which someone could freely express his views without fearing persecution; this was also acknowledged by the officials who attended the event. An older man commented on the event, "We never experienced such a time before, we have a very good situation now". The main speaker told me in a discussion a few weeks after the event that the situation was changing and that he would not go to present the book if things were different. In reply to my question about the association of the event with the Rainbow's activity, he said that he could not do anything about the possible political exploitation of the event but that most of the *Dopioi* who attended the event would disagree with their identification as members of the party. Many of the organisers did not mean to affiliate themselves with Rainbow or any ideology concerning the existence of an oppressed Macedonian minority, but simply wanted to represent their group and strive for a position equal to that of the other categories in the region. Nevertheless, others accused the organisers of promoting the Rainbow's claims on the region.

People in the town of Florina with whom I talked perceived the event as an organised political activity with specific objectives related to the right's claims for the minority, concealed under the blanket of the 'unpoliticised' tasks of cultural associations. One person who attended the presentation remarked that Greece and Greeks were not mentioned even once. A former member of the Florina town council characterised the event very straightforwardly as organised and supported by the Rainbow party and as part of its political agenda. He said that the network of people influenced by the Rainbow included this event in their efforts to consolidate practices and attitudes that show the existence of difference. They first make associations,

cultivate their dances, make publications, raise their signs as it happened in 1995, and they will have constructed a minority.

A journalist and editor of a local newspaper was dealing with the dilemma of whether or not to write about the book presentation in his newspaper. He said that if he wrote about it he would be accused of promoting these actions; if not he would be accused of not recognising either the associations' activity and the writer's work. A former mayor of Amindeo and member of the right-wing party Nea Dimokratia accused those who organised the event of playing political games and trying to come to power over other *Dopioi*. He said that in the previous years, although they were *Dopioi* he and other politicians were considered by some of the Rainbow members and supporters as traitors who had defected to the other side.

Nevertheless, the book was presented by the writer in Skopje in October 1999. A cover page and extensive reports by the nationalist journal Makedonsko Sontse [Macedonian Sun], which is published weekly in Skopje, were devoted to it (Mangovski 1999a, 199b). The journal mentioned the presentation in Perivoli in one of its reports (Makedonsko Sontse 1999a, 20 August) and included a photograph of the presentation. In a different, politically exploitative representation the event was seen as having been orchestrated by the national Macedonians of northern Greece. The report characterised it as being of historical importance because it was the first time that a book referring to the life of "our people" during the difficult period of the Greek Civil War was promoted in a village. The writer was described as a Greek of Macedonian descent and the book as being on the list of Greek best sellers. The existence in the book of words, derived from the title, of a Macedonian language which is still spoken, was also pointed out. The report then referred to the point in the discussion where the question was raised of whether it is a language or a dialect as "some Greek nationalists declare"; it ended by saying that the writer received intense applause and that the book was already translated into standard Macedonian.

#### **5.4 The Two Events in the Broader Context of Local Cultural Politics**

These two events were embedded in the politics of culture as practised in the region, according to which every population category demonstrates its cultural

practices, mainly within presentational dance and other cultural events organised by cultural associations. Bearing in mind the extent of the politicisation of culture in the 1990s and the polarisation of the local society, both events had an explicit political dimension. Both made claims about the 'culture' of the category by employing accounts articulated through non-verbal communication and text, and both used the past as proof of the existence of the category and a source of legitimacy for their actions.

Yet, both raised questions about the unanimity of the actors' views. Did these actions express a common perception of social reality? Or were they outcomes of the various political interests of agents that were dispersed, not interrelated? Both, as I have shown, reflected different interpretations and positionings by the actors. Situating the events in the broader context of the local society now, one can see that they formed arenas of action where intersected the diverse personal and group political interests and agendas of dispersed and unrelated agents.

Cultural associations are institutions that have been integrated into the political arsenal of the villages in their efforts to turn cultural difference into an advantage in the struggle to participate in local politics. "The preservation and promotion of our traditions and customs is the objective of all the associations", said Spiros, talking to a reporter from a local newspaper about the wedding revival. Nevertheless, these institutions promote and impose their interpretation of what 'culture' means according to their members' political affiliations, even though they are supposed to belong to the same population category.

The leading council members of the Anarachi association are members of Rainbow. Identification with the discourse about the existence of the Macedonian minority in the region can be conveyed through their choices and actions. They chose to create costumes for their troupe which have no relation to the region's dresses and they had them made in the city of Bitola in FYROM. In addition, their troupe intended to participate in a dance festival organised in the summer of 1999 in Ohrid, a city in FYROM close to the Greek border.

On the other side, the Thira dance troupe, a newly established association that had no costumes of its own, had to borrow the costumes of the Anarachi association in order to be able to participate in the wedding revival. Kiriakos, the association's

chairman, did not consider them as part of the local culture, as we will see in more detail in the next chapter. On the contrary, he was concerned about their use, being faced with the dilemma of being categorised as 'anti-Greek' or losing any chance to take part in cultural activities. He even felt the need to explain this to the troupe's dancers. Moreover, the involvement of the Thira association in the organisation of the book presentation, as well as a flute competition, without informing its chairman showed that these activities were far from simple cultural expressions but politically driven and morally complicit events, as Kiriakos claims in the next chapter. The consequences for the association's chairman were devastating.

Many discrepancies were displayed in the practises and symbols some of the six associations involved in the organisation of their villages' *panigiri* during the same summer. These discrepancies revealed the different views and strategies of actors who were seen to act as an entity during the wedding revival and the book presentation. The Anarachi association promoted its *panigiri* singing in Slavic. For this reason, it hired a music band that sang political songs, expressing redemptionist claims on behalf of the national Macedonians. The Perivoli association, on the contrary, organised an official event where they invited all local authorities, announced the dances using the Greek terms and did not allow singing in Slavic. Yet, Panayiotis, its secretary and dance instructor, participated individually in the Anarachi's *panigiri* and other similar events. Despite his participation, he criticised as "very extreme" Anarachi's activities and views.

In a discussion between Panayiotis and Vasilis, a council member of Anarachi, that had taken place a few weeks earlier they disagreed with each other when talking about the policies their associations followed. Vasilis criticised the Perivoli association for its relationship with political parties and politicians. Panayiotis said ironically to him, "We do not look for income only by the grilling of *souvlakia*; instead we establish contacts and relations with politicians who give us great amounts of money". Vasilis replied by saying that by making money from the *souvlakia* his association maintained their independence and did not ask for anything from Greece. Panayiotis emphasised as an accomplishment the fact that he and Spiros, the chairman of their association, worked hard and had prepared a successful application for funding by EU programmes

for the revival of customs of their village. Vasilis then complained that the money that came as subsidies was given only to certain associations and not to that of his village.

As we see, the collective action and organisation of the events did not imply uniformity of views among the associations and their members. The internal politics and conflicting interests within the group were demonstrated by the exclusion of Achilleas, an association from a village inhabited by *Dopioi*, which was interested in joining the group. Twenty days after the book presentation, while the group of associations was still operating, the Perivoli association organised an individual event in the village. It was a “meeting of friendship”, as they called it, with Achilleas. Yet, when Panayiotis tried to convince the other associations to accept Achilleas in their group, Anarachi and Plagia objected to this on the basis that it promoted the Greek national ideology. Although the six associations promoted a common representation of the *Dopioi* ‘culture’, they refused to give to other *Dopioi* who lived in the region the right to identify with these practices and meanings of dance.

Cultural associations, along with the cultural dimension, are forms of political organization, which all have political clout because they represent sections of the population, communities and other social groups. Registered members elect the board members. They carry out their duties and draft their financial policies. It is at this point that politicians and businessmen get involved in local politics in order to and promote their own agenda by supporting the associations. In that sense, the associations are seen to represent potential voters with whom the political parties have to communicate in order to keep and/or gain new supporters. In order to do this, politicians must influence public opinion and legitimise their power within socially acceptable values, norms and symbols.

In reply to a question about the role and importance of the cultural associations in public life, a party cadre and old member of a cultural association said to me “Politicians have a feeling of apprehension about those who control the populace and the members of the associations know that”. Politicians support their principles and activities. They are present at cultural events and allocate to them tasks related to dance, in that way honouring them and their activity in the domain of culture, and by extension, the community and the population they represent.

The MP of the socialist party attended both the wedding revival and the book presentation<sup>63</sup>. “Culture has great power”, he told me the next day. He also stressed the efforts of the village cultural associations in preserving their customs. “Villagers are immersed in keeping the customs. They are very strict in terms of music bands and instruments, in their costumes and songs. These are primordial elements”.

From the associations’ and their members’ point of view, they need to establish relations with institutions and persons who have the power to support them materially and politically in order to maintain their existence and activities. The wedding revival was an example of this since it was partly financed by the municipality in which it occurred. At the wedding revival, Ana was very concerned towards the end of the event about the fact that the event had already lasted a long time and she urged the musicians to play the music for the last scene before “the officials left”. Froso told me during the wedding that she needed financial support for the sewing of the dresses for the troupe dancers. She asked me if I knew anybody who might have a lot of money to donate.

In the same vein, the group of associations participated with other associations of the region in the reception of the Greek Prime Minister in August 1999 on the occasion of the cultural and political event “Prespes ‘99”<sup>64</sup>. The event, organised by the local MP of the socialist party, was politically and culturally extremely important<sup>65</sup>. The reception would include, among other things, a performance by all the participating dance troupes in front of the hotel right after the Prime Minister’s arrival. In the meetings held during the preparatory week, the associations negotiated some of their demands and some of their members benefited in various ways.

Kiriakos, the Thira chairman, declared his support and desire to contribute to the organisation of the reception but underlined the lack of appropriate costumes needed

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<sup>63</sup> It has to be mentioned that the MP had participated a few months earlier in the presentation of another book promoted by *Pontioi* associations of the region.

<sup>64</sup> The cultural event “Prespes” whose name stems from the Prespes area, has been held in the district of Florina since 1989. The inspirer and organiser of the event is the local MP of the Socialist party.

