

Beyond Stereotypes: Violence and the Porousness of Ethnic Boundaries in the Republic of Macedonia

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In this article, the author explores the social construction of local classifications and their work in the Republic of Macedonia. Macedonians and Albanians construe classifications of their social world that are modeled on ethnicity, but at the same time readily violate them. By deploying the classificatory principles kultura and besa (widely glossed as “culture” and “trustworthiness”, respectively), local actors can render ethnic boundaries porous and incorporate selected individuals of different ethnic origin within their ethnic communities. The different degrees of social inclusion within the Macedonian and Albanian ethnic communities are examined and it is argued that the porousness of ethnic boundaries can be indicative of the ways in which actors experience the social world and their position in it. The processes that are described in this article shed light on how so-called “inter-ethnic tensions” can be negotiated in daily life and how local society, at first sight fraught with negative ethnic stereotypes, can prove resilient towards ethnic violence.

Keywords: Ethnic stereotypes; Violence; Negotiation; Macedonia; Balkans

Introduction

On 16 February 2001, uniformed men approached members of a Macedonian television crew in the village of Tanuševci, located in the north of the Republic of Macedonia (henceforth referred to as “Macedonia”) near the border with Kosovo. They introduced themselves as members of the Albanian National Liberation Army (NLA) and stated this was Albanian land and Macedonians were not welcome. Soon after the incident, Macedonian forces were dispatched to the area and fighting began. According to the statement of its leader, Ali Ahmeti, the NLA was an organization that had sprung

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from Macedonia and consisted of Albanian men who were fighting for “greater rights” for the Albanian minority in the country. Their decision to take up arms was allegedly provoked by the failure of the Macedonian state, ten years after independence, to provide its largest minority with the rights it deserved—an Albanian-speaking state-sponsored university and wider representation in state institutions.

Although the conflict between the Macedonian State Army and the NLA lasted for almost seven months before it officially terminated with the signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement in August 2001, it did not eventually push the country into the abyss of civil war. Nonetheless, Macedonia made headlines in world news, justifying those who had predicted a conflict because of the growing tensions between Macedonians and Albanians, while feeding anew the image of the Balkans as a “backward” region torn by ethnic tensions (Todorova, 1997).

It is against this background and amid anthropological literature that deals with the social processes through which local actors construct ethnicity and negotiate difference (among others, Fox, 1990; Vermeulen and Govers, 1994) that this article is situated. I see ethnicity as a product of wider historical processes and ongoing negotiations that local actors make on the ground. At the same time, I attempt in this article to set the record straight regarding a supposedly divided Macedonian society. Based on fieldwork conducted from March 2000 until August 2001 in Čair, an ethnically heterogeneous neighbourhood in the capital city of Skopje, I argue that labeling Macedonian society as “ethnically divided” and social tensions as “ethnic” defies the negotiation of tension as part of everyday life and demonstrates a profound failure to grasp the social dynamics and intricate dialectics of local life in Macedonia. Building on the work of Kapferer (1988), who uses the Dumontian model of the caste system (Dumont, 1980) to show how an ostensibly peaceful situation in Sri Lanka contains preconditions for violence, I demonstrate how a seemingly violent situation in Macedonia can permit the diffusion of tension. The social processes that I describe, even if eventually they do not—for reasons that reach beyond the scope of this article—fully succeed in preventing conflict, can help explain how and why Macedonia has so far managed to escape an all-out ethnic war.

I became interested in such questions when at the outset of my research in Skopje my Macedonian and Albanian informants tended to appropriate me—for different reasons—as “ours”. My ability to speak Macedonian in combination with my having Greek parents¹ and being Orthodox were aspects of my life that Macedonian informants focused on to grant me the status of “ours” (*naša*). At the same time, my ability to speak Albanian and the fact that the United States was my place of birth and dwelling seemed to play a crucial role in my being considered by Albanians as “ours” (*jona*). Even though my Macedonian and Albanian informants used different criteria to appropriate me as “ours”, such appropriation led me to explore the construction of social classifications in the country.

The work of social classifications in Macedonia can provide a venue to explore questions of violence. So far, anthropologists have focused on violence either as “an act of physical hurt deemed legitimate by the performer and illegitimate by (some) witnesses”

(Riches, 1986: 8) or as “a form of practice mediating between the historical boundedness of action in response to specific structural conditions and human creativity and the cultural quest for meaning” (Schmidt and Schroder, 2001: 18). In other words, studies about violence aim at understanding its occurrence and the conditions that generate it. They have tended to oscillate between the options of war and peace, and depict the background for war; or they have focused on the dichotomy between practice and imaginary in understanding violence as a social phenomenon.

Despite their contributions to furthering our understanding of violence, such accounts, it seems to me, have failed in two respects. First, they do not explore the implications of violence as a potential and actual social condition, and second, they do not address cases in which actors who do not engage in violent actions are affected by its eruption. To overcome such limitations, it is my intention in this article to illuminate the social sites of power that the experience of violence creates, even in the absence of a state of war, by describing a social context that is less clear-cut, where tension and peace co-exist. As I set out to show, examining the role social classifications play in the conduct of daily life is of major importance in understanding such a dynamic social context. I begin my discussion by addressing the processes of ethnic stereotyping in Macedonia.

Of Šiptari

“Don’t make a Šiptar out of yourself” (*ne se pravi Šiptar*²) is a phrase used by Macedonians to refer to Macedonians who behave in an unfair or improper way towards other members of the Macedonian community.³ It echoes the grievances most Macedonians have harboured against the what are often seen as excessive demands that the Albanian minority has been making in the course of more than ten years since Macedonia’s independence in 1991. The phrase implies a widespread scheme of structural dichotomy between “us” and “them” that is informed by ethnicity and figures Macedonians, on the one hand, and Albanians, on the other.

