LV 2024

BALCANICA

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The journal Balcanica is an annual, peer-reviewed journal of the interdisciplinary Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA). It is uniquely universal in its treatment of all topics relating to the Balkans in terms of both chronology and scholarly field. It features original research from prehistoric antiquity to contemporary phenomena. We welcome submissions from all disciplines of humanities: archaeology, anthropology, ethnography, history, art history, linguistics, literature, law. These can concern individual Balkan countries or regions, a group of countries or regions, or the region as a whole, or examine different connections between the Balkans, on one hand, and Europe and the world, on the other. Contributions based on interdisciplinary approach are particularly welcomed.

SERBIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND ARTS
INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

BALCANICA
LV

ANNUAL OF THE INSTITUTE FOR BALKAN STUDIES

BELGRADE
2024

The origin of the Institute goes back to the Institut des Études balkaniques founded in Belgrade in 1934 as one of a kind in the Balkans. The initiative came from King Alexander I Karadjordjević, while the Institute's scholarly profile was created by Ratko Parežanin and Svetozar Spanaćević. The Institute published *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques*, which assembled most prominent European experts on the Balkans in various disciplines. Its work was banned by the Nazi occupation authorities in 1941.

The Institute was not re-established until 1969, under its present-day name and under the auspices of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. It assembled a team of scholars to cover the Balkans from prehistory to the modern age and in a range of different fields of study, such as archaeology, ethnography, anthropology, history, culture, art, literature, law. This multidisciplinary approach remains its long-term orientation.

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ARTICLES

Ninety years of the Institute for Balkan Studies
Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts

To reach its ninetieth anniversary is no small feat for any institution. The Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts has achieved this notable milestone despite the numerous challenges it has had to overcome. The Institute for Balkan Studies (Balkanski institut) was established in 1934 by two prominent men of letters, Ratko Parežanin and Svetislav Spanaćević, under the patronage of King Alexander of Yugoslavia. After the capitulation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the German occupation authorities decided to close the Institute in August 1941. The Institute resumed its work in July 1969, headed by the academician Vasa Čubrilović, who had been associated with the former Institute for Balkan Studies and had served as the inaugural director of the newly established Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (Balkanološki institut Srpske akademije nauka i umetnosti). Because the two Institutes' names are identical in English, one may be led to think that the rebirth of the Institute had been foretold.[1] However, this was not the case, as in Communist Yugoslavia, any continuity with its royal predecessor was to be eschewed. The revolutionary climate in the humanities meant that it was necessary to emphasize the communist character of any intel-

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[1] Although the correct English translation of both institutes is Institute for Balkan Studies, to distinguish them from each other, we decided to use the name Balkan Institute for the one in Royalist Yugoslavia and the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA for the one in Communist Yugoslavia.

lectual undertaking, and the rebirth of the Institute did not align with this profile. Therefore, it took some time before the geopolitical and scholarly imperatives created the need to re-establish the Institute. Nevertheless, continuity was still to be avoided, and thus the name changed from *Balkanski* to *Balkanološki institut*.[2] Nonetheless, the shared objectives, research methodology based on an interdisciplinary approach, international and regional academic collaboration, and, most notably, publication output testify to the continuity between the two eras of the Institute.

Geostrategic rationale for the formation of the Institute for Balkan Studies

The Balkan Institute was established as a private institution, even though King Alexander facilitated its establishment by providing a monthly subsidy from his personal funds, which constituted its founding capital and enabled the launch of the Institute's journal, *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques*. The Institute was established in a period when the totalitarian regimes in Italy and Germany wielded considerable influence in the Balkans. Thus, the Balkan Pact of February 1934 was a regional initiative supposed to ensure the autonomous development of the region. Consequently, the Institute's founding rationale, the academic elaboration of the Balkans' autochthonous identity, regained geostrategic significance. The Institute was intended to facilitate the resolution of conflicts between Balkan nations and to change the prevailing perception of the Balkans as a region characterized by intractable ethnic and territorial disputes. After the untimely death of King Alexander, the Institute continued as a private enterprise with minimal staff and no research profile, whose publications were financed from subscriptions and purchases by Yugoslav state institutions.

One of the Institute's founders, Ratko Parežanin, defined its objective as the promotion of Balkan cooperation and solidarity:

> "It is imperative that we facilitate the convergence of the Balkan countries, thereby enabling them to forge robust political and economic agreements and alliances. It is similarly vital to foster a spirit of solidarity and community among the Balkan peoples, which can be achieved through mutual assistance and collaboration. In order to achieve this, a number of conditions and even greater needs must be met."[3]

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[2] "Le memorial de l'Institut des Etudes balkaniques", *Balcanica* XXX–XXXI (1999–2000), with bibliographies of both Institutes; I. Obradović, "Balkanski institut", *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* 3 (2010), 43–62; D. T. Bataković, „The eightieth anniversary of the Institute for Balkan Studies (1934-2014)", *Balcanica* VXL (2014), 7–14.

[3] R. Parežanin, *Za Balkansko jedinstvo* (Munchen: Iskra, 1979), 21.

Portrait of King Alexander Karadjordjević, by Petar Omčikus

He also explained the rationale for establishing the Institute, namely, the necessity of enabling the Balkan peoples to assume governance of their own region.

"It is imperative that the Balkan peoples unite. This is their destiny. This is a matter of great consequence for the future and survival of these peoples."[4]
"In order to secure the Balkans for the Balkan peoples, the following idea must also be revived: Balkan peoples for the Balkans. We should turn to our motherland and look for the principal and only correct and solid support for political and economic independence and autonomy there. We should seek and find in the Balkans the sources of inspiration and motives for all creativity."[5]

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[4] *Idem*, 24.

[5] *Idem*, 25.

The motto "Balkans for the Balkan peoples" was synonymous with regional cooperation and lay at the heart of numerous regional initiatives, from the Balkan Alliance against the Ottomans in 1912 to the Balkan Pact of 1934 to the next iteration of the Balkan Alliance in 1954, which brought together Communist Yugoslavia and NATO members Greece and Turkey. The rationale for the establishment of both institutes thus rested on the continuing relevance of geostrategic considerations in both royalist and communist Yugoslavia. In the case of communist Yugoslavia, this regional alliance proved short-lived, as the re-establishment of relations between the Yugoslav and Soviet communist parties from 1955 onwards significantly reduced its importance. It regained importance at the beginning of the period of détente in 1968.

Shared research methodology

Multidisciplinary approach

These scholarly underpinnings of the Balkan Institute's journal, the *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques*, were articulated by Professors Milan Budimir and Petar Skok, who also served as the editors of the Institute's journal. Milan Budimir, a classical scholar and professor at the University of Belgrade, and Petar Skok, a Romance philologist and professor at the University of Zagreb, both scholars of international renown, pioneered comparative research of the Balkans, laying the foundations for Balkan studies, or Balkanology. In the inaugural issue of the Institute's journal, the editors defined the field of research that the Institute would address as studying the Balkans as a whole.

> "However, it seems that the time has come to think about coordinating national Balkan scholarship, giving it cohesion and, above all, directing it towards the study of the Balkan organism that has formed a distinct entity since the earliest days of classical and pre-classical antiquity. This is the main goal of the academic discipline that we have taken the liberty of calling Balkanology[6] and to which our journal is dedicated."[7]

They also defined the object of research of Balkan studies as the comparative inter-Balkan system.

> "The comparative study of the Balkans has become a pressing necessity. It is long overdue. The aim of this discipline is to define and explain the parallel

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[6]   The inaugural issue of the Institute's journal was written in French and the name of the new discipline in French was balkanologie, which can be translated in English as Balkan Studies.

[7]   M. Budimir, P. Skok, « But et Signification des Etudes balkaniques », *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques* I (1934), 3.

phenomena that manifest themselves in various fields of human activity in the Balkans."[8]

The research method to be used in Balkan studies was described as comparative, establishing the fundamental premises of scholarship of the Balkans carried out in a comparative perspective in all Balkan countries.

> "Balkan studies will proceed as follows. Whenever it has to study a particular phenomenon in a Balkan people, it will ask itself whether there are analogies in the neighboring Balkan peoples. If it finds them, it will duly define their nature. Then it will look to expand those findings, which will allow it to try to explain them. For a given question, it will try to take into consideration all the Balkan peoples, or, if this should prove impossible, at least two peoples, never just one. This is because the particular phenomena attract its attention in so far as they can be linked to the whole of Balkan life. It will leave the study of particular phenomena to specialists in nation-specific scholarship."[9]

The concept of Balkan studies, as defined by Professors Budimir and Skok, was based on multidisciplinary research on the Balkans:

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[8] *Idem*, 7.

[9] *Idem*, 8.

"It is not enough to define Balkan studies as an academic discipline based on inter-Balkan comparison. Comparison alone is not a widely used method in scholarship. It does not tell the whole story. It is necessary to determine the areas of Balka studies where this method is applicable."

In the first issue of the journal, the two professors gave ample evidence and numerous examples of why Balkan studies should include history, linguistics, folklore, economics, literature, law, and art history. Their concept of the new discipline was wholeheartedly embraced by fellow scholars in other Balkan countries. The articles published in the journal from 1934 to 1938, when the last issue appeared, bear witness to the success of their concept. It is fair to say that the journal brought together the crème de la crème of Balkan scholars in the humanities and social sciences.[10] The members of the journal's editorial board were Nicolae Iorga (Romania), Nikolaos Exarchopoulos (Greece), Bogdan Filov (Bulgaria), Fuat Köprülü (Turkey), Lumo Skëndo (Albania), and Aleksandar Belić (Yugoslavia).

Continuity in multidisciplinary research of the Balkans was confirmed by the decision of the Presidency of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts of May 18, 1967, to found the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA). The Presidency's statement highlighted the comparative approach by enumerating the disciplines to be explored in Balkan studies:

"The Institute should employ scholarly methods to study, research, and explore issues in Balkan studies, namely: archaeology, history, linguistics, ethnology, sociology, literary and art history, economics, and law, if they relate to at least two Balkan nations or to one Balkan and one non-Balkan nation."[11]

The mandate for the restored Institute established by the Presidency of SASA included the main elements of Balkan studies as conceived by Budimir and Skok in 1934. Balkan Studies was considered to be an established academic discipline based on a multidisciplinary approach with a comparative perspective. The Institute began its work in July 1969 under the leadership of Vasa Čubrilović, a former associate of the Balkan Institute and the first director of the Balkan Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The Institute launched its journal *Balcanica* in 1970. In its inaugural issue, the Editorial Board affirmed its decision to dedicate the journal to Balkan studies and its multidisciplinary approach:

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[10] Le memorial de l'Institut des Etudes balkaniques, *Balcanica* XXX–XXXI (1999–2000), with the bibliography of the first Institute for Balkan Studies.