<sup>65</sup> This year was the celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the “Prespes” event, which was characterised by many people as the major cultural event of the year in Greece. Its great cultural and artistic significance derived from the fact that this year’s event was dedicated to Mikis Theodorakis, who is considered to be the greatest living Greek composer. During the event, the Greek Prime Minister officially proposed Theodorakis for the Nobel Peace Prize. The political importance of the event was likewise just as great. The Prime Ministers of Greece and FYROM attended the event, met and discussed matters of mutual interest. At the same time, political parties and news agencies speculated in Greece that the Greek government would call a snap election. The early autumn was considered as a pre-election period.

by the members of his dance troupes in order to perform. The MP said to him, “I know you, I have seen you and you dance excellently. One of the first things I’ll do is find the money to make the costumes”. Ana, the Plagia chairwoman, complained to the MP that “You do not care for the small associations”. In response, he tried to ensure the equal participation of every association by defining two different days and occasions within the Prespes event for the performances of the troupes. In addition, he appointed Panayiotis as one of the persons to co-ordinate the placing of the dancers during the event.

At the end of the discussion, the MP stated that after the event the associations should prepare two documents, one for the Ministry of Culture and one for that of Macedonia and Thrace, asking for subsidies, which he would promote. Personal material benefits could also be sought for the council members of the associations. At the time Panayiotis was looking for a stable job. After that summer he became the dance teacher of two more villages near Plagia. He was also appointed by the mayor of Plagia municipality as director of an institution related to the care of children. This was the last appearance of the associations as a group. The group broke up, as Kiriakos, Savvas and Panayiotis told me, due to its members’ different standpoints.

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This chapter has explored the conditions in which cultural institutions and certain individuals of the *Dopioi* category have deployed ideas about ‘culture’ in different ways and with different material effects. The two events examined provide examples of how these agents, who assume that they share a ‘culture’, define and stress in a collective form the existence of their group. In recent decades, but most importantly in the 1990s, this version of ‘culture’ has been used by agents of the dominant national discourse as a justification for subordination and political exploitation. As the events show, this ‘culture’ appeared to have become the resource with which members of the category negotiated the group’s existence in the local and national society and benefited from the negotiations in a number of material ways.

However, at an ethnographic level claims made about a collective ‘culture’ are not empirically sustainable and challenge the equation of ‘culture’ with the group. Belonging to the group is defined subjectively and relatively rather than objectively and

absolutely. The agents involved have conflicting interests and affiliations, and thus adapt their strategies to the context and the situation. Peoples' actions reveal more complex and varied patterns of behaviour which institutions and individuals use for the achievement of their targets. The same individuals display different behaviour in different contexts in response to various obligations. This is the topic of the next chapter, which examines the construction and demonstration of identity at the individual level on the basis of the accounts of 5 individuals from the Florina region.

## CHAPTER 6: 'TO DANCE OR NOT TO DANCE?': SIGNIFYING SELF IN PLURAL CULTURAL CONTEXTS

### 6.1) Introduction

The emergence of political movements for Macedonian human rights in the 1990s created, as we saw in Chapter 4, a new context for the political use of culture in the Florina region. Until that time, cultural associations and their dance troupes emphasised and performed what had been established as 'Hellenic' dances or 'Hellenic' features of the local dances. However the meanings of dances were multiple and ambiguous. They were associated with national (Greeks versus separatists) and regional (Floriniotes versus the inhabitants of other prefectures) differences, political divisions (right- versus left-wingers), population category distinctions (*Dopioi* versus *Pontioi*), intra-regional (plains versus highland villages, or villages versus town) and intra-category (one *Dopioi* versus another *Dopioi* village) contrasts, as well as pleasurable ties and expression of solidarity with kin, neighbours, and fellow-villagers of any population category.

With the rise of the Macedonian minority discourse, participation in dancing became politicised in a new, more manifest way, as regards the Greek context<sup>66</sup>. As shown in Chapter 4, the politicisation of dance in the Florina region can be documented

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<sup>66</sup> At this point I have to mention a remark made by Jane Cowan, that such conflicts were taking place years before in the diaspora communities.

since the 1950s, when dances were appropriated as signs of regional variation with the Greek national culture. In the 1990s, though, dances were caught up in the polarisation of the two discourses, Greek nationals versus Macedonian nationals. Where and what one danced, with whom and how he/she danced it were interpreted as expressions of national and political affiliations. This had many consequences for the individuals in the region who participated in the various dance events. Individuals seemed unable to escape one of two options: either to perceive themselves as members of the Greek national community or to adopt the alternative minority discourse in order to re-negotiate their identity.

Nevertheless, these interpretations were not completely pre-determined but contextual and shifting. People could take advantage of the multiple associations of dancing and use the ambiguity of symbols related to dance in order to justify and defend their or other peoples' choices and actions. Not all dancers could be exposed to the same degree of criticism. In many cases, peoples' actions expressed different viewpoints based on their autobiographical reminiscences, fortunes of their family, the official view on history and the current economic and socio-political context. I have argued that participation in specific dances and dance events could be seen as a public claim to and a marker of identity. However at the same time I want to make the perhaps that the individual who does this may not be expressing a fixed, unitary and mutually exclusive identity but a 'statement' that is contingent, contextually-defined and apparently 'contradicted' by identity statements expressed in dance and music in another context by the same or other individuals.

In this chapter, I will direct my attention to the actions and personal narratives of specific individuals who are related to the practice of dance. My purpose is to give a sense of the more complex identities and affiliations of individuals, which may shift over time. I explore the way individuals understand and position themselves in their social context and the ways they articulate these positions, as expressed in their stories about past experiences and statements on current events and political issues. I have opted for coherent accounts of five persons in order to display a small sample of the range of opinions and perceptions on issues related to culture and identity. Most of these people I have known for years; I draw my material from my long-lasting relationships with them as well as from the specific interactions that took place between

us during the fieldwork for my study. The individuals chosen vary in terms of sex and age. They are three men and two women aged from the late twenties to the late seventies. All of them except the older woman, who is my grandmother, consider themselves as belonging to the *Dopioi* category. My grandmother is supposed to belong to the *Arvanites* category.

I argue for the need to challenge the collective and uniform dimension of identity not only of the national but of the local population categories as well. That the majority of *Dopioi* in the context of Greek Macedonia and more specifically in that of the Florina region consider their Greekness indisputable is a certainty. It is equally true that there are some who see themselves as national Macedonians. However in my opinion, a large proportion of them, as well as members of other population categories, deal with the issue of identity in ways that escape the frameworks of both national and minority discourses. Despite the struggle with two hegemonic discourses of difference, the constitution of individual identity can encompass elements of various notions of belonging which have been exclusively attributed to the existing population categories.

The articulation of alternative individual identities through various modes of processing personal experiences has been a very frequent practice in response to the imposition of totalising national ideologies by various agents since the end of the 19th century. The specific perceptions of local social reality described here represent examples that have been neglected by existing anthropological accounts or have not been sufficiently studied. They demonstrate that individuals are aware, though not always, as we will see in Kiriakos's case, willing and able to reflect on and respond to the public, polarised and dichotomous meanings that have now developed around dancing. The examples also show that boundaries between the supposedly incompatible identities of population categories are blurred and the notion of the naturalness of fixed, mutually exclusive identities, claimed by its promoters, is rejected.

## **6.2) Kiriakos**

The case of Kiriakos is an example of a person who got involved in the 'hot arena' of local cultural politics and had a harsh experience of the consequences of dealing with the dominant discourses of difference. In his early thirties, Kiriakos became the

chairman of the newly established cultural association in his village Thira. The dance troupe was the very first section they created. He employed various means with the aim of gaining a place for his association in the local scene. Following the usual pattern of cultural activity, he mainly organised dance events in the village and participated with the dance troupe at other events in the region. He also became a member of the associations group, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, organised the three key events in his experience. It was precisely this kind of commitment which, together with the impact of the events, generated various comments against him by members of his own family, co-villagers and others.

In the account that follows, I will describe the interaction that took place between him and me within a period of four months. I will focus on encounters, incidents and statements relevant to my account. I have known Kiriakos since our school years. We were classmates and friends. Although his family comes from the Thira village, he grew up in the town of Florina. During my fieldwork, he lived with his wife and little daughter and worked in the town of Amindeo very close to his village. We first met on June 30 at Thira's *panigiri* which was organised by the cultural association a month after its establishment. This was his first event as the new chairman. I hadn't seen him for years since I had been away for my studies.

Although he was pre-occupied with trying to supervise and solve any problems that would appear during the event he came to talk to me. He was very proud that they had organised it because it was only a month previously that they had created the association and it was many years since the last *panigiri* had taken place in the village. He also said that their dance troupe had been created only a few weeks earlier. He knew about my activity in previous years as a dancer and dance teacher and asked me how his troupe danced. I replied that I had only seen their last dance and that I liked it considering they had had such a short time to practise.

In the next few weeks we met again a few times at various cultural activities which took place in the region. We talked about our school times, our professional achievements, and our involvement in local cultural politics as well as the plans he had for the association. He seemed to be satisfied with it and especially with the benefits he thought it would bring to the young dancers. Talking to me about his initial thoughts on the association, he said

We founded the association in order to bring the village out of oblivion and to help the youth to gain experiences, which they would never otherwise have the chance to have. In addition to this, to develop a stronger village representation would help us to oppose any claims against the village by NEC, which was evacuating villages for its new electricity units. I worked hard to convince the village to help us and I have made it although the *panigiri* contributed a lot to this success. We first organised a dance troupe; we intended to have other activities as well like photographic exhibitions, lectures and excursions so that 'the youth could go out of the village'. The members of the troupe were very happy with all the performances and the experiences they had. They were enthusiastic about the fact that they were participating in these activities as part of a group. In that way, they acquired a group identity through a dance troupe, which was watched and recognised by others.

During our meetings, I never had the impression that Kiriakos was affiliated with any kind of political party or even Rainbow in order to promote its political agenda. On the contrary, it seemed to me that he had tried somehow to keep himself away from any actions that would associate him with either the one or the other discourse. During the wedding revival, he was very much concerned with the fact that he had borrowed costumes from the one of the associations who were actively promoting Rainbow's objectives. He did not consider the costumes as part of the local culture. He was concerned about it and said to me during the event that

Everyone has their traditional costumes and we wear the 'Bulgarian' ones. They are so striking. You don't need to be acquainted with this costume in order to recognise it. We will become objects of ridicule. They will stick a stamp and an identity on us. But on the other hand, if you do not to take part in activities, very few people will know about you.

