Introduction:
Politics and the Past

୬ఌఄఄ୬

No communist nation can be formed without a history
(T. Zhivkov, *Modern Bulgaria*, p. 41)

One must know well Bulgaria's history and the history of our cultural development in order to be able to fully understand the meaning of the experiment which we are carrying out
(T. Zhivkov, *The Cultural Policy of Socialism*, p. 149)

On 17 October 2001, in the lead-up to the presidential elections, one of the national members of parliament accepted an invitation to visit the village of Talpa, northern-central Bulgaria.[1] To quote one report (*Iantra Dnec* 2001) she was met 'with pita bread, a bouquet of wild geraniums and to the chants of "Todor Zhivkov" [the country's leader for the greater part of the second half of the twentieth century]'. As a member of the Coalition of Bulgaria, a political group of left-wing parties, the parliamentary member's presence gave the event the atmosphere of a pre-election meeting, with her speaking in support of the Bulgarian Socialist Party's (BSP) presidential candidate, although not herself from this party. Following her speech, the visitor listened to villagers' complaints: a Roma woman spoke about how in Zhivkov's time they had had work while now unemployment was a big problem; others criticised the present government (the guest was from the opposition) for showing no concern about rural problems. The Mayor acknowledged that the Zhivkov family had 'done a lot' for Talpa and said that his appeal was for assistance to keep the village school open, presently under threat of closure (*Iantra Dnec* 2001). The member of parliament promised to carry their messages back to Sofia.

The name of the visitor was Jenny Zhivkova – granddaughter of Todor Zhivkov. She had been invited to Talpa by the present head of the village Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), Petur Pashev. Petur gave an account of her

visit: he described her speech as 'very human', spoke of her 'modesty and intelligence' and how after the talk she had been taken through the house that had been, during socialist times, a museum commemorating the life and work of her grandmother, a doctor in Talpa in the pre-Second World War period. The village BSP hosted a modest lunch in her honour at the village Pensioners' Club, Petur explaining that 'like her grandfather, Jenny also didn't want to be met in town, but was happy to be here in the village'.

The occasion was covered by both the district and regional newspapers which noted past connections Talpa had with the Zhivkov family. The articles commented that this had not been Jenny's first visit to Talpa, for, as a child, she had come to view the museum dedicated to her grandmother (*Pavlikenski Glas* 2001). They pointed to the family's earliest connections with Talpa, which began with Jenny's grandparents. In the 1930s, Mara Maleeva (Jenny's grandmother) moved to Talpa as the village's general practitioner. She was joined by her then fiancé, Todor Zhivkov, who was hidden from fascists in the village for two years. During this time they had been married in the nearby township of Nekilva. After becoming the head of state in the mid-1950s, Zhivkov was frequently invited to Talpa.

The invitations, however, were more frequent than the visits. Before my first fieldwork trip in 1987, Zhivkov had come to Talpa on three separate occasions. The visit in 1973 was particularly memorable and was recounted to me on numerous occasions during my time in Talpa. On this occasion Zhivkov had come in order to open the village museum which had just been completed. Having performed this ceremony, a luncheon was held in his honour, attended by local dignitaries. It was after this that he danced with all the schoolteachers from the village. By all accounts it constituted one of the highlights of the teachers' lives – the day they met and danced with Todor Zhivkov. In 1987 Zhivkov was expected in the village once more, this time to commemorate the ninetieth anniversary of the foundation of the village Communist Party. In local meetings his impending visit was alluded to in numerous ways. On one occasion, for example, his anticipated arrival served as an incentive for the completion of certain agricultural tasks: 'What would Zhivkov say if he were to come now and find the fields not yet ploughed?' Rumours of his expected arrival reached a crescendo at various points throughout the year. It was easy to become caught up in the atmosphere of anticipation; I found it difficult to tear myself away to make trips to Sofia and always returned to Talpa as quickly as possible. I never left the village without giving strict instructions to be telephoned so that a hasty return could be organised, should Zhivkov's plans be confirmed.

However, the event was constantly postponed, as one date for the visit was replaced by another. By the time I left Talpa in early 1988, Zhivkov had still not arrived. Nevertheless he had made a promise and the village Party leaders decided that since they had already waited so long, they would postpone the

celebrations until he was able to come – even if this meant having the nineti-eth anniversary in the ninety-first or ninety-second year! In the end it was a celebration that did not ever take place, as external events leading to the collapse of state socialism gained momentum with the resignation of Zhivkov, who relinquished power in November 1989 after thirty-five years of holding the top position in the country.

Zhivkov did not manage to return to Talpa before his death in 1998. It was his granddaughter Jenny who looked after him in the last years of his life when he was under house arrest – charged with embezzling state funds – a charge for which he was later (1996) acquitted by the Bulgarian Supreme Court. But he lived to witness a revival in his popularity as economic hard-ships under postsocialism encouraged many citizens to look with some nostalgia to the 'good old totalitarian days'. Many others, especially rural inhabitants (including the majority of Talpians), never wavered from their loyalty to him: the chants in support of her grandfather with which Jenny was met were echoed in everyday comments like 'bring back Tosho, we lived well then', heard so often after 1989. The positive memories associated with Zhivkov's era provided an important background to the warm way in which Jenny Zhivkova was met in Talpa. I was in the village only a few weeks after Jenny's visit in 2001 and it was still a prominent topic of conversation: in the Pensioners' Club, in the village shop and especially amongst members of the BSP, with discussions always turning to the occasion.

The Zhivkov family's relationship to Talpa shows the complicated ways in which past and present lives are woven together, the connection between local and national figures and the importance of the past in the present. The asso-ciation serves as a reminder of the difficulties of drawing a boundary around the postsocialist period as separate from that which came before. Socialism and postsocialism may be distinct analytical frames of reference but people's lives and relations cannot be so cleanly dissected. Socialism provides a latent but crucial influence in understanding the present reforms and responses to them, in comprehending both the continuities with and differences from the socialist period.

At the broadest level, this work is about the role of the past in contempo-rary local-state relations. It focuses on the central position of the past – the way in which it was represented and utilised – in shaping political relations not only within a community but also between different administrative levels of the state structure. Thus my concern is to focus on local political relations and the way in which 'the past' is used by the community in order to connect to the state centre. In many ways Jenny Zhivkova's visit, perceived by Talpi-ans and journalists alike as the latest in a series of associations with the family, highlights these themes: it indicates the existence of connections between the local community and the higher echelons of state power. It also suggests the

importance of the past in this process, not only in enriching our understanding of the present through knowledge about the past, but also the way locals use the past as a way to be politically active in the present.

Zhivkov's visits during the socialist period constituted one way of establishing local connections with state officials from higher administrative levels. But village festivities and meetings, and numerous informal and formal conversations, all provided opportunities for particular Talpians to make evident their present, past-based, connections with the highest echelons of state power. Such activities had daily relevance in public village life, as we shall see: in determining local political relations, socialist notions of morality and identity, as well as placing Talpa favourably within a centralised state structure with respect to resources. It is a relationship that local political leaders are still cultivating today – as one strategy amongst a number (see Conclusion) – more than a decade after the 'end' of socialism.