[11] The decision of the Presidency of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts of May 18, 1967, archives of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

"This journal will publish articles on all areas of Balkan Studies in its sections devoted to archaeology, history, linguistics, ethnology, sociology, history of literature and art, economics, and law."[12]

Moreover, the Institute's research program clearly demonstrated its multidisciplinary character. The research was organized into 11 projects, spanning from antiquity to the 20th century. The projects were characterized by thematic diversity and chronological comprehensiveness. The first group of the Institute's contributors, already renowned scholars, took charge of the following projects:

- Material and spiritual culture of the Paleo-Balkan tribes of the central and eastern Balkans in the pre-Roman period, Nikola Tasić, PhD;
- Bogomilism in the Balkans and East Asia, Dragoljub Dragojlović, PhD;
- Management and administration of the Turkish Empire in the Balkans, Vasa Čubrilović, academician;
- The Eastern Question in the light of the liberation movements of the Balkan peoples, Kliment Džambazovski, PhD;
- Serbia and the liberation movements in the Balkans from the Congress of Paris to the Berlin Congress (1856-1878), Vasa Čubrilović, academician;
- The history of the labor movement in South-Eastern Europe, Petar Milosavljević, PhD;
- Great powers in the Balkans in the 20th century, Dušan Lukač, PhD;
- Nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoral movements in the Balkans and Southeast Europe, Dragoslav Antonijević, PhD;
- Customary law and self-government in the Balkans and neighboring countries, Djurica Krstić, PhD;
- Folk literature in the Balkans, Miodrag Stojanović, PhD;
- Arts and crafts in the Balkans over the centuries, Verena Han, PhD.

The overall research structure at the Institute underwent a thorough reform in the last decade of the 20th century when a new macro-project titled "History of the Balkan Peoples and their Cultures" became the pillar of its academic work. It consisted of a number of sub-projects in the fields of archaeology, history, ethnology, art history, and language and literature, led by a combination of new-generation scholars and some of the Institute's founding members:

- Tribes of the Central Balkans between the Illyrians and the Thracians, Aleksandar Palavestra, PhD;
- History of the Balkan Peoples, Veselin Djuretić, PhD;
- Folk Culture of the Balkans, Dragoslav Antonijević, PhD;
- Similarities and Differences in the Artistic Expression of the Balkan Peoples, Dinko Davidov, corresponding member of SASA.

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[12] La Rédaction, Avertissement, *Balcanica* I (1970), 1.

- Linguistic and Literary Links between the Peoples and their Cultures, Miodrag Stojanović, PhD.

The democratic changes that took place in Serbia in 2000 after the end of the wars in the former Yugoslavia also brought about a profound reform of the system of research. Research and its funding became project-based, so a new set of projects was conceived at the Institute by a new generation of scholars. The multidisciplinary character of the Institute's projects was retained as their methodological pillar, and they were organized by era. In addition to the projects focusing on antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the contemporary Balkans, projects dedicated to linguistic, ethnological, and anthropological research of the Balkans were also included. The chronologically organized projects also introduced a new methodological feature: an interdisciplinary approach to a given period. Thus, the interpretive framework of the Institute's projects became more complex, combining a multidisciplinary approach with an interdisciplinary focus. The leaders of this set of projects inevitably changed as one generation of scholars gave way to the next. All of them added their personal contributions to the projects:

- *Society, Culture and Communications in the Balkans in Proto- and Early History*, initially led by Professor Nenad Tasić. The project was later renamed: *The Balkans in Prehistory and Antiquity: Interdisciplinary Research*, with Dragana Nikolić, PhD, as project leader.
- *The Medieval Heritage of the Balkans: Institutions and Culture* initially led by Danica Popović, PhD. The project was later renamed *The medieval heritage of the Balkans*, with Valentina Živković, PhD, as project leader.
- *History of Political Ideas and Institutions in the Balkans in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, initially led by Dušan T. Bataković, PhD, and later by Vojislav G. Pavlović, PhD.
- *Language and Folklore in the Balkans*, initially led by Biljana Sikimić, PhD, and later by Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, PhD.
- *Folk Culture of the Serbs in Slavic and Balkan Contexts*, initially led by Ljubinko Radenković, PhD, and *The Danube and the Balkans: Historical and Cultural Heritage*, initially led by Djordje S. Kostić, PhD. These two projects, one focusing on ethnological and the other on anthropological research, later merged into the project *Migration and Cultural Transfer in the Balkans*, with Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović, PhD, as project leader.

The Institute's research revolved around its principal projects. From 2020 onwards, a new source of funding became available with the creation of the Science Fund of Serbia, which provided a significant boost to academic research. The Fund's remit was to provide financial support for scientific and research projects through competitive programs, with the funding provided by the World

Bank, the European Union, and the budget of the Republic of Serbia. This new source of competitive funding proved to be an invaluable opportunity for the Institute's research work. From 2020 onwards, six of the Institute's projects have been selected for funding within four distinct programs offered by the Science Fund of Serbia.

The Program for Excellent Projects of Young Researchers PROMIS (2020–2022)

- *Regional Absolute Chronologies of the Late Neolithic in Serbia (RACOLNS)*
Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Laboratory for bioarchaeology, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Institute of Archeology
Principal Investigator: Miroslav Marić, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA;

- *The Serbian Right-Wing Parties and Intellectuals in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, 1934-1941*
Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), Institute for Literature and Arts, Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory
Principal Investigator: Dragan Bakić, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA;

The IDEAS Program (2022–2024):

- *Pope Pius XII and the Challenge of Totalitarianism in Yugoslavia, 1941-1958 (POLITY)*
Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, Institute for Recent History of Serbia
Principal Investigator (PI): Vojislav G. Pavlovic, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA;
- *Vulnerable Languages and Linguistic Varieties in Serbia (VLINGS)*
Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Department of Interpreting and Translation, University of Bologna
Principal Investigator: Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

Program for Excellent Projects of Young Researchers and Scientists in the Early Stage of Career – PROMIS 2023 (2024–2025)

- *(Trans-)Formation of Identities: Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Balkans (c. 1450-c. 1750) (FORMIDOX)*
  Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Institute for Byzantine Studies SASA
  Principal Investigator: Marija Vasiljević, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

PRISMA Program (2024–2026)

- *Viticulture and Winemaking in the Central Balkans (15th–19th Century) (BalkViWine)*
  Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, Faculty of Philosophy; University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Philosophy; University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology; University of Belgrade
  Principal Investigator: Nebojša Šuletić, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

International cooperation

Besides continuity in the methodological approach to research, both institutes considered international cooperation to be one of the pillars of their work. Budimir and Skok defined the aim of the *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques* like this:

> "Our journal is intended to serve as a modest outlet for international scholars to share the results of their research of the Balkans."

In their introduction to the first issue of the journal, the editors of *Balcanica* set out their views on international cooperation in the following terms:

> "The editors are pleased to include in this publication the results of the work not only of Yugoslav Balkanologists, but also of those from abroad. The Editorial Board is aware that modern scholarship transcends local and national borders and that satisfactory results can only be achieved through a full, open, and genuine exchange of academic experience in a climate of mutual cooperation between all experts in Balkan Studies, both at the Yugoslav and international level."[13]

The bibliographies of both journals, the *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques* and *Balcanica*, show that the aspirations of their respective editors

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[13] *Idem.*

materialized. The number of foreign contributors to the *Revue internationale des Études balkaniques* was three times higher than that of Yugoslav contributors. The list of foreign contributors is impressive and includes the elite of European humanities scholars, e.g., Jacques Ancel, Charles Diehl, Nicolae Iorga, Michael Lascaris, Carlo Sforza, and Hermann Wendel. The Yugoslav contributors were at least as well-known as their foreign counterparts: Fehim Bajraktarević, Aleksandar Belić, Veselin Čajkanović, Vladimir Ćorović, Vladimir Dvorniković, Miodrag Ibrovac, and Georgije Ostrogorski, to name but a few. The journal published papers in French, English, German, and Italian, making it easier for scholars from abroad to contribute their articles.

The ratio between local and international scholars changed in favor of Serbian contributors in *Balcanica* mainly due to the different character of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA. The Balkan Institute had neither a permanent staff nor the status of a research institution; in Communist Yugoslavia, the Institute was reconstituted as a research institute of the SASA with a number of scholars as permanent staff. Consequently, *Balcanica* became a journal with the primary purpose of presenting their work. Nevertheless, *Balcanica* continued to publish contributions by renowned scholars, such as Jurii. A. Pisarev, Nicolae Ciachir, Richard Plaschka, Ioannis Hassiotis, André Guillou, and Paolo Odorico. In 2005, the historian and diplomat Dušan T. Bataković became the director of the Institute and placed international cooperation at the center of the Institute's efforts, continuing the traditional orientation of the Balkan Institute. Since 2005, the journal *Balcanica* has been published exclusively in English and French to facilitate communication with the international academic community.

The objective was to achieve two-way communication. The journal has published an increasing number of articles by internationally renowned scholars, while simultaneously publishing articles by Serbian scholars in English. This has enabled the international academic community to gain a more profound insight into academic production in Serbia. Since 2005, 23% of all articles published in *Balcanica* were authored by European scholars, such as Thanos Veremis, Spyridon Sfetas, Paschalis M. Kitromilides, Georges-Henri Soutou, Jean-Paul Bled, and John Henderson. Concurrently, over 210 Serbian scholars have been given the chance to present their research to the international academic community.

Unlike its predecessor, the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA developed international cooperation on an institutional basis. Cooperation was naturally established with similar institutes in Bulgaria, Romania, and Greece, founded in the first half of the 1960s. Over the years the Institute established mutually beneficial cooperation based on formal agreements with more than twenty universities and research centers in Europe and beyond, including the Institute for Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow (Институт славяноведения Российской академии наук, Москва); Institute of Historical

Research, Department of Neohellenic Research, Athens; Harry S. Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace, Hebrew University of Jerusalem; Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Roma; Research Centre for the Humanities, Hungarian Academy of Science, Budapest; Ecole française d'Athènes; Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin - Sprach- und literaturwissenschaftliche Fakultät - Institut für Slawistik und Hungarologie.

