

SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS  
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

LVI



2025

# BALCANICA

MIROSLAV MARIĆ *et al.*, *Intra-settlement Burials of Vinča Culture at Sajlovo 5* • ANDREY N. SOBOLEV, *The Balkan Linguistic and Cultural Union* • GORDANA ILIĆ MARKOVIĆ, *The Utilisation of Language as a Political Instrument* • STEFANA PAUNOVIĆ RODIĆ, *The Ruthenian Language in Serbia* • SILVIA NOTARFONSO, *Plague Epidemics and Sacrificial Offerings along the Danube* • BORIS MILOSAVLJEVIĆ, *The Family of Dr. Vladan Djordjević* • ANTONELLA FIORIO, *Carlo Sforza and the Attempt to Define a New Italian Foreign Policy* • FILIP ŠKILJAN, *Abuses against Serbs in the Districts of Otočac and Brinje* • PETAR VASIĆ, ALEKSANDAR REPEDŽIĆ, *Migration in Eastern Serbia* ~

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

UDC 930.85(4-12)

BELGRADE 2025

ISSN 0350-7653  
eISSN 2406-0801

SLOBODAN G. MARKOVICH, ED., *SERBIA AND THE BALKANS: THREE CENTURIES OF EMBRACE WITH EUROPE*.

Belgrade: Zepter Book World & Faculty of Political Science, 2025, 451 p.

Reviewed by Anđelija Miladinović\*

The volume *Serbia and the Balkans: Three Centuries of Embrace with Europe*, edited by Slobodan G. Markovich, is the final publication of the *Cultural Transfer Europe–Serbia* (CTES) project (2022–2025), financed by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia. Conceived as both a synthesis and a summary of a research effort spanning several years, the book encapsulates the project's ambition to rethink the long and complex relationship among Serbia, the Balkans, and Europe. It brings together contributions by distinguished international scholars—including Paschalis Kitromilides, Wolfgang Schmale, Vesna Goldsworthy, Misha Glenny, and Sonja Licht—and represents the culmination of an interdisciplinary dialogue that spanned history, literature, sociology, and political science.

At its core, the collection seeks to move beyond the simplistic dichotomy of “Europe versus the Balkans”. Instead, it posits that a continuous and multidirectional flow of ideas, influences, and values shaped both regions over three centuries. The introductory essay by Markovich, “Serbia and the Balkans in Europe: Beyond Dichotomy”, functions as both a conceptual and historical prologue. Markovich outlines the scope of the CTES project and situates the Balkans within the broader narrative of European intellectual and cultural history. Markovich frames Europeanisation as a dynamic process of interaction rather than imitation—one that re-admitted the Balkans into Europe's self-definition while

allowing Serbia to serve as both recipient and contributor in the continent's cultural exchange. In his interpretation, the book's cover, featuring a painting from the National Museum in Šabac depicting the transition from military to civic values, serves as a visual metaphor for Serbia's shift from armed resistance to cultural dialogue.

The opening chapter, titled Europe, South-East Europe, and Serbia, addresses the intellectual underpinnings of Europe's relationship with its southeastern periphery. Paschalis Kitromilides's contribution, “There Is No Dichotomy between Europe and Southeast Europe”, delivers a compelling argument against separating these two notions. He notes that the region's intellectual heritage, from Byzantine Christianity to the Enlightenment, is deeply enmeshed within the European civilisational continuum. Kitromilides calls for understanding Europe's unity in diversity through the concept of plural dialogues, insisting that modernity emerged through interlinked cultural channels rather than geographical hierarchies.

Wolfgang Schmale's comprehensive essay, “Once Upon a Time, When Europe Became a Man – 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Europe Conceptions”, examines the gendered emergence of European identity during the Enlightenment period.

---

\* andjelija.m.94@gmail.com  
Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade,  
Belgrade, Serbia

Drawing on iconography, literature, and sociology, Schmale demonstrates how Europe's self-representation gradually became masculine, with civilisation, reason, and power defined as male attributes. His analysis extends from early allegories for the continent to 19th-century monuments of "Great Men", exposing the implicit Eurocentrism and gender bias that shaped modern European thought. Intriguingly, the study concludes by examining contemporary re-appropriations of Europe's image, from performance art to postcolonial visual culture, as a counter-gesture to the old patriarchal paradigm.