Such a continuity in strategy belies, however, a fundamental change in local-centre relations that has taken place since 1989. The symbiotic relationship that is explored in the following chapters, and which I believe characterised the socialist period, has been ruptured. Privatisation, the establishment of a multiparty political system and decentralisation – through the withdrawal of the state in production and the encouragement of the market economy – have resulted in a renegotiation in the way in which the community connects with the state. The weakening and retreat of the state from every dimension of individuals' lives has had deep and traumatic consequences for communities, especially those like Talpa, which in former times had invested a lot of effort in building close relations to the state. The postsocialist split between local communities and the state centre is a topic I discuss in more depth in the Conclusion; for now, I simply wish to point to the fact that the reforms have threatened the very foundations on which the Talpian community was built (Kaneff 2000, 2002c) and have alienated rural people (individuals and the village as a collective body) from urban reformers (e.g. Leonard and Kaneff 2002). And this picture is not confined to the northern central region of Bulgaria, but seems equally applicable to other parts of the country (e.g. see Creed 1993). It is a situation as dramatically different as can be imagined from that witnessed during the socialist period.

Local-Centre Relations in Socialist Bulgaria

In a centralised state such as Bulgaria during socialism, one's position – be it as an individual or as part of a collective – with respect to the centre, was of vital importance. Close affiliation to the state centre was fundamental to successful engagement in socialism. How this was achieved and with what degree of success was also important; for this ultimately determined access to

the wide variety of resources and privileges over which the state, with its control over means of production and monopoly over the allocation of resources (Verdery 1991b: 420–21), had control. From the perspective of the individual, alignment with the centre was also a way to extend one's degree of influence in the political, economic and social domains of socialist life.

The central concern of this work is to explore how Talpians used the past as a 'tool' to position themselves with respect to the state centre. To preempt the basic argument: when discussing local-centre relations, two issues – the legitimation of the state through village participation in socialist ideology and the control of resources by the centre – appear crucial. Indeed the crux of the local-centre relationship was the vying for centrally controlled resources on the part of villagers through their considered sponsorship of the state. In these processes, the appropriate use of the socialist past seems fundamental.

My starting point is the socialist model of the state – democratic centralism (a concept discussed in the next chapter and developed in various places in following chapters). 'Democratic centralism' involved two concepts. The first was the mobilisation of citizens to show unanimous expressions of support for the socialist state. This served, at the same time, as a means of mass participation in the state process – hence the 'democratic' aspect. In this idea of democracy there was an ambiguity in terms of who the actual power holders were – the Party as the representative of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' or an 'appropriate' balance between the Party and other state institutions – a tension which presented opportunities for factions within the political arena (Chapter 4). The second feature, 'centralism', defined the proper relations between various levels of the state administrative structure: as a hierarchy that subordinated lower administrative bodies to higher ones. This relation applied to goods that moved vertically towards the centre, rather than laterally as in more market-oriented systems (Verdery 1991b: 425). But I suggest that this vertical flow was equally relevant in explaining the flow of power – of political careers and social capital more generally.

Local displays of sponsorship for democratic centralism were made on numerous occasions, including the 'model village' event (Chapter 2). On such planned occasions, Talpians expressed their unanimous support for this model of the state and for their assumed position at the bottom rung of the hierarchy. As Sampson (1984: 304–5) observes with respect to Romania: '…socialist planning is a distinct form of national integration which restructures the relations between local communities and supralocal institutions'. The model village event was one of the numerous occasions that provided an opportunity for Talpians to locate themselves favourably/appropriately in terms of the state centre.

However, my exploration of the political uses of the past suggests an alternative way in which the local was connected to the state centre. Through the manipulation of constructions of the past, Talpians had access to the inner circle of elites rather than to just the officials at the lower echelons of the

bureaucracy in the district and region, as one would expect if the prescriptive structure of democratic centralism was being followed. This constituted one form of involvement in the state-defined project called socialism which, while compatible with socialist ideology, attributed a particular inflection to the democratic centralism model of the state (Chapter 2). It was a means of by-passing the bureaucratic hierarchy that placed the village at the bottom rung of the administrative ladder.

In speaking about local attempts of orientation with respect to wider administrative structures, it becomes important to distinguish the centre from the rest of the bureaucracy. In a state structure characterised by hierarchy and subordination, the centre played a pervasive role: those at the centre were concerned with the maximisation of production, with '…the norms of consumption for the population and…the duration and intensity of labour…[Also with] the size of the social surplus…[and decisions concerning] …its allocation' (Harding 1984: 40–41).[2] The distinction between the 'bureaucratic apparatus, an all-embracing mono-organisational entity, and … its "pinnacle", a "small circle of the political elite, the Party leadership, where all the basic-orientative decisions concerning the overall distribution of social surplus are made"' is recognised by a number of authors (e.g. Feher, Heller and Markus 1983, cited in Verdery, 1991b: 423–24). When I speak of 'the centre', it is the elite Party leadership in Sofia, with Zhivkov as its head, to which I am referring.

Further, just as Talpian political activity was not carried out by a homogeneous group (Chapter 4), so it would be naive to assume that the state centre was made up of a unified elite, rather than a body in which rivalries also existed – legitimated and expressed, in part at least, on the basis of their differing relationships to history (but see Verdery 1991b: 425–26, for the economic basis of these tensions). A number of studies have brought attention to the conflicting interests within the Politburo, as well as between this group and other prominent political figures. Despite the existence of rivalries I would point, however, to the success of Zhivkov in maintaining power for thirty-five years; a period which displayed a degree of political stability in Bulgaria witnessed in few of the other East European countries during socialism, or for that matter within Bulgaria at other times in the Twentieth Century. The continued eminence of Zhivkov over such a lengthy period, combined with the fact that power was concentrated in and around the Politburo (Brown 1984: 66), justifies distinguishing the 'centre' from the rest of the state structure, be that lesser Party or government officials.

The past provided a means of directly connecting a 'primary unit' of the administrative hierarchy – the village – with the state centre. It was through celebrations, discourse and practices referencing the past that Talpians were creatively involved in showing how their own – individual and communal – past fitted with that espoused by the state. It was through the past – through establishing individual or village links to socialist history, showing how they

contributed to socialist progress through their participation in folklore, or through their active rejection of tradition – that villagers participated in the ideological production and reproduction of the socialist state. One such instance was the model village event (Chapter 2), where history, tradition and folklore were tools used by Talpians to make evident their alliance to the state's self-proclaimed aim for humanity (social change), an evolutionary project of which the village as a collective unit showed itself to be supportive. In the multitude of other ways that Talpians made evident their role in history – such as through the village museum which both established and displayed their shared history with Zhivkov – those politically active in the village made known their close connections to the very highest officials in the Bulgarian state. These associations constituted a local variant on the democratic central-ism model, but not a divergence from it. Ultimately Talpians were participating in the mass performance of upholding state ideology so vital to the legitimation of the state. Indeed the temporal evolutionary project that was central to the Marxist-Leninist state required that social change should be seen to be occurring and that progress towards the goal of communism was taking place through mass involvement in this project. It was through their appropriate use of the past that Talpians engaged in such a reproduction of state ideology and legitimation of the state. In this sense, and contrary to the findings of others (Lampland 1995, Verdery 1991b), I suggest that state ideology *was* relevant at the local level, at least in Talpa (see below).

Through their carefully constituted valuation of the past, individual Talpi-ans, sometimes working collectively for the village, established their position with respect to the centre. In this way both individuals and the village as a whole gained access to resources and privileges. It also enabled local figures to legitimate their own power. Successful attainment of resources from the centre reinforced the local power base of Talpian officials. Local development was therefore a sign of favourable (close) centre-local relations, effective village political leadership and an on-going dependency between the centre requir-ing legitimation and the local need for resources and funds. In the Conclusion I return again to this form of dependency, which involved cultivating rela-tions of 'familiarity' with officials at the state centre and which resulted, from a regional perspective, in competition between villages within the district.

