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Debating Balkan Commonalities: Is There a Common Balkan Culture?**

Abstract: Analysing the contributions of Jovan Cvijić, Traian Stoianovich, Paschalis Kitromilides and a range of Balkanologists, the author attempts to summarise the debate on Balkan commonalities and answer if the debate was able to identify shared features that could be seen as a common Balkan culture. The author first deals with the emergence of Balkan studies, which he connects with the spirit of regional cooperation that appeared in the Balkans after 1928. The first efforts to answer the question of Balkan commonalities were made in the seminal work of this discipline on the Balkan Peninsula (1918). In this book, Jovan Cvijić provided evidence for a divided rather than a unified region. The efforts of Traian Stoianovich to define a "Balkan civilization" remained in the borderland between global history and Balkanology. Paschalis Kitromilides provided the most convincing arguments for a Balkan mentality but did not go beyond the early modern period and Balkan Orthodox Christians. In the paper the evolution of the term Balkanism has been analysed to retrace the change of focus in Balkan studies, which lost some its original drive from the 1930s for finding commonalities, instead growing more focused on political and cultural contexts. In the conclusion the importance of the whole debate on Balkan commonalities has been highlighted. Although strong evidence of Balkan commonalities was found only in linguistics, this discussion proved significant for Balkan studies and brought about important results for the discipline.

Keywords: Balkans, Jovan Cvijić, Balkan civilisation, Balkan mentality, Balkanism.

In the interwar period, a series of institutes and departments for Balkan Studies were established. These initiatives intensified in 1929–34, an era in inter-Balkan relations when politicians and intellectuals of Balkan countries endeavoured to find some common ground. At the initiative of the Greek politi-

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cian Alexander Papanastassiou, four Balkan conferences were held in 1930–33. Commissions established on that occasion included intellectual cooperation and the establishment of a Balkan historical institute.[1] Various institutions and projects followed.

The Emergence of Balkanology

In 1934, *Revue internationale des études balkaniques* (1934–1938) was launched in Belgrade by the Balkan Institute (*Balkanski institut*) that was established that same year with the help of King Alexander of Yugoslavia.[2] The king, who was also a personal benefactor of the Institute, was assassinated the same year on October 9 in Marseilles.[3] Three years later, the Institute for Balkans Studies and Research (*Institutul de Studii și Cercetări Balcanice*) was established in Bucharest.[4] The Romanian historian Victor Papacostea (1900–1962) was instrumental in its creation, and he also edited the Institute's journal *Balcania* (1937–1948).[5] In Munich, the Institute for South-East European Studies was established in 1930, which covered only studies of ethnic Germans, and had a very narrow ethnic focus, until it gradually began to deal with Balkanology in its journal *Südostdeutsche Forschungen* (Southeast German Studies), launched in 1936 and renamed *Südost-Forschungen* (Southeast Studies) four years later.

It was not surprising that the creation of the first institutes for Balkan studies in Belgrade and Bucharest in the 1930s was concomitant with the formation of the Balkan Pact in 1934. Moreover, institutes of this kind appeared after the process of national unification was completed in 1918/19 in Yugoslavia and Romania, after which the newly unified states grew very interested in promoting stability through regional cooperation and understanding.

In the period after WW2, several important institutions were established or re-activated. In 1953, the Institute for Balkan Studies (IMHA) was founded in Salonica, and it played a very important role in promoting research

[1] L. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453* (London: Hurst and Company, 2000, 1st ed. 1958), 737.

[2] S. G. Markovich, "The Legacy of King Alexander I of Yugoslavia", *Balcanica* 40 (2009), 204.

[3] The first volume of the *Revue International des études balkaniques* was dedicated to King Alexander "apôtre de la solidarité balkanique et de la paix européenne" ("the apostle of Balkan solidarity and European peace"). *Revue Internationale des Études Balkaniques* 1 (1934).

[4] The earliest institute for South-East European Studies was established by Nicolae Iorga in 1913.

[5] P. E. Michelson, "Victor Papacostea and Southeast European Studies in Romania", *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 22 (1984) 359–362.

of the modern Balkans in the following decades and served as an important link between Balkan studies and the Anglosphere. In 1963, two institutions were established in Bucharest: the International Association for South-East European Studies (AIESEE) under the UNESCO umbrella and, and the Romanian Academy's Institute for South-East European Studies was re-established. In January 1964, the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in Sofia founded its Institute of Balkan Studies.[6] All three projects were approved and supported by the communist governments of Romania and Bulgaria. Finally, in 1969, the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts was re-activated in Belgrade.

This renewed interest in the establishment of Balkan institutes in 1963/64 had to do with the efforts to encourage regional cooperation. Like in the 1930s, political considerations were important, and the almost parallel establishment of the two institutes in Bucharest and Sofia was another indicator of just how relevant the political context was.

In the early 21st century, a subject called Balkan Studies or Southeast European Studies is taught at many universities in Southeast Europe and elsewhere. This implies that many historians and experts working in social sciences and humanities take it for granted or implicitly accept that the terms "the Balkans" and "Southeast Europe" are relevant socio-geographic notions. Also, that suggests, or at least implies, certain common cultural or political features shared by various ethnic and religious groups that once lived or still live in this region. Therefore, since its emergence in the 1930s, Balkanology has sought to identify possible Balkan commonalities.

In the early 19th century, the areas that could geographically be categorised as distinct units became likely candidates to obtain distinctive names. Humboldt's and de Ritter's geographical notions contributed to this, viewing these geographical areas as "natural" units.[7] The decline and retreat of the Ottoman Empire in Southeast Europe between 1804 and 1913 contributed to the gradual emergence of a new "natural" region. Prior to that, the geography of the Enlightenment still placed Belgrade in the East and Asia, except in intervals when it was under Austrian rule. The distinction between Europe and Asia involved a more sinister dichotomy: civilisation – barbarity. In the 19th century, Belgrade was interchangeably placed in Asia, European Turkey, the Near East, later in the Balkans, and finally in Southeast Europe.

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[6] A. Kostov, "Polovin vek Institut na balkanistika" ["Half a Century of the Institute for Balkan Studies"], 2014. Retrieved in September 2024 from: https://balkanstudies.bg/en/struktura/structura.html

[7] J. Cvijić, *La Péninsule balkanique. Géographie humaine* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1918), 2.