In "Modern Europe and Serbia", Markovich brings an extensive historical representation of Serbia's Europeanisation from the 18<sup>th</sup> century to the present. He proposes a new timeline for Serbia's Europeanisation, citing Dositej Obradović's era as a decisive turning point that brought Serbian intellectuals closer to the European mainstream. He identifies five stages of cultural convergence: Enlightenment reformism, Romantic nationalism, interwar Francophilia, socialist experimentation, and the post-2000 pro-European movement. The study addresses significant historical periods that shaped Yugoslav urban elites, ranging from Enlightenment influences and interwar Francophilia to post-1945 Sovietisation, socialist experimentation, and later cultural Americanisation. It also examines the conflict between isolationist nationalism and long-standing European aspirations, noting that even in the 1990s, a clearly "European Serbia" persisted. Despite periodic political rifts, the post-2000 resurgence of pro-European sentiment and civic initiatives in the 2020s reflects Serbia's long-standing and ongoing cultural ties with Europe. Markovich notes that Serbia's connection

with Europe has never been solely political, representing instead a civilisational negotiation channelled through literature, education, and moral values.

Two more contributions—Dragana Grbić's "School Textbooks and Teaching Materials as Channels of Cultural Transfer in the Metropolitanate of Karlovci" and Goran Vasin's "Impact of the Ideas of the Enlightenment and of the Absolutist State"—focus on the Habsburg era as a crucial incubator of Serbian modernity. Dragana Grbić analyses the role of textbooks and educational materials that facilitated cultural mobility among Orthodox communities in the Habsburg Monarchy. Grbić utilises bibliographic data from Serbian printed books to highlight how translations and adaptations of educational materials helped spread ideas from many cultural hubs, including Russian, Greek, Venetian, Habsburg, and Protestant centres. Her research demonstrates that the multilingual and multicultural exchange within the Metropolitanate of Karlovci not only reflected but also expedited Enlightenment-era reforms in Serbian education and culture. Goran Vasin examines how the Enlightenment and absolutist-state concepts influenced the Serbian populace in the Habsburg Empire, and how these ideas, imparted through Habsburg Serbs, helped to Europeanise and modernise the Principality of Serbia. The contribution, with its timeframe from the late 18<sup>th</sup> to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, emphasises the role of Serbian intellectuals such as Sava Tekelija and focuses on the establishment of newspapers, reading rooms, gymnasias, and cultural and educational societies as key conduits of intellectual and social transformation connecting Central Europe and the nascent modern Serbia.

The second chapter, *Between Imagination and Reality: Serbia and the Balkans between Europeanness and Balkanization*, discusses how the Balkans have been imagined, misrepresented, and reclaimed in European discourse.

In "Ruritania: Reflections on an Aftermath", Vesna Goldsworthy revisits her seminal concept of Ruritania, analysing the endurance of the Balkanist imaginary long after Yugoslavia's disintegration. The author contends that this narrative, which has persisted since the early 20th century, stems from unequal power dynamics in cultural representation rather than ignorance. Drawing on film history, Goldsworthy observes that over half of all cinematic portrayals of the Balkans made in the early 20th century were American, creating a distorted image that persists in modern media, including digital and AI-generated visual culture. By tracing the origins of these prejudices from British literature to contemporary global media, she traces how the Balkans were "invented" as Europe's internal Other, revealing more about Western identity-making than the region itself.

Misha Glenný's "The Balkans and Europe" reinforce this assessment from a political journalist and war correspondent's viewpoint. Glenný questions the historical and rhetorical construction of the Balkans as "the powder keg of Europe", which reduced a complicated region to a symbol of instability. The author investigates the geopolitical roots of this cliché, associating it with centuries of imperial struggle, and deconstructs the misuse of the term "Balkanisation", a term originally coined to describe the effects of the breakup of East Prussia. Moving beyond external impressions, Glenný stresses that Balkan élites have traditionally wielded

sufficient political power to influence regional developments. The comparison between Transylvania's resolution of tensions in the late 1980s and Yugoslavia's descent into state-sanctioned violence in the 1990s demonstrates that the region's fate cannot be explained by stereotypes of inherent instability, but rather by political choices and historical circumstances.

