

Vanished Cultural Landscapes: Rituals of Remembrance for Submerged Bulgarian Villages

Lina Gergova

PhD, assistat professor, The Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences

e:mail: lina.gergova@gmail.com

Abstract: The article explores the processes of building memoryscapes: a material anchor is a starting point or an integral part of the narrative in order to facilitate communication. In some cases, these anchors are material remains, in others new religious, commemorative or ritual sites. The commemorations or pilgrimages need a visible, material object. Placemaking based on a lost place as performed by the first generation, i.e. resettlers, results in elaborated memoryscape within the second generation, i.e. their descendants.

Key words: memoryscaps, narratives, material objects, pilgrimage, place-making

Contextualising the study: Dam construction in Bulgaria

Dam construction is an engineering, environmental, political and social process that affects multiple spheres of natural and human life not only in a particular area but on national and international levels. The largest projects are so economically important that they take precedence over cultural and natural

heritage, traditional livelihoods and habitats. Societies are divided in their evaluation of the contribution of such large projects to economies and their effects on social, cultural and natural environments. However, the displacement of indigenous communities, vanished cultural landscapes and radically transformed local economies are among the most common consequences worldwide (McCully 2001; Basu 2016). Anthropologists are rarely attracted by reservoirs construction issues and, when they are, they usually try to reconstruct and conserve the heritage of relocated communities and study the trauma caused by the spatial and social transformation (Phadke 1999: 5–15).

Dams have a long history as a way of managing and using water, mainly for farming, but also since the 19th century for generating electricity. The hydro era began in Europe and the USA in the 1930s, although by the 1970s green ideology was prevailing and it was no longer so easy to resettle people and make ecological shifts to satisfy investors (Usher 1997). In Asia, notably India and China, the building of massive reservoirs has led to the displacement of millions of individuals. Although particular initiatives have been established in these countries to facilitate the transition period for resettlers and promote their wellbeing (Shaojun & Zhen 2006), economic expansion is still the top priority (Phadke 1999: 3). In Bulgaria, the majority of large-scale water infrastructure projects took place during the time of socialism. This can be attributed to the fact that Bulgarian industrialisation experienced significant growth in the late 1940s. After the 1989 democratic transformation, the implementation of such extensive construction projects abruptly came to a halt.

Among thousands of dam installations in the country, construction of about 20 reservoirs led to the need of population resettlement and dozens of vanishing villages. The forced migration was not violent and people had numerous options of where to move in order to carry on with their lives. People were granted access to the materials from their previous houses, the means to transport their furniture, and low-interest loans to better accommodate families. However, entire villages, roads, fields, ritual sites, and local geography are under water, forever invisible. Occasionally, when water level drop, some remains can be seen, prompting the original inhabitants, their descendants, and other intrigued people such as photographers, journalists, and tourists to come and investigate the area. Some villages are situated at the reservoir's edge and the buildings can be spotted, although others lie too deep and their remnants will never appear again.

After being relocated, populations were spread out across various villages and towns, and families separated, resulting in the disintegration of communities. Occasionally, people get together and visit a village that was formerly their home. In many cases, a custom of assembling was established at certain locations on specific dates, the dates being either random or regular, the place being either a remnant from the former village or its cultural environment, or a newly organised spot. These events are the objects of this study because they are the products of interrelations between new social and natural environments and are the most important contexts and models of maintaining a village community after its collapse. Between 2019 and 2022, through my research, I extensively examined written records and conducted ethnographic observations of various types of community gathering that have taken place annually or been held at least once in the past. During the socialist period, community gatherings were neither forbidden nor encouraged, so various forms of commemoration of vanished villages and festivals continued or were established – annual gatherings, decade commemorations, a museum, monuments, etc. After the 1990s, these events flourished, especially those in areas of religious interest. Over the last 30 years many historical books about vanished villages were published by community members. Books of poetry were also dedicated to home villages.