The term "the Balkan Peninsula", coined by the German geographer August Zeune in 1808, was gradually accepted in other European cultures. The word "Balkans" appeared in *The Times* for the first time in the 1820s, mostly in articles reproduced from France, but the term did not go into broader usage in this influential daily until the Crimean War. The acceptance of the term "the Balkans" was concomitant with the process of the occidentalisation of the region, which, after more than a century (1804–1918), eventually became a part of Europe in the symbolic sense.

In 1893, another German geographer, Theobald Fischer, attempted to change the name of the peninsula his predecessor had dubbed the Balkans and proposed renaming it *Südosteuropa*.[8] Obviously, the name Fischer proposed implied a notion of Europe that could not have emerged before the borders of Enlightenment geography were challenged. Both terms – the Balkans and Southeast Europe/*Südosteuropa*, involved redefining the region created by the emergence of Balkan Christian nation-states. "The Balkan Peninsula" and the Balkans became firmly established and widely used terms for the region only in the last decades of the 19th century. The Ninth Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1875) only included an entry on the mountain range known as "Balkan",[9] but the Eleventh Edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1910) had a lengthy article on "the Balkan Peninsula"[10] by James David Bourchier, who had served as the first full-time Balkan correspondent of *The Times* from 1892.[11]

The term was disseminated through Western European languages and then transferred through local élites to South-East Europe. In the interwar period, intellectuals in these Christian nation-states began to discuss their Balkan heritage and connections between their cultures. In the 1920s and 1930s, the emergence of a secular Turkey under Atatürk facilitated the first serious discussions of their shared history among scholars from all countries dominantly or partly located in the Balkans.

[8] M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 27–28.

[9] S. v. "Balkan", *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, The Ninth Edition (Edinburgh: Adam and Charles Black, 1875), vol. 3, 282.

[10] J. D. Bourchier, S. v. "Balkan Peninsula", *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, The Eleventh Edition (New York: The Encyclopaedia Britannica Company, 1910), vol. 3, 258–261. This entry ends with Bourchier's implicit endorsement of a Balkan confederation and clearly links the wide acceptance of this term with the emergence of Christian nation–states in the Balkans.

[11] *The History of the Times*. Vol. III: *The Twentieth Century Test 1884–1912* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1947), 715.

Cultural Zones and Cultural (Dis-)Unity

In 1918, the Serbian and Yugoslav geographer Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927) published his seminal work in French on the geography and anthropogeography of the Balkan Peninsula. The monograph went far beyond geography. It included discussions on the impact of social factors and ethnographic and sociological facts. Dušan T. Bataković called Cvijić "the founder of contemporary Balkanology"[12] because his work paved the way for the emergence of this discipline.

Since Cvijić was among the scholars whom the Serbian government sent in 1915 to promote Serbia's war aims and the future Yugoslav state in France and Britain,[13] his work inevitably included political connotations and contexts. Reflecting these political concerns, the second part of the book is entitled "Yugoslav Psychological Types". In May and June 1918, he expounded some of the key concepts from this book in two articles published in the American *Geographical Review*.[14]

Cvijić endeavoured to analyse the impacts of various European and non-European cultures on the everyday life, architecture, economy, and the psychological traits of different groups in the Peninsula. He warned that the lack of continuity of civilisational influences characterised the Balkans and that this feature was quite different from the experience in Western and Central Europe.[15] Nonetheless, he identified two main "zones of civilisation" among Balkan Christians: 1. "The Zone of the old Balkan, or modified Byzantine, Civilization", and 2. "The Zone of the Patriarchal Regime".

"The Modified Byzantine Civilization" spread all over the Peninsula during the Byzantine and Ottoman periods, and even beyond the Peninsula. "Byzantine civilization has thus become Balkan civilization *par excellence*, Balkanism in the true sense of the word".[16] It was present among Greeks and later among Romaic Romans, and Aromanians. It also influenced the South Slavs in the Middle Ages but had a bigger impact on the Bulgarian than the Serbian state. However, in the early 20th century, it was confined to the area south of the

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[12] D. T. Bataković, "Jovan Cvijić. Balkanologue, géologue et géographe". In J. Cvijić, *La Péninsule balkanique. Géographie humaine* (Belgrade: National Library of Serbia, 2014), 20.

[13] Lj. Trgovčević, *Naučnici Srbije i stvaranje Jugoslavije* [Scientists of Serbia and the Creation of Yugoslavia] (Belgrade: Narodna knjiga and SKZ, 1986), 33–38.

[14] J. Cvijić, "The Geographical Distribution of the Balkan Peoples", *The Geographical Review* 5, 5 (1918), 345–361. J. Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilisation of the Balkan Peninsula", *The Geographical Review* 5, 6 (1918), 470–482.

[15] *Ibid.*, 471.

[16] *Ibid.*, 472.

Balkan mountain range and the Shar Mountain. It spread also along the Morava valley, but many enclaves of the patriarchal regime persisted even in its core area.

North of this "civilization" was "the Zone of the Patriarchal Regime". It was firmly established among Yugo-Slavs who lived in clans and communes known as *zadrugas*. Although this system weakened under Byzantine influence, it was revived during Ottoman rule. As Cvijić somewhat proudly observed, "a certain geographic rejuvenation then took place: ancient social organizations and customs which had almost disappeared, revived and developed anew".[17]

In addition to these two biggest zones, the Peninsula had "unbroken Western influence" in the Adriatic littoral, mainly in Dalmatia, among its Roman Catholic population. There were also Mediterranean influences, with local adaptations along the coastline from Trieste to Constantinople. The author also described influences of Central and Western Europe.[18] Finally, "Turko-Oriental" influences were "transmitted to all the Balkan peoples", and by "Oriental" Cvijić also meant certain features characteristic of Byzantine culture. He noticed the intermediary character of the Balkans between Asia and Europe and the Greeks as the people that populated both sides of the Aegean. However, he mainly had in mind the influences that came with Ottoman rule, which were the strongest among ethnic Turks and Islamised populations. The Oriental component also had a strong impact on Christian populations since "it has impressed upon the Balkan peoples more or less the traits of the *raya*, the characteristics of an oppressed class".[19]

Cvijić's distribution of the zones of civilisation paints the picture of a rather divided region. What he described as one unit in the geographical sense was rather disjointed in terms of the cultures that lived there with prospects of further penetration of "Western civilisation". The only "Balkanism" was to be found in the Byzantine zone, but that zone was confined to one part of the Peninsula. Therefore, following Cvijić, one could hardly find something that would connect all the cultures of the Balkans. Even its Christian population was divided into three civilisational zones, and the Balkan Muslims lived in the fourth.