Šiptar (masculine)/*Šiptarka* (feminine)/*Šiptari* (plural), with stress on ‘i’, is the pejorative term that Macedonians tend to employ to refer to all Albanians who live in the country as an ethnic collectivity. The term is loaded with negative qualities that stand in stark contrast to all the positive qualities that the Macedonian group as a whole is seen to possess. In particular, *Šiptari* refers to those who have come to Macedonia mainly since Tito’s death in 1980 and are described as “newcomers” (*novodojdeni*), primarily from Kosovo. *Šiptari* are also regarded as “dishonest” and “unfair” (*nečesni*), as they are never satisfied with what they have but continuously ask for more. As a popular Macedonian saying suggests, they want to have “fancier bread than the bread they are given” (*preku leb pogača*). *Šiptari* are considered to be “uncultivated” (*nekulturni*), “dirty” (*prljavi*), “smelly” (*mirisaat*), “stupid” (*glupavi*), “wild” (*divil divjaci*), “closed” (*zatvoreni*), “dangerous” (*opasni*), “powerful” (*silni*) “fanatics” (*fanatici*), “aggressive” (*agresivni*), “criminals” (*kriminali*) and “left in the past” (*zaostanati vo minatoto*). *Šiptari* allegedly force their wives to veil and treat them as “machines for

giving birth” (*mašini za ragjanje*). In the course of my fieldwork, many Macedonians tended to be preoccupied with allegedly high reproductive rates among Albanians and interpreted such rates as indications of Albanian aggression, expansionism and eventual irredentism.

The “collectiveness” (*kolektivnost*) ascribed to Albanians emerges as a site of contradiction in Macedonian narratives. On the one hand, most Macedonians tend to look down on the alleged Albanian social cohesion and argue that Albanians are not threatening whenever they are alone, but derive power and become dangerous once they come together as a group. Albanians as a whole emerge as a threat to the country’s territorial integrity, national security, economic development and the prospect of joining the European Union. On the other hand, most Macedonians tend to admire the closeness in social relations and the coherence of the Albanian social unit, whereby they all help and support each other in times of need. Albanian “collectiveness” is juxtaposed against Macedonian “individuality” (*individualnost*), where the promotion of individual interest supercedes the benefit of the Macedonian ethnic collectivity that in local narratives emerges as fragmented.

When random social encounters across ethnic borders take place, Macedonians’ employment of the term “*Šiptar*” can be accompanied by a racist discourse. As Mirjana, a woman in her early thirties, told me while we were walking in the shopping mall downtown: “Do you see them? Look at them, God! That is what *Šiptari* look like!” While casting a long, exploratory gaze toward a group of people who were walking ahead of us speaking Albanian loudly, she explained in disgust: “Ugly people with big ears, long faces and protruding cheek bones, usually their legs are tilted outwards. It is known who is a *Šiptar* by the face (*od faca*).” *Šiptari* are also said to have problems with their teeth and bones because their food is allegedly lacking in vitamins and minerals. Besides summoning a racist discourse to justify identification of a *Šiptar*, Macedonians often maintain that they can distinguish Albanians because they speak Macedonian with an accent.

When referring to Albanians living in the country, Macedonians conventionally employ the pejorative term “*Šiptari*”. It should be noted that the term denoting an “Albanian” in the Albanian language is *Shqiptar* (masculine)/*Shqiptare* (feminine), with *q* following *Sh*.⁴ While educated Albanians tend to emphasize *q* when they pronounce the term, people in less educated social circles often do not pronounce *q*. In any case, whenever Albanians deploy *Shqiptar*/*Shiptar*, the stress falls on *a*, whereas when Macedonians deploy it the stress conventionally falls on *i*. Unaware of the difference, most Macedonians are often perplexed why their use of the word provokes negative reactions among Albanians. As Lenče, a woman in her early forties, said: “I do not understand why are they offended. ... Isn’t that the same word that they use in Albanian to refer to themselves? We say ‘Macedonians’ for our people and they say ‘*Šiptari*’ for their people.” Lenče’s statement echoes similar statements that I often heard people make in the course of my fieldwork research.

Moreover, most Macedonians tend to justify their use of the term “*Šiptar*” by describing it as a habit rooted in time: “I am used to calling them *Šiptari*, I have called

them *Šiptari* for many years now. That's how we used to refer to them in the time of ex-Yugoslavia. I do not understand why they should take offense now, after so many years have gone by," Biljana, a woman in her mid-forties, said. On such occasions, increasingly rare after the crisis in Kosovo in 1999, Macedonians claim to use the term free of any negative connotations or derogatory meaning. Whether it is used to express social exclusion or a habit rooted in time, Macedonians' use of the term "*Šiptar*" presupposes a clear distinction between "us" and "them". Ethnicity, therefore, seems to constitute an organizing principle in the system of social classifications that most Macedonians generate.

Of *Shkie*

In a somewhat similar vein, most Albanians use the phrase, "Don't make a *Shka* out of yourself" (*mos u bë Shka*) of Albanians who behave unfairly or improperly towards other people of Albanian extraction. On the one hand, the phrase registers the complaints of Albanians that their life in Macedonia is that of "second-class citizens". Frustrations centre on allegedly inadequate opportunities for education in the Albanian language and inadequate representation of Albanians in state institutions and all spheres of public life. On the other hand, the phrase suggests a system of bipolar oppositions between "us" and "them" that is shaped by ethnicity and figures Albanians on the one side and Macedonians on the other.

Shka (masculine)/*Shkina* (feminine)/*Shkie* (plural) is the pejorative term that most Albanians employ to refer to Macedonians as an ethnic collectivity.⁵ Albanians in Macedonia tend to employ *Shka* to refer to those who are said to be "non-believers" (*pa fe*) and "without good soul" (*pa shpirt të mirë*)—that is, Orthodox people living not only within, but also outside Macedonia's geographical borders: Macedonians, Bulgarians, Russians and Serbs.

With reference to *Shkie* in Macedonia, most Albanians tend to portray them as an "artificial people" (*popull artificial*) who are also "not hospitable" (*pa mikpritje*). *Shkie* are also said to be "backwards" (*te prapambetura*) because they do not treat all people as equal human beings, but instead look down on others and expect Albanians to work in their service. In addition, *Shkie* are said to be "two-faced" (*dyftyre*), without *besa* or "untrustworthy": no one can rely upon them for anything. According to a popular argument among members of the Albanian community, *Shkie* are allegedly people who put their elderly parents in nursing homes so why would they care about people who are not even their relatives? These perceptions comprise a binary and comparative scheme of collective social order from which Albanians emerge as a "natural people" (*popull natyror*) with *besa* (trustworthiness), "more dear" (*më të dashur*) and "more hospitable" (*më shume mikpritje*) than Macedonians.

