

electricity sector under national control throughout a over a century long history. Notwithstanding some misleading interpretations it is worthwhile for readers and researchers with interests in either international economic history or the economic role of the nation state worldwide.

Vassilis Nitsiakos, *On the Border. Transborder Mobility, Ethnic Groups and Boundaries along the Albanian-Greek Frontier* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2010).

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Vassilis Nitsiakos' book is part of the Balkan Border Crossings' series, a larger research project concerning the evolution of the Greek and Albanian minorities after the fall of Communism in the 1990's and this volume focuses more on the Albanians living next to the border with Greece.

On the Border is about the frontier populations sharing one common element: the border itself. The nature and character of the Albanian-Greek border is the topic of this book, with Nitsiakos focusing on the "secret" doors of the Albanian identities around that area. It is a travel diary, kept while visiting some border areas between Albania and Greece, a diary marvelously combining narratives of people, places and facts with a soft analysis of the sociological and anthropological issues that characterize the area.

What is Nitsiakos actually doing? He documents one-sided transborder migration from Albania to Greece in the light of the changes occurring after the brutal fall of Communism in Albania. His case studies are numerous, since every stop along the border holds a particular case and every town provides new data and issues to reveal and analyze. The reasons behind the choice of these cases are not explained – the author relies on the continuity argument, as the present book is part of a larger research in the area, and thus he uses his previous local

connections as case studies. There are few new case studies, and this is only by accident. For instance, the chapter about the wedding in Petran is a new case study – his local connection takes Nitsiakos to the wedding. Such unplanned events in the narrative are important in creating a certain flavor and make it more accurate.

The author operates with several key words: border, migration, transnational, transmigrant and internal migration. These concepts are scrutinized both from an academic perspective but also from a local perspective. Everything is filtered through the case of the border movements from Albania to Greece. There are three dimensions of the border: juridical, natural and socio-cultural. Each of the above concepts fits one of these dimensions, as Nitsiakos focuses especially on the concept and image of the border zone. The region is further framed in the larger historical and geographical context and towards the end of the analysis; Nitsiakos brings into discussion even the impact that globalization as a process has on the migration phenomenon. Migration is an issue inevitably connected with the realities of the nation state. However, Nitsiakos filters these concepts through the lenses of the globalized world, where the nation state relinquishes its dominant role and people are driven more and more towards new forms of collective and individual identification. In this regard, the construction of ethnic identity depends more on the awareness of difference induced by the border.

The purpose of the book is to investigate transborder mobility/migration in the case of Albania and Greece after the fall of communism, when the borderline between the two countries became a formality. There are no impediments in crossing it, and Albanians do it frequently, when they go to work in Greece and eventually settle there. The investigated boundary – the border line has not only a geographical dimension but also a symbolic one. The fall of the material border in the 1990s led to the rise of a symbolic one. People are free to come and go, but it is the way they identify themselves in the course of this movement that is problematic. The cultural and spiritual dimensions are considerable landmarks in Nitsiakos' analysis. When defining a

people it is highly important to see how he views himself and how the others regard it. For instance, Albanian immigrants call themselves Northern Epirotes when they are in Greece, hoping that the identification of the term with Greekness will facilitate their reception and improve their treatment in Greece.

Although the book could be considered a travel diary the target readers for Nitsiakos' book are people with a solid background in the analysis of migration phenomena and anthropology. *On the Border* is structured in 16 chapters preceded by a Prologue and an Introduction. Each chapter has several sub-chapters, many of them with one-word titles referring either to places or people. Except for the Introduction and the Epilogue in which the theoretical aspects are presented and demonstrated, the chapters of the book rarely mention theories or concepts. These chapters are used as the playground to question and evaluate the concepts of border, migration, transnationalism etc. The author is constantly making references to specific concepts and even if the narration seems at times to be similar to a mere story of local customs it is in fact imbued with data and analysis ensues. Bearing in mind the fact that the book is part of a larger series, the target public should definitely be a specialized one: academics and trained personnel. A non-specialized reader would find it difficult to navigate through the sociological and anthropological concepts from the beginning of the book and to follow their implementation in the chapters.

Methodologically, the author uses the ethnographic narrative in order to deliver the intended message. The border line between Albania and Greece is the center stage actor of the book. The author uses lots of pictures to portray the local realities, making it look like an album. He should have also put along a map so that the reader could follow the itinerary accurately. The work is in fact a research diary with data collected in several years of traveling in the area. These data are intertwined with the personal analysis and questioning, which makes the effort a rather innovative and interesting one.

The main advantage of the book resides in the fact that it

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contains a lot of useful information collected from primary sources. However, the raw collected data is constantly processed in order to be able to explain some of the concepts that Nitsiakos chose to analyze in this work. Another point in favor of the academic utility is that fact that every aspect is viewed critically, although Nitsiakos manifests personal attachment to the topic and the area of investigation due to the past research they share. However, all pieces of information are presented unembellished, allowing the reader to draw its own conclusions. This effort is also supported by the pictures attached, mostly black and white, depicting the cruel reality of the border area between the two countries. A main drawback of the book is the rather pedantic style of the Introduction and Epilogue, abounding with a specialized vocabulary, which would be inaccessible to most readers. What is more, Nitsiakos' intention of rounding-up the book with the help of the technical Epilogue is not very satisfactory as the reader would have expected a more personal view on the topic, a more private conclusion, since throughout the book the author appears to be highly involved in the conducted research.

Taking everything into consideration, the book is well-written as it balances the theoretical aspects with lots of examples. The ideas are fluent and they derive naturally from the case studies. The choice of mixing the diary retrospective and the anthropological approach was an inspired one, as it helps conveying the aim and message of the book in a powerful and noteworthy manner.