Before looking more closely at the three constructions of the past – history, folklore and tradition – which constitute the ethnographic focus of this study, and which are metaphors for different ways of relating to the state centre, I first turn to a more general discussion on socialist time and how 'the past' fits into this broader framework. For it seems to me that in any discussion of the use of the past in engaging in socialist ideology and connecting with the state centre, a more general discussion of temporality appears necessary in order to provide an overarching framework for the more specific ethnography of the past that follows.

Socialist Temporality

Marxism-Leninism was, in essence, an economic and sociopolitical project. As such, however, it contained an important temporal dimension: it was a developmental programme with a perceived historical inevitability. Thus the present was directed towards social change aimed at the realisation of a specific future goal – communism. As a future-oriented project, with a definite past and assumed future, Marxism-Leninism dictated the nature of engagement in, and understanding about, the contemporary world. Such a temporality provided the 'charter' (Malinowski 1992: 93–148) for the political economy and for social development. Importantly, 'Under state socialism, Marxism-Leninism was not one ideology or political economy among many, but rather was the inevitable and glorious outcome of a discernible historical process' (Watson 1994: 1). A Marxist-Leninist world view was adopted by the state as a scientific, objective and universal truth. Every aspect of life under the socialist state, from the way in which government administration was organised to the content of educational programmes and cultural activities, was geared towards the realisation of stipulated goals. Marxism-Leninism was an ideology that pervaded all levels and dimensions of life in socialism and provided the blueprint for state policies across the board of social life. It constituted a national and global project which demanded the full efforts of state organs as well as perceived commitment and consensus from the masses.

In a context where development towards the communist goal was believed to be a historical inevitability, the '…production of history [and not only history, it could be added, but the domain constituted as 'the past' more generally] takes on tremendous significance – political, ideological and moral' (Watson 1994: 1). In such circumstances, temporality was raised for critical reflection in everyday relations in a way not evident amongst those living out capitalist time. Socialist time was characterised by a high degree of self-reflection and was legitimated, reproduced and debated in a very deliberate way. The seizing of time by the state established temporality as a highly contentious domain of socialist life.

Under state socialism the Communist Party appropriated time in the name of the working class. Thus the 'centralisation' of time occurred in a particular way. While history was the prerogative of the Party and organs under its jurisdiction, Party leaders grounded their claims to legitimacy in the historical principles of Marxism-Leninism (Watson 1994: 1). This was true not only for national leaders but also at the village administrative level. In a more 'practical' sense, the state seizure of time was achieved through the nationalisation of institutions, thus giving the state ascendancy over a wide range of forms of time through control of labour, subsuming industrial and work time to state agenda. Control of the media, of education and the cultural arena also gave the state influence over leisure time. Indeed the seizure of time was so pervasive that even notions of personhood were affected, eroding

previous senses of self in an attempt to create the 'new socialist man' (Verdery 1996).[3] The encroaching nature of state-controlled time resulted in an increasing expropriation of time from individual control (as Verdery shows in the case of Romania, 1996: 40), an opposite process to that of the 'privatisation of time', or, in Verdery's terms, 'etatisation' (1996, Ch. 2).

The complex plethora of different times that constitute social reality were encompassed during state socialism within the one temporal framework – which I refer to as socialist time, or sometimes Marxist-Leninist temporality. In this sense socialist time differed from that of other societies where industrialised time was developed, in that Marxism-Leninism imposed on this apparently objective and stratified time an overarching temporal agenda, which provided the canopy under which other seemingly fragmented times were subsumed.[4] In capitalism there appears to be no equivalent overarching temporality.[5] A Marxist-Leninist notion of world history (socialist time) thus took on the status of a 'meta-narrative' – or should I say meta-temporality? – controlled by a political administration which was itself legitimated by the very same meta-narrative. State socialism therefore appeared to develop within a fundamental tension: between a Marxist-Leninist political-economic agenda that encouraged industrialisation (and the dislocation of various times) and an ideology that encompassed the fragmented times under its directed temporal goals.[6]

Despite the centralised nature of socialist time, state control was never absolute. In fact, precisely because of the highly politicised position of time brought about by the attempted totalising control of the state, the past remained a highly contentious domain of socialist life. Firstly, there was not one official state-sponsored version of history, but a number of renditions which all occupied different 'niches' within the broad lines of the legitimate framework constituted by 'history' (see Chapter 4). Negotiations and tensions arising from these versions provided much of the driving force for open political activity – something that has not been given sufficient attention in studies of socialist states to date. But secondly, 'spaces' also existed for alternative versions of the past which were not state-sponsored (Chapters 5 and 6). Social memory as well as other means of encoding the past (e.g. see Connerton 1989) bear witness to the fact that the state's monopoly over time was never absolute. Official renditions of the past were not able to drown out alternate/unofficial pasts (Watson 1994: 2). Indeed these unauthorised pasts are now the foundation of new histories being legitimated in postsocialist states (Watson 1994: 4).

This book focuses on the political uses of the past within socialist Bulgaria; on the fundamental importance of the past in the legitimation of state power and in creating and shaping relations not only within the community but also between the local community and state centre. Participation in socialist temporality was a means of exercising power. Competing notions of the past advocated by groups located differently with respect to the centralised socialist state were fundamental in creating internal differentiation (used to

maintain boundaries and inequalities within society), as well as in structuring relations between the state centre and periphery.

The Importance of the Past: History, Tradition and Folklore

In village Talpa, temporality was primarily referred to in terms of three different ways of talking about the past – history, tradition and folklore. The chapters of this book are arranged into three sections that reflect this way of categorising the past (which was also a projection about the future). As essentially ethnographic categories – more accurately, my analysis of native categories – history, tradition and folklore provided a *central organising principle*, for not only social relations within the community but also for the way the community engaged in wider state structures. As 'carriers of significance' (Fabian 1983: ix) and value, history, folklore and tradition shaped relations between villagers with respect to each other and to the state centre, where resources and other privileges were controlled and distributed. In short, these pasts were a key way in which villagers experienced and *engaged in* the socialist project.

The three pasts had very distinct characteristics, occupying quite specific social spaces that were associated with different individuals. Each one of the pasts 'spoke' to a particular domain of social relations: history was the embodiment of the political-economy; tradition a potentially oppositional way to conceptualise the human order (primarily through religious/mystical practices); while folklore provided a state-sponsored notion of national identity. The state was pervasive and ever present in all these constructions of the past, either through its presence (as in the case of history and folklore) or through its absence (in the case of tradition).

In practice it is difficult to treat the three pasts as separate categories for they were not played out in isolation from each other (Watson 1994: 8–9). In this work I explore the connections between different ways of representing and utilising the past. Indeed an important concern is to show how the different pasts – both the official and the unofficial past that others (e.g. Verdery 1991a and Watson 1994, respectively) have written about – 'fitted' together in daily village life, gave value to persons, space and occasions (activities) and were central to local political, moral and identity relations.

History, tradition and folklore are also metaphors for different ways of relating to the state centre. A comparison of history and tradition reveals their contrasting way of relating to the state, while folklore takes some middle position both between history and tradition, and between tradition and the state. But in practice such an analytical relationship, reinforced in state ideology, was subject to inflections according to local aims and opportunities. In Talpa, where history held the prominent position (see Chapter 2), folklore was encompassed by history (rather than carrying equal value to it). The way a

local community valued these pasts, for example by giving more importance to history or to folklore, provided a number of possible ways for the community to negotiate its relationship to wider state structures (see Conclusion).