In analysing the Balkans, Cvijić faced different historical processes and legacies. The region was sharply divided between the relatively small urban agglomerations and traditional hinterlands, but there were also different historical legacies, and, on top of that, the effects of what would in this era be called European cultural transfer, which Cvijić described as the effects of the zone of "Western civilisation", among which he highlighted Italian and Central European influences.

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[17] *Ibid.*, 480.

[18] *Ibid.*, 477–479, 482.

[19] *Ibid.*, 476.

Two major and very different zones described by Cvijić referred to the Balkan Christians who lived in them. There were also antagonistic Christian-Muslim relations in the Balkans since the Great Turkish War (1683–1699). This split involves a major problem in defining a potential common Balkan identity because such an identity would need to transcend two complementary but also antagonistic cultural zones: the Orthodox/Byzantine and the Ottoman/Islamic. A common Balkan identity would imply that a Muslim from the Balkans had something in common with his Christian neighbours that he did not share with the Muslims of Anatolia or the Middle East. Conversely, it would mean that the Balkan Christians had something in common with Balkan Muslims that they did not necessarily share with non-Balkan Orthodox Christians or their Catholic neighbours.

There were indeed cases of particular cultural intertwining, for instance, Karmanlides and Ma'min. The Turkish-speaking Orthodox Christians (Karamanlides or Karamanli Greeks) in Asia Minor wrote in Turkish but used the Greek alphabet.[20] However, their case is telling because they lived in Asia Minor and not in the Balkans, and when they were forced to leave Asia Minor and settle in Greece, after the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), their "compatriots" did not see them as their own. A similar fate befell the Ma'min (whom the Muslim Turks called Dönmehs), the descendants of groups of Jews mainly from Salonica, who converted to Islam in the late 17th century and gradually evolved into a heterodox Muslim sect, influenced by Sufi orders.[21] When they had to move to Turkey, again after the Treaty of Lausanne, they also faced an inimical reception by the local Muslims. Both instances demonstrate that cases of Balkan intertwining between two cultures sometimes had unfortunate outcomes: a group that was supposed to connect two mainstream cultures was viewed as alien by both. Therefore, intertwining is a feature often observed by outsiders that often had little meaning for the members of the group.

Three Southern European peninsulas – the Iberian (from the 8th to the 15th century), the Apennine (Sicily in the 11th and 12th centuries), and the Balkan Peninsula (since the mid-14th century) – all saw various forms of Christianity clash and intertwine with various forms of Islam.[22] In modernity, however, it was only the Balkan Peninsula that had a constant interaction between Islam and Christianity. During two periods, vast western, northern and north-

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[20] About Karamanlides see R. Clogg, "A *millet* within a *millet*. The Karamanlides". In Idem, *I Kath'inas Anatoli* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, and River Road: Gorgias Press, 2010), 387–410.

[21] M. Mazower, *Salonica. The City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430–1950* (London: Haper Perennial, 2005, 1st ed. 2004), 75–79.

[22] D. Tanasković, "Islam na Balkanu" ["Islam in the Balkans"]. In *Enciklopedija živih religija* (Belgrade: Nolit, 1992), 300.

western areas of the Balkan Peninsula became "imperial borderlands", as John R. Lampe called them,[23] between the Ottoman Empire and various Christian states, for the first time in the 1430s to the 1520s and the second time from 1688 to 1878. The experience of living in the "imperial borderlands" meant that the Balkan Christians often faced dilemmas about whether to enter an alliance with Christian states when they were at war with the Ottoman Empire. Appeals of Christian states to Balkan Christians usually proved irresistible, and every such conflict would deepen mutual distrust between Balkan Muslims and Christians to the point of radical antagonism.

The Peninsula's population, however, remained dominantly Christian even during the rule of the Ottoman Empire. The most enduring state formation in the region was the Eastern Roman Empire. And yet, in its eleven-and-a-half centuries-long existence the Empire managed to unite the Balkans under the Christian emperor in Constantinople for no more than a century and a quarter and only on three occasions (538–602, 1018–1070, and 1172–1180).[24] Still, Dimitri Obolensky believed that the Byzantine heritage had left such a deep mark on Eastern European peoples that had accepted Orthodox Christianity to "justify the view that, in some respects, they formed a single international community".[25]

The main factor of the Orthodox Commonwealth was the shared religious heritage of Eastern Orthodoxy. However, in the age of nationalism, the Orthodox church in the Balkans gradually split into "national" churches. This led to bitter divisions. A separate Bulgarian church, known as the Bulgarian Exarchate, was confirmed in a sultan's firman in 1870. Two years later, the Patriarchate of Constantinople proclaimed the new church heretical, and its exarch and bishops were excommunicated.[26] This schism endured until 1945. Political leaderships of nation-states in the Balkans pressed their Orthodox churches to side with their governments on national propaganda issues.

In Ottoman Macedonia, rather than sharing a common Byzantine heritage, the different Orthodox church jurisdictions clashed in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Four Orthodox nation-states (Greece, Bulgaria, Serbia, and Romania) raced to send priests and teachers to spread education and religious teachings in their mother tongues. This was another proof that traces of the

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[23] J. R. Lampe, "Imperial Borderlands of Capitalist Periphery". In *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe; Economics and Polities from the Middle Ages until the early Twentieth Century*, ed. Daniel Chirot (Berkley: University of California Press, 1989), 189–190.

[24] D. Obolensky, *The Byzantine Commonwealth* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 5.

[25] *Ibid.*, 1.