Since its renewal, the Institute has been a member of the International Association of South-East European Studies, a Balkan-wide association for South-East European studies based in Bucharest under the auspices of the UNESCO. The Institute's reputation, the abilities of its associates, and the international reputation of its director, Professor Radovan Samardžić, was affirmed during the 5th International Congress of the Association of South-East European Studies, which the Institute successfully hosted in 1984.

In recent years, the Institute's scholars have enhanced their international cooperation by participating in projects implemented through European funding programs, such as Creative Europe and COST:

Creative Europe

- *Prometheus – Promoting Universal Values through Digital Epigraphy and Cultural Heritage 2024-*
  Partners: Archaeological Museum of the Republic of North Macedonia Skopje, Sofia University St Kliment Ohridski, Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje;
  Project Coordinator: Dragana Nikolić, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies, SASA;

- *European Network on Archival Cooperation (ENArC) (2007–2015)*
  Partners: Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, München, Národní archiv, Prague, Slovensky narodny archiv, Bratislava, Arhiv Republike Slovenije, Ljubljana, Magyar Orszagos Leveltar, Budapest, Hrvatski Državni Arhiv, Zagreb, Budapest Fővaros Leveltara, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, Universita degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Historisch-Kulturwissenschaftliche Informationsverarbeitung, Universität zu Köln, International Centre for Archival Research – ICARUS, Wien, Ministerio de Cultura, Subdirección General de los Archivos Estatales, Madrid.
  Project Coordinator: Žarko Vujošević, PhD, from Institute for Balkan Studies, SASA.

COST (European Cooperation in Science and Technology) Actions

- *Participation through Prayer in the Late Medieval and Early Modern World (PRAYTICIPATE) 2024- 2028*
  Principal Partner: University of Madrid
  The project's members Valentina Živković and Marija Vasiljević are employed at the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

- *Managing Artificial Intelligence in Archaeology, 2024–2028*
  Principal Partner: University of Pisa
  The project member Vladimir Petrović, PhD, is employed at the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

- *Connecting Theory and Practical Issues of Migration and Religious Diversity (COREnet), 2021–2025*
  Principal Partner: University of Caunas
  The project member Aleksandra Djurić Milovanović PhD is employed at the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

- *Action Islamic Legacy: Narratives East, West, South, North of the Mediterranean (1350–1750), 2019–2023*
  Principal Partner: University of Ghent
  The project members Valentina Živković and Ognjen Krešić are employed at the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

Another form of international cooperation in which the scholars from the Institute have been involved is bilateral interstate projects, such as:

- *What's in a verb? Mapping Serbian verbs borrowed into Romani (2024–2026)*
  Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), Department of Slavic Studies, University of Graz
  Project Coordinator: Mirjana Mirić, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA;

- *Religious Policies and Freedom of Conscience in the interwar and socialist Yugoslavia: The Contexts of Change (2023-2025)*
  Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, Science and Research Center Koper
  Project Coordinator: Aleksandra Đurić Milovanović, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA;

- *Semiotic landscapes of multilingual border regions (2022-2023)*
  Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), Friedrich Schiller University Jena

Project Coordinator: Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA;

- *Linguistic landscape of the cultural region Banat in diachrony and synchrony (2020-2021)*
  Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies, Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA), Friedrich Schiller University Jena
  Project Coordinator: Annemarie Sorescu-Marinković, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA;

- *Probing the Boundaries of the (Trans)National: Imperial Legacies, Trans-national Literary Networks and Multilingualism in East Central Europe (2018–2021)*
  Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, University of Oslo
  Project Coordinator: Marija Mandić, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA;

- *Middle Danube, Lower Sava and Central Balkans: land of anchor, land of passage from first to fifth century A.D. (2014–2015)*
  Partners: Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, Institut Ausonius, Bordeaux
  Project Coordinator: Vladimir Petrović, PhD, Institute for Balkan Studies SASA.

PUBLISHING AND EDITORIAL WORK

Both Institutes considered their publishing and editorial output to be their primary purpose, albeit from slightly different perspectives. The Balkan Institute was established to foster awareness of the scientific and popular aspects of Balkan unity rather than as a research institution *per se*. Accordingly, the objective of its publications was to present evidence of the convergence between the political, cultural, and economic experiences of Balkan nations. The Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, on the other hand, aimed to present the latest knowledge on

the Balkans and publish original scholarly contributions by its members and correspondents. These two perspectives, though differing in nature, shared the same overarching objective: to promote knowledge about the Balkans in both academic and popular circles.

The Balkan Institute's publications were split into two series, one intended to instruct and educate and the other to inform a broader audience. The topic of the first series revealed the editors' intentions to educate the broader public on the beginnings of the nation- and state–building process in the Balkans. Four volumes were published:

- П. Скок, М. Будимир, Р. Парежанин, С. Спанаћевић и Г. Круљ, *Балкан и Балканци* (*The Balkans and the Balkanians*) (1937)
- В. Ћоровић, *Борба за независност Балкана* (*Struggle for Balkan Independence*) (1937)
- Ф. Шишић, *Југословенска мисао: историја идеје југословенског народног уједињења и ослобођења од 1790–1918,* (*Yugoslav thought: the history of the idea of Yugoslav national unification and liberation from 1790-1918*) (1937)
- Г. Константинов, *Вођи бугарског народа: Раковски – Каравелов – Левски – Ботјов,* (*Leaders of the Bulgarian People: Rakovski - Karavelov - Levski – Botjov*) (1939)
- *Knjiga o Balkanu* [Book on the Balkans], was intended for a wider circle of Yugoslav readers, presenting to them the concept of Balkan unity. Two volumes were printed (1936-1937).

A separate series on contemporary Balkans focused on its economic development:

- Драгослав П. Михајловић, *Привреда савремене Турске,* (The economy of contemporary Turkey), 1937
- Bogoljub Konstantinović, *La Yougoslavie pour la sante publique: Situation sanitaire. Organisation de l'activité socialo-médicale. Instructions pour le relèvement de la santé publique* 1937.
- *Economic encyclopedia of the Balkan countries* (with texts in French, German, English, and Italian, in two volumes, 1938). This was a pioneering work, which, given its topic, had a broad practical application and was distributed to many state institutions in Turkey, Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania. It was remarkably well-received in the Balkan countries.

The Balkan Institute also published literary works, focusing on poetry:

- Miodrag Ibrovac, *La poésie yougoslave contemporaine* (1937)
- Héllé Lambridis, *La poésie grecque des cinquante dernières années* (1937)
- Mario Roques, *La poésie roumaine contemporaine* (1937)

A monograph on Belgrade (1940), printed in French and German, the last publication of the Balkan Institute and a collective undertaking, was unfortunately banned before it could be distributed. It was considered unacceptable and damaging to German interests in Yugoslavia, and the authorities succumbed to pressure from the German Embassy. As we have already said, not long afterward, the Institute itself was banned by the German occupational authorities.

The editorial work of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA focused on publishing the proceedings of the conferences organized by the Institute and the monographs authored by its members. The flagship series of the Institutes was called Special Editions. The first decades of the Institute's existence saw the publication of the following monographs:

- Обичајно право и самоуправе на Балкану и у суседним земљама (*Customary Law and Self-Government in the Balkans and in Neighboring Countries*), Collection of Papers from an International Scientific Conference, Belgrade 1971, ed. Vasa Čubrilović, Belgrade 1974.

- Драгољуб Драгојловић, *Богомилство на Балкану и у Малој Азији* (*Bogomilism in the Balkans and in Asia Minor*), Belgrade 1974.

- *Средњовековно стакло на Балкану (V–XV век)*, (*Medieval Glassware in the Balkans (5th–15th Century)*), Collection of Papers from an International Conference, Belgrade 1974, ed. Vasa Čubrilović, Belgrade 1975.

- *Одредбе позитивног законодавства и обичајног права о сезонским кретањима сточара у Југоисточној европи кроз векове* (*Provisions of positive legislation and customary law on seasonal movements of herders in Southeast Europe over centuries*), Proceedings of an international scientific conference, Belgrade 1975, ed. Vasa Čubrilović, Belgrade 1976.

- *Светска економска криза 1929–1934. године и њен одраз у земљама Југоисточне Европе* (*The world economic crisis of 1929–1934. and its reflections in the countries of Southeast Europe Proceedings*), ed. Vasa Čubrilović, Belgrade 1976.

- Petar Milosavljević, *Radnički pokret u Rumuniji I (1870–1917)*, (*Workers' Movement in Romania I (1870–1917)*), Belgrade 1977.

- Ђурица Крстић, *Правни обичаји код Куча. Анализа реликата. Методологија. Прилози за теорију обичајног права*, (*Legal customs of Kuč. Analysis of relics. Methodology. Contributions to the Theory of Customary Law*), Belgrade 1979.

- Никола Тасић, Борислав Јовановић, *Методологија истраживања у праисторијској археологији*, (*Research Methodology in Prehistoric Archaeology*), Belgrade 1979.

- *Архивска грађа о стаклу и стакларству у Дубровнику (XIV–XVI век)*, collected and edited by Verena Han, Belgrade 1979.

A total of 159 titles have been published in the Special Editions series, including monographs and edited volumes. Since 2000, 61 books have been published in Serbian and 21 in English and French. The trend of publishing books in foreign languages intensified from 2006 onward in a bid to overcome isolation in narrow national frameworks and establish lively communication with contemporary movements in the globalized domain of the humanities. It is worth noting that many of the Institute's publications have been produced as the final and obligatory outcome of important international conferences hosted by our Institute. The series reflect the multidisciplinary character of the research conducted at the Institute. The five projects that formed the structure of the Institute's research after 2000 have all produced a significant number of monographs in their research fields.

The Institute has developed a fruitful cooperation with several publishing houses in Serbia, namely with Clio, Zavod za udžbenike, and Sebastian Press. One of the major editorial projects has been the publication of the seminal volume *Christian Heritage of Kosovo and Metohija* in collaboration with Sebastian Press. Recently, the Institute signed an agreement with Brill Academic Publishers that will bring the Institute's publications to a much wider audience, as a number of them will be reprinted by Brill. The first book published by Brill in a special series devoted exclusively to the Institute's monographs is Vladimir Ćorović's *Relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary in the 20th Century*.