What stigmatizes a Macedonian as a *Shka* is his or her arguments and actions regarding the existence of the Albanian minority in Macedonia. Consider the following example that features my friend Florin and myself sitting in the small yard of a café, chatting over coffee on a cool Spring afternoon. At the adjoining table, a group of

Macedonian-speaking middle-aged men was similarly engaged in the local ritual of coffee drinking while arguing loudly against the construction of tall exterior walls in Albanian houses. The topic of their discussion immediately attracted the attention of Florin who sank into an unaccustomed silence, straining his ear to listen to what they were saying. One of them suggested that the government should demolish the tall walls because Albanians build them to conceal great numbers of guns and children, by means of which they plan to overpower the existing Macedonian majority and take over the country. Florin did not need to hear more. In a jittery fashion, he asked for the bill, paid it, got up and told me we had to leave. As we walked toward another café to continue our interrupted discussion, Florin repeated angrily: “Why do the walls of Albanians bother him?! A wall! One wall!” He frowned, exclaimed “*Shka!*” and went on to complain about the lack of respect Macedonians in general demonstrate towards Albanians.

Enacting Stereotypes

The frequency with which members of the Macedonian community deploy the stereotype *Šiptar* exceeds by far the frequency with which members of the Albanian community deploy the stereotype *Shka*. I suggest that the reasons for this practice are twofold and lie first with the impact the wars in neighbouring Balkan areas have had on the ways most Macedonians practice their everyday lives, and second with the actions of Macedonians in their social encounters with particular Albanian individuals.

Specifically, the conflicts in Bosnia and Kosovo figure in the Macedonian imaginary⁶ as having been instigated by Muslims. Macedonians tend to view Islam as a dangerous religion that favours irredentism and territorial expansionism. Islam’s aggressiveness has allegedly surfaced in the recent history of Macedonia during events that have featured Muslims, and in particular Albanian Muslims, such as the student demonstrations and political upheaval in Kosovo after Tito’s death in 1980, the Albanian boycott of the 1991 official referendum on the independence of Macedonia and the illegal referendum in 1992 on whether Western Macedonia should be proclaimed an autonomous “Republic of Illirinda”. Because of these events, most Macedonians have been living with what they term “war psychosis” (*vojna psihoza*): the overwhelming fear that war is bound to descend from the north down toward Macedonia because of the presence of Muslims in the country.

Albanians are singled out over other Muslim peoples in Macedonia (Turks and Roma, for example) as embodying threat because of omnipresent, daily practices that are perceived as exclusively Albanian, namely veiling and the sale of small goods (mainly, cigarettes and gum) by children in the street. For many Macedonians, veiled women index excessive reproduction and Albanian aspirations to outnumber Macedonian majority members. Most Macedonians regard male children who work in the street from a young age as funding their fathers’ purchase of guns with the aim of driving Macedonians out of their places of residence by force, gaining ruling control of the state and eventually creating Greater Albania. These practices, which are taken to index

Albanian Muslim aggression, are directly tied to the Macedonian experience of “war psychosis” and also to the great extent to which Macedonians use the pejorative stereotype *Šiptar*, even during social interactions with selected Albanians.

Most Albanians seem restrained in their use of the negative stereotype *Shka*, except in cases when they react to particular Macedonians’ making abusive remarks about the Albanian minority in their presence (e.g., arguing that the large number of children women bear demonstrates the backwardness of the community). In other words, whereas Macedonians’ use of the stereotype *Šiptar* is predicated on the lack of social interaction with a particular Albanian, Albanians’ use of the stereotype *Shka* presupposes an abusive social exchange with a person of Macedonian extraction.

Of Parts, Wholes and Stereotypes

How and why do the stereotypes *Šiptar* and *Shka* differ and what are the culturally specific models that generate them? To answer these questions we need to explore the interface between the individual and the collective in Macedonia. My suggestion here is that there is a correspondence between processes through which local actors see themselves as parts of a social whole, on the one hand, and processes through which they deploy stereotypes, on the other.

A starting point for me to explain what I mean is the hierarchical conception of the individual that exists in Macedonia whereby, similar to the situation in Sri Lanka as Kapferer (1988) describes it, the state subsumes the individual. Borrowing the words of Herzfeld (1992: 63), who draws on the work of Kapferer to explore bureaucratic practices: “unity should encompass the expression of individual sentiments and identities”, ethnic ones included. Such a unity is hierarchical in the sense that non-Macedonians form part of the encompassing unity of the Macedonian state, but not of the Macedonian nation that is made up of people with Macedonian ethnic extraction exclusively. In this framework, Macedonians are connected to non-Macedonians in a dominant relation of encompassment while non-Macedonians are connected to Macedonians in a subordinate relation of incorporation. What is at stake for Macedonians and Sinhalese alike is the preservation of personal and national integrity.

The expression of ethnic identities that are potentially not contained in this hierarchical relation of domination and subordination can sever the part from the whole, undermine unity and bring about ethnic conflict. In Macedonia, people of Macedonian ethnic extraction tend to demarcate ethnic identities (mostly Albanian identity) whose expression may have destructive effects by deploying pejorative stereotypes. Thus *Šiptari* not only remain in a relation of hierarchical subordination within the Macedonian state, but they are also seen as potential threats to the maintenance of the hierarchical unity. I would like to underline the fact that the stereotype *Šiptar* derives its meaning from domains of classification that most Macedonians tend to view as buttressing the encompassing unity of the Macedonian state, such as class and religious classifications. In other words, people of different ethnic extraction who belong to low

classes and are not Orthodox by religion (people who, as we have already seen, are regarded as “smelly”, “dirty”, “fanatics”, and so on) are regarded as dangerous because their actions are viewed as directed against encompassing forces. Such conceptions, consistent with the hierarchical ideology, lend meaning to the stereotype *Šiptar* and point to the need for subordinated forms of being to be contained at all costs within the unity of the Macedonian state lest their full menace be released and fragment Macedonian personal and national integrity.

Besides the ideology of hierarchy, upheld primarily by members of the Macedonian majority, Macedonia also presents us with an ideology of egalitarianism that seems to be consistent with Kapferer’s description of the situation in Australia (Kapferer, 1988). According to the ideology of egalitarianism, which in Macedonia tends to be endorsed by Albanians, “value is placed on the unique, natural individual that is prior to or independent of the socially constructed individual in identity” (Kapferer, 1988: 194). The social whole resembles “a succession of Chinese boxes, each social category, group or unit of organization more inclusive than the one before” (Kapferer, 1988: 15). This conception does not build on hierarchical encompassment since it can shift emphasis from dominated and subordinated forms of being to individuals as the same units of value.