Analytical approaches: placemaking and memoryscapes

These villages and their surroundings might be studied from several perspectives. Perhaps, the logical choice is to approach them through the phenomenological conception of **placemaking**, i.e. as a process (cultural practices and communal experience) and a result (sense of place). Placemaking in various contexts relies on concepts that are derived from local culture, customs, and the collective will of the community, as well as is a grassroots initiative based on popular notions and models of connecting nature and society, past and present (Sofield, Guia & Specht 2017; Kõiva 2018). Placemaking has the ability to cultivate a **sense of place**, which is a necessity for humans in order to have a sense of comfort, security, and direction. Furthermore, it serves as a remedy for feelings of exclusion and unfamiliarity (Aravot 2002: 202). Obviously a sense of place is an intangible result of the process of placemaking, although it touches on the materiality of the place. However, this brings us to the possible

immateriality of place, or its virtuality as memory, heritage or other mental or cultural construct, something subjective and not based on empirical evidence.

It seems that the idea of 'lost place' (Read 1996), which highlights as a leading characteristic of a place that it is culturally understood as lost by the community, has not been widely accepted as a general term. In recent decades, this concept co-functions with others that nuance its meaning – dead, obsolete, abandoned, derelict, temporary, etc. (Bauer, Dolgan 2020). These distinctions are important for a phenomenological understanding of loss because they draw attention to the ways people cope with loss, as well as how it is used as a narrative and ritual device. The place, even if it has changed or been removed, is still present in some form, whether it be physical or virtual (Davidson 2013). The manner in which it is considered lost is based on nostalgia, family history, the culture of a village, community and the mechanisms through which they have been preserved and institutionalised – such as ritual and story, material remains, and testimonies (Nassar 2002; Zembylas 2014; Brody 2022). The concept of 'lost places' puts the accent both on the significance of the sites and the spaces to be defined as 'places', and on the irretrievability of their loss. Nevertheless, the notion presumes the physical existence of the area although changed by an actual or metaphorical shift in ownership. We can lean on this logical outlook with regards to villages that are not submerged in water, but have been emptied due to health or infrastructural reasons. We have many illustrations of this, yet these situations do not create a group of inheritors or approaches to recollecting and bringing back the recollections of the place.

In the case of vanished villages, the idea of place concentrates the loss significantly. Not only has a real place been lost, but also a network of sites, a whole landscape, the entire world of the traditional community. The concept of cultural landscape establishes a connection between materiality, which can be tangible and visible, and cultural identity and history. These cultural landscapes are still landscapes of today (Roberts 1994: 135), combining both permanent and shifting elements to create a socially and culturally current space. Along with the disappearance of rural life, the physical landscape wherein the community existed before their leaving also alters. This landscape was documented through photographs and written descriptions made by the resettlers, their descendants and sometimes anthropologists and journalists, and was kept alive through the stories told at gatherings, although despite the documentary

quality of the photographs and the truthfulness of the narratives, the landscape no longer has a material dimension and is forever lost.

That is the reason I prefer the scope of ‘memoryscapes’ because it combines views of material and immaterial, collective and individual, it is fixed in publications and pictures and living narration and rituals, etc. It emphasises the complexity of memories of a village because it is not just a place but a universe. The term covers not only the architectural features and social functions of a building or a small slice of the space that is closed and homogenic, but a whole landscape with its complex social relations, connections between people and nature, seasonality, etc. Furthermore, the cultural landscapes of submerged villages are not completely destroyed, the hills, mountain peaks and high fields are visible, which in traditional culture always meant a lot. These material and visible remains from the past have already lost their meaning, or they were transformed during the construction of the reservoir. They also embody collective memories of past forms of production and festivity. The term ‘memoryscapes’ therefore contains a pinch of this nostalgic glorification that is specific to memories of lost pastoral youth.

In general, in this text we are searching for the dynamic interaction between material remains and evidence, community cultural practices, objective spatial relations and heritage transmission, as well as the spatial-temporal interplay of place and event, or placemaking-based ‘memoryscaping’.