Dušan T. Bataković invested considerable effort in creating the Institute's digital infrastructure. The central platform integrating various projects, activities, and content is the official website of the Institute, which brings together numerous individual websites, databases, and digital tools created as a result of the Institute's research. Digital, open-access versions of books from the Special Editions series are available on the site. The Institute for Balkan Studies also participates in Google's partner program, so the Institute's publications are also available on the Google Books platform, enhancing the visibility of the Institute's publications and the availability of scholarly works and publications.

The journal *Balcanica* has its own website, and the texts it publishes are also available through a number of important national and international digital services, including DOI Serbia, CEEOL, and DOAJ. Additionally, they are accessible through the Digital Repository of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, which forms an integral part of the Digital Archive of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (DAIS). Currently, the Digital Repository of the Institute for Balkan Studies contains over twenty thousand titles divided into several collections.

The objective of the *BiblioBalkans* project is to enhance the visibility of researching the Balkans in social studies and humanities and facilitate international collaboration between institutions and researchers working in Balkan stud-

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ies. This is to be achieved by establishing an international network that will enable and encourage the development of joint projects and activities.

This project created a bibliographic database comprising the scholarly output of institutions that focus on Balkan studies. The digital infrastructure for the database was developed in collaboration with the Mathematical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts (SASA).

A number of digitization projects have been implemented at the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA, which represent a significant contribution to the academic community and the cultural heritage of the region. Suffice it to mention a number of notable independently and co-authored projects by Dr. Mirjana Detelić, including the digital lexicon "Epic Cities," which is accessible on the Institute's platform, and electronic critical editions. "Epic Folk Poetry" and "Erlangen Manuscript" are accessible via the Monumenta Serbica portal.

Additionally, the "Language, Folklore and Migrations in the Balkans" project, spearheaded by Biljana Sikimić, resulted in the establishment of the DABI (Digital Archive of the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA). This multimedia archive represents a unique and invaluable repository of field research, providing a basis for the Institute's current and future research.

Another notable achievement is the digitization of Serbian diplomatic material, undertaken as part of the aforementioned European project EnArC. As a result of this initiative, the material is now accessible via the Monasterium web portal, the largest European virtual archive of charters. In accordance with the agreement of 2021, the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA ceded its rights over the "Serbian Digital Diplomacy" to the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

Scholars as the Institute's principal resource

Both Institutes were privileged to have a group of particularly knowledgeable and renowned scholars to guide their research. Professors Budimir and Skok laid the foundations for Balkan studies as an academic discipline in its own right. Their colleague at the Balkan Institute, academician Vasa Čubrilović, continued to foster the same research principles at the Institute for Balkan Studies. Academician Radovan Samardžić took over the Institute's helm in 1979, following in the footsteps of his professor and predecessor. During his ten years as the head of the Institute, Radovan Samardžić published ten issues of the *Balcanica* journal and twenty books in the "Special Editions" series and hosted several international academic conferences.

Academician Nikola Tasić took on the thankless and challenging task of leading the Institute during the turbulent last decades of the 20th century marked by international sanctions. Institutional international cooperation was no longer possible but continued through personal contacts, confirming the importance of previously established cooperation. Despite the limited resources at its disposal, the Institute showed an enviable vitality in the 1990s, manifested, above all, in its prolific scholarly production, with thirty-five monographs published in the Special Editions series.

As director (2000–2004), Ljubinko Radenković guided the process of adapting the Institute's work after the introduction of project-based funding. The historian and diplomat Dušan T. Bataković became the director of the Institute in 2005 and made international cooperation the Institute's focus. Academician Nikola Tasić, despite his workload and commitments as Vice-President of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, agreed to stand in as the Institute's director during Dušan Bataković's diplomatic service (2008–2012).

Throughout its existence, the Institute for Balkan Studies of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts has enjoyed the full support of academicians who, by participating in its Scientific Council, guided the Institute's research. The Council's members included many renowned scholars, such as Mithat Begić, Milka Ivić, Dragoslav Srejović, Milutin Garašanin, Predrag Palavestra, Ljubomir Tadić, Dragoljub R. Živojinović, Aleksandar Loma, Mirjana Živojinović, and Vujadin Ivanišević. Their colleagues, Nikola Tasić, Borislav Jovanović, Mihailo Vojvodić, and Ljubodrag Dimić, as representatives of the Department of History of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts on the Institute's Executive Board oversaw the Institute's daily work.

The Institute for Balkan Studies and the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA owe the high standard of their research output to the dedicated work of their staff. Over time, a number of colleagues who began their careers at the Institute moved on to teaching positions at the University of Belgrade, but this did not interrupt their cooperation with the Institute – on the contrary. New gen-

erations of scholars committed to researching the Balkans gradually assumed responsibility for the Institute's work. The late 2010s saw a significant generational change, with more than half of the Institute's current staff now under 40 years of age, ensuring its continued success, productivity, and development.

In the future, the Institute will focus on national and European projects. Regional cooperation has always been, and will remain, a constant of the Institute's development. The Institute's website boldly states that the vision for the future is to become the central institution of a future regional network of institutions dedicated to multidisciplinary research of the shared heritage and promotion of the inherent values of the Balkans as a European region. Ambition, even great ambition, is a powerful stimulus, and time will tell how productive it has been.

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Reading the Subtext – Site Location and Settlement Systems in Roman Moesia

Abstract: This paper argues that there is a political, social, economic or even historical substratum to the location and development of settlement that is significant to the diachronic understanding of settlement systems but may easily get neglected in favour of discussions of settlement hierarchy or single events in settlement history. Hence, it postulates that the factors for initial site location may not be the same as the factors for further settlement development, and that said substratum should be explored to fully grasp the reasons behind settlement dynamics. In doing so, it focuses on two categories of sites – so-called bridge-sites at significant geographical locations and legionary garrisons turned colonies. Settlements used as examples are Horreum Margi, Naissus, Scupi, and Ratiaria in Moesia Superior.

Keywords: Moesia (Superior), site location, settlement development, settlement systems, Scupi, Ratiaria, Naissus, Horreum Margi.

Introduction

With 'why' undoubtedly being the most striking question to be asked in Archaeology, 'why there' readily presents itself as the obvious equivalent in archaeological settlement studies. Hence, studies on settlement development, settlement systems, or urbanism immanently are studies on site location and locational factors, too. The pivot, here, is how to approach such studies on a theoretical or methodological level, and particularly in Roman Archaeology. Inquiries into the development of settlements and settlement systems are per se inquiries into pattern. The search for pattern is a conditio sine qua non in Humanities, and there is nothing wrong with applying it, as long as the backbones of thought that lie at the – to remain anatomical – heart of a study's starting point are properly acknowledged. In Roman Archaeology settlement studies these backbones are often rather structuralist; overemphasising the principle of pattern in search

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for overarching, supra-regional or even global development characteristics in settlement types, urban – rural divides, urbanisation, monumentalisation, or settlement hierarchy. A certain horror vacui can easily take hold of the process of mapping: Territories need to be administered, settlements need to be connected, the location of settlements needs to be assigned a mathematical value in order to explain conurbation or empty spaces. The counterpart for this is a focus on the local, i.e. a zooming in on a certain settlement and its development. Understanding a site in its surroundings, emphasising the significance of the actual living environment of inhabitants, and recognising the impact of the landscape a site is embedded in are desirable objectives that have – rightfully so – taken their place in current settlement studies in Roman Archaeology.

For the topic of this paper, I endorse a combination of both described modi, making the approach to settlement development both more organic and holistic – if those two are not mutually exclusive. The goal is to stop structuralising pattern while still recognising it. By emphasising the local, yet not limiting the gaze to it, an as-is approach to the characterisation of the development of both settlement and settlement systems is strived for. Understanding the development of a single site requires zooming in, understanding the development of systems of sites requires zooming out. The famous bigger picture, though, is comprised of both: recognising pattern and system is necessary to also accentuate the environment of the single site and the local, yet pattern and system will not be comprehensible without a deeper enquiry into the specifics of single sites. For this condition, I use the terms of 'subtext' or 'substratum' to refer to determinatives for site location within the bigger picture that are imperative to identify in order to fully grasp both settlements and systems.

Accordingly, this discussion sets out to do two things. First, it accentuates subtexts or substrata of site location[1] to understand settlement characteristics, using the settlements of Horreum Margi and Naissus as examples by coining the term of 'bridge-sites' for their characterisation. Secondly, it argues that there often is a difference between factors for initial site emergence and subsequent settlement development, which is significant to the understanding of a settlement's nature but will easily be overlooked in favour of – for example – single events in settlement history. Here, the colonies of Scupi and Ratiaria serve as examples. This selection of reference sites displays a clear focus on Moesia Su-

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[1] Obvious subtexts or substrata for site location can be pre-Roman Iron Age settlement systems, pre-existing roads, routes of penetration in the course of military conquest, the existence of raw materials or resources, geographical aspects like river crossings, preceding or contemporaneous historical developments or the like. Out of this set of aspects, only a few are discussed here, mainly those of traffic/transport axes with a specific focus on military conquest.

perior; a short concluding, paralleling view over to Moesia Inferior is, however, conducted, too.

Adjusting the Scale

Before initiating the actual discussion, some remarks on the adjustment of the data set are in order. This relies on the premise that any study benefits from the application of a suitable approach that is designed to nuance instead of filter: in the case of settlement studies, this means choosing a scale for enquiries that makes sites appear on the map. August Lösch provided a starting point for this approach when stating that although location and locational conditions were geographical facts, what was made of these conditions in a specific regional and/ or chronological context was open to be guided by different development factors.[2] This statement inherits the premise that irrespective of how we label sites and settlements, their development still needs to be explained. Thus, it is purely logic to focus on development factors to characterise sites and settlements.[3] In doing so, we should park the idea that mapping the settlement landscape of Moesia with municipia and coloniae provides a realistic picture and conclusive research framework. Status granting, urbanisation, and monumentalisation are crucial categories, but if we focus on them as conditions for the identification of major settlements, hierarchical centrality, and hubs of urbanism – especially in a comparatively little urbanised area of the Roman Empire – otherwise particularly significant settlements are excluded, which potentially impairs the process of painting the bigger picture of settlement systems-characteristics. Moreover, it potentially negates the background and substratum of settlement development in a certain region as guided by economic and social aspects and depending on a dynamic mixture of historical events, imperial agency, and political strategy on a global scale that can all affect said region.