In egalitarianism, the nation is placed above the state while the state is feared as an instrument that could potentially bring about the negation of individual autonomy. This is exactly where the prerequisites for the potential eruption of violence lie. To explain with reference to Albanians in Macedonia, difference is located among those individuals who demonstrate different qualities from those that Albanians construct as basic, of which the principal examples are Albanian ethnic identity and Muslim religion. Individuals who have neither Albanian nor Muslim identity and form distinctive units of social organization are dangerous, and as such they are stigmatized by the pejorative stereotype *Shka*. Their danger lies with their potentially causing separatism by their actions or their urging the Macedonian state to exploit the difference in these qualities and exercise repression against the Albanian nation. In conformity to the ideology of egalitarianism, the production of the stereotype *Shka* is made possible by a cultural model according to which social classifications such as class become subordinate to the Albanian nation, that most Albanians in Macedonia define along lines of Muslim religion and Albanian ethnicity.

In this article, I view the hierarchical ideology as dominant in Macedonia because local actors construe it as such: on the one hand, Macedonians put it forward as the ideal model on which their country should be built; on the other, Albanians experience it as a repressive model worth fighting against. In any case, two different worldviews emerge in a dialectical and antagonistic relation with one another in Macedonia. These two worldviews certainly seem to accentuate the force of an ethnic division between members of the Macedonian and the Albanian communities. At the same time, however, local actors can selectively draw upon strategies that weaken the force of the division. It is to this under-examined aspect of inter-ethnic relations in Macedonia that I now turn.

Stories of Hatred?

During my fieldwork, whenever I asked my Macedonian and Albanian informants whether they had any contact with Albanians and Macedonians respectively, their answer tended to be negative. Not only that, but they also embarked on virulent stories that objectified the “Other” and depicted them in the light of the negative stereotypes *Šiptari* and *Shkie*. Such reactions could easily lead one to the conclusion that first, ethnicity forms the only organizing principle of opposition and difference for both Macedonians and Albanians, and that second, the two ethnic communities in Skopje live parallel but hardly intersecting lives. Indeed, as Keith Brown (2001) has also noted, local people seem ready to applaud and confirm such conclusions in all earnestness.

Once I started tracing the social networks of my informants both inside and outside the neighbourhood where I conducted fieldwork research, however, I realized that social reality was not as clear-cut or as neatly organized. Local actors of all ages crossed paths and shared daily experiences with ethnic “others” they tended to exclude in their narratives: the friend from school, the co-worker, the greengrocer, the dentist, the owner of the money exchange store, the jewelry store owner, the neighbour. The participation of selected individuals in such exchanges defied the work of negative stereotypes and created an inclusive social arena in practice. During social interactions across ethnic boundaries, local actors cease to draw upon ethnicity and instead employ the principles of *kultura* or “culture”, and *besa* or “trustworthiness” to create alternative social taxonomies. *Kultura* and *besa* not only form yet another organizing principle of “folk taxonomy” to which ethnicity is reduced, but they also render the reified entities that ethnicity brings about extremely porous.

This disjuncture between what local people say and what they do in practice points to ways in which concern to appear “politically correct” to people of one’s own ethnic extraction has taken its toll on local life ever since the eruption of ethnic conflict in neighbouring areas. The experience of violence breaking out in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo has had a tremendous impact on social relations in Macedonia, in the sense that it has focused local attention on the ethnic character of communities. *Appearing* to adhere to conventional beliefs has become a powerful way to belong. It is not coincidental that those who deploy ethnic stereotypes in the harshest of terms are usually the ones whose social relations extend across ethnic borders to encompass a selected “Other”. In this light, strategies of inclusion can also justify social relations across ethnic borders without disrupting relations within them.

On Having *Kultura*: *Naš Čovek* or, “Our Man”

Despite the many discussions of the contested meanings of the term “culture” in the realm of anthropological theory (see Abu-Lughod, 1991; Clifford and Marcus, 1986; Clifford, 1988), the notion of *kultura* (in Macedonian)/*kulturë-a* (indefinite and definite forms in Albanian) in practice is pretty straightforward in Macedonia. Introducing notes of accord with the Greek *politismos* (see Herzfeld, 1997: 46–47) and the Italian *civilt’a*

(see Silverman, 1975), *kultura* denotes a state of “civilization” connected to the ideal of European identity, and of “cultivation” associated with an urban way of life. Such a state can be attained through good manners towards friends and neighbours, refined social behaviour, respect and consideration, openness and willingness to communicate.

All people irrespective of ethnic background can possess *kultura* and she or he who owns it is referred to as “*kulturen*” (in Macedonian) and “*kulturueshëm*” in Albanian. Consider the following example that Mare, a graphic designer in her early thirties, gives us:

I have an Albanian (*Albanecë*) colleague at work who is very *kulturen*. Every time he gets up to make a cup of coffee for himself, he always asks whether anyone else in the office wants some. He is very fine. What he does means a lot to me. Whenever I get up to make myself some coffee I ask in return if I can get him anything.

Kultura establishes a common field of reference among people who own it and thus constitutes an idiom of affinity that serves either to diminish social distance among actors or underline the social distance between those who possess it and those who do not. At the same time, *kultura* erodes the classifications modeled on ethnicity by allowing selected Albanians to enter the gateways of the Macedonian community as “our man” (*naš čovek*).⁷

For most Macedonians, the channels through which an Albanian can attain *kultura* are threefold: time spent residing in Macedonia, education and “modernity”. In particular, it is a widespread belief that the more time an Albanian has spent living in Macedonia, the more members of the Macedonian community she or he is likely to know, the more shared experiences they are likely to have and the closer they are likely to be. The importance of time in inter-ethnic relations becomes apparent when Macedonians distinguish between *Albanči*, on the one hand, and *Šiptari*, on the other. “*Albanči*” is a term used to refer to Albanians who were born and raised in Macedonia, whereas “*Šiptari*”, as we have already seen, is used to refer to Albanians who came to Macedonia since the early 1980s. *Albanči* are described as “our Albanians/our *Šiptari*” (*našite Albanči/Šiptari*), while *Šiptari* are described as “newcomers” (*novodojdeni*). The differences between the two categories are stark. As Slavica, a woman in her late fifties, explains:

We have lived with *Albanči* together for years very well. They are our people (*naši luge se*), they are used to living with Macedonians. They are *kulturni*, honourable (*česni*), domestic (*domakinki*), peaceful (*mirni*), open (*otvoreni*), they have two or three children at the most and they do not insist on their wives’ veiling. We have no problems whatsoever with them. We have problems with *Šiptari*, with those who have come to Macedonia from Kosovo and from villages, those are the ones who deal in drug trafficking, guns and prostitution. They are the ones who are very [much] without culture! [*nekulturni*]

A different popular Macedonian theory terms as *Albanči* those people who live in Albania and as *Šiptari* all Albanians who reside in Macedonia, irrespective of whether they are newcomers or whether they have lived in the country for decades. The time component, however, emerges once again when Macedonians who deploy this theory

distinguish between “old” *Šiptari* (*stari Šiptari*) and *Šiptari*. The aforementioned positive qualities of an *Albaneč* are in this case assigned to an “old” *Šiptar*.