Maintaining traditional holidays and rituals at traditional venues (*Shishmanovo*)

Shishmanovo is the largest of the three villages (the other two being Kalkovo and Gorni Pasarel) that were submerged under the waters of the Iskar reservoir in 1956. Before that, the population’s livelihood was agriculture and livestock breeding (with large herds of sheep). Mining was also a factor, and so the mountain environment was considerably well-known and utilised. In the 1930s the Uspenie Bogorodichno monetary was built on village land. After the village was destroyed and submerged, the monastery together with the higher ground left were the only visible traces of the former material life. Displaced people moved to nearby towns (Samokov, Ihtiman) and to villages near Sofia that had already become part of the capital city, so they were made

rapidly to change their lifestyle. Gradually, the fields were forested (about 16 million trees) to hold the soil on the shores of the reservoir, and thus human activity changed the landscape. Places that were previously significant to the



Figure 1. The field in front of Shishmanovo Monastery and Church. Under the shade of the trees on the left there are shelters for resettler families. On the right, a small marketplace offers food and cheap toys for children. In the middle is a stage for the music program. Photo: L. Gergova, 25 August 2019.

community disappeared, and the monastery became the most consistent centre of resettlers' community gatherings.

After the village was submerged, the monument to a Russian officer who died in the battles of December 1877 was moved from the village churchyard to the monastery. This was the reason for the first community gatherings at the monastery, coming under the heading of Bulgarian–Soviet friendship. This served the purpose of altering the meaning of the gathering from nostalgia for the lost home village to the glorification of war heroes, diverting public attention from the religious to the secular object. After 1989 the religious element prevailed and the festival was restored as a traditional annual religious event, celebrated on the monastery's patron saint day, the Saturday before or after August 28, the Assumption of Virgin Mary according to the Julian calendar. The monastery fair mainly attracts the descendants of the resettlers, although many guests from nearby towns and villages also visit. Resettlers' descendants bring food and organise tables by families on particular sites in front of the monastery, so the division between them and the guests is obvious in the monastery space. Guests are attracted by the holly spring, thought to heal on the monastery's festival day. The spring is situated in a small building that was restored recently; healing rituals take place there throughout the day. A folk music program takes

place right after the church service. In modern times, homage is no longer paid to the Russian memorial although it is still in good condition.

The people who maintain the monastery and organise the festival are also descendants of the displaced people from Shishmanovo who moved to Samokov. They admit that preserving the memory of the submerged village is among the main goals of the event. Sharing memories from the lost village is not a common practice because the people who had such memories have already passed away, although the very gathering of families is a way of maintaining the memoryscape of Shishmanovo as far as it was an annual festival even before the reservoir.

Regardless of the ideological changes, the annual festival at the Shishmanovo Monastery is a traditional gathering of the village community that has been maintained in the years after the population displacement. Such cases are few as usually resettlers and their descendants establish new rituals at the remains of the village or at new or non-traditional venues.

Establishing new rituals at the remains of the village (Zapalnya, Kochash and Darets)

Zapalnya village was partly submerged under the waters of the Zhrebchevo reservoir in 1962. It was located on the reservoir's shore with only the cemetery and few buildings remaining above water. The village church, St. John of Rila, was not demolished before filling the reservoir so it was gradually destroyed by the rising water. In summer, when the reservoir waters are low, the church and house foundations are accessible above the water; during the socialist period they were used as a sheepfold. After 1989, the religious functions of the church were partially restored. It also became an extremely popular tourist site. In the 1970s, next to the church but out of the water, a museum dedicated to the former village was established. Resettlers then started gathering at this site every September organising a small fair with a folk music program and shared meals. The resettlers and their descendants visit the remains of the village and their former houses. Recently, a religious service has also taken place at the church.