He also felt the need to explain this to the troupe dancers. He told them that:

We don't identify at all with the costumes you wear. First of all and most basic, they are not ours. Not even from this place. You have to know where you stand in some things; to know what to say if someone teases you. We couldn't borrow any other costume. But we have to participate in activities so we had to put these on.

Wanting to be more efficient as a chairman he was thinking of proposing the creation of an associations' union whereby those included would offer both dancers and costumes. In this way, he meant that their objectives would be better fulfilled. In order to adopt a politically correct view on culture, they ought to agree to dance only the commonly accepted dances and have a costume which would represent everyone, one which would have signs, as he said, from all; that is, one that signified each group's cultural background. That would entail a basic agreement on what would be danced in

order to avoid any conflicts and misinterpretation. Because of these principles, Kiriakos chose to participate as a co-organiser in the three events organised by the group of village associations.

As it has been shown in the previous chapters, local cultural politics is a central stage for the intersection of varied political interests not always apparent to those involved. As his account reveals, Kiriakos found himself to be a victim of such interests. The announcement of his association as a co-organiser of the book presentation and the flute competition were not as innocent as they seemed. I met him and his wife on the 15th of August, the day on which the flute competition was taking place. I greeted them and asked why not at the flute competition they had organised. "Oh, in Skopid"<sup>67</sup> he said. "No in Skopos", I corrected him. I realised from this mistake that he was not informed about the events, because nobody who comes from the region would mix the two villages' names despite their similarity. I then asked him why he had not come to the book presentation and he said he had not been informed about it.

He said he felt very disappointed and confused. Problems had been created in the village in relation to his activity and the association's performances. Negative comments and thoughtless remarks and characterisations of him by his relatives had cut him to the heart. I replied I was sorry about what seemed to have happened. It looked to me, I said, as though it was the same old story about who is what. I asked to meet him in order to talk about these issues. We made an appointment for a few days later.

I realised from the first moment of the subsequent discussion that he was very upset. His manner of talking expressed feelings of concern and insecurity. "There is a lot of discussion about me. I do not know yet who were those that talked about me". I asked him if the book presentation and the flute competition had anything to do with this. He asked me what happened at those activities and I said that I only attended the first. I briefly described who talked and what was said at the book presentation. He got more upset and complained that I had not told him about it in our meeting in Florina. He was furious.

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<sup>67</sup> Skopiá, with the emphasis on a, is the name of a village 2 Kms away from the town of Florina.

I did not know about the presentation. I will publicly deny on the radio our association's participation and will disassociate myself and the association from the group of associations. I did not even know about the flute competition.

He then told me about a discussion he had had with his affinal uncle, a Greek who came from central Greece but lived permanently in Canada.

I described the activities of the association to him. My uncle got angry about what he had heard and categorised me as an *aftonomistis* [separatist]. He came to the village telling all our relatives not to support me and to be careful about what I did. He upset all our relatives and made us argue with each other about the objectives of the association and the activities with the other associations.

Then I asked him how the group of associations had been formed. He said that it was proposed and encouraged by a local future politician<sup>68</sup>, member of the socialist party, who had told them that by organising activities as a group, they would be able to get access to subsidies. He also mentioned to them a similar group active in the prefecture of Pieria. But, as he said, he did not know it would end up like this. He got angry with the other associations that used Klidi without primarily informing them about it. "I lacked the experience to understand what is going on with these issues".

The agendas of the associations, the politicians who patronise them and single individuals with their own ideas compose, in this case, the complex network of actors involved in these incidents. The outcome was devastating for Kiriakos, who felt threatened. Recounting the family's history in order to find an explanation or to defend himself was the next stage of our discussion. Because various degrees of loyalty and different realities have to co-exist, the past has to some extent been re-defined. His family was mixed politically, including right- and left-wingers, who had gone through a lot in the past. Some of his uncles had been exiled in Makronisos because they were accused of being communists. Somebody from the village had spread false rumours about his father. He concluded that a lot of people had suffered because of the villagers, who always collaborated with those who were in power and acted against their own relatives and co-villagers.

Our next meeting took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of August. Kiriakos was devastated. I was late and he said he had 5 glasses of whisky while he was waiting for me. This was the most critical point of the dramatic experience he was going through. He felt completely

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<sup>68</sup> He was a doctor who was speculated to be a candidate of the PASOK in the next national elections, which took place 9 months later.

insecure. Although he attributed no particular political meaning to what he said and did, his actions had been understood and categorised as either the nationalist or minority discourse. They were criticised and he was stigmatised. Let us see how he narrated these issues.

I will talk to you from my heart. I felt threatened from all sides. Some people have called my boss and asked him to dismiss me. I found out that people in the village had accused me of acting against the State. I trust nobody. I feel hate for those who are involved in this situation. I am not sure if I can trust even you. Neither do I trust anybody from the other associations. I have to be cautious with them because I do not know their motives. During the free dancing in the wedding revival, I danced dances with songs in Slavic, as you did, but I was almost stigmatised while you did not have this problem. I even had problems during the *panigiri* because of announcing the dances in *Dopia*. But this is the right and I couldn't say it differently. I was also accused because the troupe performing at Amindeo in the beginning of August danced with melodies which were not Greek. However, during a dance feast in Lofoi the members of the troupe walked out when political songs in Slavic against Greece were sung because they disapproved of this attitude. I plan to write a letter of protest in consultation with a lawyer so that I cannot be persecuted by anybody. I was very romantic at the beginning of my involvement but now I have learned a lot from it.

I was overwhelmed with sadness and disappointment after this meeting. I was thinking that the game of the manipulation of national sentiments had always existed in the region and that most of the people translated all actions according to the dominant ideological doctrines without really being able to transcend them. At other times lives had been lost; now reputations were sullied.

Kiriakos' experience shows how every single person, independently of the degree of his/her involvement in public social life, starts to reflect on such events and develop a mechanism of manipulating ideas, symbols and behaviours. One soon realises that one has to be flexible and capable of presenting oneself accordingly. A socially accepted identity depends on the specific social context and situation in which one finds oneself.

I met Kiriakos again at the beginning of October. He was much calmer than on previous times. His relatives had revealed to him who had talked about him in the village. "Some accused me of trying to 'hellenise' the village and others of being an *aftonomistis*. In the latter case, it was someone who during the village's *panigiri* had wanted to dance a dance with a song in Slavic. I do not care". Kiriakos concluded, "I have learned the rules of the game. Everything I now do will be after deep thought and consideration".

### 6.3) Savvas

Savvas is a 27-year-old man. He was the dance teacher of his village's cultural association. The association became widely known as the organiser of the village's *panigiri*, an event broadly seen as a demonstration of the existence of an oppressed Macedonian minority in the region. Savvas played a leading part in the early 1990s as the first dancer and instructor of the troupe. Since I was involved in dancing myself I knew about him from his performances as well as from the attention the village had gained in the 1990s. Most people would characterise him as a national Macedonian.

He studied for two years at the History and Archaeology School of the University of Thessaloniki and then broke off his studies to do compulsory military service. Now he works as a manual worker at the new electricity unit which is being constructed in the Florina region. He is satisfied with the work and the money although he works 10 hours per day, 6 days a week. Our first contact took place during the village's *panigiri* in July 1999. We had never talked to each other before. I was going to the schoolyard to prepare my cameras to record the event when I was passing the association's office. He knew who I was so he approached me and told me it was a very sad thing that this would be the first year that there would be two different dance events in the village. He continued, "We must disengage ourselves from politics. If not, we have no chance".

His statement interested me since I knew there was tension in the village during those days, and negotiations had taken place earlier between the municipality council members and the associations on the organisation of the celebration. I told him right away that I would very much like to talk with him about these issues and he accepted. Although we met in many subsequent dance events that took place in the region, we first talked at the end of August. A close and sincere friendship developed between us, which was based on the high regard we held for each other, common interests, our love of dance and our need to discuss the issues of identity and politics in the Florina region.

Savvas grew up in a family "with contradictions", as he says. "My father and half of our relatives are right-wingers and the other half left-wingers". His family spoke *Dopia*, which he calls *Makedonika* [Macedonian]. His mother tongue is Greek. As he says, "it maybe that our mother tongue is theoretically the other one but in my consciousness

I learned to call the table *trapezi* [the Greek word] and not *masa* [the Slavic word]". Savvas addresses an array of issues in his accounts. He talks about dance and politics, his activity within the association, his persecution during his military service due to his active involvement in the Macedonian conflict, his sense of belonging and the need for a new approach to issues of identity in the region. He is very critical of the political use of culture as it occurs through dancing.

Getting involved with politics is inescapable when one is actively participating in a dance troupe. Savvas reflected on this, expressing his disagreement with those who take advantage of culture. He used an example of a relative of his to demonstrate the way people are divided into opposing sides.

Dance is a means to practice politics and propaganda. This is how it is here, on both sides. I don't like anybody who comes and tells us we need help and pretends to help us. This is a pure instrument of politics. Because of such people we then argue against each other. I have a cousin who is the chairman of the other association in the village. His mother and my father are siblings. He tells me sometimes, "I will not dance *Poustseno* and the like". And indeed he doesn't dance *Poustseno* or anything else. He does not want to be identified as *aftonomistis*. We are together at work and one evening when we left together he put a tape in with songs from *Aidonia*<sup>69</sup> [Nightingales] and started clapping his hands.

In a moment of introspection, Savvas reflected on his previous activity as a leading member of an association which is believed to be governed and run by the Rainbow party. He also recounted that he was persecuted for his activity. A notion of self-criticism is evident in his words.

I have been stigmatized for my activity. When I joined the army I first went to a training camp in Peloponnes. The husband of my cousin-in-law was a member of the socialist party and was arranging for my transfer close to Florina. For a person like me, who is a member of a family with 4 children, it is very unusual to have a second transfer. You only have one and remain there until the end of your service. I came to a camp close to Florina, stayed for 20 days and was transferred to an island near Turkey. I was supposed to stay 2 months there and remained 12 and ended my service. I expected this kind of treatment.

But I have made mistakes as well. I have believed in persons about whom now I say how could this be possible. I don't mean the persons themselves but their actions, their beliefs. Until four years ago I was the first to offer myself for everything.

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<sup>69</sup> Aidonia is the name of a famous local music band, which sings songs in Slavic.