Another means by which *kultura* can be conferred upon Albanian individuals is education. In local accounts, education emerges as “cultivation” that is associated with good manners and not necessarily with schooling. In this regard, a person with no schooling can be “educated” or *kulturen*, whereas someone who holds a university diploma may be described as “uneducated” (*bezobrazen*), “without *kultura*” (*nekulturen*), or a person with “village-like manners” (*selak*).⁸

Besides being channeled through time and education, *kultura* can also result from being “modern” (*sovremen*). As Jasmina, a woman in her mid-thirties, says:

I have a close Albanian friend from school, he also happens to be my hairdresser. He is married to a Macedonian woman and they speak Macedonian at home, his kids go to a Macedonian school. One cannot tell he is *Albaneč*, he wears nice clothes, he always wears cologne, he eats everything, he drinks, he is very modern. He is our man (*naš čovek*), I think of him as ours, not like a *Šiptar*.

In Macedonian accounts, “modernity” is associated with the consumption patterns and lifestyle of people who are “progressive” (*napredni*) and not “left living in the past” (*zaostanati vo minatoto*). Someone “modern” is someone who follows fashion trends, wears perfume and trademark clothes, owns a mobile phone, drives an expensive car, spends a lot of money, and goes out to all the “in” places (*po šema*) in order to show off to others. In this sense, being “modern” has a performative quality.⁹

Thus time, education and consumption patterns bestow *kultura* upon selected Albanians who defy the negative traits inherent in the category of *Šiptar* and instead inhabit the realm of *Albaneč*. At the same time, *kultura* provides the ground on which Macedonians can transform an *Albaneč* into *naš čovek*. Interestingly enough, Macedonians who describe their Albanian friends as *naš čovek* are the same ones who usually employ the negative stereotype *Šiptari* in the harshest of terms. Despite the fact that Jasmina, for example, considers her Albanian hairdresser *naš čovek*, she said: “I don’t like *Šiptari* at all, *Šiptari* bother me. Those who are stupid bother me, for example those whose father has bought a wife for them, those who talk nonsense, and those who are smelly.” When I asked whether she thought her words were contradictory, she replied: “No, I don’t have in mind particular *Albanči*. I’m talking about *Šiptari* as an ethnic and religious community (*kako načija*).”¹⁰

Some Macedonians engage in such comments not only in the absence, but also in the presence, of Albanian individuals. Lumi describes such an incident:

I was out for coffee with my Macedonian girlfriend and some of her friends when one of them asked me which high school I had attended. I replied *Zef Ljuš Marku* because that was the only school I could have attended in Albanian. “How can you put up with the *Šiptari*? I don’t like them at all, they bother me a lot!” he said. After that, there was this silence, everyone continued to sip their coffee and smoke their cigarettes; there was no reaction from anybody, not even from my girlfriend. I said, “Excuse me, but you should not speak like that, in my presence at least, because I might get offended!” “But, you are ours (*ti si naš*)!” That is what they all said.

Lumi, however, did get offended: he broke up with his girlfriend and never went out with her friends again. For him, as indeed for many Albanians in similar situations, the label of *naš covek* can be a bigger burden than the label of *Šiptar*: transformed into a honorary non-Albanian, he is now called to witness and endure the abuse Macedonian individuals direct against members of his ethnic community.

It is the tacit agreement on the distinction between selected Albanians and the rest of the Albanian people that forms the basis for most long-term relationships across ethnic boundaries. By creating such a distinction and keeping it implicit, most Macedonians avoid personal confrontations with individual Albanians as well as justify socialization with Albanians to individuals of Macedonian ethnic extraction. It is in this framework that local actors can transgress the boundaries that ethnicity creates: an Albanian with *kultura* is no longer a *Šiptar*, she or he can penetrate the social nexus of the Macedonian community as *naš covek*. Can similar processes be found within the Albanian community? It is time we addressed the local concept of “*besa*”.

On Having *Besa*: *Si Shqiptar* or, “Like an Albanian”

Another local principle for the production of social taxonomies is that of *besa*. *Besa* is an Albanian term that can be translated as “credibility/ trustworthiness” in Macedonia.¹¹ Similar to *kultura*, *besa* is a quality that one possesses. The means to achieve it are loyalty, respect, understanding and communication with others. Someone who owns it is said to be a “trustworthy” person (*njëri me besë/besnik*). *Besa* brings about the creation of alternative classifications from those of ethnicity, and also renders the classifications that ethnicity generates porous by permitting the admittance of selected Macedonians to the Albanian community.

In contrast to the notion of *kultura*, *besa* is conventionally identified as mainly an Albanian trait. Macedonians tend to associate it solely with those Albanians who are *stari Šiptari* or *Albanči*, individuals who were born and raised in Macedonia or have a long history of residence in the country. Most Macedonians value the existence of *besa* among members of the Albanian community, and at the same time disparage its absence within their own ethnic community. Albanians with *besa* emerge as agents of *kultura* and escape the stereotype *Šiptar*. As my neighbor Dobriča, a woman in her mid-fifties, suggests:

Among Macedonians, there is no trust. Macedonians are bad people, better people are Albanians (*Albanči*), especially those old Albanians. Macedonians you cannot trust but they [Albanians] have *besa*, if they tell you they will do something for you, they keep their word. They are very *kulturni*.