[26] L. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, 374–375.

shared Orthodox or Byzantine heritage meant little in the era that saw the climax of nationalism.

Is there and was there a "Balkan Civilisation"?

In 1934, the editors of the *Revue international des études balkaniques*, Petar Skok and Milan Budimir, published a manifesto entitled "The Aim and Significance of Balkan Studies". In this text, they argued that Balkanology was "a predominantly comparative science" based on three sources: history, "as Jireček embraced it", anthropogeography, "as Cvijić practised it", and "linguistics based on Sandfeld's approach",[27] reflecting the latest scholarly trends of the interwar period.

Traian Stoianovich went one step further in his efforts to give a comparative analysis of the Balkans by using a Braudelian approach. The result was his book *A Study in Balkan Civilization*, originally published in 1967[28] and expanded in 1994.[29] Stoianovich attempted to prove that certain patterns of beliefs and technology could survive with only slight modifications throughout the ages and that a "Balkan civilization" was a case study that could prove this claim. Modelling his approach on the *Annales* School, on which he later wrote a monograph,[30] he analysed five underlying structures from the deepest to the least stable layer. The deepest was the geographical layer covering the earth and cosmos, the biological layer was above it, and the technological layer was in the middle. The least stable layers were social and economic. Within each layer, he endeavoured to identify a particular system of coherences. Chronologically, he covered a period that spanned almost ten millennia. In his opinion, the oldest Neolithic culture survived many changes and seemed obliterated during the radical transformations of the 20th century. For Stoianovich, the Neolithic culture did not disappear; instead, in a submerged form, "the old folk culture still profoundly conditions the deepest thoughts and feelings of peasants, workers, writers, and thinkers, and of men of action and politics – in short of Balkan man in general".[31]

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[27] M. Budimir, P. Skok, "But et signification des études balkaniques" ["Aim and Significance of Balkan Studies"], *Revue Internationale des Études Balkaniques* 1 (1934), 23. The German version of the article was published as a separate publication: P. Skok und M. Budimir, "Ziel und Bedeutung der Balkanstudien" ["Aim and Significance of Balkan Studies"] (Beograd: Balkanistitut, 1934), 24.

[28] T. Stoianovich, *A Study in Balkan Civilization* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1967).

[29] T. Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds: The First and Last Europe* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1994).

[30] T. Stoianovich, *French Historical Method: The Annales Paradigm* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976).

[31] T. Stoianovich, *A Study in Balkan Civilization*, 45.

Although Stoianovich's analysis has its brilliant moments and requires its readers to have vast knowledge not only of humanities but even of sciences, one remains puzzled as to what the results of his analysis were. In particular, it remains unclear if Stoianovich analysed global patterns that materialised in the Balkan Peninsula and neighbouring areas since the Neolithic Revolution or if he identified specific features of the region that distinguish it from other regions around the world that underwent a similar succession of archaeological and historical periods.

The American historian William McNeill acknowledged that the book offered some fascinating suggestions but phrased very similar dilemmas: "How much of what Stoianovich describes as Balkan is shared by European peasants at large?" And, even for certain features of folk culture that occur only in the Balkans "what evidence there is that they are 'Balkan' and not strictly local – perhaps isolated – survivals from a once far more widespread pattern of belief and conduct?"[32]

Stoianovich demonstrated that elements of traditional societies continue to exist in modern societies. His book could, in hindsight, be seen as an early contribution to the understanding of the hybridity that appears whenever a modern society clashes with traditional societies. His book would then be a case study on how this process unfolded in the Balkans. One could, in that sense, fully agree with the points from Kevin Reilly's foreword to *Balkan Worlds*: "The Balkans are a microcosm of the world. The region cries out for analysis that transcends the boundaries of nation-states, language, and confession of faith. To understand the Balkans is to understand a world".[33] Stoianovich did so by devising a total history, but Reilly, himself an expert on global history, could not decide if the book was a world history or a history of the Balkans. Therefore, the central dilemma behind Stoianovich's grand opus concerns its implications. Did he basically identify the global patterns of any culture, or succession of cultures, that passed through the phases from the Neolithic revolution to modern societies, or did he indeed outline something that could specifically be called the "Balkan civilisation"? The scope of Stoianovich's work definitely transcends the much narrower question of whether the cultures of the late modern Balkans had some specific and commonly shared features that made them distinctive.

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[32] W. H. McNeill, "A Study in Balkan Civilization", *Journal of Social History* 2/2 (1968), 173.

[33] K. Reilly, "Introduction". In *Balkan Worlds*, Traian Stoianovich, xv.

Specific Balkan features or global subcategories?

The patriarchal or Neolithic zone had one issue that seemed very distinct, and that distinguished the experience of the Balkans from that of all similar regions. It was "the zadruga", a joint communal family.[34] However, this term was not widely used and was unknown in most areas where the institution existed. It was canonised by Vuk Karadžić in his *Serbian Dictionary* of 1818, from where it made its way to other scholars. The works of Philip Mosely popularised this form of family and its name among Western anthropologists and sociologists, and his studies facilitated comparisons of the *zadruga* with similar family systems in traditional societies.

The famous American anthropologist Margaret Mead wondered whether the special term *zadruga* was appropriate or not because similar types of family appear in traditional societies all around the world. Commenting on the works of her colleague Philip Mosely, Mead said: "By using the term to cover an institution found in many parts of the area, but still preserving the name itself, students of the zadruga had been able to invest it with a quasi-mystical or 'racial' quality. This 'discovery' of a 'racial' quality would not have been so likely had they used instead an abstract term, such as *joint family*". Yet, Mead did not give a definitive answer on whether a specific name was justified and was satisfied to challenge it.[35]

The "zadruga" was strengthened and spread during the 18th century when, in the words of Traian Stoianovich, re-volution happened, or moving backwards. It spread, in the backdrop of Ottoman dromocracy, in the 18th century when only the main routes were maintained as commanding roads for Ottoman armies.[36] This led to a kind of neolithisation that also included the ever-growing domination of traditional pagan institutions and rituals over Christian ones.