In former Zapalnya, an annual festival took place on October 19, the church's saint day. It was a typical village fair with korban and a church service. After the population migrated, the village was submerged and the village community was dispersed, and so the festival ceased. In 1967, the fifth anniversary of the

displacement, a monument was erected that looks like a gravestone, with the inscription “Village Zapalnya // Settled in 15th century // Evicted in 1962”. In the 1970s Zapalnya museum was established in a small building not within the reservoir on the periphery of the former village. It accommodates only photos and short stories written on the walls and represents the revolutionary past of the village from liberation until 1944 and the partisan actions. The village’s old cemetery is also in this area, which together with the museum, monument and church form a commemorative site that reminds resettlers of the former village,



Figure 2. The submerged church, the monument (on the small hill behind the church) and Zapalnya museum (on the right) at low water. The remains of the houses are visible in the foreground. Photo: L. Gergova, 1 May 2019, Zhrebchevo reservoir.

providing the travellers with information about the village and the resettlers and their descendants with a place of mourning and a meeting place.

After the museum was established, local community managers connected to the communist party and cultural activities in the town of Tvarditsa, where the most resettlers moved, began to arrange a new celebration, similar to Zapalnya’s much-loved festivities. The celebration was moved to the holidays around the communist holiday of 9 September. The purpose of the event was to gather descendants and offer them amusement in order to maintain a sense of community. The museum displays and the place of gathering trigger stories

of the past. Surviving elder locals take part and share their memories. Usually, Stoyko Popstoykov – the son of the last village priest and author of books about the village’s history – visits the event and sings traditional songs. This draws the descendants into the process of inheritance, indicating that the activity of producing memoryscapes is also an act of passing on heritage and viral communication between generations.

The case of **Kochash** is quite similar in terms of landscape features and the function of the village remains. It is one of the four villages that were partially destroyed in connection with the construction of the Ivaylovgrad reservoir in 1964. It was not submerged, but most of the houses were destroyed and, in this case, the materials taken from the owners to be reused. The farms, church of St John the Baptist and other public buildings were not demolished, while the farms were used until the end of the 20th century. In the 2010s farmer Krasimir Kostadinov bought the whole territory and ran a large farm, restoring the church and transforming what had been the ‘horemag’ – a large multifunctional building – into his own home. The old school was abandoned and today is utilised as hay storage. All these buildings are not so close to each other because they



Figure 3. The remains of the village of Kochash on the shore of Ivaylovgrad reservoir: farms, church, the ‘horemag’, and the school. Photo: L. Gergova, 21 June 2021.

were not concentrated in the centre of the former village, so there are a few buildings in a field covered by stones from the previous houses and bushes. In 2015, after church restoration, the owner, who is not a descendant of the resettlers, tried to invent a new tradition by inviting resettlers and their descendants to the village at Easter and offering them korban. This was the first common gathering of the locals after migration. They moved to various villages in South Bulgaria, so the feast was very important in re-establishing the community. Before this, only particular families used to visit the site to maintain a connection with their parents' homes or to recall childhood memories. These were special occasions because the place is not easily accessible, and people remember them and talk about them with emotion. Returning to the village during the Easter feasts allows the visitors to find the place of their parent's house because the buildings' foundations are still visible. Thus, they project the family narrative on the material remains of the village. Before the migration, the village fair was on January 6 because the church's patron saint is St John the Baptist. The Easter feast was invented without any connection with the community's traditional calendar, rather it started this community-building event as a new tradition. The initiative was interrupted by the pandemic, so in the future it might experience development or attenuation.

On the other side of the reservoir, in the former village of Stavri Dimitrovo, the old school building was transformed into a hut. Because the village was not destroyed and submerged, the hut remained in the centre of a settlement, and in the last decades it has been rebuilt as an area of summer houses. So, the former school became a public building where everybody could gather and was used to accommodate annual resettlers's meetings. They did not perform any rituals, rather they just met each other in the former village. When the migrated generation passed and the descendants did not continue the tradition of annual meetings. In this village, a church has not been built, so there is no holly place to be maintained or revisited by the descendants or other local people.

The other similar case is that of **Darets**, the only Christian village in an area dominated by Turkic Muslims. It was among about 12 villages that were affected by the construction of the Studen kladenets dam in 1958. Most of these village were left underwater, including Darets. During the socialist period the highest part of terrain of Darets remained on the shore and became an area for summer houses. Even today this area is accessible only by boat and few people visit it. Over the last 40 years, a few people from Kardzhali have built small summer

houses and shelters there. A book, and newspaper articles, were published in the 1980s and 1990s but no gatherings were organised at the site or nearby.