In Macedonian narratives, the possession of *besa* is indicative of the coherency and consistency that Albanians allegedly exhibit in their social relations not only with family members, but also with close friends, especially in times of need. Lack of *besa* among Macedonians, on the other hand, becomes a marker of detachment, indifference and selfishness. Here is the example that Aleksandar, Dobriča’s husband, gave to explain this contrast:

A few years back, we had a harsh winter. My wife and I had to keep the steam-heater on most of the time. When the electricity bill came, we were dismayed at the amount of money we had to pay. I am a pensioner, how much money do you think I get each month? Six thousand denars and that's it! What can you do with six thousand denars?! Buy bread? Pay the bills? Nothing you can do! And our neighbour Ismael saw me once downstairs and he saw I was worried. "Do you need money?" he asked. What could I say? I told him about the electricity bill. "I will give you money now and you will pay me back when you can," he said. And that's what he did! He gave me money for the bill on the spot. He said it and he did it. Who else does that for you? No-one! Your own brother, even he does not care. As if he is a stranger! Why should he give you help? But they [Albanians] are different, they have *besa*, one will say something and that's what it will be.

Tightly related to the concept of "word of honour", *besa* foregrounds the significance of the oral word among Albanians. *Besa* is not only possessed, but it is also given to someone else (*unë jap besë dikujt*) as a guarantee of sincere intentions. It entails that the beholder always delivers on their promise. Thereby, *besa* does not bring about a separation between words and actions: actions are the precise reflection of words and vice versa.

The idiom of nostalgia is often found in narratives about *besa* to disclose an era when people were still trustworthy, unaffected by the contemporary degradation of social values. The nostalgia intertwined with the local principle of *besa* thus closely relates to what Herzfeld (1997: 111) defines as "structural nostalgia"¹² because it emerges consecutively in every generation and also describes a current condition of decayed reciprocity. In the following illustration, Mustafa, a man in his early forties, touches upon failure to properly observe the norms of a sacred practice in order to describe moral decadence: "Vasiliki, *besa* existed before, it no longer exists!" he said to me. Then he shook the collar of his shirt with his two fingers and spat on his chest in an attempt to guard himself from people with no *besa*. "There is no *besa* anymore, now exists *haxhi*", he added with evident disappointment in his voice. When I asked him to explain what he meant, he added: "An Albanian borrowed 5,000 deutsche marks from me once in order to go to Mecca on *haxhi*."¹³ He said he would return the money to me in a couple of months but ... I am still waiting for it!"

Due to the alleged scarcity of *besa* among Albanians nowadays, the possession of *besa* by a Macedonian diminishes the importance of his or her ethnic background immediately. As my greengrocer Fidan suggests: "a friend of mine knows of a Macedonian storeowner in the Turkish Bazaar who is an *esnaf*,"¹⁴ he has *besa*. He is exactly like an Albanian! (*është bash si Shqiptar!*)"

What this account foregrounds is that *besa* is not only traced among people of Macedonian extraction, but also forms a principal criterion for a Macedonian to escape the stereotype of a *Shka* and be allowed within the Albanian community. Especially in the sphere of commerce, which tends to be dominated by Albanians, a Macedonian's having *besa* carries the connotation of a fair businessman whose word one can count on. In local idioms, a person with *besa* is expected to be "respectful" (*i ndershëm*), someone "with understanding" (*me kuptim*) and "communicative" (*i shoqërueshëm/ me komunikim*). Based on such virtues, an Albanian can trust a Macedonian with *besa*

to such an extent that he can develop personal relations with him. As Fidan explains about the above-mentioned Macedonian storeowner: “If you let him enter your house and introduce him to your wife and daughter, you know you can trust him, his intentions are good.”

When the relationship is not professionally based and an economic interest is not in question, *besa* is still a primary prerequisite for a Macedonian to be treated “like an Albanian”. In such cases, *besa* is manifested through consistency in demonstrating respect over time. Respect entails first and foremost that on the personal level a Macedonian does not view a particular Albanian as a *Šiptar*—that is, through the lens of the popular pejorative stereotype. In addition, someone who is respectful is similarly expected to refrain from making abusive remarks about *Šiptari* in the presence of Albanian individuals.

Even though the Albanian language forms a pillar of Albanian identity, speaking Albanian is not in itself a sufficient condition to transform a *Shka* into *si Shqiptar*. Cases of Macedonians who can speak it are increasingly common in Macedonia. Proficiency in Albanian is considered a big advantage when seeking employment in institutions where contact with Albanians takes place on a daily basis (e.g., private banks, private English language schools for children and international non-governmental organizations). Nevertheless, unless knowledge of the language is combined with *besa*, a Macedonian cannot enjoy the special status of being “like an Albanian”. On the contrary, a Macedonian-speaking Albanian might, in certain cases, encounter a good deal of suspicion. Such was the case with Violeta, a lawyer who decided to learn Albanian in order to expand her business among Albanian clients. When I asked Bashkim, one of her clients, if she was *si Shqiptare*, his answer was straightforward: “No! No way. This is just a mask! Maybe she has learned the language to harm Albanians. Maybe she wants to put Albanian people in jail, she is a lawyer after all. Maybe she is a spy!”

Divergent Porousness

When comparing the porousness of ethnic boundaries in Macedonia, it becomes apparent that there is a divergence between the readiness of most Macedonians to appropriate selected Albanian individuals fully as *naš čovek* and the restraint most Albanians show in fully endorsing selected Macedonian individuals. As we have already seen, most Albanians do not incorporate Macedonians into their community as “ours”—*yni* (masculine)/*jona* (feminine)—but instead as “like an Albanian”: almost an Albanian, but not exactly one. Whenever I brought the divergent porousness of ethnic boundaries to the attention of my Albanian informants, most of them embarked on the following journey through history to explain and justify their practice.

The starting point of this journey is the emergence of modern Macedonia as a federal Yugoslav republic after the end of the Second World War. After the breakdown of relations between Tito and Stalin in 1948, the policy formulated by the government in Belgrade aimed at the removal of minorities, mainly Albanians and Turks, from all of Yugoslavia. Such a policy was motivated both by Tito’s hunt for pro-Moscow elements

among Yugoslav Albanians after Enver Hoxha declared Tirana's loyalty to Moscow, as well as by communist restrictions on Islam. Malcolm (1998: 323) summarizes this policy in the words of the Serbian nationalist Vaso Cubrilovic who, in his report to the Communist leadership, urged that: "the only correct solution to the question of minorities for us is emigration".¹⁵ At the time, Yugoslav Albanians experienced political pressure to declare themselves "Turks" (a term that until then was largely identified with the religious term "Muslim") and, when in 1953 Yugoslavia signed a treaty with Turkey, they were encouraged to immigrate to Turkey in large numbers.