Siniša Malešević's "Wars, States, and Nationalisms: From Western Europe to the Balkans" offers a sociological perspective on state formation and nationalism in the Balkans within the broader European context. He emphasises the interdependence of conflict, nation-building, and cultural interchange, focusing on how their connections to Western Europe shaped the organisation and ideology of newly formed Balkan states. The study contends that while conflicts accelerated state formation and entrenched nationalist sentiments, they also resulted in significant social inequality, as evidenced by dysfunctional civil institutions, authoritarianism, and insufficient cross-class solidarity. By situating Balkan nationalism within the broader European context, Malešević challenges the notion of Balkan exceptionalism, suggesting that the region's turbulent history stems from structural causes rather than inherent volatility.

Gordana Đerić's contribution, "Balkan Studies and the Stereotype Phenomenon after 1989", analyses how post-Cold War academic and cultural discourses repurposed old clichés with new theoretical titles. The first section examines the historical genesis of Balkan stereotypes—including the concepts of Balkanisation and Balkanism—across several fields, emphasising how these notions emerged as echoes of broader European concerns. The second section critically examines

post-1989 scholarship, emphasising the persistence of conceptual issues and the paradoxical role of stereotypes as both obstacles and tools that facilitate understanding. Rather than dismissing stereotypes as false representations, the author advocates for their contextualisation and historicisation, arguing that only by investigating their social and intellectual functions can we fully understand how the Balkans have been imagined, othered, and theorised within European thought.

The third chapter, titled *Europeanisation(s) of Serbian and South-East European Culture*, focuses on culture as the main medium of Europeanisation. In “Modernisation and Europeanisation(s) of South-East Europe seen through Cultural Transfer Europe-The Balkans, 1800–1914”, Markovich synthesises the project’s historical findings to demonstrate that modernisation in the Balkans was neither derivative nor linear. He examines the intricate processes of Europeanisation and modernisation in the Christian Balkan states during and after the Age of Revolution, focusing on structural and cultural barriers, such as widespread illiteracy, economic underdevelopment, and patriarchal social systems. He focuses on the interactions between foreign agents of influence (Philhellenes, German Romantics, American Protestants) and local reformers, arguing that Europeanisation was a multidimensional process mediated by cultural spheres—the Francosphere, Germanosphere, and Anglosphere. Markovich traces changing Western perceptions of the Balkans throughout the 19th century, demonstrating how external views directly influenced the pace and direction of local modernisation. He concludes with reflections on how cultural transfer functioned as a

vehicle of both inclusion into and differentiation within Europe.

Zoran Milutinović’s “Modernisation, Europeanisation and Aesthetic Modernity in the Balkans” examines how artistic modernism and philosophical aesthetics transcended borders, resulting in a distinctly Balkan blend of cosmopolitanism and local sensibility. Milutinović challenges the common conflation of the two concepts, arguing that modernisation—the genuine transformation of political, social, and economic structures—should be distinguished from Europeanisation, which often involved the superficial adoption of Western European cultural models. The author asserts that, in the Balkans, as in many other non-European contexts, Europeanisation essentially functioned as imitation rather than innovation, affecting ordinary life and elite culture without fundamentally transforming the existing societal structures. However, in the early 20th century, aesthetic modernism represented an important turning point: artists and intellectuals consciously rejected the concept of copying or emulating, arguing that modernity could take many localised forms. This transition not only altered the definition of modernity, but it also aestheticised national identity, transforming imitation into creative reinterpretation.

In “Serbian Travelogues and the West: Pastism as a Paradoxical Element of Interwar Travel Writing”, Vladimir Gvozden examines interwar travel writing as a paradoxical expression of appreciation and criticism. He contextualises travel writing in the broader cultural landscape of the 1920s and 1930s, when increased mobility, new technology, and social transformation altered how authors experienced and represented the world. The author demonstrates how both well-known and

lesser-known Serbian writers employed the genre to express middle-class sensibilities and connect with European aesthetic, ideological, and political tendencies. Interwar travelogues combined documentary rigour with artistic imagination, reflecting optimism about cultural exchange while also expressing strong scepticism about modernity. As industrialisation and the capitalist rationale gained momentum, the genre shifted towards romanticised retrospection and “pastism”, which idealised lost cultures, juxtaposing them with the fragmented modern reality. Finally, travel writing emerges as a reflection of interwar consciousness—an ambivalent area where alienation meets longing, and excursions outward into distant lands serve as spiritual and aesthetic quests for meaning in a rapidly changing Europe.

The fourth chapter, *Cultural Transfers: Europe-Serbia in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*, includes case studies that show how European ideals and practices were absorbed and modified in Serbia and Yugoslavia. Nemanja Radulović’s “Serbian Folklore and European Framework. Some Remarks” explores the pivotal role of folklore in shaping Serbian cultural identity and its dynamic relationship with European intellectual trends. It traces the reciprocal contacts between Serbian and broader European cultures from the 18th to the 20th centuries, emphasising how folklore served as both a cultural import and export. Serbian intellectuals were influenced by Herderian thought, and they saw folklore as a repository of national spirit. At the same time, the European reception of Serbian folk poetry—particularly through German mediators like Jacob Grimm—played an important role in the rise of Pre-Romantic and Romantic sensibilities across Europe. Early Serbian

folklore collections inspired other smaller European nations, while Western conceptual frameworks moulded Serbian perceptions of their own folk tradition. The study shows how folklore functioned as a multilateral network of cultural transfer, a dynamic interaction between Serbia and Europe that perpetually transformed both, ranging from Ossian-inspired Italian and French receptions to 20th-century comparative studies on the “Homeric question”.

Ivana Pantelić’s paper, titled “The Liberation of Women: International Influences and National Practices in 19th-Century Serbia and Yugoslavia”, traces the evolution of women’s battle for liberation from the late 1800s to the socialist period. It examines how Western European liberal ideas and Russian socialism influenced early Serbian feminists, as well as how succeeding generations—particularly socialist and liberal women’s movements—established transnational networks and educational programs. Pantelić explores the interwar feminist landscape, the Soviet impact on pre-war communist women, and the rise of New Feminism in socialist Yugoslavia, which is rooted in Western second-wave feminism from the 1960s. The contribution offers a comprehensive account of the ideological and cultural shifts that shaped women’s emancipation in the region during the last century.

Aleksandra Djurić-Milovanović, Jovica Pavlović, Srbojub Peović, and Nikola Tucakov’s research, “Religious Minorities as Important Agents of Cultural Transfer During the Interwar Period: The Case of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia”, analyses the role of religious minorities in the exchange of ideas, practices, and material culture across borders during the interwar period. Drawing on newly discovered



archival materials and firsthand historical sources, the authors employ historiography, ethnography, and discourse analysis within the context of cultural transfer theory. The study demonstrates that, prior to the rise of electronic mass media, minority religious communities had an important role in bringing foreign influence to Yugoslavia. Their cross-cultural encounters, however, frequently elicited distrust and antagonistic responses from state officials, revealing the contradiction between modernisation and control in the Kingdom's political landscape.

In "Representations of Heroes in the Serbian Modern Novel and European Cultural Transfer", Aleksandar Gajić discusses how shifts in the literary portrayal of heroes reflected broader social and cultural transformations shaped by European thought and aesthetics. He traces the development of the Serbian novel from its origins to Realism, the interwar period, and socialist Yugoslavia, demonstrating that European cultural transfer continues to inform Serbian literary paradigms. Gajić analyses the development arc of literary characters from epic, high-mimetic heroes to ordinary people and anti-heroes, ending in postmodern narratives in which the hero—and often the whole concept of a primary protagonist—disappears entirely. He concludes that simplified heroic motifs survived only in genre fiction, remaining on the periphery of post-Yugoslav Serbian literature.