Only a hill just above the village survived from the previous cultural landscape, called Daba (oak) hill, or St George's hill. On St George's Day, people from the village used to visit the hill and perform rituals there. The hill and the oak still exist. In 1998, two brothers built a chapel to St George there and the first big meeting of resettlers took place. St George was not the patron saint of the village church, and neither was St George's Day the day of the village fair. Due to difficult access, no meetings are now held. The place was well chosen because of its visibility from the reservoir waters, attracting mainly Bulgarians who are not descendants of resettlers who now become familiar with the village's story. A man who is a permanent resident there maintains the chapel and also built a shelter for guests. This is a case of a new site being built that inherited status of an old place and developed its function. As far as oak hill was the only preserved part of the former cultural landscape, it might become the material centre of the memoryscape. However, the inhabitants shift caused a change of

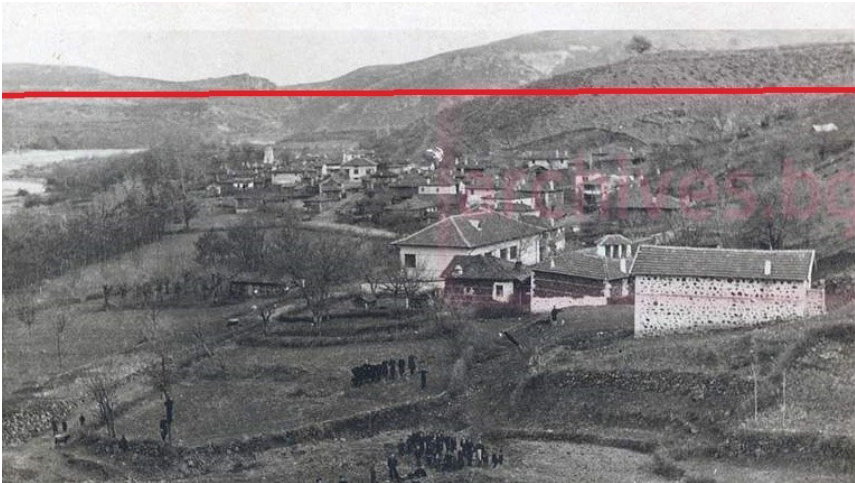


Figure 4. St George's hill above the former village of Darets, 1940s. The red line shows the present water level. Photo: State archive, Kardzhali; adaptation L. Gergova.

the meaning of the place, so in this case, perhaps a memoryscape has not yet been elaborated, although the cultural landscape has been dramatically altered.

Establishing new rituals at new venues (Zhrebchevo and Kadanka)

The village of **Zhrebchevo** was demolished and remained at the bottom of the reservoir of the same name, mentioned above. Very rarely, when the reservoir waters are extremely low, a small part of the village might be observed, although the road to this area is so bad that almost nobody has visited it. At the time of village depopulation and demolition, people moved the remains of their relatives from the village cemetery, buried them in the ground in the vicinity of the road to near town of Nova Zagora and marked the new burial with a stone. A monument to the village was built next to the gravestone. The place was chosen because it is easily accessible and because there is a view of the former village's location from the shore. Villagers also collected money and built a restaurant with some hotel rooms nearby, called Zhrevcheto (the foal), derived from the village's name. The inscription is long and poetic and is a message to future generations. Every year on May 1 or 2 resettlers and their descendants meet at the vicinity of the restaurant to commemorate the coffin of the ancestors, the only material remains of the village.