He then turned to his own activity within the association. Superficial or politically driven accounts about the region fail to see the internal conflicts and contradictions that arise from the different standpoints people have. Savvas disagreed with the ways that members of the association's board who were Rainbow activists used the troupe to promote the party's political agenda. He described events which illustrate the political objectives of certain agents, and the way he challenged those ideas and actions:

When I finished my military service and returned to the village, I heard of some outrageous things they did with the dance troupe. We had big arguments. Imagine that I was quoted as their good example! They went on a trip to Sweden and the newspapers wrote about it. And they presented themselves as coming from Greece but with a Macedonian flag. I started shouting and they accused me that I once got money from the association. Yes, they had given money to me once while I was in the army.

Another moment, four or five years ago, scenes from the association's dance feast were shown on the state television channel in Skopje. I was very annoyed. I do not want to dance and have someone else use this for his own goals. This is a basic democratic principle. So we decided that we would not allow cameras during the association's feasts.

Savvas condemned the nationalist practices and sentiments expressed by certain persons to whose category he supposedly belongs. But he was also restrained by the social context he lived in. Like every person in the region who did not conform with the ideas of the two dominant discourses, he has had to deal with criticism by the group he is deemed to belong to.

I have to deal with people who criticise me. I told them I will teach the dancers Greek dances. They reacted again to this. They said, "If they want Greek dances they should go to the other association of the village". I said, "What are you talking about? You will draw boundaries around your child and you expect it to talk about the human rights that you now speak of? Isn't it you who accuses the fascists? I am in the association and the domain of tradition and culture since 1983. Tell me when Rainbow was established and you started to be aware of these issues? You, the Great Macedonians who now give loyalty certificates"

In searching for an identity, Savvas provided an account of a person who is struggling to find a place for himself in a social context that is often presented as simply divided into two opposing and mutually exclusive sides. He questioned notions of belonging and ideas imposed by nationalist policies such as that of the homeland and national symbols such as the flag. He certainly did not see himself as part of either of the two national categories. He felt connected with the place where he was born and grew up.

Who are you with? Us or the others? And who is us and who are the others?. I don't know. I have thought about this a lot of times. I was talking with a friend when I was studying in Thessaloniki about what we are and what we are not. What are our ideals? Guys like me don't really have a homeland. I regard myself as happy that I am different. I don't belong either to the one or the other side. I am connected with my place but not with the idea of homeland. I am a Macedonian from Florina. Neither from there nor from here. Nationalism limits your ability to understand persons and situations. I voted for Rainbow. Rainbow as a party doesn't make any territorial claims but as national Macedonians they do have. They want to change the border and go to the other side. And I ask, "What flag are we going to have?". We will take one with blue, white, yellow and red. I do not belong anywhere finally.

We were discussing once in Thessaloniki what we would do if there were a war between FYROM and Greece. This is still a fundamental question for me. We don't want to be with Greece. The others, we don't really know. We finally decided we would stay in our houses. What should I do?, I asked myself. Kill my *Pontios* neighbour though we grew up together?. At least, I should try to save myself. When I was in the army the commander called me and I told him, I am not ashamed to tell you that I am neither separatist nor nothing. I don't believe in armies and flags. A flag is for me a commercial symbol. I am a citizen of the world. Neither of Macedonia nor Greece.

Savvas stressed the need for a new approach to the issue, a new form of contact between people. The youth were for him the primary target group for the introduction of his ideas: it is necessary to let the youth think and give them space to decide and act. He argued for the de-politicisation of culture and the choice to stay outside the politics of culture.

Efforts must be made between the people that will give the youth information. Don't let anybody say his bull shit from this and from the other side. I try to promote in the village the de-politicisation of dance and they keep on at me not to do it. There are young people in our villages who consciously don't want to participate in politics. We need to help them understand why they argue. If they will understand they will not argue. They just don't see the problem. We will probably be able to see that we don't argue about the same thing and we only think we argue.

#### **6.4) Kir-Andreas**

Kir-Andreas lives in the town of Florina. He is a 70-year-old musician, member of a very famous family of musicians in the region. He himself is one of the family's most prestigious representatives. His reputation has spread all over Greece and in the Florinot diaspora communities around the world. He is retired and occasionally plays music at weddings and dance troupe performances. His family comes from a village in

the plain of Florina, 5 Kms from the town, which comprises *Dopioi*, *Pontioi* and *Tsiganoi* in its population. His parents moved to the town of Florina where he was born in the early 1930s. In local terms, he could be characterised as a *Dopios* although he himself never uses this term as a self-designation.

I have known him since my childhood. His house is in my neighbourhood and he was a friend of my grandparents. I got to know him better in the early 1990s when I conducted research on dances. He was one of the first informants with whom I had extensive discussions about the dances, songs and music played in the district of Florina. After the mid-1990s, we formed a music group and for almost 4 years played music together in various dance events in the region and certain other places in Greece. Throughout this period, I had the chance to talk a lot with him and learn a lot from his experience and knowledge. In addition, I conducted two biographic interviews and further discussions during my fieldwork. The material that is presented is based on my overall knowledge about him and the interviews during my fieldwork. In my account, I present the way he perceived the supposed differences within and between the population categories in the region, his own experiences playing music during the 1940s and the years that followed, and incidents he recounted from that time

His perception of the *Dopioi* category reveals internal differences based on cultural criteria. He brought to light a new contrast between villages in the plain and those on the mountains. He also mentioned differences in ways of speaking and dress, which were considered impediments to marriage between villages, attributed to the *Dopioi*.

The *Dopia* villages in the plain did not give brides to the mountain villages. For example, a woman to go from Idrusa to Kalliniki? No. Their way of speaking did not match with each other. We speak differently, in Proti they speak differently, in Kallinki differently, in Meliti differently. We call the spoon *lazitsa* and in Kelli they call it *bulela*. Our neighbour from Kratero calls the towel *riza* while we say *krpa*. They call the stove *kobe* and we call it *coba*. Their dresses as well were different.

As regards the relations between the categories, he thought that the situation was not very bad even before the war. He saw a difference in the recent decades when intermarriages have increased and are now considered as a very natural phenomenon. He gave an example from his own family to show me this. At the same time, he used

politically loaded terms such as 'Bugarka'<sup>70</sup> and 'Turk'<sup>71</sup> which are used by members of the categories against each other.

There were not great problems between *Dopioi* and *Pontioi* and the others before the war. *Arvanites*, in particular, had good relations with the *Dopioi*. But it was not as it is now. Do you know how many sons-in-law I have? One is Vlach. At that time, it was inconceivable for a Vlach to marry a *Dopia*. I have a daughter-in-law who is *Pontia* [female, singular]. My other son-in-law is *Kiutachialis* [male, singular]. We used to call them 'Turks'. Are you serious? A 'Bugarka' to marry to a 'Turk'? My older brother got married in 1957 to a *Thrakiotissa* [female, singular]. Not only that. A friend of mine who is *Pontios* married an *Arvanitissa* [female, singular]. The two extremes.

Turning to the political situation in the last decades, Kir-Andreas saw the events in his account in terms of a succession of power holders. They tried to establish their power by persecuting their political opponents.

A whole life through, the prisons were full. In the previous years it was the Bulgarians; now it is the Macedonians. During the Civil War it was the communists that had the power. After them the supporters of the king arrested the communists. Yioura, Makronisos, lots of people were sent there. One was coming after the other.

He seemed not to identify himself with any one of them. The reasons for this become evident in the incidents he described concerning members of his family. They all were victims of the exercise of power. Kir-Andreas placed the initial point for the emergence of that policy in the Metaxas dictatorship. He pointed out the State's role in imposing notions of national homogeneity. He recounted an incident in which a member of his family experienced exclusion, persecution, and disappointment. Yet he began by calling himself Greek, maybe as a strategy to avoid any criticism that he was accusing the State and its instruments.

It is our fault, the Greeks' fault. It all started in the Metaxas time. We did not have problems before. During the Metaxas period people started going to prison, to be arrested for language. But nobody knew Greek. Neither my grandmother nor my mother. My uncle Pantelis was playing a melody in a coffee shop during the

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<sup>70</sup> 'Bugarka' means 'Bulgarian woman' in *Dopia*. The terms 'Voulgaroi' [Bulgarians] in Greek and 'Bugari' [Bulgarians], 'Bugar' [male singular] and 'Bugarka' [female singular] in *Dopia*, were in use to refer to the *Dopioi* category. The terms have negative political connotations because they highlight the collaboration and the identification of part of the the *Dopioi* with the Bulgarian forces in certain periods in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. After the rise of the Macedonian minority discourse in the 1990s, those of the *Dopioi* who see themselves as national Macedonians have strongly denounced these terms since they challenge the claims on the existence of the minority. From those negatively disposed to the existence of the minority, it is elders that mostly use the term Bulgarians while the rest have adopted the terms *aftonomistes* or Macedonians.

<sup>71</sup> Turk is the term attributed by the *Dopioi* and *Arvanites* to parts of the refugees who settled in the region in the 1920s coming from certain parts of Turkey and spoke Turkish.

Metaxas time. A rural constable split on him. He was arrested and beaten by policemen. Can he forget this and be a friend of Greece?

The action of the rural constable highlights that although it is the state structures that create the framework for the exercise of power, it is individuals that interpret and exploit it. The role of individual agency is illustrated in the next passage as well, where kir-Andreas moved on to the decade 1940-1950, describing the arrest of his father at the end of the Civil War on the basis of information given to the police by one of his neighbours.

In the late 1940s there were some people in our neighbourhood who were supposed to have been recruited by the police. People were accused by them of being Bulgarians and were sent to prison. They did this to show the police they were doing their job. In 1949, my father was sitting at the door of his little store. A policeman came and arrested him and two others from our neighbourhood. We did not know why they took him. They put them in prison. They even did not give them food. Then they interrogated them. As we heard afterwards, one of those I mentioned before had informed against him. This guy was collaborating with the Germans when they were here, and the Bulgarians and the Greeks when they came.

In the post-war period, kir-Andreas was in the army and experienced the consequences of the previous turbulent decade. The dances of the region were called 'Bulgarian' by the central state authorities and kir-Andreas, together with local musicians and dancers, were denied the state's help in organising a tour abroad. "Do you know what they replied to us? We can't present these Bulgarian dances in public". People that came from the areas that were the bases of the left wing forces were stigmatised. That posed further dilemmas to feelings of national belonging.