I assume that the past is ethnographically constructed (context-specific) and that there are numerous ways of categorising, understanding and representing the past within any given society. It is precisely because socialist concepts of the past cannot be assumed to be the same as, say, in capitalist societies, that I have explored Talpian understandings of history, tradition and folklore in Chapters 3, 5 and 7 respectively.

History, folklore and tradition as both representations and utilisations – ideas about and practices of – Marxism-Leninism, by no means provided an exhaustive account of socialist temporality. But they did cover the 'collectively held, publicly expressed, ideologically charged versions of the past, which…vary within the groups that form a society' (Appadurai 1981: 202). In any exploration of the significance of the past, these forms cannot be understood in isolation from each other. Jointly considered, they constituted the publicly constructed domain of socialist time, representing a system of values that helped shape local-centre politics, morality and identity.

The following chapter illustrates the importance of the past to Talpians by focusing on an occasion in 1987 when Talpa was awarded the title 'model village'. Concentrating on the events of the day and on the entourage of official guests from Sofia as they were taken around various sites in the village, the reader is also led around the village and introduced to the community. During this highly planned and structured affair, each representation of the past – history, tradition and folklore – was attributed a certain value, assigned to a different spatial 'zone' and associated with different villagers. The relationship between the three – a subject of exploration in the remaining chapters – was of a hierarchical nature, in the Dumontian sense (Dumont 1966: see Postface): one between the encompassing Marxist-Leninist history and the encompassed folklore and tradition, with folklore being valued positively and tradition negatively. In the course of the tour it was history that was shown to have greatest relevance to the 'model' villagers.

History (Chapter 3) was the representation of the past that was sponsored by the state and expressed through the centrally controlled media – written sources, television and radio. Events which celebrated history were located in public places and dominated by state officials – Party members or others – through a wide variety of calendrical ceremonies as well as through formal and informal discussions. The relationship between a historical version of the past and local political activity is also explored. The elevation of some past events above others – possible because of the teleological quality of history – was central in raising history as a contestable and sought-after political resource. History also provided the source of a socialist notion of morality: a political figure's ability to exercise power was ultimately dependent upon being

able to command respect and public approval, to be seen as morally responsible. Importantly, history was not a monolithic past but multifaceted: political careers were dependent on an individual's ability to incorporate her/his own personal biography within a state-approved version of the past – thus history itself became contestable, assuming a number of significant renditions. These renditions, which existed within the broad framework of the officially designated history, provided the basis of factions (pluralism) within the political domain (Chapter 4).

Traditional activities (Chapter 5) provided an alternative way of constructing and knowing the past, as well as a conceptual and practical means of resisting the state. The almost complete state control of discourse meant that this alternate past occupied nonverbal or textual domains – as nonarticulated practices. Traditions were rooted in religious and mystical significance and characterised the past as cyclic (rather than the linear ordering given to time by history). Further, traditions were banished to village sites not sponsored by the state – such as the home or the church – which held ambiguous (or even negative) value. Engaging in traditional activities designated an individual's peripheral position with respect to the state – as non-Party member, with little political influence. The conceptual and practical marginalisation of traditions was a result of the fact that this past distinguished and unified humanity in a very different way from a historical temporal order, creating locally based identities defined in terms of gender, ethnicity and religion (Chapter 6).

The dualism between history and tradition represented two different ways to define humanity and to distinguish between the human condition, one sponsored by the state, the other outside state jurisdiction.[7] It served to differentiate internally between people/places/organisations, to give legitimation to the state-sponsored 'us' and to marginalise those in conflict with the state, the atemporal 'them'. Aware that traditional practices could be, and often were, used as a way of expressing opposition, the state's response was the development of folklore.[8] Folklore was the way in which state officials attempted to claim tradition for their own hegemonic purposes – through restructuring the population's perception of the traditional past (Chapter 7). Folklore thus served to transform a potentially oppositional past into a state-approved form. At the same time, the practice of folklore helped legitimate the state: it was a show of how transformation and change were taking place in society, demonstrating that traditional customs were irrelevant and socialist development was in progress.

The process by which tradition became folklore necessitated the involvement of state representatives in the textualisation and study of the practices and then their reconstitution in a state-controlled space (museums, stages) and time. Since folklore was a state-sponsored means of spatially and temporally distancing traditional practices from contemporary socialist life, participation in folkloric practices was one way villagers displayed themselves

to be 'modern' and 'progressive'. Unlike history, which was controlled by politically active villagers, or tradition, which was practised by non-state officials, folklore was a past in which any villager could participate irrespective of her/his position in the state structure. The wide accessibility of folklore was reflected in its spatial distribution – it was performed in both public and private locations.

It is this unifying quality which gave folklore its importance in contributing to a state-approved notion of a national socialist identity (Chapter 8). Folklore represented an important part of what constituted 'Bulgarian culture'. Through their involvement in folkloric events Talpians revealed how 'cultured' they were. At the same time, participation in this past provided the villagers with a state-approved socialist identity which countered the fragmenting (localising) tendencies of traditional practices, allowing them to present themselves as modernising Bulgarian villagers unified in the socialist cause.

The politicisation of the past as history, tradition and folklore led to a valuation of space and persons who moved through this Marxist-Leninist temporal-spatial framework. Thus the three constructions of the past could be mapped spatially – each being confined to particular sites within the community. Certain pasts were performed in only certain spaces – for example history was celebrated in public places, tradition in private, non-state ones such as the house and church. However, it was not only space, but also persons who moved through this space who were politicised by the temporal order. Only certain villagers could occupy particular locations and participate in certain events and this was determined in terms of their legitimate relationship to state-approved history. Individuals (through their biographies) and specific places were drawn into the state's rendition of the past, into socialist temporality.

Therefore it is not just that different pasts represented and transmitted the past in characteristically different ways (Watson 1994: 9), but also that different pasts were designated to different locations in space, and each was constituted as the domain of various people (e.g. political or nonpolitical figures). However, it would be erroneous to suppose that any definite boundary could be drawn between time/space/persons belonging to history, to tradition and to folklore. A degree of ambiguity existed which helped constitute the temporally charged world as a contentious and ambiguous sphere. The past always remained an inherently debatable resource.

The importance of the past lay ultimately in its ability to give value to persons, places and events with respect to the Marxist-Leninist meta-narrative orienting everything in terms of the state centre. When individuals associated themselves with different pasts – through, for example, participating or not in the celebration of a state-sponsored history – they oriented themselves in terms of other individuals and, perhaps more specifically, in terms of state officials. This had consequences for how they were positioned with respect to the centralised state: a crucial consideration in a system that concentrated

allocative powers over resources (material and other) in the centre. This was, as I argue in the Conclusion, an important feature of state socialism in connecting different levels of the administrative hierarchy – local to the centre. The politicisation of time, space and persons provided meaningful coordinates to socialist events, places and people, orienting everything in terms of the all-pervasive state.

In Talpa, history, folklore and tradition were pasts that found expression through a range of scheduled and spontaneous practices and discourses, in both official and unofficial settings. Time was not only 'symbolically elaborated through rituals' (Rotenberg 1992: 19) but was also expressed through other everyday public activities – meetings, celebrations, conversations. Such occasions, which constitute the focus of my study, indicate the wide range of ways in which the past was referenced: from formalised, structured meetings in which there was little room for internal contradiction (history) to practices which were spontaneous acts that posed potential opposition to the state (tradition). This is not to say that all historical celebrations were what Handelman (1990, see especially pp. 41–48) would typify as 'events that present the lived-in-world' since sometimes history was raised in spontaneous, informal discussions. Nor were all traditional practices destabilising acts which proposed an alternative order as 'events that re-present the lived-in-world' (Handelman, 1990, especially pp. 49–58). Indeed, the ambiguity frequently conveyed by traditional activities meant that occasionally they were even performed with the tacit sponsorship of the state – for example *Zarezan* (celebration of viticultural production), Chapter 5. However, in a general sense, such a delineation between public events that referenced the past had some validity.