Even more than the term itself, the effects of joint family structures and particularly its decomposition in Serbia in the 19th century inspired many literary and scholarly contributions. John R. Lampe concluded that the upland village system that developed in the 18th century in Serbian and Greek lands lacked institutional strength but agreed with mainstream Serbian authors that

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[34] On Zadruga see R. F. Byrnes (ed.), *Communal Families in the Balkans: the Zadruga. Essays by Philip E. Mosely and essays in his honor* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976). This collection reprinted major works on the *zadruga* by Philip Mosely.

[35] M. Mead, "Introduction: Philip E. Mosely's Contribution to the Comparative Study of the Family". In *Communal Families in the Balkans: the Zadruga*, ed. Robert F. Byrnes, (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976), xvii–xxvii.

[36] T. Stoianovich, *Balkan Worlds. The First and Last Europe* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 1994), 99, 168–170.

one could find in the system "the earliest origins, entirely non-Western, of what many Serbs rightly regard as their own democratic tradition".[37]

The dilemmas surrounding the term *zadruga* suggest that even terms that are seemingly very specific to the Balkans are actually part of phenomena that can be detected in many cultures around the globe. Milenko S. Filipović correctly remarked in 1971: "Today, all scholars agree that the zadruga is a form of family life not unique to the South Slavic or Slavic peoples". It was present among Germanic peoples and, in the mid-20th century, could still be detected in "the Caucasus, in India, in western, eastern, and northeastern Africa, and even among the Indians of North America".[38]

Many elements of the "re-volution" and the revival of some pagan traditions in the 18th century endured throughout the 19th century. To some Western travellers who recorded them, they seemed as something genuinely local and Balkan, rooted in very long traditions and very distinctive. Even as late as the beginning of the 20th century, travellers in "European Turkey" still noticed this. Describing religion among the Macedonian Slavs, Noel Brailsford noted: "But the real religion of the Balkans is something more deeply-rooted… It is older and more elemental than Christianity itself; more permanent even than the Byzantine rite. It bridges the intervening centuries and links in pious succession the modern peasant to his heathen ancestor, who wore the same costumes and led the same life in the same fields. It is based on a primitive sorrow before the amazing fact of death, which no mystery of the Resurrection has ever softened. It is neither a rite nor a creed, but only that yearning love of the living for the dead which is deeper than any creed."[39]

What Brailsford attributed to the early 20th century Balkanites corresponds to F. de Coulanges's description of early Roman religion, in which ancestor cults occupied the central place;[40] in more general terms, very similar religious traditions existed in many agricultural societies since the Neolithic Revolution. Thus, the traditional ancestor cult appeared as a part of the Neolithic religion in the Near East and culminated already in 7500–6500 BC. After that,

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[37] J. R. Lampe, "Imperial Borderlands of Capitalist Periphery", 189–190.

[38] M. S. Filipović, "Zadruga (kućna zadruga)". In *Communal Families in the Balkans: the Zadruga*, ed. Robert F. Byrnes, 269. In this collection on the zadruga, Filipović's entry from the Encyclopaedia of Yugoslavia was translated: M. S. Filipović, s. v. "Zadruga (Kućna zadruga)", *Enciklopedija Jugoslavije* (Zagreb: Jugoslavenski leksikografski zavod, 1971), 573–576.

[39] H. N. Brailsford, *Macedonia. Its Races and Their Future* (London: Methuen & Co., 1906), 75.

[40] F. de Coulanges, *The Ancient City. A study on the religion, laws, and institutions of Greece and Rome* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

the cults performed by individual households emerged in 6500–5000 BC.[41] Like the *zadruga*, when put in comparative terms, many seemingly distinctive Balkan religious features could be detected in various historic cultures around the globe.

Effects of nation-states and European cultural transfer on Balkan cultures

The era of nation-states had a profound effect on the Balkans. Nationalism came with some delay to Southeastern Europe but, by the mid-19th century, could easily be identified among intellectuals and merchants in Balkan towns and cities. The revolutionary events of 1848 affected the Balkan Peninsula. On March 25th 1848, Belgrade, then a border town, witnessed the first liberal and nationalist slogans posted all around town.[42] At that time, no more than 100 citizens of the Principality of Serbia had received education at European universities. Even such a small group, together with merchants, was enough to stir up the first nationalist uproar.

However, it was not until the late 19th century that Balkan nationalisms were fully formed; by the early 20th century, the Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian, and Romanian nationalisms all reached the phase of mass movements. This was especially true of national capitals, while the situation in the hinterlands varied, and many areas with more-or-less present national indifference still existed. Nationalism came as a part of European cultural transfer. Eric Hobsbawm defined the period between 1918 and 1950 as "the apogee of nationalism", and the 1920s were also the period of the triumph of the Wilsonian system of nation-states in Europe.[43]

In the post-WW2 period, it seemed that nationalism was marginalised in Western Europe. Therefore, when the Wars of Yugoslav Succession began in 1991, the Western press too easily accused Balkan nations of inherent nationalism without mentioning that the construct had been imported to that region from the West, and that in the West it reached its peak half a century earlier. Even more paradoxically, nationalism made its roaring comeback to Western Europe in the early 21st century. As Mark Mazower put it: "For just as Europe gave the Balkans the categories with which its peoples defined themselves, so

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[41] D. Srejović, "Neolithic Religion". In *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Mircea Eliade, (New York: Simon Schuster Macmillan, 1993), vol. 9, 352–360.

[42] T. Stoianovich, "The Pattern of Serbian Intellectual Evolution, 1830–1880", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1, 3 (1959), 252.

[43] E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995, new and rev. ed.) 131–162.

it gave them also the ideological weapons—in the shape primarily of modern romantic nationalism—with which to destroy themselves".[44]

Cultural transfer Europe – the Balkans gradually intensified during the 19th century. Since this century was also the era of the emergence of nation-states in Southeast Europe, the transfer could also be seen as the process of Europeanisation of Balkan nation-states. Cvijić was fully aware of this process and described it in the then-prevailing categories. He noticed that "the civilisation of Central Europe" reached Serbia, Bosnia, and Bulgaria, as well as Salonica and Constantinople. It even reached "the villages of the valleys that are followed by the railroads and the more important roads". Still, he believed that it did not influence the mentality of the inhabitants of independent Balkan states, and he also observed a competition between Central and Western European models. He gave the example of Serbia where "numerous men have been trained in Western Europe, particularly in France, and the rest have also adopted Western ideas. The institutions, although based on national tradition and spirit, are more related to those of Western than on those of Central Europe".[45] After these descriptions, Cvijić somewhat surprisingly concluded that there was "a marked tendency" in Serbia to make out of different civilisational influences "an original national civilization".[46] The interwar period, however, only witnessed the most concentrated Europeanisation of Serbia and the Balkans. Even if Cvijić's prediction had materialised, it would have only led to further divisions of the Balkans into different "original national" cultures.