In 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the hotel and its site were sold by the local authorities and in the course of reconstruction the commemorative stones disappeared. Surprisingly, the village stone appeared again in the nearby village of Asenovets, although the gravestone of the ossuary has never been found. Thus, the location lost its symbolic meaning and its significance remained only in collective community memory. Previous community efforts on placemaking resulted in a concentrated site for mourning, commemoration and entertainment, i.e. a site for community-building with complex events paying tribute to the ancestors, with common meals, walking to the viewpoint, etc. A new cultural landscape was built on the basis of a lost place, a landscape of loss. However, after demolition of the stones and appropriation of the hotel, the meadow under the trees in Komluka remained the only place for resettler meetings. Elaborating a memoryscape is the only tool with which to compensate this loss of built cultural landscape. Community models of narration, sharing



Figure 5. Meeting of resettlers from Zhrebchevo village and their descendants at Komluka. Photo: L. Gergova, 1 May 2019.

knowledge and memories, organising small photo exhibitions, etc., have prepared the community for material loss.

The village of **Kadanka** is the only case of a Muslim community establishing a place for meetings. In fact, the resettlers of most Muslim villages do not organise any rituals and have built no practices of remembering lost villages. Moreover, in 1989 and in the 1990s, most of them moved to Turkey due to the so-called Revival Process. The village of Kadanka was located at the Borovitsa reservoir dam. It was depopulated in 1980–1981 and the zone was submerged. During dam construction a small living zone was built for workers. The buildings are situated near the former village, and in the 1990s a few resettlers from Kadanka who had moved to Stoevo bought land and houses. Since 2003 locals have organised an annual *dua*, a religious but also commemorative event that attracts people from the village who migrated. They come from distant villages for a weekend, staying overnight in tents and celebrating together on a meadow under the dam. Over the years, some shelters and a small bridge have been constructed to indicate the detached site for this particular event. In this case, placemaking is crucial both for community-building and because it conditions future efforts to elaborate a memoryscape with which the next generation can be involved.

Conclusions

In conclusion, some of the observations above are worth developing and emphasising. Processes of building memoryscapes need a **material anchor** as a starting point or as an integral part of the narrative in order to facilitate communication. In some cases, these anchors are material remains, in others new religious, commemorative or ritual sites. As far as the meetings visits that are organised in the form of commemorations or pilgrimages, they need a visible, material object.

The traditions, meeting events, and recalling memories that are significant in the processes of building memoryscapes, are communicative situations that connect generations through the discourse of loss. These are situations, contexts and processes of **inheritance**. For some people this is a comprehensive picture of the world around them. For instance, a man from Ostrovitsa village, which was moved in order not to be submerged, was looking at the former place of the village and was pointing out the places of the buildings. For others, the lost village is just a point on the map: when the grandson of a resettler from Darets was a child, his grandfather took him on a boat and showed to him the exact location of the village, pointing out the water. So, the second generation, those who have never seen the village and its cultural landscape, are receivers of memoryscapes, and in their consciousness the lost village and its surroundings are completely imaginary.

Ways of building memoryscapes might vary. In the past, there were moments of ritualised narration about the history and the surroundings of the villages. Local historians gave speeches or presented their books, elder people went on a purposeful walk to the remains of the village to show the exact place of their house and to share memories, etc. Published stories and memoirs, collected pictures, the museum I mentioned, material souvenirs from the former life, etc., are also very important in constructing imaginary notion of the ancestors' home village. However, the annual meetings usually produce the necessary context for memory-sharing, helping to maintain the community of origin, something that seems to be the key element in the process of inheritance. In other words, placemaking based on a lost place, or on marking a place as being lost, as performed by the first generation, i.e. resettlers, results in elaborated memoryscape within the second generation, i.e. their descendants.

Notes

¹ See also Borisova 2021; Gergova, Borisova 2022.

² See also: Interim Report of the Independent People's Tribunal on Dams in Arunachal Pradesh, India, published on February 3, 2008 (http://www.slic.org.in/uploads/2019/02/IPT_Dams-in-Arunachal-Pradesh.pdf).

³ My research and this contribution are part of my work on the Submerged Heritage, A Village at the Bottom of the Reservoir: Migrations, Memory, Cultural Practices project, supported by the Bulgarian National Science Fund (contract No КП-06-H30/1). Most of the materials I rely on in this article I collected together with my colleagues Mariyanka Borisova, Petar Petrov and Yana Gergova.