Apart from reasons of conforming to pressure from Belgrade, many educated Albanian townsmen deployed Turkish to preserve the social stratification of the Ottoman Empire, according to which people were classified as either Ottomans (urban Muslims) or non-Ottomans (Muslim and Christian village-dwellers) (see Fraenkel, 1993). In an effort to distinguish themselves from uneducated Albanian villagers, who have gradually migrated into Macedonian cities since the end of the Ottoman Empire, urban Albanians spoke Turkish and thereby regulated high and low positions of social status.¹⁶

It should be noted that the choice many Albanians made to declare themselves "Turks" and converse in Turkish in the time of Yugoslavia has played a fundamental role in the shaping of current competing claims about historical antecedence in modern Macedonia. In particular, the way most Macedonians experience the past is informed by the belief that Turkish speakers in the region have always had Turkish ethnic identity. By conflating language and ethnic origin, most Macedonians tend to disregard the pressures that Albanians experienced in the time of Yugoslavia to declare themselves "Turks" and they thus refute claims of Albanian presence in the country prior to the death of Tito in 1980.

Tensions between Macedonians and Albanians in Macedonia emerged in the period following Tito's death in 1980. The student demonstrations in Prishtina in 1981 that called for unification of Kosovo with Albania caused fear among Macedonian authorities about the potential spread of Albanian nationalist sentiment in the Republic. These fears, coupled with concerns over high Albanian birth rates, generated repressive measures against the Republic's Albanian population. These measures included a decrease in the number of Albanian employees in state administration, dismissal of Albanian teachers, official refusal to register names that were taken to index support for Albanian nationalism (e.g., *Relindja* or "Rebirth", *Flamur* or "Flag"), and the closure of classes in the Albanian language lacking sufficient enrollment of Albanian pupils. Albanians reacted by taking part in demonstrations against such measures throughout the 1980s.

For most Albanians, the construction and experience of such events as indicative of the social and political repression of the Albanian minority has created a strong sense of community, woven around the idiom of suffering. It is precisely this sense that informs the way Albanian individuals tend to identify with people of their own ethnic extraction and experience present-day life as members of a group that has allegedly held low social status and suffered continuous social and political discrimination within the wider former Yugoslav and present-day Macedonian society. It is in this

light that most of my Albanian informants justified their being less prone to endorse selected individuals of Macedonian extraction as “ours” or grant them the status of “like an Albanian”.

The processes that inform the divergence in the porousness of ethnic boundaries can be better understood by taking into account political debates on the status of an ethnic minority within an “altering state” (Berdahl *et al.*, 2000) in transition to capitalism. For most Macedonians, Albanians in the country constitute part of a minority that exists within the framework of the Macedonian state. As we have already seen, in Macedonia, the state is what encompasses the nation not only of Macedonians, but also of all other people that live in the country, as long as the latter do not compete for prominence. It is in this framework that most majority members have experienced the constitutional changes in 2001—elevating the status of Albanians in the country from a “nationality” (*nacionalnost*) or “minority” (*malcinstvo*) to a “people” (*narod*)—as concessions to an Albanian aggression that eventually aims to dissolve the Macedonian state.

When examining the strategies that actors deploy to make ethnic taxonomies porous in daily life, debates on *nacionalnost* and *narod* acquire special significance. For at the core of a *naš čovek* or “our man”, and complementary to the possession of *kultura*, lies the communication of a lack of interest in disturbing what Malkki (1995) calls the “national order of things”. For most majority members, this “order” defies the recent constitutional reforms and continues to point to an Albanian *nacionalnost* in the country. Thus for someone to get transformed from *Šiptar* to *naš čovek* they need to refrain from challenging the majority *status quo*. It should be noted that most members of the Albanian community share a divergent vision of the “national order of things”, one that sustains the traditional existence of the Albanian people in the country and renders them a state-making people. Someone of a different ethnic extraction who avoids challenging such a viewpoint can escape the realm of *Shka* and be endorsed as *si Shqiptar*, in conformity with the Albanian experience of history as suffering that does not leave much room for the total encompassment of an ethnic “other”.

Final Reflections

An objective of this article has been to view Sri Lanka and Macedonia in a comparative perspective. Although both counties, as I have argued, share a dominant hierarchical ideology, they differ in the ways they have experienced violence. An examination of the work of stereotypes that contrasts ethnic divisions between members of the Macedonian and Albanian communities, on the one hand, and the processes through which local actors render ethnic boundaries porous, on the other, has helped us unfold a social context where tension and peace can co-exist in Macedonia. As I have tried to demonstrate, such a dynamic social context points to some of the markers of differentiation with the situation in Sri Lanka. That is to say, whereas in Sri Lanka a seemingly peaceful hierarchical ideology has contained some of the preconditions for the eruption of physical violence, in Macedonia a seemingly violent situation has contained some of the preconditions for the negotiation and diffusion of tension.

Even though at first sight Macedonian society seems to abound with rigid stereotypes that actors deploy to organize their social world along ethnic lines, a closer look reveals the existence of the alternative classificatory principles *kultura* and *besa* upon which local actors model the porousness of ethnic boundaries and the endorsement of selected “others” who are seen to escape the conventional images of *Šiptar* and *Shka*, as *naš čovek* and *si Shqiptar*. The rigidity of stereotypes and the porousness of ethnic boundaries should be seen in a relation of dialectical interaction with one another: one provides the context in which the other is made possible.

As Handler (1988) and Herzfeld (1992), among others, have argued, stereotypes can point to ways in which local actors decide to sort out—and justify their classification of—the rest of the world at a given moment. Also, stereotypes play a central role in the negotiations of (Macedonian and Albanian) identity. At the same time, as I have suggested, the porousness of ethnic boundaries can be equally telling of the ways in which actors experience the social world and their position in it. In particular, decisions on who owns *kultura* and *besa* together with the divergent degrees of inclusion of selected “others” within the Macedonian (*naš čovek*) and Albanian community (*si Shqiptar*) are indicative of the divergent ways in which local actors of different ethnic extraction currently negotiate history and construct the state.

A focus on rigid stereotypes and porous ethnic boundaries builds on what other scholars have argued with reference to ethnicity (see Tambiah, 1996; Bringa, 1995)—namely, that actors can treat ethnic categories as flexible and shifting and ethnic differences as not permanently rooted. Specifically, in this article I have tried to improve our understanding of the work of ethnicity by examining the presence of contradictory attitudes toward it in the Republic of Macedonia. Local actors can construe classifications of their social world that are modeled on ethnicity and at the same time violate them. The processes that make possible the generation of rigid ethnic dichotomies, and also their dissolution, shed some light on how tensions are negotiated in local life and reveal a society that has so far been flexible and resilient toward ethnic violence.