I joined the army in 1952. During our basic training we were practising shooting. In these cases, two soldiers warn the people by standing with two red flags at the two edges of the shooting ground. One of those two came from the region of Kastoria. Before the shooting, the captain talked to us about the flag. He said, "The flag you hold is heroic". And the guy from Kastoria asked, "The red?". "Come here", the captain told him. He beat him so hard that blood did not stop running. "Where are you from? Kastoria? Keep quiet you dirty Bulgarians. I will all load you on a ship and send you to Yioura right away". Who could say anything? How could we then fight for the country?

How can a person overcome fear and insecurity and deal with the dilemmas that are very often posed by changing political conditions? One has to find ways to overcome these problems 'cleverly' and painlessly. This is especially true in the case of a musician, who very often finds himself at the center of deeply politicised situations in

which he is forced to do his job, that is, play what he is asked to play. Kir-Andreas cited some of these situations.

I was always concerned not to play something which could be seen as either communist or nationalist. I was playing once in a village and a policeman came there and told me not to play *Gaida*. Then I started to play a song from Ipiros that was as slow as *Gaida* so that the people could dance it as *Gaida*. At another time, I was playing at a wedding and three different persons asked me to play three different songs. One asked for the Pavlos Melas<sup>72</sup> song, the second for the Sun of the Eagle<sup>73</sup> and the third for U borba<sup>74</sup>. I said I do not play any of them and asked the father-in-law to sort things out. He told them he did not want any political songs because he did not want to spoil the wedding. Imagine: one of them was the best man. At the time, Nea Dimokratia was in power I was asked to play the Samiotissa<sup>75</sup>. When PASOK came to power they asked for the Sun<sup>76</sup> instead of the Samiotissa.

In the final passage, kir-Andreas narrated an incident that took place during another wedding, this time in Canada in the 1960s. He went there for a short period to work as a musician at various dance occasions. Very important issues are addressed in this account such as the role of individual agency, ways of strategising, and perceptions and actions that do not fit stereotypical notions of collective identities. An instrumental element is evident in kir-Andreas' actions. He admitted he manipulated his cultural background in a strategic way to obtain access to situations from which he could benefit by earning money. The incident also demonstrates the fact that very often individuals do not follow the dominant patterns of belonging. Although the main person in the incident seemed to stand against anything related to Greece, at the most important moment of the ritual where he had to dance he asked for music that was identified as Greek. It then becomes interesting to see kir-Andreas' reaction. He was very cautious about what he was going to play since he did not want to be accused of not doing his job. On the other side, he was puzzled in his effort to interpret the incident. He saw it as a contradiction in his behaviour, derived from past experiences and policies that had led people to argue with each other.

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<sup>72</sup> For information on Pavlos Melas, see Chapter 3, footnote 18.

<sup>73</sup> The Sun of the Eagle is a song related to King of Greece.

<sup>74</sup> U borba is a Slavic expression and means 'join the battle'. It refers to a song introduced during the Civil War by the Slav-speaking partisan groups created in north-western Greek Macedonia and supported by the Greek Communist Party.

<sup>75</sup> Samiotissa is the name of a very famous and popular song that refers to a beautiful woman who comes from the Greek island of Samos. It is danced with the step pattern of *Sirtos*. The song has been acquired the status of a national song and dance.

<sup>76</sup> The 'Sun' is referred to a song identified with the Greek Socialist party and its ideology. It was widely used in its electoral campaigns throughout the 1980s.

I was in Canada in the 1960s. There was a bus driver there who had left Greece because he was sent into exile. He was working there as a shoemaker. I had heard his son would have a wedding. In Canada, they have two churches, St Klime for the *Makedontsi* and St George for the Greeks. I went first to the Greek church. Somebody from Papayianni welcomed me and asked me if I wanted to register with their association. I told him I would only be staying for three months. After that, I went to the other church. There, another guy asked me there if I would register. I told him I would because I knew about the wedding and I wanted to play there. I finally did not register but I went to play at the wedding.

The man from Florina remembered me. Talking about the feast he asked me in Macedonian "*Ne ke slusnam Grtska pesna. Ako ne, ne ki gi zemas parite ke begas*". [I won't hear any Greek song. If not, you won't get your money and you will have to leave]. I told him "All right". The dancing started after the dinner. The bride and the groom danced a waltz first. After that, they would dance traditional dances together with their parents. I thought about what to play in order not to be misinterpreted. I played them the Paloma. After that, it was the turn of the father-in-law to dance. I leaned towards him and asked him what he wanted to dance. He said, "*Edno kalamatano*". I told him, "*Grtska e taa*" [That is Greek]. "*Abe sam taa snam da igran*", he said [This is the only dance I know].

You see? At the same time, I hate something and I love it. People were misguided and divided by the beating and the exile and came to hate each other.

## 6.5) Froso

Froso is a 40-year-old woman who comes from a village in the plain of Florina. In local terms, she is *Dopia*. She played a leading part in the establishment of the Thira's cultural association although she did not participate in the council. She is the instructor of the dance troupe. She was introduced to me during the association's first event, in June 1999. As with the foregoing informants, I met her many times since then in various activities during the summer of 1999. I also visited her in her house and had discussions with her husband and her two children, who both participated in the dance troupe. We spent a lot of time talking about the region, the association, the dances and the political situation created in the 1990s.

In terms of age, in comparison to the other people presented in this chapter she represents the middle generation. Those at the age of 40 had not had direct experience of the dramatic events of the Civil War but grew up with their families' memories, anxieties and, possibly, misfortunes. She got married before her twenties and has lived since then in her husband's village, close to the town of Amindeo. She told me that

when she first heard about her husband's village she did not know where it was located; but she likes it now.

Froso's memories from her first years of marriage in Thira, a village around 15 Kms away from her own, revealed the differences that existed within the *Dopia* villages, as well as the peoples' perceptions of patterns of behaviour identified as 'Greek'.

I grew up with my grandmother who did not speak Greek and so I learned *Dopia* first. During my first years in my husband's village, although I spoke *Dopia*, I couldn't understand enough what my parents-in-law were saying because they spoke differently. So, I spoke Greek. For this reason I was teased by my affinal relatives and told "You are too Greek". But in later years, I learned the *Dopia* spoken in the village.

The process of learning to speak *Dopia* was different for her 16-year-old son however. Like every teenager, he participated in many dance events where he was introduced to speaking through listening to the Slavic songs sung by local bands.

I did not teach it to my children but they listened to me and my husband speaking it. My son was complaining that he did not understand. As he grew up he started to learn it by going to every *panigiri* and listening to tapes from the local bands. Then he started asking us to tell him more and to correct him.

The importance of the youth's participation in the activities of an association in order to gain experience and become socialised were the main reasons she worked hard for the establishment of the village's association although she did not come from the village. She said that it was very important for the youth. She insisted that their association had to participate in as many activities as possible. She gathered the young dancers and prepared the troupe for the first performance they made, in the village's annual celebration of its patron saint. Describing the way she worked with the dance troupe, she said

I don't have any experience in teaching dances. At the beginning I only taught them by counting the steps. Then they asked me to dance with the music and they spontaneously expressed themselves and 'the feet danced by themselves'. The only one that knew how to dance was my daughter who watched me dancing at home. Of course, the teenagers were very stressed but they did well.

Froso seemed to be unaware of the dance discourse in the region and the potential political significance of the theatrical presentation of the dances. In her effort to introduce an innovative element she was thinking about presenting dances that did not originate in the region.

I have a friend in Skopje from whom I expect a videotape in order to select dances and elicit the way they are danced, and then teach them to the troupe. I want to present something new. I will give the dance a different name and that will be something novel.

However, she was aware of the functioning of local cultural politics. Relations of clientelism with politicians and everyone with political and economic power who might help are important. She wondered how she could get access to subsidies in order to have dresses manufactured for the troupe. She said she knew she had to establish contacts and acquaintances, although she was concerned that the local MP and current representative of the PASOK wouldn't want to meet them because they supported another future candidate of the same party.

In relation to issues of identity, Froso was seeing her children develop a sense of belonging based on elements which she couldn't incorporate or express because they have been stigmatised or rejected. Experiencing the current socio-political context created in the region since the 1990s, she seemed to be in the process of building a new form of subjectivity, which considered itself part of the *Dopioi* category and attempted to acknowledge various realities without challenging the dominance of the Greek national project. It strove however to occupy an equal position in relation to the other categories and get equal treatment from the State.

Everybody has to have the freedom to express him or herself the way one had been accustomed to do. Just like the *Pontios*, the *Arvanitis* and the Vlach dance and sing freely, in the same way must the *Dopios* do these things freely.

But she differentiated herself from those who promote an ideology against the Greek state. She further asserted that if the state had not followed a repressive policy towards the *Dopioi* and had let the language be spoken freely *Dopia* would not have been preserved.

Those who created the problems with Macedonia were very few and could mislead many others. They were also based on language and this is the way they "do their job". If people could speak freely the language would become extinct. The past has also contributed to the problem.

According to her, language and dancing must not be mixed with politics

But I do not want to mix culture with politics. I love to express myself in the way I am and what I learned to be without any other connotations. Politics is one

thing and cultural issues another. Dance is joy and entertainment and should not be used to divide people.

## 6.6) Yiayia Anastasia

Yiayia Anastasia is my grandmother. She was born in 1924 and raised in the village of Kato Idrusa, or Kotori<sup>77</sup> as she often calls it. The majority of its population consists of villagers who see themselves as *Dopioi* and the rest as *Arvanites*. In these terms, my grandmother is an *Arvanitissa*. She moved to the town of Florina in her mid-twenties during the Civil War. Her mother tongue is *Arvanitika* but she speaks *Dopia* and Greek equally well. When she plays with her great-grandchildren she sings them songs in Greek, *Arvanitika* and *Dopia* and she tells them to learn to dance *Beratse* and *Poustseno*.

Her views and perceptions of the years she lived in the village and her account of the relations between the two categories did not reveal a view of two opposing groups. On the contrary, she saw the community in terms of conducting a common life in the same social environment, participating in the same social events, going to school together and protecting each other in dangerous and tough periods for the village such as World War II and the Civil War. Even today she visits relatives in the village who belong to both categories, attends weddings and is informed about the village's social life.