⁴ Iskar is among the earliest and largest reservoirs in Bulgarian. Initially, it was named after Stalin, but in 1962 its name was changed to Iskar, which is the name of the river on which it was built. It is situated on Sredna Gora mountain about 20 km southeast of Sofia. The reservoir was built to provide Sofia with drinking water. Before the reservoir was created, archaeological and ethnographic fieldwork took place in the three villages that were to vanish, as well as across the entire territory that was to be inundated.

⁵ Houses were often destroyed prior to flooding in order to clean the dam bed.

⁶ During the Russian-Turkish War 1877–1878, the Russian army passed from Sofia to Ihtiman and Plovdiv, and in late December 1877 a battle took place near the village of Chamurli (later Shishmanovo).

⁷ Zhrebchevo reservoir is situated in Central Bulgaria near the road Sofia – Burgas and the mountain Pass of the Republic. It is built on the river of Tundzha and Due to its location, it is quite popular, mostly for the so called 'submerged church' of Zapalnya. About 720 people were displaced and moved to near towns (Tvarditsa, Nova Zagora) and other villages.

⁸ See more about that church and its recent life in Gergova 2021; Gergova 2021a.

⁹ Ivaylovgrad reservoir is situated on the Arda river in the southeast border region, close to the borders with Greece and Turkey. Four villages were affected: Kochash, Stavri Dimitrovo, Kostovo and Malki Voden. All of them were destroyed and partially submerged, although the first three were also removed as administrative units. Kostovo is only accessible by water, and the road to Kochash is only suitable for off-road vehicles. The displaced population moved in various directions, to Haskovo, Plovdiv, Svilendrag, etc.

¹⁰ Horemag (in Bulgarian *xopemar*) is a word derived from the first letters of the words 'hotel', 'restaurant' and 'magazin' (shop). It is a typical building and institution from the socialist times that was established in almost all villages in Bulgaria – one building,

usually on two levels that accommodate the village mixed shop, a restaurant (or pub) and several rooms for guests. Almost everywhere this became the center of social life.

¹¹ A festival dedicated to Sts Cyril and Methodius takes place annually on 24 May at the chapel in the locality Hisara, which is situated on a hill about 3 km southwest of Kochash. This event is organised by the local authorities in the town of Madzahrovo and people from the whole area take part. Many resettlers from Kochash also visit the event with people from nearby villages. Although in Bolyarovo (a village within the town of Haskovo) and Branipole (near Plovdiv) groups from Kochash and other evicted villages have lived together closely for decades, Nikolina Kostova, the administrator of a Facebook group of the descendants from the four villages, said that she visits the festival at Hisara to meet other descendants from the home village of her parents; moreover, the festival is staged at a place from which Kochash can be observed (N. Kostova, online, 24/05/2022).

¹² The Studen Kladenets Reservoir is situated on the Arda river between the Ivaylovgrad and Kardzhali reservoirs. Construction affected about 11 villages.

¹³ Dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin Mary; the church holiday was August 15 or 28.

¹⁴ 'Zhrebche' means 'foal'. Zhrebchevo is a translation of the old Turkish name of the village Atlare, 'atlar' being 'horses'.

¹⁵ Revival Process is a political process that occurred in Bulgaria in the 1980s. According to the concept that all Bulgarian citizens are Bulgarians by origin and mother tongue, the Muslims and Turks in Bulgaria were forced to change their names. As a result, thousands of Turks moved to Turkey and never came back.

¹⁶ Borovitsa reservoir is situated on Borovitsa river in Rhodopid mountain in south Bulgaria. It is constructed to provide Kardzali with drinking water and therefore its access is limited.

¹⁷ Stoevo is situated about 25 km northwest from the former village of Kadanka and most resettlers moved there.

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Lina Gergova, PhD, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Her research interests are in the field of ethnic stereotypes, migrations and cultural heritage, urban festivity and national commemorative traditions.

e-mail: lina.gergova@gmail.com