My focus on *public* celebrations and practices is not accidental. Public events are privileged points of access into understanding a cultural world (Handelman 1990: 9). Nowhere is this more relevant than in the situation of socialism. For while every state requires legitimation, socialist ideology demanded that legitimation and development occur in a very public way, through mass participation of the Party-led working class. Public events in Eastern Europe – rituals, folkloric performances, poetry readings, to name a few – held a privileged position in the role of education and legitimation of the state (Binns 1979, 1980; Kligman 1983, 1988; Lane 1981; Silverman 1983, 1989[9]). Indeed the programme of social change that was at the heart of state socialism was dependent upon the reeducation of the population.

The attempt to reeducate, to transform practice and consciousness occurred in a wide range of ways – including the establishment of new rituals and other public celebrations and the removal or transformation of others, that is, through 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 1983a).[10] Public rituals and celebrations were taken up, scrutinised and reworked by state agents. It was for this reason that Bulgarian officials were constantly exploring and experi-

menting with new rituals, developing new ways to celebrate various occasions that represented the social world in line with Marxist-Leninist principles. Many of the invented celebrations – weddings and funerals, for example – appear to be modifications of Soviet rituals. The Bulgarian adaptation occurred with arguably a greater degree of success than was ever achieved in many of the republics of the Soviet Union.[11] Similar seizures of time and attempts at transforming society are now occurring in postsocialist Bulgaria, as the population is subjected to new educational programmes which 'teach' people how to celebrate festivals such as Christmas in line with a new state ideology. I return to this point in the Conclusion.

The past, as written, celebrated and practised in public events during socialism, was the responsibility of intellectuals and high-level Party and government officials (see Verdery 1991a for the Romanian case). Such officials were assigned the task of 'designing' and conducting celebrations (e.g. see Chapter 6). They were responsible for the state-sponsored public celebrations concerned with the past: how a historical celebration would be commemorated or how a folklore competition would be carried out. Much of my ethnography focuses on these individuals – that is, this is a study of the village elite, which is tantamount to saying it is a study of the Party members. In Talpa, in the mid to late 1980s, one-seventh of the total population held Party membership. This was considered a little higher than the average for surrounding villages or indeed for the country as a whole (estimated as one eighth, Fotev 1999: 157). Interestingly, the statistics do not show a decline in the postsocialist period. After an initial period of inactivity, during which time the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP) was reformed as the Bulgarian Socialist Party (BSP), the latter now enjoys a similarly high membership in Talpa: in fact slightly more than one-seventh of the local inhabitants are currently active members.

While the coordination and running of public events was in the hands of the village elite, participation extended well beyond Communist Party membership, drawing in the vast majority of Talpians. 'Ordinary' villagers were not passive vessels in this process: they were very much involved with the production and reproduction of the past at the local level. This process inevitably led to inflections and distortions of the centralised versions of the past. Talpians were engaged in socialist time in a multitude of ways: through their work, where they were subject to schedules and socialist work routines; and in their leisure time through direct participation in celebrations and rituals which upheld state-sponsored time. Indeed, as I hope will become evident, Talpian officials and others were skilled at using these pasts, using socialist temporality in strategic ways to achieve their political ambitions. Smaller numbers were involved in ignoring if not explicitly resisting socialist time through their engagement in celebrating pasts that lay outside state jurisdiction. Everyone was bound, however, to the web of state ideology.

And here I return to a point briefly raised earlier: while it is difficult to ascertain whether Talpians actually believed in state ideology, they did engage in it and 'use' it to their advantage. Realistic in their assessment of the degree of control exercised by the state centre, Talpian leaders showed considerable skill and sophistication in utilising their relations with the centre, relations calculated to bring them, and the village, maximum benefit. Thus it would be inaccurate to say that there was 'no role for socialist ideology' in Talpa (nor did the Talpian elite make such claims), as was apparently a commonly voiced opinion in other East European countries, for example, amongst Hungarians (Lampland 1995: 245). For Lampland, any involvement in ideology was passive reproduction while for most Hungarians politics was an 'alien' process (1995: 247). A similar position is also taken by Verdery (1991b: 427) for Romania: 'Marxism-Leninism remained for most people an alien ideology unintegrated into consciousness and practice except in a wholly superficial manner…'. (Also see Hann's (1985) Polish study.[12]) On the other hand, Talpians – and not only Party members – were highly aware of the advantages of engaging in state ideology, and skilled in using the ideology for their own benefit and that of their community. Nor was this situation restricted to Talpa; as I elaborate in the Conclusion, other villages in the district were equally apt participants in this process. As to why this should be so, I can but offer several speculative comments. One explanation is that the Bulgarian state was more centralised and therefore exercised greater control over its citizens (a debatable point), or that Talpa was an anomaly in that its leaders were exceptionally skilled in using the past and engaging in state ideology (not upheld by my observations of neighbouring villages – see Conclusion). Part of the explanation, I suspect, lies in the fact that the village had a long pro-socialist history extending back to the late 1800s (when the village priest helped found the first socialist party (!) and the portraits of Marx and Engels were hung in the *Chitalishte* or cultural/political centre). This suggests that state socialism was 'in tune' with local interests (in a way not necessarily evident in other East European countries). It certainly was, and still is, associated in villagers' minds with bringing about an increased standard of living in rural areas. Indeed, socialism can be understood to be a rural 'revolution', in that those people in power during the socialist period were from the countryside; actually the vast majority of Eastern Europe leaders came from peasant backgrounds (Drachkovitch 1982). Thus Zhivkov's personal as well as ideological commitment to rural Bulgaria was clear – as Pashev's comment about Zhivkov and his granddaughter 'preferring the simple and modest life of the village' (quoted at the beginning of this Introduction) suggests. To the extent that socialism was a victory for rural interests, this contrasts with the post-1989 situation, where reforms are very much an urban-based initiative.

Fieldwork and the Issue of Representation

Approximately one year into my first fieldwork period in Bulgaria, I photographed a queue of elderly Talpians at the village bakery. An old woman in the queue immediately responded to my action with the comment that 'they'll [meaning Westerners] think that we are queuing because there is no bread'. There was a silence amongst those present as we all recognised the truth in her words: without a specific explanation from me of the exceptional circumstances surrounding the day, the picture would convey another story to the western observer. The fact was that villagers were preparing for a day of festivities; each household would be entertaining thirty to fifty guests and thus needed an uncharacteristically high quantity of bread. The pure logistics of having to bake and sell ten times more bread than on a normal day provides ample explanation for the delay at the bakery. Yet the photograph easily replicated the many I'd seen in the Western media submitted as 'evidence' of the lack of food under state socialism. That in various periods in different East European countries there were food queues is not the point. The elderly woman's comment revealed a critical awareness of the way in which Westerners could and did represent and misrepresent life under state socialism, emphasising the lack of consumables and material comforts in order to serve Western propaganda goals.[13] At the same time, this occasion served as a warning about the way I would use my material to represent Talpians. For Westerners, generous hospitality and regular social gatherings of people meeting over lavish meals were not typical images of socialism, even though such occasions played a prominent role in my experience of socialist Bulgaria. So, why did I take a picture of the queue, rather than on the following day a photograph of the festivities, when large numbers of merry guests sat around a banquet table piled high with various foods and drink? What makes one image more 'representative' of state socialism than the other?