My account is based on my overall knowledge about her as well as on two biographic interviews I conducted during my fieldwork. In the stories and incidents she described, I try to trace her views on the relations between the categories, the degree of contact through dance events and common celebrations and her memories of the village during the critical periods of the Metaxas dictatorship and the decade 1940-1950.

Recalling the years when she was a little girl, she said about the contact between the two categories

Earlier, I remember it very vaguely because I was very young, we had two distinct churches. We had St. Dimitrius and they had St. Nicholas. But after a while we all became the same. We, the kids, exchanged bread with each other at school. They ate a lot of corn bread and we had wheat bread. They made it very tasty and they ate ours, which they did not have. They also had strong livestock

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<sup>77</sup> The term Kotori is the previous name of the village. The complete name was Dolno Kotori or Kato Idrousa today. The names were changed by the Greek state in the 1920s.

and we paid some of them to plough our fields. But we did not argue with each other. We lived together. We did not talk against each other or do anything against each other. And we did not marry each other, no, that did not take place. That started from the 1940s onwards.

She presented two different examples from her extended family in which persons attempted to break the social norms. The first example concerned an *Arvanitis* and a *Dopia* who were in love but whose kin did not let them marry each other, and the second was about another *Arvanitis* who married a *Dopia*.

The brother of my father loved Maro very much. He was madly in love with her. But they couldn't get married. Everybody had objected to it. They did not let her marry him, neither did they let him marry her. She then got married to someone else and left for Bulgaria. My uncle married an *Arvanitissa*. But he still had his mind on her. He visited us recently from Australia and he said he wanted to go to Bulgaria to see Maro. Now, look at this bad thing. To love each other and not be able to marry.

The only one who had a *Dopia* bride was another uncle of mine. He was first married to another woman who died at forty-two. Then he married a *Dopia* and there were no problems. Previously they did not marry each other. But from the war onwards we became one thing.

In the 1940s, both categories seem to have begun to establish kin relations with each other. My grandmother described being a bridesmaid at a wedding held in the village in 1946 where she also sang the wedding songs in *Dopia*. Alexandra, the bride and her 'blood sister', was *Dopia*.

I was the bridesmaid at Aunt Alexandra's wedding. We were very close. We were *stavradelfes* [blood sisters]. Her mother put me in this position. I followed her and stepped wherever she stepped. And behind me there were others who were singing in *Dopia*. I sang with them too. They played very sad songs and we all cried.

In relation to other public occasions where the whole village gathered, she described big religious feasts at Christmas, Easter and August 15th that took place in the central square. People arrived there when they heard the sound of the music. The two first dances she mentioned are attributed to the *Dopioi* and the others to the *Arvanites*.

They danced *Poustseno*, *Gaida*, *Beratse*, *Mentris*. Some elders were saying in *Dopia*, "*Gaidata sakam*" [I want the *Gaida*].

She also mentioned the school as a place for learning and performing dancing. Her description reflected an important distinction. She explicitly differentiated between the

dances she learned at school, which were related to Greece, and those she danced in the village. It seems that even during that period, identification with the State was not pre-given and school was definitely used as a means for the consolidation of national identity.

At school we were taught the Greek things, the Greek islands, everything Greek. We did demonstrations of co-ordinated gymnastic exercises. We learned the Greek dances, *Kalamatianos*, *Tsamikos*; but not our own dances like *Poustseno* or *Beratse*. These we danced during the village's feasts.

The most difficult time for the village and especially for the *Dopioi*, she remembered, was the Metaxas period. People "were afraid because police persecuted them". While she was talking about this she asked me to turn the tape recorder off. Although she was talking to her grandson, she couldn't overcome the fear very often expressed by people of her age that anything that is recorded is a documented evidence that can be used for any purpose. She described an incident in which one can see the role of certain state representatives in the application of state policy and its impact on people. But most importantly, one can see the ways in which the villagers dealt with it.

During the Metaxas period, I was already going to the housekeeping school in Florina. One day, the Prefect visited the village. It was Sunday and I was there too. The local musicians played some music. Then he gave a speech. I remember that he was saying to us not to speak Bulgarian, not to do this, not to do that. He was shouting, fuming at the people. Everybody was afraid of him. He said, "If I hear you speak Bulgarian, you see that tree over there?" Its like I see him now. "This is where I will hang you". And he pointed at it with his fingers. The whole village was very scared. But we the young girls did not care. We continued speaking it. Who could hear us? If we saw anybody we just stopped talking.

The 1940-1950 decade was equally difficult. Many *Dopioi* from the village were happy with the Bulgarian presence in the region. Others collaborated with them. A celebration was organised on the occasion of the Ilinden uprising<sup>78</sup>.

It was difficult when the Bulgarians came. Many of ours [co-villagers] in the village got involved in the Bulgarian propaganda. When the Greeks came they left and joined the left-wing armed forces. While the Germans were here, the partisans had killed a Bulgarian in Tropeuchos<sup>79</sup>. Some of the partisans were wounded and were carried to the village. There was blood on the road. Bulgarian troops came and gathered the whole village. The husband of my cousin Pandora was a partisan. He was not in the village and the problem was what we should

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<sup>78</sup> For information on the Ilinden uprising, see Chapter 4, footnote 22.

<sup>79</sup> This is the village next to Kato Idrousa towards the town of Florina.

say about her. We agreed to say she was the wife of my uncle. When they came close to us they asked us, "*Ruski, Ruski?*" ["Russians, Russians?"] because we were blond. "No", we told them. Then, they asked about Pandora and we said that Taskos was her husband. They spoke to us in Bulgarian. "*So ste? Ruski?*" ["What are you? Russians?"]. We responded, of course, "*Ne sme Ruski. Od tuka sme*" ["We are not Russians, we come from here"]. Nobody from the village said anything though they all knew that they were not married.

Yiayia Anastasia closed her account with one incident in which the solidarity expressed by her co-villagers, who in both cases were *Dopioi*, saved her father's life.

When the Germans left, the State appointed my father as the village's mayor. But although it was the Civil War, we supported each other. Some of the left-wingers wanted to arrest my father but one of their high-ranking officers who came from our village said "If you kill him I will withdraw from the group". That person left Greece in 1947. After the war, we went to Bitola to see him.

## **6.7) Anthropological Accounts and the Construction of Individual Identities in Greek Macedonia**

This chapter has explored the ways individuals in diverse social positions construct and experience identity and difference. The construction of individual identities has been pointed out recently in the study of identity formation processes in Macedonia (Cowan and Brown 2000) but to a large extent remains an unfulfilled quest. In the case of Greek Macedonia, the majority of the studies in the area have laid great emphasis on collectivities and collective identities.

Loring Danforth (1995) has provided an in-depth analysis of the construction of national identities at the individual level among transnational diaspora communities. His detailed ethnographic account reveals the ways migrants from north-western Greek Macedonia, mainly from the region of Florina, deal with the challenges and restrictions posed in the multi-national and multi-cultural societies in which they live in order to choose their national identity. In all cases, identification is mainly a matter of personal choice and individual agency. Yet, although Danforth is able to recognise the 'constructedness' of identities in Australia, he seems to primordialise it in the Florina region. Though he de-constructs nationalities, he sees the *Dopioi* category as an ethnic group exposed to the national projects of both Greece and FYROM (ibid: 212).

He takes too much at face value the salience as well as the boundedness of this category. According to his account, its members are forced, as regards the issue of

national identification, either to identify themselves with the two national discourses or to follow a neutral position, keeping an equal distance from them. This implies that national identity “develops like a thin veneer on top of preexisting regional or ethnic identities” (ibid: 202). By not attempting to de-construct the identity of the *Dopioi* category, Danforth fails to acknowledge intra-category differentiations and divisions, its own politics and internal conflicts. In this way, he reproduces the “metaphors of Macedonian multiplicity – fruit salads, mosaics, and chess-boards – which represent groups as discrete and irreducible ‘billiard balls’ in collision” (Cowan and Brown 2000:3).

In another paper, Riki Van Boeschoten (2000) examines the question of why ethnic difference has become the basis for political and social conflicts in the Florina region. Her uncritical use of the terms referring to the local population categories and her description of ‘Slav-speakers’ and refugees as two of the main ethnic groups hardly sees ethnicity as “constructed, fluid and variably salient” (Cowan and Brown 2000:3). It rather presents the categories as homogenous entities and the individuals, their supposed members, as displaying unitary senses of their own identity and uniform types of consciousness.

Assumptions of the existence of a ‘real’ identity underneath a ‘false’, ‘preformed’ one by the individuals in Macedonia are also made by Anastasia Karakasidou in her account of an old ‘Bulgarian’ woman (1997:126-132) in central Greek Macedonia, near the city of Thessaloniki. In the description of her interactions and interviews with this woman, Karakasidou underlines the fact that the woman told her two different versions of her life-history and states that she considers the second to be the ‘authentic’ one. Karakasidou has been criticised for not equally appreciating all the contextual frames in which her data were gathered and for privileging the second version as “uncovering a deeper level of truth” (Brown 1999:14). By doing so, she seems to replicate practices of the nation-state she has elsewhere criticised (ibid:15).

The situational nature of the individual identity which changes over time and across contexts has been acknowledged by Jane Cowan (1997). In a paper based on her study of Sohos, a small town in central Greek Macedonia, Cowan suggests that the use by individuals of cultural practices and symbols labelled by the national discourse as ‘non-Greek’, should not be read as a mark of ethnicity or as an instrument for the

accomplishment of political objectives. Such an interpretation is simplistic and reductive because it “fails to enquire into the meanings these forms have for those who use them” (1997:164). The employment of these preserved polyglot practices with a multiplicity of meanings (not necessarily incompatible) is rather to be seen as “part of the normal fabric of the everyday interaction, and as a code for Sohoians to articulate (largely to each other) complex identities, relationships and historical experiences” and as an “expression of belonging to the local community” (ibid:165). Nevertheless, in the politics of identity as practiced in the Florina region, the use of the ambiguous term ‘*Dopioi*’ to designate a collectivity in the form of a minority and highlight its difference from other population categories on the basis of its cultural distinctiveness serves certain political ends. It obscures the contextual character of individual identities and the variety of the ways they are expressed (Cowan 2001).