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Notes

- [1] Despite the still unresolved controversy over the name “Macedonia” between Greece and the Republic (see Danforth, 1995), most of my Macedonian informants distinguished between the state of affairs on the political level and the conduct of daily life among ordinary people on the ground in the two countries. To underline the similarities between the two peoples, my informants of Macedonian extraction often construed an inclusive category of “Balkan people”. They tended to tell me that “we people from the Balkans are the same” (*nie Balkan-tsite isti sme*) and justified their claim by calling upon a common “mentality” (*mentalitet*).
- [2] The system of transliteration that I use for all Macedonian words (conventionally written in the Macedonian Cyrillic script) in this article is based on the system used by Keith Brown in *The Past in Question: Modern Macedonia and the Uncertainties of Nation* (Princeton University Press, 2003).
- [3] It is not my intention to present Macedonians and Albanians as reified entities. Thus I prefer using the term “community” as opposed to “group” as a more flexible metaphor that captures two conditions. First, it allows for the porousness of the “boundary” (see Barth, 1969), as in the case of Albanians who are Catholic and can become members of both Macedonian and Albanian ethnic communities. Second, it leaves room for the variations ethnic taxonomies can take, as in the case of Albanians who enact the pejorative stereotype *Šiptar* both among themselves to reproduce the Macedonian ideology and also in social interactions with Macedonians to assert the menace the stereotype implies (for a detailed discussion, see Neofotistos, 2002).
- [4] Albanian is written in the Latin script, hence my transcription of the Albanian words that appear in this article.
- [5] Another term that Albanians sometimes use to underscore the ethnic division between “us” and “them” and register social exclusion toward members of the Macedonian collectivity is the Turkish term “*Gavur*” (infidel).
- [6] My use of the “imaginary” resonates with what Aretxaga (1997: 8) calls “a cultural repository of largely unconscious discourses and images, modes of thinking and feeling”. This is not to suggest a disjuncture between the so-called “real” and the so-called “non-real/imagined”. Rather, I wish to point to ways in which this “cultural repository” can inform local actors’ experience of daily life and affect their actions and social relations on the ground.
- [7] The social experience of *naš čovek* also emerges in Greece as *dhikos mas anthropos* (our man) (see Herzfeld, 1987).
- [8] Brown (2001) traces the rural:urban dichotomy among Macedonians as a highly pervasive one in local society that brings about the production of the ethnic dichotomy. For a discussion of the rural:urban dichotomy among Albanian urbanites and its implications for the maintenance of a social and moral hierarchy in Macedonia that places Macedonians on top and *Šiptari* at the bottom, see Neofotistos, 2002.
- [9] Similarly, in the cultural context of Greece, Kalymnians deploy the idiom of “modernity” in connection with a variety of social practices through which they negotiate the relationship between present, past and future (see Sutton, 1994). Also, for a discussion of “modernity” as consumption, see Miller, 1995.
- [10] Similarly to what Bringa describes in Bosnia, the term “*nacija*” in Macedonia refers to “ethnoreligious identity and community” (Bringa, 1995: 22). While in the Bosnian context,

however, religious identity has an ethnic aspect, in Macedonia the meanings and significance of *nacija* can be shifting. For example, Orthodox Macedonians mostly choose to regard Macedonian Muslims as members of the Macedonian *nacija* by virtue of their ethnicity, while Macedonian Muslims tend to self-identify as members of the Turkish *nacija* by virtue of their Muslim religion.

- [11] According to Schwandner-Sievers (1999), *besa* (indefinite *besë*) derives etymologically from the Albanian word *beja* (indefinite *bë*) or, “oath”. As the same author argues in the context of blood feuds in Northern Albania, *besa* escapes translation into one word as its meaning ranges from “‘peace treaty’ ... to ‘safety guarantee’, and also, ‘oath’, ‘word of honor’ ... ‘loyalty’ and ‘trust’” (Schwandner-Sievers, 1999: 144). As far as Albanians’ dialectic use of *besa* to refer to Macedonians is concerned, and on the basis of the social experience of local life as my Albanian informants described it to me, I suggest that the English terms “credibility”/“trustworthiness” can be adequate translations of *besa* in Macedonia.
- [12] Herzfeld (1997) uses the notion of structural nostalgia as a means to reveal local justifications of social practices and unfold the negotiation of identity in the nation-state.
- [13] The Albanian term “*haxhi*” derives from the Arabic *hajj* (pilgrimage to Mecca). Going on *hajj* bestows great honour upon the faithful who are physically and financially able to undertake such a journey. As my informant suggests, however, one must have paid all his debts before departing. For a discussion of *hajj* as a journey that Turkish immigrants in Europe make to their natal villages, see Delaney, 1990.
- [14] In local narratives, *esnaf* feature as people who are “old” (*vjetër*), “religious” (*fetare*), “from the city” (*qytetare*) who used to be, or still are, craftsmen—mostly shoemakers and copper-smiths—with their own stores in “Turshka Carsija” or the Turkish Bazaar in the old part of Skopje. By virtue of their descent from families which have stayed put in a certain place for the hundreds of years since the time of the Ottoman Empire, *esnaf* emerge as people “with place” (*me vend*) and thereby possess virtues related to both *kultura* and *besa*. In consequence, being *esnaf* is not a title but a “quality” (*cilësi*). Women can also be *esnaf* if they are “measured” (*te mesat*)—that is, modest, domestic and with temperate habits. For a discussion of the polysemy and significance of the Carsija for local life in Macedonia, see Shott, 2000.
- [15] For a different perspective, see Terzic, 2000.
- [16] The ability of Albanians in Macedonia to speak Turkish contributed to the prevention of alternative, violent means of engaging in competitive status politics, such as the *kanun* moral code among Albanians in Northern Albania. The *kanun* code involves the self-regulating use of violence for granting respect and honour to a family (Durham, 1971; on the application of *kanun* from Ottoman rule to the Berisha presidency, see Schwandner-Sievers, 1999). The decline in social prominence of the Turkish language among the younger generation of Albanians in Macedonia in recent years has been replaced by a different kind of status politics oriented toward economic and material capital (see Bourdieu, 1977). Thus little room is left for the emergence of violence as a mechanism that regulates positions of power on the ground among members of the Albanian community in Macedonia.

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