Paschalis Kitromilides also noticed the crucial transformative role of the idea of Europe for Balkan societies. This idea "was destined to prove a potent force for the transformation and eventual break-up of the common traditions of Balkan culture".[47] In spreading the idea of Europe, the main influence in the Balkans came from France, but ideas also came from England, Italy, and Russia.[48] One should add to this analysis the immense impact of the Germanosphere on South Slavs, in particular the Serbs and later Bulgarians.

Thus, Cvijić's hopes proved futile, and local intellectual and cultural elites in the interwar Balkans focused even more on institutional, administrative, cultural and economic models from Western Europe. In addition to Balkan Christian states, Atatürk's Turkey also joined the club.

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44 M. Mazower, *The Balkans. A Short History* (New York: Modern Library Chronicles, 2000), xliii.

45 J. Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization of the Balkan Peninsula", 479.

46 *Ibid*.

47 P. Kitromilides, "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination", *Nations and Nationalism* 2 (1996), 185.

48 *Ibid*.

The era of nation-states at their apogee demonstrated that two rather different approaches to Balkan cooperation were possible. The experience of the Second Balkan War indicated that national aspirations could easily lead to war even between former Orthodox Christian allies. In the decade after 1928, a new spirit appeared in the Balkans, one more focused on cooperation. This could only happen once nation-states gained self-confidence, and the process of gaining self-confidence included the construction of historical continuities. Using Salonica as his case study, Mark Mazower demonstrated how unlikely such continuities were.[49]

One should, however, be aware that both the ideas of Balkan cooperation and nationalistic antagonism came through the process of Europeanisation and the transfer of European ideas.[50] In the first instance, European cosmopolitanism was implemented in the region; in the second, European nationalisms were copied locally.

Political geography of the Balkans

Once the term the Balkans stabilised at the end of the 19th century, it still remained unclear which countries it should include, with political considerations always playing some role in these criteria. This issue resurfaced during the Cold War. Between 1956 and the 1980s, the standard history of the Balkans in the Anglosphere was *The Balkans in our Time* by Harvard professor Robert Lee Wolff (1915–1980), considered "the most authoritative account in English of Southeastern Europe in the decade after World War II".[51] Lee Wolff reduced the Balkans to Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania. Greece and the European part of Turkey were conspicuously absent. This author considered Greece a Mediterranean country, and her difference compared to the other four countries, in his opinion, was enlarged after WW2 "by the fact that first the British and then the Americans, by defeating and restraining the Greek Communists,

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[49] Or, as Mazower put it: "The history of the nationalists is all about false continuities and convenient silences… It is an odd and implausible version of the past, especially for a city like Salonica, most of whose inhabitants cannot trace their connection to the place back more than three or four generations". M. Mazower, *Salonica. City of Ghosts*, 474.

[50] For more on cultural transfer see W. Schmale, "What is Cultural Transfer?". In *Cultural Transfer Europe-Serbia. Methodological Issues and Challenges*, ed. S. G. Markovich, (Belgrade: Faculty of Political Science and Dosije Press, 2023), 13–31. On its application to the case of Serbia see: S. G. Markovich, "European Cultural Transfer in 19th-Century Serbia and how to analyse the Europeanisation of Serbia", in *ibid.*, 45–91.

[51] K. Hitchins, "Robert Lee Wolff", *Slavic Review* 40, 2 (1981), 336.

succeeded in preserving Greece from absorption into the Soviet sphere".[52] In this way, reflecting the Cold War dichotomy, communism became the dividing line between Balkan and non-Balkan entities.

British historian Stevan K. Pavlowitch explained his use of the term "the Balkans" in his book *A History of the Balkans 1804–1945*. Pavlowitch's notion of the Balkans covered areas inhabited by Romanian, South Slav, Albanian and Greek speakers, and he adopted a framework in which he saw "geography and history combining to link one region to another, imperceptibly, from the Aegean northwards to the eastern Alps and to historic Moldavia, and from Macedonia outwards to the continental and maritime fringes".[53] Historical links and geographic proximity were, therefore, Pavlowitch's main criteria that guided his selection of the countries categorised under the term "the Balkans". This approach seems the most "objective" that one could take, but the problem with this definition is that there is no *differentia specifica* between this definition and the construction of a region that would include other neighbouring areas that unavoidably share historical links and geographic proximity.

Regardless of this and the many ambiguities concerning the northern borders of the Balkans, there is a surprising consensus among historians that the term the Balkans covers what Cvijić defined as the Balkan Peninsula, with the addition of Romania and its predecessors (Wallachia and Moldova) for practical purposes.

Is there a "Balkan mentality"?

After the ideas of a Byzantine or Orthodox Commonwealth and Balkan civilisation, another idea on possible Balkan commonalities appeared, and this one deals with Balkan mentality, a term pioneered by Cvijić in 1918. Apparently, Cvijić was among the first to use the word mentality, even before Lucien Lévy-Bruhl published his book on "primitive mentality" in 1922 and, therefore, Cvijić "appears to be well in time with the exploration at the forefront of social science in his time".[54] For him, "La mentalité balkanique" was particularly present in the

[52] R. L. Wolff, *The Balkans in our Time* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974, 1st ed. 1956), 8.

[53] S. K. Pavlowitch, "Europe and the Balkans in a historical perspective, 1804–1945", *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 2, 2 (2000), 142

[54] P. Kitromilides, "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination", *Nations and Nationalism* 2 (1996), 164. The article was republished in Idem, *An Orthodox Commonwealth. Symbolic Legacies and Cultural Encounters in Southeastern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate Variorum, 2007), article I.

areas closer to the Black Sea, Thrace and Salonica[55] or the area he called "the Zone of the Modified Byzantine Civilization".