The creative role of individuals in the construction of collective identities in a mixed-population village in central Macedonia is emphasised by Georgios Agelopoulos (1997b). Individuals tend to manipulate and strategically use their affiliations in constructing various situational levels of belonging for the achievement of their aims. In this process, their actions move beyond the ways they perceive and represent their worlds and undermine the unchanging and consistent identities of the collectivities of which they supposedly are members.

In the end, in the only paper published so far that deals explicitly with the identity of individuals in the Florina region, Piero Vereni (2000) analysed the complicated attempts of a Slavic-speaking villager from the Florina region to justify the choices he made in identifying himself as a ‘Greek Macedonian’. In his notebooks, upon which the analysis was based, the main character wandered between Greek national history and his personal history as read through kinship and personal events to place himself within conflicting notions of collective identities. Vereni’s example illustrates very effectively how complex the sense of belonging of an individual can be, disregarding current representations of ‘ethnic’ distinctions in the Florina region.

Regarding the accounts of the five individuals presented in this chapter, Kiriakos’s case demonstrates the deeply political character of local cultural activities. It also illustrates the struggle between the individual and the hegemony of both national and minority discourses. He found himself in the middle of them, and with the intervention

of other contingent factors he experienced in an extremely emotional way an identity crisis. As a result of this process, he learned that fluidity of strategies and situational use of ambiguous symbols (Cowan 2003, forthcoming) are the most effective tactics for maneuvering in the local context. Savvas having been actively involved in the Macedonian conflict from a position that promoted Rainbow's political agenda has shifted his views towards a distancing from of all exclusive identities and their respective restricting qualities. Dealing with questions about his personal sense of belonging, he has adopted a new approach: he wishes to establish new relationships in which identity and difference are never predetermined but always negotiable (see Cowan 2001:171).

Kir-Andreas' and yiayia Anastasia's accounts demonstrate that neither the boundedness of the *Dopioi* as a consistent category nor the clear-cut distinction between population categories is valid; they depend on each person's experiences and multiple other factors. In addition, they exhibit the individual's capacity to manipulate and use for their own ends dominant symbols and ideologies. Froso, like Savvas, exemplifies a new type of subjectivity that emerged after the boisterous 1990 decade as a manifestation of deeper social changes in the region. She dismisses any kind of action that strives to implant a new socio-political order. She seems to be concerned with improving the terms of the state policy and de-stigmatising the category she belongs to. She also claims her right to practice 'culture' instead of politics of culture.

Individuals do not want to identify themselves in exclusive and absolute terms with any one of the national categories imposed on them by various totalising projects. Although such projects pose the dichotomies 'we and they' in the first place, it is the social actors who act within this cultural logic, adopting more fluid strategies in order to adapt to the social environment they live in. In the light of their current interests, they draw on various practices to work out how to organise their social relations. They operate in unpredictable political situations by appropriating symbols and practices, which do not have a closed and entirely coherent set of meanings but are polyvalent and fluid. Focusing on the ability of individuals to create the meaning of personal and collective identities reveals that belonging is a matter of negotiation and political manipulation related to power structures existing in society. This process has its own

limits which are posed by the wider context of local and national life in which the region is embedded.

\* \* \*

This chapter has adopted the view that paying attention to the construction of identity at the level of the individual contributes to the understanding of the formation of collectivities from the bottom up. The multifaceted and multi-layered sense of identity as expressed by the individuals of this chapter has significant implications for the character of the supposed collectivities of which they are members. This complexity of identity shows that the construction of collectivities is a politically responsive process. It also undermines accounts which represent them as exclusive and previously existing groups. Although individuals may assume that any given person can 'have' only one 'real' identity of a certain basic kind (ethnic, national, gender) (Verdery 1994:37), identities actually constantly change to negotiate the meanings of the individual's actions in response to the social setting.

From the moment people increase their ability to construct their identity, the formation of the categories to which they are assigned, as well as their sense of belonging, enter a stage of continuous negotiation. Individuals seem to be interested in adopting a position that leaves them space to 'act'. To the degree that state policies and other nationalist projects are based on a political agenda or on a misunderstanding that sees local cultural practices as illegitimate and dangerous, the individual's multi-dimensional identity will be perceived as opposed to and unidentifiable with any totalising project.

## **CHAPTER 7:**

### **THE POLITICAL CHARACTER OF DANCE PERFORMANCE IN THE FLORINA REGION**

In this thesis, I have explored the ways identification and categorisation are expressed in presentational and participatory dance events in the Florina region, a border area in northern Greece. Collectivities and individuals introduce dance within these contexts to communicate to group and non-group members a self-definition of their identity. At the same time, through dance they may be defined and attached by others to a putative name and characterisation. In this way, they deal with hegemonic discourses of cultural difference distinguishable groups defined as separated cultural entities reside in the region; each consists of individuals who share a group's 'culture'. Dance events are presented and perceived as visualisations of the supposed groups' 'cultures' in which their members perform their identity and thus prove the existence of the groups.

The first objective of the thesis has been to challenge the notion of well-defined groups and to de-construct not only the essence of the nation but also other collective categories. I have deliberately avoided using any terminology which classifies the inhabitants of the Florina region on the basis of their 'ethnicity' and ascribes them to 'ethnic' groups. Such an approach involves what has been called 'an essentialist view of culture' (Cowan, Dembour, Wilson 2001:3). This view of the local populations attempts partially and imperfectly to account for the complexity of the local social reality and the 'contradictory' actions of the individuals.

I have shifted the focus from groups to social situations in order to explore the conditions under which the members of the supposed collectivities identify or distance themselves from the categories to which they are ascribed or claim to belong. I decided to centre my analysis on the population category of the *Dopioi*, taking into account the other categories in the region to the extent necessary to address the questions I raise. I adopted a situational approach to identity, viewing identification and categorisation as “dynamic, historically grounded and politically responsive” processes (Cowan and Brown 2000:22) whose outcome is never predetermined but depends on the context.

I then distinguished the various agents that are involved in active participation and interaction with each other during the progress of dance events. I observed how they behaved during dancing, the meanings they attributed to dance, the symbols they used to express meanings and the ways they perceived the result of this process. I also explored what people said about dance in order to see how they gave meaning to what they did and to what extent their accounts corresponded to their actions.

Viewing dance not as a fixed essence with certain definable properties but as a wide field of practices and meanings, I considered it critical to give an account of the social, political, and economic contexts during the period of my fieldwork to enable us to understand those contexts and thereby interpret the dances in terms of practices and meanings. I argued that the changes taking place in the Florina region during my fieldwork considerably affected ideas of belonging. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the importance of ascription to a collective category acquired new cultural meaning. On the one hand, it decreased the exchange value of population category membership and, on the other hand, it made it a determining factor in local power relations.

I argued that the construction of identity during and through dance events is a performative action that has to have an audience and an externally derived framework of meanings. I demonstrated that this framework of meanings was set by the Greek state and the local agents that promoted its ideology. According to the national discourse, the concept of culture has an ideological centrality in confirming the existence of the nation and, at the same time, differentiating it from other collectivities. As I showed in Chapter 4, until 1990 dance was a tool for the propagation of the dominant ideas about national culture and national belonging. A vision of what ‘Floriniot dances’ were had been projected under specific ideological circumstances, in a

diversity of contexts and with a variety of strategies employed within those contexts by cultural institutions and individuals.

However in the 1990s, after the transformations in the Balkans and the increasing importance of the issue of human rights, the practice of dance acquired an even more explicit political meaning. Political movements emerged in Greek Macedonia promoting the protection of human rights of the Macedonian minority in Greece and claiming that the category of *Dopioi* were the members of that minority. These developments generated counter-actions which caused the Greek official position to be promoted even more intensely. Competing agents attempted to construct exclusive national identities and presented dance events as 'expressions' of those particular identities, and no other.

Minority activists exploited dance and its practices in their struggle to legitimate their cause, transforming their meanings and introducing new elements related to the performance of dance. In seeking to challenge the state ideology, the movements for Macedonian human rights offered an alternative identity which was no less totalising. Their objectives and the means they used overlapped to a great extent with the Greek national project (Cowan 2001). Individuals and groups in the region were forced, on public occasions, to make choices between exclusive identities, by attending either the one or the other event, or by dancing either one dance and not the other or none.

In reality, the *Dopioi* category, the population to which this dance 'culture' was attributed, was politically fractured and encompassed multiple ways of perceiving reality, different histories and different attitudes, which did not fit the essentialist qualities attributed to exclusive collective identities. *Dopioi* members who were identified with the Greek project promoted the Greek state's version of national culture. Other *Dopioi* who felt excluded or oppressed by the Greek national project were offered new opportunities for negotiating their position and status within the nation-state. Some of them identified themselves as Macedonians in the national sense and pursued the recognition of a distinctive Macedonian identity and culture. Others were forced to choose between exclusive identities and contingent qualities. Still others wanted only to assert their right to practise their culture apart from any national connotations.

Therefore the second objective of the thesis has been to point out the diversity of views within the *Dopioi* category. I considered it significant to document and highlight the ways dance and other cultural events and actions within them were perceived and to reveal the varied strategies followed by the agents involved. I showed this by stressing the 'inconsistency' of choices and actions taken, not only by different agents in the same context but by the same agents in different contexts. I described a wedding revival and a book presentation which were presented and perceived as demonstrations of the *Dopioi* 'culture'.

As I showed in Chapter 5, what was represented as to be group 'culture' was not empirically maintainable. While such events as those described were seen as significant for the perpetuation of the group's 'culture', these very events provided a stage that transformed this 'culture'. Embedded in the politics of identity and culture, the events became means for the accomplishment of diverse, not always interrelated, deeply political cultural projects from which the actors benefited in many different ways.

The third objective of the thesis has been to show that belonging is a matter of negotiation and political manipulation related to the power dynamics that prevail at certain periods. Examining the construction of identity at the individual level, I demonstrated that individuals consciously reject subject positions and identities assigned to them and shift from one possible position to another. Within these contexts, social actors make choices and develop strategies through which they accept, manipulate or contest symbols and change their meanings circumstantially or permanently. In this process, they draw on local, national and transnational discourses and use cultural institutions as vehicles for promoting their agendas.