The final chapter, *Transformative Power of the EU: Serbia and the Balkans*, brings us to the 21st century. Sonja Licht's *Transformative Power of the EU and Serbia: From a Dream to Reality* is a personal and analytical look at the European Union's role in Serbia's post-2000 development. Licht investigates the recurring problems

that undermine the European Union's transformative capacity in the Western Balkans, with a special focus on Serbia's trajectory. She notes both specific political setbacks—such as Serbia's delayed admittance to the Council of Europe during the premiership of Zoran Đinđić—and broader structural concerns, including tensions in neoliberal reforms and the stalled democratisation process. Finally, Licht argues that, despite stagnation and populist backlash, EU integration remains the most effective platform for supporting democratic and civic growth.

Ivan Vejvoda's contribution, "Transformative Power of the EU in Serbia and the Western Balkans", focuses on the regional level, analysing the successes and failures of the expansion process in the Western Balkans. Vejvoda discusses the slow and complex nature of Europeanisation, suggesting that the EU's transformative power takes time and internal social participation to take hold. While individuals typically demand rapid change, the author underlines that developing a democratic political culture is a generational process that takes decades rather than years. He situates Serbia's current political moment within broader European tendencies, highlighting that the crisis of democracy, as well as the rise of populism and right-wing forces within the EU, hinders the Union's potential to inspire revolution abroad. Nonetheless, the author maintains that meaningful reform cannot be forced from outside; it must arise from inside. In this regard, the student and civic protests in Serbia in 2024–2025 are seen as a decisive turning point in democratic awakening, reflecting a revived civic consciousness capable of revitalising Serbia's efforts towards genuine democratic integration. Vejvoda

underlines the significance of mutual responsibility: the Balkans must continue to develop, while the EU must restore its strategic commitment to the region.

In summary, *Serbia and the Balkans: Three Centuries of Embrace with Europe* effectively straddles historiography, cultural studies, and political analysis. It challenges Eurocentric narratives while acknowledging the Balkans as an integral part of European civilisation. The volume's timeframe, spanning from the Enlightenment to modern-day EU transitions, provides a chronological and thematic consistency rarely found in edited collections. The

contributors take a critical approach to the core themes of cultural transfer and Europeanisation, presenting them as reciprocal interactions rather than one-way processes. The volume holds significant scholarly value: it redefines Europe's intellectual geography by arguing that the Balkans are Europe's mirror rather than its borderland or backwater. With its interdisciplinary scope and compelling synthesis of three centuries of cultural communication, the book represents a watershed moment in the study of contacts and interactions between Europe and the Balkans.

STEFAN BERGER AND PHILIPP MÜLLER, EDs., *DYNAMICS OF EMIGRATION. ÉMIGRÉ SCHOLARS AND THE PRODUCTION OF HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE IN THE 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY*.

New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2022, 268 p.

*Reviewed by* Petar S. Ćurčić\*

Historical scholarship has not always been devoid of political overtones. The experience of forced migration has frequently exerted a profound influence on eminent historians and their scholarly contributions. A notable example of this phenomenon is Thucydides, who, having been expelled from Athens, embodies the intersection of historiography and political upheaval. Stefan Berger and Philipp Müller astutely observe that the 20<sup>th</sup> century was deeply marked by forced migration. Totalitarian regimes, particularly those in Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union, engendered highly ambivalent attitudes towards intellectuals. Many scholars conformed to the ruling systems, continuing their research uninterrupted, while others had no choice but to emigrate—among them bourgeois historians from the USSR, as

well as Jews, social democrats, and communists from Germany, Italy, and Spain. In response, Russian émigrés established several institutions, such as the Russian Free University in Prague, the Kondakov Seminar, the Russian Historical Archive Abroad, and the Russian Library (later renamed the Slavonic Library). A similar process unfolded for émigré scholars from communist states after 1945, leading to the formation of institutions such as the Polish Instytut Historyczny in Rome, Collegium Carolinum in Munich, the Ukrainian Research Institute at Harvard University, the Archives of Czechs and

---

\* petar.pero.curcic@gmail.com; petar.curcic@ies.rs  
Institute of European Studies, Belgrade, Serbia



ISSN 0350-7653



9 770350 765003 >