A leading specialist in Hellenophone Enlightenment, Paschalis Kitromilides was aware of the dramatic change that the emergence and consolidation of nation-states in the Balkans between the 1830s and 1920s brought about when "individual national 'mentalities' (Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian, Serbian, Turkish, Albanian) have replaced whatever could be described as a common 'Balkan mentality'".[56] Therefore, he attempted to explore if "Balkan identity" had existed in the period that preceded Balkan nation-states when religious beliefs formed the basis of identity. As I have previously phrased it, in addition to being an intellectual historian, he also had to become an intellectual archaeologist in order to "excavate certain phenomena that had been intentionally covered up by the first generation of nationalist narratives".[57] However, to find commonalities, he also had to limit his analysis to the religious majority of the Peninsula: the Orthodox Christians of the Balkans. This again splits the Balkans into the Christian Orthodox majority and Muslim and Roman-Catholic minorities, but Kitromilides accepted this limitation and endeavoured to discover if that reduced zone had elements of a "Balkan mentality".

He noticed a surprising fact in the premodern Balkans. It was "the facility with which people crossed linguistic frontiers and the Protean nature of linguistic identities".[58] This would indeed suggest that there was some other commonality that helped bridge this seemingly large obstacle. Drawing on autobiographical works of three Christian Orthodox writers, Constantine Dapontes (1713/14– 1784), Sofroni, Bishop of Vratsa (1739–1815), better known in Bulgaria as Sofroniy Vrachanski, and Prota Matija Nenadović (1777– 1854), he identified three major features of the Orthodox Balkan outlook that constituted "the Balkan mentality". They included 1) "a sense of time defined by the ecclesiastical calendar", which revolved "around the succession of feast days in the Orthodox calendar, and daily life was punctuated by the Saint's days", 2) the presence of the supernatural, which was "integrated into everyday experience through the constant quest for the miraculous intervention", and 3) "the organisation of the individual's life around the sacramental life of the church".[59] All three features

[55] J. Cvijić, *La Péninsule Balnanique. Géographie humaine* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1918), 111.

[56] P. Kitromilides, "'Balkan mentality': history, legend, imagination", 170.

[57] S. G. Markovich, "Paschalis Kitromilides and the Weak Foundations of National Identity in the Balkans". In *The False Continuity of Nations: Contributions of Paschalis Kitromilides to the Study of the Orthodox Commonwealth and Nationalism in the Balkans*, ed. S. G. Markovich, (Belgrade: Centre for British Studies, 2018), 29.

[58] *Ibid.*, 171.

[59] *Ibid.*, 177–178.

were most prominent in Dapontes, but the works of Sofroni and Prota Matija revealed similar patterns.

Kitromilides made it clear that he did not want to minimise divisions in Balkan societies, although "these were mostly social and class divisions, which, as a rule, by cutting across ethnolinguistic demarcation lines, in a way sustained the dynamic of a common society".[60] This common Orthodox Balkan mentality was, however, challenged in the 19th century when it was gradually replaced by "by mutually exclusive national identities, which more often than not came into violent collision with each other".[61]

The process of Europeanisation and/or European cultural transfer had multiple effects on the issue of Orthodox commonalities. Since secularism was one of the most important ideational transfers to the Balkans in the 19th century, it was only natural that an identity based on religious common grounds would be severely challenged. The second blow came from nationalism, which celebrated local particularism over any form of common identity and not only challenged any kind of Balkan commonalities but even threatened to challenge the very concept of Europeanisation.[62]

The history of the term Balkanism

In the early 21st century, the word *Balkanism* is mostly used to describe a Western discourse about the Balkans that emerged in the 19th century and fully developed in the period between the Balkan Wars and the 1930s. Maria Todorova was instrumental in canonising this notion in her excellent study *Imagining the Balkans*.[63] She identified particular features of this term separating it from its close relative, *Orientalism*. Unlike Edward Said's term, *Balkanism* was not a discourse of otherness but rather an ambiguous term of an incomplete self.[64]

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[60] *Ibid.*, 181.

[61] *Ibid.*, 184.

[62] Or in the words of Paschalis Kitromilides: "In fact, the common Greek-speaking culture of the intellectual elite of the Balkans did not disappear until both the ecumenical heritage of the Orthodox Church and the cosmopolitan humanism of the Enlightenment were destroyed in south eastern Europe by nationalism later in the 19th century." P. Kitromilides, "Orthodox culture and collective identity in the Ottoman Balkans during the eighteenth century". In Idem, *An Orthodox Commonwealth*, II, 138.

[63] M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

[64] As Todorova put it in an interview she gave to the portal of the University of Florida: "It is an externalization from within. They are [the Balkans] part of the European world and of the Western world but somehow they are considered to be the 'bad' side of oneself. This is the interesting nuance that I found of how the Balkans are being thought of in Europe and the U.S.: that is not a complete 'other' but an incomplete, dark side of the

Geographically, it covers any area seen by the European core as both familiar and alien, simultaneously on "our side" of the border or on the very border. A literary expression of this border discourse is the concept of Ruritania, a strange country somewhere at the borders of Europe, described in Vesna Goldsworthy's penetrating study *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination*.[65] The Ruritanian coverage of European border countries, in addition to Southeast Europe, can sometimes include the countries of Central Europe.