The above incident indicates one mundane way in which the issue of representation – how I would portray life in socialist Bulgaria to an audience in the capitalist West – was raised while I was in the field. As some anthropologists have pointed out, a text not only represents a politics in its contents but it also occurs in a political context (see Abu-Lughod 1991; Fox 1991; Vincent 1991). Fieldwork is always a highly politicised activity, but in the half century following the Second World War, there was, for Western field researchers working in Eastern Europe, the added dimension of Cold War politics. I cannot claim to have faced the restrictions that (especially) some American colleagues appear to have faced – difficulties in getting visas, restrictions placed on movements within some countries. But nevertheless Cold War politics provided a background to my experiences, a confrontation that was encapsulated in a conversation I had soon after my arrival in Talpa, when I was quizzed by a pensioner whom I met in the street about the current position of Aboriginals in Australia. This conversation reminded me that I was

dealing with not only a highly literate and educated population, but also one that was willing and able to directly challenge the Western anthropologist on her native ground.

But apart from the influence of global politics, there were other ways in which representation was at issue. How the village was depicted to higher-order state officials was one, how I portrayed myself to villagers and they to me, were others. Unsurprisingly, Sofia officials, local officials and ordinary villagers all took an interest in how I would describe them within Bulgaria and beyond. These issues were complicated by ancestral connections: my grandparents were born in Bulgaria and emigrated to Australia during the first two decades of the twentieth century.[14] Fieldwork in Bulgaria involved establishing contact with distant relatives whom I had never met before. Balancing my responsibilities to kin with obligations to anthropological research in the context of Cold War politics made fieldwork into an endeavour which sometimes required careful manoeuvring. But the kindnesses extended to me by both kin and state officials helped make the period an extremely happy one.

I arrived in Bulgaria in July 1986. This did not constitute my first trip to the country[15], but it was the first visit made as an anthropologist. This 'first' trip, which provides the bulk of the material in this book, lasted for nineteen months. I subsequently returned to Bulgaria in 1992 for nine months and have followed up these extensive trips with shorter two- to three- month visits most summers since 1992. Ancestral affiliations meant that I was never viewed by state officials or others as purely an 'outsider' or 'stranger', nor was I left totally dependent on bureaucrats for assistance. Family connections gave me an alternate means for sorting out fieldwork problems, such as finding an appropriate site. I was, therefore, not 'managed' by the bureaucracy, at least not in an official sense. When I first arrived in Sofia I was met by a family acquaintance who at this time was a minister in the government (and reportedly the youngest partisan during the Second World War). That first night was not at all reminiscent of stories I had been told or read concerning 'first fieldwork experiences'. Greeting a filthy anthropologist who had just travelled (economy class) two nights and three days by train from London, the acquaintance presented me with a bouquet of flowers before whisking me away in his black Mercedes (after apologising that his chauffeur was off duty) to dine with a group of European academics in Sofia for a convention. I felt very much out of place at the sophisticated dinner party: I was not suitably dressed (we had gone straight from the train station to the restaurant), nor was I able to participate in the table conversation which was carried out in five sometimes six different European languages. I soon learnt that my host was head of a professional union and a high-ranking Party official. His status served me well in minimising the bureaucratic hurdles that I faced in the following weeks. Thanks to him, suitable accommodation had been organised for me in Sofia and my unaccompanied luggage was passed through customs without any delays.

The first three months of my stay were spent in Sofia enhancing my language skills (as a bilingual speaker I nevertheless needed to improve my reading and writing skills) and exploring potential fieldwork sites. My affiliation from the outset with Sofia University, where I was assigned a supervisor who was responsible for me while I was in the country, was more problematic, however. For having delineated my interests in the visa application as within the safe 'apolitical' limits of folklore, I was understandably introduced to historians and folklorists who could not grasp the nature of my anthropological project. The villages which were put forward as potential study areas were not to my liking, nor was I pleased about the suggestion that I reside in a city hotel and commute daily to the fieldwork site. Rather than confront the situation by openly stating my needs – more a feature of my lack of confidence than a result of any pressures I felt from them – I drew away, deciding instead to 'go it alone'. The short-term consequences were appealing: I had total control over the choice of village and no association with Sofia officials after those first few months, except for help always gratefully received from the family acquaintance. The negative side to this situation was that I worked in relative isolation, without establishing close connections with Bulgarian academics – a situation that happily I have now, over a decade later, rectified.

I finally settled in Talpa in December 1986 – the birth village of my maternal grandmother. A couple of months after my arrival I was asked by the village policeman, who had been observing my note taking during a village meeting, to go to his office. His question about what I was doing in Talpa was not, understandably, pacified by my response that I was interested in studying folklore. It only raised further questions as to why I was taking notes at a meeting which had no obvious relation to the subject. After checking my papers, the policeman discovered that I was not registered in the village as required by law, no doubt a consequence of the fact that having depended on the family friend and relatives to help me 'settle in', I had no Sofia bureaucrats to guide me on such matters. He requested that I attend an interview at the district Police Headquarters the following morning. Given the fact that he confiscated both my passport and notebook, I had little choice but to do so. Problems were ironed out and my documents returned the following day – after I produced an official letter in my possession from Sofia University confirming my research student status – but the interview concluded with a warning that he would be 'keeping an eye on me'. I continued my research, including public note taking at meetings, but the incident did alert me to the fact that care was needed in the way I conducted my enquires.

Officially, my position in the village was now established and local officials seemed more willing to accept my presence. In fact most of my daily activities were centred around public events in the village. In this respect my place of residence became a great asset. As with the choice of fieldwork site, so too, when it came to choice of where I would reside, the decision was negotiated

without bureaucratic assistance. In this case it was carried out between myself and family. I had hoped to live with my grandmother's 86-year-old brother, *diado* (grandfather) Ivan, and his pensioner son *diado* Koliu, whose house was close to the village plaza. However, it was not deemed appropriate that I reside with two elderly widowers, even though I was happy to take on numerous house chores – helping with the cooking and so on. Instead I was encouraged to live with my mother's second cousin, *lelia* (aunt) Maria, a widow aged fifty-five, who was a schoolteacher in the village and a prominent Party and public figure. There were clear advantages to this: it enhanced the access I had to material on local politics, providing a good vantage point from which to get a sense of the way in which the village functioned politically and adminis-tratively. The fact that she was an active public figure who was visited regularly by other villagers compensated for her home being located further away from the central village plaza than *diado* Ivan's.

The practices that I carried out in the name of anthropology – showing an interest in public occasions, observing and writing about village life – aligned me, in many people's eyes, with state officials who were engaged in similar activities. There were different responses to my strengthening relationship with local state officials, which depended on the political position of the individual. Village officials had something to gain from their acquaintanceship with me: sometimes my presence at a formal event as an 'exotic' Westerner gave the occasion greater status and pomp. In fact a couple of times I was aware that I was being 'used' by local officials to elevate the status of the village in front of higher-ranking state representatives who attended more important village celebrations. As far as village officials were concerned, I contributed to the internationalism of the village and my presence provided the community with a degree of importance. It was understandable, therefore, that local officials should be concerned with how I would represent the village, because of the wider consequences this could have for their own reputations and that of the village.

At the same time, others, especially the small number of families whose views set them in opposition to the socialist state, while being polite, were distant, excluding me from their intimate social circle. A household further down our street was occupied by a pensioned couple (Denkov) who rarely spoke to me beyond casual greetings. Nor did I ever see them at village meetings. It was only after our friendship grew during my second trip in 1992, that it became clear that the couple, one of the few village households on the 'wrong' side of the political fence – being a wealthy family that had resisted collectivisation of the land – had deliberately avoided close contact with me, maintaining a low profile during the socialist period. (After 1989, their situation was reversed, as especially the elderly woman, Penka, became a central figure in establishing one of the two, new private agricultural firms.)

Apart from this case and a handful of other householders who did not seek association with me, there were other occasions when my presence was not

always welcomed. For example, during *Zarezan* (Chapter 5), a festival with religious roots and for this reason not enthusiastically sponsored by the state, I was excluded from an important part of the proceedings. Years later the reason for my exclusion became clear (see Chapter 5). Again it had to do with the fact that in many people's eyes I was closely associated with village officials: state representatives were anxious that the popularity of such non-state-sponsored events in the village was not conveyed to outsiders, while non-officials did not wish to collude with someone they associated with the state. Excluding me from particular activities was one way in which they were able to determine my access to information and so establish control over the way I represented them. There were other means by which villagers influenced the information I could obtain about their activities and therefore shape my descriptions, including: pertinent silences, nonparticipation and the use of nonverbal forms of communication (e.g. visual symbols). They used similar strategies when resisting state interference.

On the occasions when I was marginalised due to my associations with officialdom, I had one 'trump card' (to extend the metaphor from Loizos (n.d.: 7) quoting R. Firth 'If you have a strong suit in your hand, lead from it') – my kinship ties. I had not intended carrying out fieldwork in a village of my ancestors and in many senses I entered Talpa as a relative stranger. Although I had not spent more than a few days or hours with Talpian relatives before starting fieldwork, they nevertheless had a conception of 'who I was'. There was a place for me, I discovered, in the village, on the basis that I was 'X's' granddaughter. The advantages in terms of walking into 'ready-made' relationships were considerable. Indeed very soon I found myself appealing to kinship ties in order to reassure worried villagers who were concerned about how I would represent them to the outside world. One such instance occurred soon after I had moved to Talpa. Most households raised livestock for meat and an important family winter occasion was the slaughtering of the fattened pig. I attended such an event at *diado* Ivan and Koliu's house, dutifully photographing the proceedings and asking numerous questions. This made family members conscious of the way in which I was raising their activities for observation. At the end of the day, my second cousin (the grandson of *diado* Ivan) commented to me in front of the other householders that 'you'll go back and probably tell them what "savages" we are in Bulgaria, slaughtering and consuming the pig'. Without thinking, I responded: 'If I were to say that about you, then I'd also be saying it about myself, since we are related'. My self-identification as kin served as a guarantee, providing a basis for acceptance and an assurance that I could be trusted.

However, locating myself in this way structured all future fieldwork activities: from that point on I refrained from subjecting my family to incessant questions and writings. Note taking was no longer conducted openly in respect to issues concerning family and friends, but carried out from memory

as soon as an opportunity arose (see also Abu-Lughod 1991 and Mascaren-has-Keyes 1987). In fact kin often assumed that I had more knowledge than I actually had. I recall in the first few weeks after my arrival wearing a black shawl over my head. This was done for purely practical reasons: it was the only shawl I possessed and a vital piece of clothing in the – 20° C temperatures. But *lelia* Maria's mother, *baba* Grigora, commented how appropriate it was that I wear a dark colour to mourn the recent death of my grandmother (in Australia). A few days later she presented me with a dark blue one, adding that another dark colour, rather than black, is more seemly for a young woman. Although I was terribly upset at losing my grandmother, it would never have occurred to me to wear a dark-coloured shawl as a sign of respect or mourning. This was one occasion when I no longer felt comfortable emphasising my outsiderness by carrying out conventional anthropological fieldwork methods, such as asking for explanations or interviewing those close to me.

Thus most of the time my fieldwork research was constituted by visiting people, socialising, attending meetings and generally being as active as possible in village life. During summer I helped *lelia* Maria in the garden and in her household tasks. I would accompany her to numerous village meetings that she was obliged to attend, in her capacity as Party member, member of the *Chitalishte* (cultural house) Council, Deputy of the Fatherland Front and senior schoolteacher. On the odd occasion she sent me to meetings to deputise in her place! When she was teaching at school, I would often visit her mother whose house was located next door to *diado* Ivan's. It was an informal gathering place during the winter months; close to the central plaza, people would 'drop in' on their way to the shops and neighbours would gather to knit and gossip. In fact a precedent for my activities had been set by my grandparents who had visited Bulgaria on several occasions for lengthy periods since the late 1950s. Their time was spent visiting and socialising with family and friends. I adopted a similar schedule, while my note taking was carried out as soon as possible when I had time to myself, during the day or in the evenings. Although I did not ask questions or carry out interviews, I filled in, gradually, many of the gaps as various issues came 'naturally' into conversation.

The shared ancestral connections on which I drew gave me immediate access to particular information that association with state officials alone could not bring. In fact kinship offered a 'buffer' from excessive state influence over my activities. The day after the trouble with the village policeman, I mentioned the occurrence to the 76-year-old *baba* Grigora. She had already heard the news and informed me that, the very same day, she had rushed off to the policeman's office. She said she had scolded him, pointing out that he and I were third cousins and that was no way to treat a relative! I realised then what an asset kinship ties were as a form of 'protection' in a local community where most of the population were related to each other in one way or

another. The policeman never troubled me again; he knew he would have the wrath of this old lady, amongst other kin, to contend with if he did! As with other local state officials, the policeman was in a difficult situation – having a responsibility to implement directives from 'above' but also expected to observe the norms of social interaction with kin and others in the community. (This suggests one reason why the socialist state was not experienced as repressively in rural as in urban areas since kinship and other close ties acted as a 'buffer' (see also Ragaru 2003). Urban anonymity served to reduce the conflicting interests of state officials who could more easily pursue their state responsibilities free from moral dilemmas introduced by relations of kinship/friendship.) Kinship ties therefore served as a useful tool in giving me access to other sides of state socialism, ones that differed from those espoused by officials; to the informal, nonpublic networks which played such a vital part in the organisation of socialist society.

Although kinship provided various fieldwork advantages – as a short cut to establishing relations of trust and offering me alternative foundations from which to gather information – it also brought its own set of restrictions and responsibilities (see Abu-Lughod 1991; Mascarenhas-Keyes 1987). The assumption that I had more knowledge than I actually had, and the wish to play down my outsiderness by not asking questions, set one limitation to my anthropological investigations.

Another disadvantage was that my 'ready-made' family carried with it duties of loyalty. *Lelia* Maria held the head of the agricultural cooperative responsible for the untimely death of her husband. This affected my relationship with Gradinarov which, while cordial, was not as close as the relations I developed with the other political elites in Talpa. Nor did I spend much time in the agricultural cooperative, although this was more a consequence of my research interests, which were never primarily concerned with agriculture (but see Creed 1998 for a contemporary account which gives central focus to agriculture[16]). In any case, while all villagers' lives were influenced by what happened at the cooperative, by the mid-1980s only one-sixth of the population worked there as full-time agriculturalists. The mechanisation and collectivisation of agriculture, a programme that was initiated soon after the Second World War to modernise agricultural production, meant that while the cooperative remained central to village economic life, there were numerous other opportunities for local employment. More importantly, agriculture gradually became less central to village constructions of identity (Creed 1995).