When now zooming in on the settlement landscape of Moesia, two, very much intertwined aspects are vital to note: the chronological discrepancy between settlement emergence/development and status granting, and the innate reasons for status granting in Moesia. Traditionally, the Dacian wars and Trajan's foundations in the whole Balkan region are viewed as a neuralgic point for Moesian settlement, but the heyday of urban development is usually set in the reigns of Marcus Aurelius and Caracalla – which derives from the fact that a

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[2]   A. Lösch, *The economics of location* (Newhaven, 1954), 5.

[3]   For this approach in further detail, see in L. Diers, *Roman urbanism in Moesia Superior and Inferior. Studies on the formation, development, and contextualisation of urban settlement and space during the Principate (1st–3rd century AD)* (Dissertation University of Vienna, 2019), 23–31.

Fig. 1: The settlement landscape of Moesia (Superior and Inferior) around AD 200
(1. Singidunum, 2. Margum, 3. Viminacium, 4. Horreum Margi, 5. Timacum Minus,
6. Remesiana, 7. Naissus, 8. Municipium Dardanorum/DD, 9. Ulpiana, 10. Scupi,
11. Ratiaria, 12. Montana, 13. Oescus, 14. Novae, 15. Nicopolis ad Istrum,
16. Sexaginta Prista, 17. Durostorum, 18. Abritus, 19. Marcianopolis, 20. Tropaeum
Traiani, 21. Troesmis, 22. Noviodunum, 23. Histria, 24. Tomis, 25. Kallatis,
26. Dionysopolis, 27. Odessos). © Diers, Woller

total of 7 out of 12 municipia of Moesia received their legal rights from one or the other emperor.[4] When taking a closer look to single settlement chronologies and stepping away from the paradigm of official settlement status, however, it becomes clear that this can be misleading. In fact, the exoskeleton of settlement and settlement networks between the Adriatic and the Black Sea and Macedonia and the Danube had already existed by the time of the separation of Moesia into Moesia Superior and Inferior at the end of the first century AD; and by the time of Trajan – and to a part Hadrian – the settlement landscape of Moesia had fully developed.[5] Searching for reasons for this chronological discrepancy in the way Moesian settlement has often been approached to date, the reasons for official status granting to a settlement need to be explored. In Moesia – as may also be the case in other parts of the Roman Empire, where it is likewise worth enquiring – status granting had very specific reasons. Those reasons did not necessarily have anything to do with the actual settlement in question, but could derive from the need of widespread military recruitment in so far officially unadministered territories[6], the necessity of local administration, manpower and financial equity in the organisation of resources[7], filling of economic voids due to changing site circumstances[8], or fostering territorial consolidation in sending imperial messages, attracting inhabitants, and allowing for the solidification of inland production, transport, and – thus – supply systems.[9] Given the fact that status granting did not only come with benefits but also with obligations like maintaining the imperial cult or financing public buildings, we can not only un-

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[4]   Issues in deciding on either Marcus Aurelius or Caracalla are rooted in the same imperial names of both emperors. For an overview of either Marcus Aurelius or Caracalla granting municipal rights: Diers, *Urbanism*, 565–566.

[5]   Visual comparison in settlement maps according to legal status granting and actual development can be found in Diers, *Urbanism*, 561–563.

[6]   As will be focussed on in the course of this paper with the examples chosen for the discussion.

[7]   As is the case with the mining settlements of Ulpiana and Municipium DD, see in Diers, *Urbanism*, 442–425, 38–444.

[8]   As, for example, in the case of Troesmis, where the municipium was installed in AD 177–180 using the same space as the former military camp after legio V Macedonica had left in AD 167/168: C.-G. Alexandrescu, C. Gugl & B. Kainrath, *Troesmis I. Die Forschungen 2010–2014* (Cluj-Napoca, 2016), 195; A. Waldner, C. Gugl, "Der Oberflächensurvey in Troesmis (RO) 2012–2013: Keramikfunde und Verbreitungsbilder". In *Akten des 15. Österreichischen Archäologentages in Innsbruck 27. Februar – 1. März 2014. Ikarus 9*, eds. G. Grabherr, B. Kainrath, (Innsbruck, 2016), 438; Diers, *Urbanism*, 342–347.

[9]   This particularly applies to the imperial foundations and colonial status grantings of Trajan, e.g. in Ratiaria, Oescus, Tropaeum Traiani, Nicopolis ad Istrum, and Marcianopolis, see in Diers, *Urbanism*, 204–208, 234–235, 355–358, 478–480.

derstand that settlements at certain times during their existence and in their local/regional contexts did not give respective emperors any reason to grant status, but that status granting, on the other hand, could also entail rapid urbanisation and monumental planning and growth.[10] Yet, this cannot be presupposed, but needs to be highlighted for each single settlement.

Hence, irrespective of the settlement or topic of enquiry at hand, we always have to explain why a site became a site in the first place or attracted people to agglomerate in a successive step. Understanding a settlement landscape and the single settlements in them means enquiring what made sites appear on the map, and why and how they developed – or did not develop – from this starting point and as parts of larger systems. An open and organic approach to settlement, again, facilitates understanding the evolution of a site in its local, regional, supra-regional, and global context based on substrata of site emergence and site development factors.

Bridge-Sites

In terminological regard, the 'landscape' of a site or settlement does not necessarily relate to natural conditions and conditioners like rivers, mountains, terrain, soil, water access, or climate only. It can also be understood as a catch-all, as an aggregation of surrounding political, social, and economic characteristics and infrastructure. This is a category independent of time and space, which means that any man-made characteristic of a certain area and/or period of time could have an effect on a landscape and/or settlement in either the same area and period or varying ones. According to this principle, the elements of a landscape that site location and settlement agglomeration oriented on, could be already existing settlements in the same spatial, territorial, or political entity or in neighbouring spatial, territorial, or political entities, natural or political borders, histories or agendas of political control, the presence of resources, existing or emerging economic systems, existing or emerging traffic axes, and the like. Such elements were able to determine where sites were deliberately installed, where sites emerged due to these elements or even in spite of them, or – perhaps most striking – where sites needed to be in order to facilitate the governance of territories, occupation and control, or the development of networks and supply systems. According to the latter aspect, traffic nexuses were clearly logical site emergence factors. In Roman Moesia, several such traffic nexus sites existed. Located throughout the inland of both Moesia Superior and Inferior, they marked significant spots along already existing inter- and supra-regional roads or gradually emerging intra-

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[10] As was, for example, most probably the case with Ratiaria, see in the Ratiaria subchapter below.

provincial communication lines. These sites can be addressed as bridge-sites; not in the sense that they were located at river crossings with bridges – which, interestingly, is true for both the examples I will employ here – but in the sense of network bridges following Granovetter.[11] Hence, they were interlinked with other sites along the roads and communication lines that spawned them. In this, the underlying substratum to site location and settlement emergence becomes apparent, a substratum that generated a certain centrality for the sites it applied to. This centrality, however, was no hierarchical one. The sites in question were not necessarily significant as settlements, presenting a particular urbanisation rate or monumentalisation. In fact, the opposite is true. As discussed in the following, both Horreum Margi and Naissus, which are used as examples in this section, remained comparatively un-urbanised, small and marginal settlements throughout the Principate. Yet, the whole systems of Moesian conquest, occupation, administration, military supply, and settlement networks would not have been possible to implement and maintain without the existence of these bridge-sites, as building these systems relied on the occupation of the location of pre-existing and developing traffic nexuses, i.e. bridge-sites.

Certain sites might get eliminated from archaeological enquiries into urbanism and settlement because of their lacking ability to check boxes on settlement characterisation scales; yet I argue that they should still be included for their potential in pinpointing the underlying system behind the settlement characterisation to be scaled. Assessing both a settlement's character and the relevance for it to be put on the map does not only rest on the settlement itself but on the aspects and background workings that made it become a settlement to begin with.

Horreum Margi

The site of Horreum Margi lay in the inland of Moesia directly at the confluence of the small Ravanica river with the Velika Morava, one of the most important fluvial communication lines throughout the province's entire history. When following the course of the Morava to the north, Horreum Margi was also directly

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[11] M. Granovetter, "The strength of weak ties", *American Journal of Sociology* 78/6 (1973), 1364 stating that a bridge is a line in a network that provides the only path between two points, in the sense that a bridge between A and B provides the only connection between any contact of A and any contact of B. This means that bridges are important for diffusion, but they are not strong but weak ties in Granovetter's terminology; and weak ties are what ultimately holds up systems. Following C. H. Cooley, *The theory of transportation. Publications of the American Economic Association 9,3* (Dissertation University of Michigan, 1894), 314–315, 322, one could also refer to these bridges as breaks (as in track switches) in the transportation network.

connected to the Danube Limes in the area of the only conurbation zone of Moesia between Singidunum, Margum, and Viminacium.[12] Apart from the Timok valley, the Morava valley, thus, provided the only accessible and direct connection from Macedonia and Dardania to the Danube, which would have made it pivotal in the gradual Roman military approach from Macedonia to the Danube and beyond.[13] Judging by this location and – strikingly – by its name, Horreum Margi is characterised as a supply station and back-up post for the Danube Limes legionary and auxiliary garrisons from as early as the first century AD on.[14]

Epigraphic and archaeological data on Horreum Margi are generally scarce. Still, military presence of some sort must be assumed based on the historical and locational relevance of the site alone; and indeed, several hints at the presence of legio VII Claudia vexillations in Horreum Margi exist. A fairly large number of legio VII Claudia soldier and veteran gravestones[15] and an overall ratio of 3:2 of military over civilian inscriptions from the site and its direct surroundings[16] attest to a certain military influence over Horreum Margi. Various finds of legio VII Claudia bricks and tiles are also striking, and although military building material is not necessarily solid proof for the actual presence of a respective unit, it surely provides some information about influential spheres. Also, archaeological evidence further solidifies the presence of a military unit in Horreum Margi: In the main identified settlement area on the left bank of the Ravanica, several phases of a military architecture were excavated. The identification of the south-western and north-eastern corner towers of a fortification as well as wattle-and-daub structures and a horreum inside the fortification walls[17] allows for the estimation of the military camp's size of approximately 400 x 350

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[12] Diers, *Urbanism*, 570.