This thesis is essentially an ethnographic study about dance, identity and culture, examining politics and dance performance. Apart from that, it incorporates autobiographic and auto-ethnographic elements of my lived experience as one who has grown up in the region and has been involved in the processes and practices that formed the object of my research. Discussing aspects of my fieldwork in Chapter 2, I disclaimed the privileged position that might be implied by my origin from the region for the conduct of my research; I claim only partial knowledge of the society under study. I emphasised that self-reflexivity and the conduct of an experiential form of fieldwork are the main strategies that allow the ethnographer to denounce any claims to

'objectivity' and 'detachment' from those under study. The central importance of this approach has been suggested in studies conducted in European societies (Kokot and Drackle 1996:8).

In this way, I hope to contribute to the anthropological discussion about the ways these issues are approached theoretically and methodologically, addressed in the field and then textually represented. I claimed that we need to stress our positioning in the research setting as well as our relationships with our subjects. I pointed out the extremely complex relations between the researcher and those under study, which involve various dimensions of power. These relations depend on an array of factors, which develop and change over time. As Agelopoulos has pointed out (1998), Florinotes are "conscious of and control the information provided to anyone who is a stranger and are particularly conscious of the professional strangers (i.e. the anthropologists)"; I showed this in Chapter 2.

The thesis should be also read as an attempt to de-exoticise the Florina region. Accounts which claim a consensual form of culture tend to represent Florina region as an 'isolated' area untouched by national and global forces. Thus, processes of identification and categorisation performed in the Florina region are simplified and presented as excessively determined. The perception of local reality on the basis of dichotomies which are then used as analytical distinctions reifies and essentialises 'we' and 'they', 'us' and 'them'.

Such dichotomies obscure the diversity of views and the range of different models of viewing social reality. Hence, they contribute to the construction of social reality rather than its explanation, and introduce into local discourses notions and symbols which collectivities and individuals then use to negotiate identities and power relations. The 'invention of culture' as the objectification and textual representation of peoples' practices and beliefs articulated through social action (Wagner 1981) is an approach that remains still "provocative" (Cowan, Dembour and Wilson 2001:14) and that all anthropologists must keep in mind when dealing with the complexity of social processes.

The idea that dance performance simply reflects 'underlying' cultural patterns and social structures expresses a structuralist position in anthropology that has been

abandoned in the analysis of dance for a long time now. Social performance is now understood as a practice in which meanings are generated and manipulated within certain limitations.

The thesis has adopted this approach in the study of dance in the Florina region and has focused on the political aspects of dance events. Dance events as practiced in the Florina region are embedded in power relations between collectivities and individuals as they have been configured by the state at a previous stage, and by current transnational forces and discourses. Celebratory practices in the Florina region cannot be seen as expressions of 'real' identities, but must be placed in the context of the modern practice of identity politics which interweaves different levels of action, involving various agents and different audiences and implicating ideas developed in a global context.

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## ABSTRAKT

In der vorliegenden Arbeit habe ich untersucht, wie Prozesse kollektiver und individueller Identifikationen und Abgrenzungen in Tanzereignissen in der Region Florina, einer Grenzregion im nordwestlichen Griechisch-Makedonien, zum Ausdruck gebracht werden. Dabei habe ich Tänze, die von Individuen und/oder Gruppen bei verschiedenen Tanzereignissen (Tanzgruppenauftritte, Hochzeitsfeste, religiöse Festlichkeiten, spontane Tanzgelegenheiten) aufgeführt werden, als performativen Ausdruck eines konflikthaften Diskurses um nationale und regionale Identitäten gedeutet. Durch den Tanz versuchen verschiedene kulturelle Agenten kollektive Identitäten zu konstruieren und/oder auszuhandeln. Individuen und Gruppen reagieren auf diese Weise auf einen domierenden nationalstaatlichen Diskurs über Identitäten in der Region Florina. In diesem Diskurs wird die Bevölkerung der Region Florina in Bevölkerungskategorien aufgeteilt, die als deutlich voneinander unterscheidbare Gruppen angesehen werden, deren Mitglieder eine homogene Kultur und damit auch eine homogene kollektive Identität aufweisen. *Dopioi*, *Pontioi*, *Vlachoi*, und *Arvanites* sind Begriffe, die die Bewohnern der Region Florina als "categories of ascription and identification" (Barth 1969:10) benutzen, um sich voneinander abzugrenzen und Unterschiede in der Sprache und andere Kulturpraktiken hervorzuheben. Tanzereignisse werden als die Visualisierung von ‚Kultur‘ und „kollektiver Identität“ der entsprechenden Gruppen angesehen. Das Verhalten der Individuen bei Tanzereignissen wird entsprechend als Vorführung kollektiver Identität wahrgenommen. Tänze sind damit ein kulturelles Mittel um die Existenz deutlich unterscheidbarer kultureller Gruppen zu beweisen.

Vorrangiges Ziels meiner Arbeit war es, die Idee der Existenz von klar abgegrenzten nationalen und ethnischen Gruppen in der Region Florina in Frage zu stellen. Ausgangspunkte meiner Untersuchung sind daher nicht die Gruppen an sich, sondern Tanzveranstaltungen im Sinne von sozialen Ereignissen, bei denen sich Individuen mit der Vorstellung der Existenz von Gruppen identifizieren oder davon abgrenzen. Bei meiner Analyse habe ich mich hauptsächlich auf die Bevölkerungskategorie der *Dopioi* konzentriert. Ich habe zwischen den verschiedenen Agenten unterschieden, die sich an den Tanzereignissen beteiligen und ihre Interaktion untersucht. Bei meiner teilnehmenden Beobachtung standen folgende Fragen im Vordergrund: Wie verhalten sich die Akteure während des Tanzes? Welche Bedeutungen schreiben sie dem Tanz zu? Welche Symbole werden verwendet, um diese Bedeutungen auszudrücken? Wie reagieren Akteure auf diese symbolischen Zuschreibungen? Darüber hinaus habe ich durch anschließende Interviews untersucht, wie die Akteure ihr Verhalten bei Tanzereignissen retrospektiv sinnhaft deuten und in welchem Verhältnis diese retrospektiven Sinnkonstruktionen zu ihren Handlungen stehen.

Die Konstruktion von Identität während und durch Tanzereignisse ist eine performative Handlung. Die Bedeutungen, die Tänze dabei einerseits ausdrücken und die ihnen andererseits im Rahmen dieser performativen Handlungen zugeschrieben werden, entstehen nicht ausschließlich in der Situation selber. Bereits in den 50er Jahren begannen der griechische Nationalstaat und seine lokalen Agenten Tanz als Mittel zur Konstruktion einer homogenen nationalen Kultur und Identität einzusetzen. Diese Bedeutungen werden seit Anfang der 90er Jahre von der lokalen Bevölkerung nicht mehr widerspruchslos akzeptiert. Seit Ende der 80er Jahre und besonders nach der Unabhängigkeitserklärung der Yugoslavischen Republik Makedonien 1991, traten politische Gruppen in der Region Florina in Erscheinung, die für sich in Anspruch nahmen, die Interessen einer makedonischen Minderheit zu artikulieren, die in ihren Augen deckungsgleich mit der Bevölkerungskategorie der *Dopioi* war. Um deren kulturelle Eigenständigkeit zu belegen, nutzten sie, neben anderen Mitteln, die lokalen Tänze als Differenzierungszeichen.

Aktivisten der Minderheit nutzten die Bedeutungen der lokalen Tänze und des Tanzens aus und führten neue Tanzelemente ein, um eine neue makedonische nationale Identität durchzusetzen. In Reaktion darauf haben Vertreter des griechischen Staates,

der die Existenz einer nationalen makedonischen Minderheit auf griechischem Territorium nicht anerkannte, eine griechische nationale Identität durch den Tanz noch intensiver zu befördern und auszudrücken. Dadurch wurden Tanzereignisse in politische Ereignisse umgewandelt, in denen Vertreter beider Diskurse gegeneinander antraten, um die Ereignisse als Beweisführungen einer griechischen oder makedonischen Nationalidentität zu präsentieren. Angehörige der *Dopioi* Bevölkerungskategorie wurden in diesen Situationen gezwungen, zwischen zwei sich gegenseitig ausschließenden nationalen Identifikationen zu wählen.

Das Aufzeigen der Vielheit von Ansichten und Einstellungen in der Kategorie der *Dopioi* im Bezug auf die Identifizierung mit und/oder Abgrenzung von den Nationalidentitäten stand im Mittelpunkt des Interesses dieses Projekts. Durch die Erwähnung von einzelnen Vorfällen während verschiedenen Tanzereignissen und die detaillierte Beschreibung und Analyse der Inszenierung eines Hochzeitfestes und einer Buchvorstellung erwies sich, dass was als ‚Kultur‘ der *Dopioi* dargestellt wurde, empirisch nicht zu stützen war. Obwohl beide Ereignisse als Ausdrücke und bedeutsame für die gemeinsame ‚Kultur‘ der Gruppe von den Organisatoren bezeichnet wurden, bestimmten den Kontext, in dem diese ‚Kultur‘ transformiert wurde

Im Zusammenhang mit der Diskussion über die Rolle der Individuen bei der Konstruktion und Manipulation von Identitäten bestätigten sich Positionen der kontemporären Identitätsforschung. Identitäten sind niemals abgeschlossene Einheiten, sondern fortwährende, flexible Prozesse kollektiver und individueller Identifikationen und Abgrenzungen. Gruppenzugehörigkeiten sind also situationsabhängig und von den jeweiligen Machtbeziehungen abhängig. Individuelle Akteure verhandeln ständig und bewusst ihre soziale Position und verfolgen Strategien, um ihre persönliche Ziele zu erreichen.

Tanzereignisse in der Region Florina können nicht als Ausdruck von ‚echten‘ Identitäten gesehen werden. Ihre Wirkung als Symbole exklusiver nationaler Identitäten entfalten sie im Kontext konflikthafter nationaler und lokaler Kultur- und Minderheitenpolitiken, die in der Region aufeinanderprallen und von lokalen Akteuren verhandelt werden. Dabei wäre es verkürzt, die Positionierung lokaler Akteure gegenüber diesen widerstreitenden Kulturpolitiken als bloße Identifikationen mit und Abgrenzungen gegenüber nationalen Identitäten zu interpretieren. Vielmehr sind die

Prozesse der Positionierung gegenüber nationalen Identifikationen von wirtschaftlichen und materiellen Dimensionen bestimmt, die zwar nicht öffentlich artikuliert werden, jedoch dennoch eine entscheidende Rolle spielen.