However, originally the word had a different meaning. *Balkanism* was a term that denoted something common to several groups living in the Balkans. This meaning is now confined to philological studies. Back in 1918, Cvijić wrote about *Balkanism*, which he saw as not having to do with the Orient or the Near East but with the Byzantine heritage, remarking: "Turco-Oriental influences have certainly left numerous traces in the peninsula. They have even modified Old Balkan civilization. But what is striking in the material civilization and the moral conceptions of Balkanism is notably the influence of ancient Byzantine civilization, which makes itself felt throughout the whole range of ideas, from the kitchen to the most subtle moral conceptions".[66]

Ever since the publication of the works by Russian linguist Nikolai S. Trubetzkoy and Danish linguist Kristian Sandfeld in the 1920s, the question of commonalities among various Balkan languages has been in the focus of linguists. These commonalities in languages were named *Balkansprachbund* (Balkan language union). This union includes Bulgarian, Romanian (and Aromanian), Greek, and Albanian languages, as well as the border dialects between Serbian and Bulgarian. In all of them, one finds linguistic Balkanisms. They are also present, albeit to a lesser extent, in the dialects of the Serbian language in Serbia and Montenegro. Around 300 balkanisms of different scopes have been found.[67] Similarly to Cvijić's Balkanism, this type of balkanism does not cover

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'self'." 'UF Professor Explains How Balkans Got Their Reputation', retrieved in September 2000 from: http://www.clas.ufl.edu/CLASnotes/9610/Todorova.html

[65] V.Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). In her novel *Iron Curtain*, Goldsworthy made another attempt to reconceptualise Ruritania, depicting a *Ruritania-esque* Eastern European country, which, when contrasted with Britain, makes Britain occasionally look like a Ruritania as well. V. Goldsworthy, *Iron Curtain. A Love Story* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2022).

[66] J. Cvijić, "The Zones of Civilization of the Balkan Peninsula", 472.

[67] Kr. Sandfeld, *Linguistique balkanique: problèmes et résultats* (Paris: Libraire Klincksieck, 1930). The first edition of this book was published in Danish in 1926; Kr. Sandfeld, "Note de syntaxe comparée des langues balkaniques", *Revue Internationale des Études Balkaniques* 1 (1934), 100–107. V. Stanišić, "Balkanizmi u srpskohrvatskom jeziku" ["Balkanisms in Serbo-Croat language"], *Balcanica* 16–17 (1985–86), 245–265. V. Friedman, "Balkans as a Linguistic Area". In *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*

all linguistic groups in the Peninsula and excludes many speakers of the Serbo-Croatian language.

The early meaning of Balkanism was almost an antonym to another term that emerged after the Second Balkan War, whose aftermath saw the emergence of the verb "to balkanise" and the accompanying noun "balkanisation". The verb has had the following meaning: "to break up (as a region or group) into smaller and often hostile units".[68] "Balkanism" as understood by Cvijić has the opposite meaning and suggests that different nations of the Balkans have something in common. Paradoxically, the discourse of Balkanisation came from Western Europe. As Siniša Malešević recently argued, "Organised violence in the Balkans appears miniscule when compared to the intensity and scale of destruction and human casualties resulting from wars, revolutions, uprisings and industrial conflicts in the large and powerful European states".[69]

The development of the term also testified to two different preoccupations of Balkanologists. While early Balkanologists, in the inter-war period, focused on efforts to present what was common to the peoples of the Balkans, subject specialists who, in the 1990s, wrote under the impressions of the Wars of Yugoslav Succession desperately tried to demonstrate that the dominant association of the Balkans with wars was the result of a discourse developed in the West in the 1990s. Thus, a word designed to describe the internal commonality of the Balkans transformed into a word that marks an external anti-Balkan stereotype and construct based on the idea of "Balkanisation".

(Oxford: Elsevier, 2006, 2nd ed.), 657–672. N. Bogdanović, s. v. "Balkanizam". In *Srpska enciklopedija* (Novi Sad and Belgrade: Matica srpska, SANU and Zavod za udžbenike, 2010), vol. I – 1, 491.

[68] *Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Incorporated, 1998, 10th ed.), 87. The dictionary claims that the terms emerged in 1919. *The Times* certainly used both terms already in 1918. The first use of the word "Balkanisation/Balkanization" was actually just a reprint of a news report from the German Social-Democratic journal *Vorwärts,* which mentioned "the balkanization of the East". "Socialists denounce Bolshevism", *The Times,* 22.02.1918, 5 f. Arthur James Balfour, British Foreign Secretary (1916–1919) was among the first to use the term in its fullest subsequent meaning, just a month after the end of the Great War. In an interview to the London correspondent of *the Philadelphia Ledger*, Balfour said: "There are critics who say the effects of splitting up Europe into many democracies will be to 'Balkanize Europe'. It would certainly be intolerable to bring a number of small States into being, discordant in character, language, even religion, and find no way to curb outbursts of passionate patriotism which might make them ready to fly at one another's throats. A League of Nations is required to prevent rash and unconsidered war." "Mr. Balfour on League of Nations", *The Times*, 09.12.1918, 12 f.

[69] S. Malešević, *Grounded Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 165.

In line with the deconstruction of grand concepts and narratives such as civilisation, previous efforts to define what a Balkan civilisation could be were almost fully abandoned by the end of the 20th century, and Balkanism in its original meaning was left to linguists alone.

Concluding Remarks

The concept of a separate region called "the Balkans" is relatively recent and did not enter into wider use in European and Balkan languages before the closing decades of the 19th century. Balkanology was a discipline that developed in the 1930s to deal with the historical and cultural heritage of the region. From its very inception in Cvijić's book on the Balkan Peninsula (1918), this discipline raised the issue of Balkan commonalities, which he called Balkanism. Different types of Balkanisms were suggested, with linguistic Balkanisms supported by the most solid evidence. However, no Balkanism has been found that could cover all, or at least the vast majority, of Balkan cultures.

"The Balkan civilisation" suggested by Traian Stoianovich remains an elusive but very stimulating concept and lies somewhere in the borderlands of world history. Further elaborations could perhaps more clearly distinguish the contents of world history in this concept from its possible components designating exclusive Balkan features.

Finally, the idea of a common Balkan Orthodox mentality, if accepted, is confined to the period of early modernity. The rise of nation-states, as the author of this concept acknowledged, obliterated Balkan commonalities in the 19th century. Paradoxically, Europeanisation significantly challenged this type of concept, which would have been in perfect harmony with what would today be called European values.

Finding Balkan commonalities outside of the realm of linguistics has indeed proven a difficult task for Balkanologists. In the quest to find such commonalities – scholars have identified parallelisms of local cultures with global patterns, discovered similarities between local traditions and customs and traditional cultures all around the globe and, more recently, traced the trajectories of the region's Europeanisation. Although it has remained an elusive task to find a common Balkan culture, the search for Balkan commonalities has produced very valuable results for Balkan studies.

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