As a short-hand method of conveying to the reader my varying degrees of familiarity with different villagers, I use the titles and names by which I addressed villagers, thus revealing my relationship to particular individuals. In rural Bulgaria, unlike the cities, those older than oneself are rarely addressed by first names. For example, my mother's second cousin, the woman with whom I lived, immediately became '*lelia* Maria' (Aunt Maria), then later just

'*Lelia*' or, on more affectionate occasions, the diminutive '*lelka*'. In this book, I call her *lelia* Maria, or sometimes simply *Lelia*.[17] Pashev, the distinguished old gentleman who led the village Communist Party, was 'Comrade Pashev' to everyone in the village except to his contemporaries, in recognition of his position of respect and authority. Often the names I adopted for individuals were chosen at the suggestion of *Lelia* (or her mother), who knew, better than I, my kinship relations with particular individuals. Sometimes I adopted the names *lelia* Maria used if my own relationship with them was unclear. Thus my terminology occasionally reflects something of her position in the village, and probably her perceptions of my position. Of course, I too was referred to in a variety of ways: usually addressed by first name or as '*kaka*' (big sister) or '*lelia*' by those younger than me, depending on how large the age difference was between us. Sometimes I was referred to as *'nasheto momiche'* (our girl). The latter expression, a term of endearment, was used when various groups made 'claims' to me: in different contexts this was done by *Lelia* and other family members within the village, and occasionally by village Party figures when talking to outsiders.

During the years that I have spent in Bulgaria, kin have become relatives in more than just name. I have also learnt about the positive and negative sides to life during state socialism. This in turn has given me important insights into why a vast majority of rural Bulgarians are at best ambiguous about the present postsocialist reforms. Rural inhabitants, at least in Talpa, were always quite positive about socialism and listed numerous benefits that the system had brought them: electricity, running water, free medical and educational services. It is not an opinion that has changed since 1989. On the contrary, economic hardship and political chaos has solidified such positive opinions. Socialism is viewed as a period which brought real improvement in standards of living and a reduction in poverty and sickness. Talpa is not unique in this sense; much of rural Bulgaria has shown continued support for socialist policies, as witnessed in the strong rural electoral support for the left-wing parties in the elections following 1989 (for the case of northwestern Bulgaria, see Creed 1999). To make sense of this, we must move beyond Western portrayals of socialism (media and academic, especially from disciplines that do not demand participation in the culture) which make little recognition of the fact that different groups in socialist society had very different experiences of socialism. In the same way, Bulgarian urban-based postsocialist reformers have also failed to take into account or acknowledge local rural views. The fact is that rural inhabitants made considerable gains during the socialist period which are now being eroded. On-going rural support for socialism cannot be attributed simply to nostalgia (Creed 1995; 1999:239).

The continued prominence and popularity of socialism within rural areas, not only in Bulgaria but Eastern Europe more generally, underlines the neces-

sity of understanding the previous system. A closer look at the system seems crucial in indicating why, to date, postsocialist reforms have failed to capture the enthusiasm of the majority in rural Bulgaria, and why pro-communist views just 'won't go away'.

Notes

1. The names of villagers, of Talpa and surrounding villages and the district capital, are pseudonyms in order to protect identities. When I first began writing about Talpa in the early 1990s, the situation in Bulgaria was highly politicised, polarising people in terms of whether they were pro- or anti-communist. During this time, political figures in Talpa lived in a state of some anxiety (if not fear) as they recognised that their pro-socialist views could not be freely expressed without attracting recriminations from urban pro-reformers. While my use of pseudonyms was not a guarantee of anonymity, it provided some protection. Zhivkov had special relationships with a number of places in Bulgaria, so the pseudonyms did have some value.

    The highly charged, politically tense, atmosphere of the early 1990s has now passed. And many – although not all – of the central figures in this book are dead. But because I have published numerous papers using the pseudonyms, it seems sensible to continue with these names. To do otherwise, would be confusing for those who have read my previous publications, since many of my informants are reoccurring figures in the literature.
2. Bulgarian *preustroistvo* in the late 1980s, like Soviet *perestroika*, included initiatives to introduce limited decentralisation, to encourage 'local initiative and creative activity' in combination with central leadership (Piskotin 1989: 277).
3. Parallel to this, notions of personhood are shaped under capitalist time via the mediation of the market (Rotenberg 1992: 30).
4. In capitalist and socialist systems, the time resulting from industrialisation processes is broken into standardised, invariable units providing a framework in which social interactions and exchanges have become independent of context and content. Consequently time is stratified and separated into family time, work time, leisure time, production and market time, amongst others. 'Chronological calendar and clock time, related to as being time *per se*, in terms of an independent, objective reality, forms the central link between all these aspects' (Adam 1990: 117).
5. Nevertheless, market relations and related production/consumption processes may well distort and create a temporal binding force. This remains, however, a speculation on my part.
6. For a perspective that questions the effective impact of socialist time in rural Bulgaria, see Dobreva 2000.
7. The dualism between history and tradition, linear and cyclic time, which characterised uses of the past in Talpa, is a familiar dichotomy to anthropologists. Acknowledged as a tool in creating a spatial and temporal distance between 'modern' and 'traditional' societies, between the colonising 'historicised' West and colonised 'timeless' non-Western societies respectively, or between the anthropologist and her/his object of study (see for example Adam 1990, 1994; Fabian 1983), the dichotomy is also crucial to understanding the nature of internal relations of domination within socialism.
8. Folklore is sometimes thought of as referring specifically to 'stories' of the 'folk'. However, when I use folklore I understand it to include a broad range of performances and practices, in line

with the definition in the Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1973: 781): 'The beliefs, legends, and customs, current among the common people'. For more detailed information concerning the way I treat the term folklore (both as an ethnographic term and an analytical concept) see below and Chapters 7 and 8.

9. Hobsbawm 1983b argues for a similar importance for invented traditions in western Europe in the period leading to World War One.

10. Both folklore and history as used in this work can be thought of as 'invented traditions' (Hobsbawm 1983a).

11. To use funerals as an example: Binns writes that in 1972 about 32 percent of USSR funerals were commemorated in a religious fashion (1980: 185). I have no general figures for Bulgaria, but in Talpa at least, the first secular funerals were held in 1957 and by the mid-1970s all funerals were carried out as secular ceremonies. Postsocialist reforms have not brought a turnaround in this situation: funerals are still celebrated without priests.

12. The Polish community described by Hann does not willingly engage in state ideology (for example, see 1985: 121) but nor has the state vastly improved life in the Polish countryside. In the Bulgarian case, I suggest that the two processes go together: state sponsorship of rural development and local engagement in socialist ideology.

13. Hann (1993: 11) notes the problem with which anthropologists have been faced in reporting the considerable popular support for socialism before 1989 – and since – to an unconvinced and hostile Western audience.

14. Both sets of grandparents emigrated for economic rather than political reasons (unlike much of the emigration that took place following the Second World War).

15. My family visited Bulgaria in 1972 for two weeks. During this time we spent a few days in Nekilva, which included visits to Talpa. I was also in Bulgaria briefly in 1985, which included another brief visit to Talpa.

16. The village where Creed worked, as in the case of Talpa, had a pro-socialist history that extended back to the pre-1944 period (a situation I believe to be not uncommon across northern Bulgaria). This political allegiance continues today (see Creed 1999).

17. Whether related or not, most villagers used such terms. Fictive kinship played an important role in the way rural communities drew everyone into close relations of intimacy. But people always knew whether the terms denoted biological kinship or whether it was a courtesy term – local knowledge, context and tone of conversation gave clear indications. In my case – as for most Talpians – the usage of titles indicated a mix of both degree of kinship and courtesy.