[13] As e.g. suggested already in P. Petrović, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure IV. Naissus – Remesiana – Horreum Margi* (Belgrade, 1979), 20, 58.

[14] On the significance of storage-related place names in general and Horreum Margi specifically: G. Rickman, *Roman granaries and store buildings* (Cambridge, 1971), 316–322. On Horreum Margi's character as a supply post: Petrović *Inscriptions*, 58–59; M. Mirković, *Moesia Superior. Eine Provinz an der mittleren Donau* (Mainz am Rhein, 2007), 60.

[15] E.g. IMS IV 83–87, compare to mentions in M. Valtrović, "Rimski natpisi", *Starinar* 7 (1890), 52–56; S. Ferjančić, *Naseljavanje legijskih veterana u balkanskim provincijama I–III vek n.e.* (Belgrade, 2002), 292.

[16] A. Mócsy, *Gesellschaft und Romanisation in der römischen Provinz Moesia Superior* (Budapest, 1970), 167, although it must be stated that the overall little number of around 20 inscriptions is no solid base for estimates on ratios. For the inscriptions in general see Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 109–116 (IMS IV Nos. 82–100).

[17] D. Piletić, "Rimski castrum Ćuprija – Horreum Margi", *Vesnik vojnog muzeja 15* (1969), 15–16; Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 58–59; Petković & Tapavički-Ilić, 2011, 252.

m, which matches a smaller legionary camp.[18] Although the camp appears to only date from the third century AD onwards[19], an earlier military architecture should have existed – potentially as a smaller wood-and-earth structure. At the right bank of the Ravanica opposite the camp, several sections of walls with varying orientation and partial overlap, which were identified already in the 19th century in the basements of modern dwellings of the town of Ćuprija[20], can then be interpreted as parts of a civilian settlement relating to the military presence.[21] The spread of the settlement remains as well as the fact that at the north-eastern corner tower of the military camp, the third century AD walls are directly set into a layer with late first century AD finds and material of pre-Roman Iron Age tradition[22] shows that neither the camp site nor an accompanying settlement of Horreum Margi reached the state of a large-scale settlement of monumental layout or rapid growth throughout the first, second, and even third century AD. Despite this fact, the importance of the site in aspects like traffic and supply becomes apparent in its most significant feature, a bridge crossing the Velika Morava west of its joining with the Ravanica. While it is completely eroded by today, Felix Kanitz identified this bridge as a Roman, Principate-times installation at the end of the 19th century.[23]

The site of Horreum Margi is generally listed as one of the municipia of Moesia Superior. Yet, this rests on one inscription only, which was not found

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[18] Piletić, 1969, 37; 1971: 963; Mócsy, 1970, 142; S. Petković, M. Tapavički-Ilić. "Römerzeitliche Keramik aus dem nördöstlichen Turm der Römerstadt Horreum Margi", *Starinar* 61 (2011), 254; D. Mladenović, *Urbanism and settlement in the Roman province of Moesia Superior* (Oxford, 2012), 84.

[19] According to M. Vasić, S. Petković, "Rezultati istraživanja višeslojnog nalazišta Horreum Margi – Ravno – Ćuprija u 1990. godini", *Studije i članici* (2010), 9–23, two building phases can be determined; and the earlier dates to the mid-third century AD only. For preliminary reports of the finds: S. Popović, "Antički pokretni nalazi sa lokaliteta Horreum Margi – Ćuprija", *Vesnik vojnog muzeja* 33 (1989), 49–77.

[20] F. Kanitz, *Srbija, zemlja i stanovništvo. Od rimskog doba do kraja 19. veka I* (Leipzig, 1904), 227, 229.

[21] Petković & Tapavički-Ilić, *Keramik*, 253 identifying one of these wall sections as part of a bath.

[22] M. Stojić, Gvozdeno doba u basenu Velike Morave (Belgrade, 1986), 24, compare to further comments in D. Piletić, "Certains aspects de la continuité laténo-romaine sur les fortifications de la Basse Pannonie et de la Haute Mésie". In Actes du VIIe congrès international des sciences préhistoriques et protohistoriques Prag 1966, ed. J. Filip, (Prag, 1971), 961; M. Tapavički-Ilić, "Dacian ware at Horreum Margi". In Late Roman coarse wares, cooking wares and amphorae in the Mediterranean 3,2 ed. S. Menchelli et al., (Oxford, 2010), 979; Vasić & Petković, Horreum Margi, 9–23.

[23] Kanitz, *Srbija*, 0229, referred to in M. Garašanin, D. Garašanin, *Arheološka nalazišta u Srbiji* (Belgrade, 1951), 196; Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 143; Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 59.

on site, but in Novae in Moesia Inferior, and names Horreum Margi with the caption of '*m Moesia Superioris*'[24] or potentially even '*mu Moesia Superioris*'.[25] As the inscription dates to the time of Alexander Severus, it makes a striking case for the principles that underlie status granting in Moesia. The date allows to speculate that Horreum Margi was another of the settlements that received municipal rights under Marcus Aurelius[26], again allowing for widespread legionary recruitment in the course of his comprehensive military mobilisation; or under Caracalla, providing an administrative constant at the beginning of the unsettled third century AD.[27] According to the currently available archaeological data the presumed granting of municipal rights had no background in urbanisation, rapid growth, or civilian monetary force manifesting in monumentalisation. Hence, it can be understood in the context of its decisive properties only: Horreum Margi's extraordinarily relevant location and its role in the consolidation of the province of Moesia (or provinces of Moesia Superior and Inferior) represent the substratum to the understanding of the site's further development.

Naissus

The same principle can be observed for Naissus. The site lay at the most significant and frequented traffic nexus of the central Balkan area: the crossroads of the connection from the Sava-Danube confluence and the Danube section between Singidunum and Viminacium to Scupi and further on into Macedonia via Stobi with the transregional, heavily travelled artery from the Adriatic in general and Lissus specifically to Constantinople via Serdica. Moreover, this crossroads was perfectly embedded between the (Južna) Morava – Moesia's most important fluvial artery – in the west and the Nišava, which connected the Morava traffic further to the east.[28] Due to this extraordinary location, Naissus has been

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[24] CIL III 6224 = CIL III 7591.

[25] J. Kolendo, "Études sur les inscriptions de Novae", *Archeologia* 16 (1965), 138 (no. 3).

[26] This applies to several other settlements throughout Moesia, namely Troesmis, Noviodunum, and potentially also Margum, Naissus, and Durostorum; see in Diers, *Urbanism* 335, 140–141, 306–307, 335, 468, 474.

[27] This is also discussed in Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 58; S. Černač-Ratković, "Burnished pottery from Horreum Margi", *RCRF Acta* 42 (2012), 51–52; for an overview see in Diers, *Urbanism*, 450–451.

[28] On the characteristics and significance of Naissus' embedment into traffic systems: P. Petrović, *Niš u antičko doba* (Gradina, 1976), 9–18, 167; *Inscriptions*, 19–29; D. Srejović, *Roman imperial towns and palaces in Serbia* (Belgrade, 1993), 58–59; Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 58–59; V. P. Petrović, "The roman road Naissus – Lissus: the shortest connection between Rome and the Danubian Limes", *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 12,1 (2008), 31–40.

occupied not only during the Roman Principate, but also in Late Roman, Late Antique, and Ottoman times; and remains to be so as the third-largest city in Serbia – Niš – today. A certain focus on Naissus'/Niš' archaeology and history, however, has always been laid on the Late Roman period with the residence in Mediana[29] and the Ottoman period with the fortress on the right bank of the Nišava[30]; so the first–third centuries AD are a comparatively blank space.

Given the fact that the traffic axes from the Danube to Macedonia – or rather the other way around – via the Morava valley and from Lissus to the east via Naissus had already been installed throughout the first century AD as military approach and supply lines serving the occupation and consolidation of the Balkan peninsula[31],we may expect the site of Naissus to have already been put on the map during the same period as well. Yet, although – as with Horreum Margi – military presence as well as an accompanying settlement are attested for Naissus, their exact chronological development remains dusky at best. First, a temporary legionary garrison as a stop-over on the way to the Danube in the first half of the first century AD has been assumed for Naissus[32], although there is no archaeological or epigraphic evidence to back this assumption. For the end of the first century AD, however, the grave stela of IMS IV 35 attests to an auxiliary presence in Naissus by mentioning an auxiliary administrative office.[33] Attempts to narrow down the respective auxiliary unit to either cohors I Cretum or cohors I Cilicium have been made, but assessing the validity of the evidence used in this is – to date – no easy task.[34] For the mid-second century AD, a

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[29] For overviews of Mediana: Srejović, *Palaces*, 69–75; M. Vasić, G. Milošević & N. Gavrilović, "Iskopavanja Medijane u 2010. i 2011. godini", *Starinar* 64 (2014), 231–263.

[30] On the research history of Naissus and its surroundings: Petrović, *Niš*, 9–18; 166. For investigations in the area of the Turkish fortress and throughout Niš: G. Jeremić, "The late antique necropolis in Jagodin Mala, Niš (Naissus), Serbia – eighty years of research". In *Strategie e programmazione della conservazione e trasmissibilità del patrimonia culturale*, ed. A. Filipović, W. Troiano, (Rome, 2013), 272–281; Vasić, Milošević & Gavrilović, *Iskopavanje Medijane*, 231–263 and further references in the site record entries in Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 159–160.

[31] Petrović, *Niš*, 27–46, 168; Petrović, *Naissus – Lissus*, 31–40.

[32] As with most other sites relevant to the early history of Moesia, legio IV Scythica and legio V Macedonica have been suggested for this: Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 50; Petrović, *Niš*, 30–46, 169.

[33] Petrović, *Niš*, 84–85.

[34] IMS IV 34 is a grave stela of a veteran of cohors I Cretum: Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 83–84. Yet, the presence of a veteran is not necessarily proof for the presence of the unit he was discharged from. Cohors I Cretum has been proposed to have served as manpower in the erection of baths at the site of Timacum Maius: V. P. Petrović, V. Filipović, "The first cohort of Cretans – a Roman military unit at Timacum Maius", *Balcanica* 46 (2015), 33–39, which could – due to the proximity of Naissus and Timacum Maius – be

change in units has been proposed: Naissus is now believed to have housed co-
horts I Aurelia Dardanorum, for which IMS IV 32 and 94 are employed despite
from being solid proof either.[35]

In spatial terms, the camp for the proposed military units as discussed
here is commonly located underneath the Turkish fortress on the right bank of
the Nišava.[36] Roman civilian settlement structures generally stretch out on both
sides of the river over a total area of 20–25 hectares[37]; and significantly, a bridge
– although only broadly dated to the first to sixth century AD – connected both

conclusive. IMS IV 33 names an active soldier of cohors I Cilicium: Petrović, *Inscrip-
tions*, 83. A singular inscription is also not compelling, although an active soldier is more
indicative than a veteran.

[35]　Petrović, *Niš*, 30–40. IMS IV 32 is a grave stela for an active soldier of cohors I Au-
relia Dardanorum, which provides a good hint for its presence in Naissus. The soldier-
grave stela IMS IV 94 (Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 114), however, is far from conclusive: lack-
ing the indication of a number, it could refer to either cohors I Aurelia Dardanorum or
cohors II Aurelia Dardanorum. Cohors II Aurelia Dardanorum is safely attested as be-
ing garrisoned in Timacum Minus from the sixties of the second century AD on: Mócsy,
Moesia Superior, 123, 170; A. Mócsy, *Pannonia and Upper Moesia. A history of the Middle
Danube provinces of the Roman Empire. The provinces of the Roman Empire* (London,
1974), 51; P. Petrović, "Timacum Minus und die Kastelle im Timok-Tal". In *Studien zu
den Militärgrenzen Roms III. 13. Internationaler Limeskongreß Aalen 1983 – Vorträge. For-
schungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 20*, ed. C. Unz,
(Stuttgart, 1986), 514; P. Petrović, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure III/2. Timacum
Minus et la vallée du Timok*, (Belgrade, 1995), 44–45, 66–67, 73–77, 82–85; also see in
L. Diers, "Timacum Minus in Moesia Superior – centrality and urbanism at a Roman
mining settlement". In *Central places and un-central landscape. Natural resources and politi-
cal economies in the longue durée, Land* 2018, 7.4, eds. G. Papantoniou, A. Vionis, (2018),
doi:10.3390/land7040126. Cohors I Aurelia Dardanorum has also been suggested for a
longer-term garrison in Municipium Dardanorum/DD: S. Dušanić, "Aspects of Roman
mining in Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia and Moesia Superior". In *Aufstieg und Nieder-
gang der Römischen Welt II. Principat 6*, ed. H. Temporini, (Berlin, 1977), 75 based on
E. Čerškov, *Municipium DD kod Sočanice*, (Belgrade & Prishtina, 1970), 65 (no. 13) =
ILJug 511, although this suggestion was later revised by Dušanić in favour of a garrison
of cohors I Aurelia Dardanorum in Naissus: S. Dušanić, "Army and mining in Moesia
Superior". In *Kaiser, Heer und Gesellschaft in der Römischen Kaiserzeit. Gedenkschrift für
Eric Birley. Heidelberger Althistorische Beiträge und Epigraphische Studien 31*, ed. G. Alföl-
dy et al., (Stuttgart, 2000), 348–349; see also in Diers, *Urbanism*, 438–439 with further
references. Due to the fact that the inscription was found in the village of Vukašinovac in
roughly the same distance from Naissus, Municipium DD, and Timacum Minus, the is-
sue of IMS IV 94 cannot be solved, although it appears most likely that cohors I Aurelia
Dardanorum was indeed stationed in Naissus.

[36]　On location and characteristics of the camp: Petrović, *Niš*, 48, 51–53; *Inscriptions* 44;
Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 160.

[37]　Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 38, also *Niš*, including a map with an overview over Roman set-
tlement areas and remains throughout modern Niš.

sides of the Nišava, which further attests to the immense traffic relevance of Naissus.[38] Yet, the settlement remains on the left bank of the river all date to the period of the fourth to sixth century AD[39], while scatters of first to third century AD finds, single graves in Beograd Mala southwest of the Turkish fortress/Roman camp[40], or a bath structure in Gradsko Polje directly north of the fortress/camp[41] allow to suggest that the Principate-times civilian settlement of Naissus developed in direct proximity to the military camp and was limited in size.

As was the case with Horreum Margi, there is only one inscription that refers to Naissus as a municipium[42] by mentioning the *decurio m(…) N(…)* Marcus Aurelius Posidonius. Two further inscriptions name decuriones by the name of Aurelius without mentioning an actual municipium[43]; yet all three inscriptions suggest the service of a person, who was granted civil rights by emperor Marcus Aurelius, in an administrative office of the municipium of Naissus. This is a strong hint for municipalisation during the reign of Marcus Aurelius[44], although two other options are theoretically possible as well: either civil rights granting and municipalisation by Caracalla or municipalisation even prior to the reign of Marcus Aurelius, with the decuriones mentioned in IMS IV 10, 18, and 27 having nothing to do with the status and civil rights granting but having come to Naissus from any other place that had been given legal status by Marcus Aurelius. This would mean that the granting of municipal rights in Naissus could have happened at any earlier time really; most favoured are the reigns of Hadrian or Antoninus Pius.[45] Like in Horreum Margi, however, this municipal status was given to the only, rather small-scale settlement that existed in Naissus in the first to third century AD.[46] This settlement per se clearly developed

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[38] Garašanin & Garašanin, *Nalazišta*, 175–177; Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 45; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 159.

[39] R. Ajdić, "antičke nekropole u Nišu", *Niški zbornik* 1 (1974); Jeremić, *Jagodin Mala*; Diers, *Urbanism*, 473–474, including all relevant references. For the general layout of settlement spheres throughout Niš and its surroundings, e.g. in Jagodin Mala, Sokolana, and the Trg Kralja Milana see in Petrović, *Niš*.

[40] Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 159, including further references, discussed in Diers, *Urbanism*, 473.

[41] Petrović, *Niš*, 48–49, 87–88; *Inscriptions*, 45; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 159, including further references.

[42] IMS IV 10, Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 72.

[43] IMS IV 18 and 27: Petrović, Inscriptions, 75, 80.

[44] As also suggested in Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 35; Petrović, *Niš*, 30–40, 169; Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 59.

[45] Jeremić, *Jagodin Mala*, 273.

[46] Contra Petrović, *Inscriptions*, 44–45 the archaeological evidence clearly suggests that there was no second civilian settlement near the military camp in the first to third cen-

out of the impact of the military presence, and the later act of municipalisation should be related to Roman agendas of fostering recruitment options and filling an administrative gap of territorial control between the mining settlements of Ulpiana, Municipium DD, Timacum Minus, Remesiana, and Montana and the Danube Limes hinterland from Singidunum, Viminacium, and Margum to Horreum Margi.[47] To fully understand the motivators and circumstances behind this, it is, however, vital to spotlight Naissus' character as a bridge-site.

Site Emergence vs. Site Development

When looking at urban settlement in Moesia, there appears to be a difference between the development factors for settlement(s) and the factors for initial site emergence in some cases. This is particularly apparent in the imperial foundations of Moesia Superior, Scupi and Ratiaria. Both sites were officially founded as *coloniae* by Vespasian/Domitian (Scupi) and Trajan (Ratiaria), and their settlement layout and spatial characteristics as well as architectural development is very much linked to the respective foundation process and its aftermath. Yet, both sites initially emerged out of their military relevance and relationships to the gradual occupation of the territory that became Moesia throughout the first and early second century AD, which needs to be zoomed in on in order to fully grasp the settlements' nature and history.

Scupi

As the earliest official settlement foundation of Moesia, Scupi is the prime example for the principles that can underlie site emergence and subsequent settlement development in this area of the Roman Empire. The earliest presence in the region around later Scupi is believed to date back to the time of Augustus, when a Dardanian military district centring on Scupi is assumed to have existed.[48] For this early period, neither a military garrison nor an accompanying

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tury AD and, hence, no settlement dualism.

[47] On the territory of Naissus and its presumed delineation: M. Mirković, "Rimski put Naissus – Scupi i stanice ad Fines", *Živa antika* 10 (1960), 249–257; Petrović, *Niš*, 89–114, 175; *Inscriptions*, 27; V. P. Petrović, "Une nouvelle borne milliaire découverte sur la voie romaine Naissus – Lissus", *Starinar* 56 (2006), 367–376; see also in Diers, *Urbanism*, 475.

[48] L. Jovanova, "The disposition of Scupi (Colonia Flavia Scupinorum) in relation to the necropolises from the first-third centuries". In *The Roman and Late Roman City: the International Conference, Veliko Turnovo, 26-30 July 2000*. eds. L. Rousseva-Slokoska, A. G. Poulter, (Sofia, 2002a), 318; L. Jovanova, "New evidence on the historic and urban development of Coloniae Flaviae Scupinorum", *Histria Antiqua* 11 (2003), 478; L. Jovanova,

settlement have been safely identified in the area. Yet, the historical context of the Dardanian wars and the campaigns of Marcus Licinius Crassus in 29–27 BC aiming at securing the province of Macedonia and its borders support the assumption.[49]

The actual settlement of Scupi was then officially founded as a colony in Flavian times. Numerous inscriptions attest to both the chronological setting of the foundation and the initial status of the settlement as a colonia.[50] The abbreviation of the settlement title as *colonia F F D*[51] first left the debate around the exact foundation throughout Flavian times somewhat undecided, as a reading as *colonia Flavia Felix Domitiana* would have clearly pointed to the reign of Domitian.[52] The discovery of IMS VI 15, however, confirmed that *F F D* should be written out as *colonia Fl(avia) Fel(ix) Dar(danorum)*. While this reading, of course, does not exclude Domitian as a possible founder of Scupi, the scholarly debate has by now largely accepted Vespasian as the most likely initiator of the colony.[53] Additional evidence for the dating of Scupi's foundation is provided by gravestones of legio VII Claudia veterans naming the tribus Quirina[54] and

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"Scupi from the first to the third century according to new archaeological and epigraphic discoveries". In *Römische Städte und Festungen an der Donau. Akten der regionalen Konferenz organisiet von der Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung, Belgrad 16.-19. Oktober* 2003, ed. M. Mirković, (Belgrade, 2005), 153; V. P. Petrović, *Dardanija u rimskim itinerarima. Gradovi i naselja* (Belgrade, 2007a), 114; M. Mirković, „Die Anfänge der Provinz Moesia". In *Die römischen Provinzen. Begriff und Gründung,* ed. I. Piso, (Cluj-Napoca, 2008), 257.

[49] On the early history and these events in general: R. Syme, *Lentulus and the origin of Moesia. Danubian papers* (Bucharest, 1971), 40–72; Mirković, *Anfänge,* 249–270; M. Šašel Kos, "Octavian's Illyrian war: ambition and strategy". In *The century of the brave. Roman conquest and indigenous resistance in Illyricum during the time of Augustus and his heirs. Proceedings of the international conference Zagreb, 22.-26.9. 2014,* ed. V. Vlahović-Štetić, (Zagreb, 2018), 41–58.

[50] An overview of these inscriptions is found in B. Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions de la Mésie Supérieure VI. Scupi et la region de Kumanovo* (Belgrade, 1982), 25.

[51] IMS VI 42, 46.

[52] This has, for example, been assumed in I. Mikulčić, "From the topography of Scupi", *Archaeologia Iugoslavica* 14 (1978), 31.

[53] This is discussed in B. Dragojević-Josifovska, "Deux monuments funéraires inédits de Scupi". In *Mélanges helléniques offerts a Georges Daux,* (Paris, 1974), 183; *Inscriptions VI,* 25; E. Birley, "The Flavian colonia at Scupi", *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 64 (1986), 210; Ferjančić, *Naseljavanje,* 214; Jovanova, *Scupi,* 319; Šašel Kos 2012, 507; Mrozewicz 2015, 153. Further titles of the colony are attested as *colonia Flavia Scupinorum* (IMS VI 31, 66) or simply *colonia Scupinorum* (IMS VI 6, 34, 45, 49, 62, 65, 68, 70, 71, 73, 74, 76, 195).

[54] Dragojević-Josifovska 1974, 183; 1982, 25; Jovanova, *Scupi,* 319; M. Šašel Kos, "A glimpse into stonecutters' workshops in Scupi, Upper Moesia". In *L'officina epigrafica Romana in ricordo di Giancarlo Susini,* ed. A. Donati, G. Poma, (Faenza, 2012), 507.

referring to the deceased as being *deductos Scupos* or *deducticius*.[55] Considering the Flavian foundation of Scupi, these veterans clearly were discharged when legio VII Claudia was still deployed to Dalmatia, thus attesting to the deductive veteran colony character of Scupi.[56] However, the small number of veteran inscriptions does not provide solid ground for the assessment of the earliest deduction's scale.[57]

Generally, it should be highlighted that Scupi played a significant role in the development of the province of Moesia in two ways. First, the assumed Augustan military district of Dardania provided a buffer zone to the border of Macedonia and facilitated the gradual approach towards the Danube, aimed at the occupation of the Morava valley, the Danube basin, and the area north of the Stara Planina. With the focus of the later, established province of Moesia and the debate about its history in academia clearly being centred on the Danube Limes, the first century AD approach from the very south of the later provincial territory may surprise. Yet, in order to understand the gradual occupation of Moesia's later territory in its very own historical circumstances, acknowledging the convenience of the earliest lines of approach from the south and the role the area around Scupi and the settlement itself played in it, is strikingly significant: It provided the background to connect the existing Roman World with the Danube via the Morava and Timok valleys. Secondly, the location of Scupi as Moesia's first colony was also clearly linked to Flavian policies. On one hand, it provided a convenient starting point and back-up facility for the connection to the Morava valley and Danube, for example becoming apparent in Domitian's Dacian campaigns.[58] On the other hand, Scupi's official foundation allowed for local and territorial recruitment, and this must be viewed as part of a distinct political agenda and thoughtful planning. Founding a colony north of

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[55] IMS VI 52–54, 56.

[56] Scupi has been explicitly named as a veteran colony, e.g. in Dragojević-Josifovska, *Deux monuments*, 181.

[57] For remarks on the nature of veteran settlement in Scupi: K. Stoev, "Settlement of veterans to the Roman colony of Scupi (end of first – beginning of second century AD)", *Thracia* 17 (2007), 217–225.

[58] For comments on these campaigns and their organisation: Syme, *Lentulus*, 205; K. Strobel, *Die Donaukriege Domitians. Antiquitas I. Abhandlungen zur Alten Geschichte 38* (Bonn, 1989); S. Dušanić, „The frontier and the hinterland: The role of Scupi in Domitian's wars on the Danube". In *Roman Limes on the Middle and Lower Danube. Đerdapske sveske* 2, ed. P. Petrović, (Belgrade ,1996), 42; Petrović, *itinerarima*, 122–125; L. Mrozewicz, "Flavische Städtegründungen auf dem Balkan". In *Kontaktzone Balkan. Beiträge des internationalen Kolloquiums „Die Donau-Balkan-Region als Kontaktzone zwischen Ost-West und Nord-Süd vom 16.-18. Mai 2012 in Frankfurt am Main*, ed. G. von Bülow, (Bonn, 2015), 151–163, especially 153.

the Macedonian border was a significant step towards inhabiting, administering, and maintaining the province of Moesia.

In this regard, it is not only essential to understand the role of the officially founded settlement of Scupi as a permanent base of Romaness and as a recruitment centre from Flavian times onwards. There is also the layer of pre-colonial Roman presence in and agendas around Scupi. If a first half of first century AD military district of Dardania[59] existed, legionary presence in this district needs to be assumed as well. Being the earliest attested legions in Moesia, either legio IV Scythica or legio V Macedonica appear the most likely candidates for a temporary deployment in the border region of Macedonia and Dardania already in Augustan times, with later Scupi being the most likely candidate for the location of their garrison site.[60] Yet, neither legio IV Scythica nor legio V Macedonica left epigraphic evidence for such a garrison and no archaeological features of a temporary wood-and-earth military camp or an accompanying settlement have been safely identified throughout the settlement area of Scupi. Still, there are contextual data: First, the eastern necropolis of Scupi revealed several graves, which have been addressed as containing Augustan and Tiberian Italic grave good-ceramics.[61] Although there is, of course, the possibility that the pottery represents residual material that had been in use for a longer period of time while travelling with soldiers and, thus, relates to the Flavian colony rather than to Augustan and Tiberian times per se, the graves may also actually date to the first half of the first century AD, i.e. the potential pre-colony phase of Scupi. If this was the case, the graves would also hint at the location of a presumed military camp in the eastern part of the later, walled colonial settlement space of Scupi, as a certain spatial proximity of camp features and burial grounds can

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[59] Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions VI*, 24; V. P. Petrović, "Pre-Roman and Roman Dardania. Historical and geographical considerations", *Balcanica* 37 (2007b), 11; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 4–5.

[60] This has been suggested by Mikulčić, *topography*, 31; Dušanić, *frontier and hinterland*, 42; Jovanova, *Scupi*, 318; L. Jovanova, "Colonia Flavia Scupinorum – western necropolis grave forms and rituals", *Histria Antiqua* 8 (2003), 193; *New evidence*, 478; *New discoveries*, 154; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 16; Šašel Kos, *stonecutters' workshops*, 508. As both legio IV Scythica and legio V Macedonica are attested to have stayed at the Danube while taking part in the construction of the Danube road and Danube shipment facilities in the year of AD 33/34, the unit stationed in Scupi should have left its camp at this date at the latest. See also in Jovanova, *Scupi*, 318; *Western necropolis*, 193; *New discoveries*, 154. Furthermore, it is assumed that legio V Macedonica stayed in Oescus already before AD 33/34, which would result in either a vexillation garrison of this unit in Scupi or in the presence of legio IV Scythica instead of legio V Macedonica.

[61] These graves and their inventories have, unfortunately, not been published in detail. Hence, the origin and dating of the associated pottery cannot be confirmed or further assessed to date. For remarks on the graves and their Italic material and dating: Mikulčić, *topography*, 30.

be assumed.[62] Secondly, there is epigraphic evidence for a short-term or stop-over stay of legio V Macedonica and legio I Italica in Scupi around the year of AD 70.[63] IMS VI 42 is a burial inscription that names both an active solider of legio V Macedonica and the colony of Scupi[64]; IMS VI 36 refers to a soldier of legio I Italica.[65] Two additional grave stelae for veterans – one of legio V Macedonica[66] and one of legio I Italica[67] – date to the end of the first century AD and may, thus, also relate to the stay of both units around AD 70 in Scupi.[68] These epigraphic data, combined with the logical assumption that Domitian would have used Scupi as a military base for all his campaigns[69], hint at the continued maintenance of a military facility in Scupi until the end of the Flavian period and the manifestation of the initially small deductive colony of Scupi, although legio V Macedonica and legio IV Scythica had been given home garrisons at the Danube from Claudian times onwards already and such a maintenance task would have needed to be conducted by vexillations.

In addition to the location of the earliest graves in Scupi's eastern ne-cropolis, small-scale features of simple buildings underneath the crossing of the

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[62] The eastern necropolis of Scupi is located north-east of today's village of Zlokucani and covers around 30 hectares: Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319; *Western necropolis*, 194. Given the dating of the 650 identified burials, it seems that over time the graves gradually moved closer to Scupi's eastern fortification wall: I. Mikulčić, "Ronarimski skeletni grobovi iz Skupa", *Starinar* 24/25 (1975), 89–102; for more details see D. Koračević, "Sostoljata na arheološkite iskopuvanja na antičko Skupi", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 3, (1977), 180; D. Koračević, *Antički Skupi. Rezultati novih arheološkhi istraživanja* (Pula, 1989b); M. Ivanovski, Ž. Vinčić, "Skupi – istočna nekropola, 1981", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 9 (1988), 165–174; L. Jovanova, D. Mihailova, "Skupi – istočna nekropola, istraživanja 1994 g.", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 15 (1996/1997), 203–250; Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319–320. The earliest graves with the presumed first half of first century AD date, however, lie in an area later occupied by fourth–seventh century AD graves, hence closer to the colonial settlement of Scupi: Mikulčić, *territory*, 29; Dragojević-Josifovska, *inscriptions VI*, 24; