

**Third Workshop on Contemporary European Migration History:
“History – Migration – Anthropology: New Perspectives on Migration
and Migration History”**

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Commenting on:

**“The Voluntary and Reciprocal Population Exchange between Bulgaria
and Greece in the Interwar Period: Some Issues of Interpretive
Reciprocity”**

By:

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COMMENTARY

The paper begins with a brief introductory part providing essential historical data and archival information concerning the Bulgarian-Greek population exchange. Theoretical and interpretative observations follow which culminate with governmental concerns and the diplomatic rhetoric. Subsequently, the advocacy discourse and the divergence in rhetoric are presented which concludes the discussion.

The importance of the Bulgarian-Greek convention and its smooth implementation not only for the states involved but as a landmark agreement demonstrating the viability of population management has not received the necessary attention by scholars in Greece, Europe and elsewhere. Theodora Dragostinova’s study is indeed a welcome addition to the literature and international bibliography on ethnic and migration issues. The case is

revealing of both ethnic politics as well as national identities. Furthermore it can be an illustrative examination of notions of home and belonging, inclusion and exclusion. The researcher has conducted research using a comparative methodology in both Bulgarian and Greek archives and refers to problems encountered. Essential works are identified in the bibliography. One of the many important contributions of Dragostinova's paper is her application of a *reciprocal manner* and the notion of *interpretive reciprocity* which exemplifies a multi-layered and multi-dimensional investigation as well as interrogation of the many diverging points of view within the archives. Moreover, the invocation of an "experiential history" emphasizes human agency and allows for the questioning of the limits of individual choice in so far as possible manipulative actions of historical reality can arise. Dragostinova's exploration of the Bulgarian-Greek exchange as one with unique characteristics of smooth and non-sensational developments that highlights deeper understandings of the dialectic between structure and agency should be viewed as an enlightening exploration of complex interrelationships that involve and revolve around a multiplicity of concepts, actors and structures. Nation-states, national identities, territories, citizens, governments, immigrants, refugees, etc., to name but a few of those concepts and issues paid attention to by the researcher. In conclusion, I find Dragostinova's paper to be an extremely interesting and challenging study that raises many questions and questions many otherwise unquestionable issues.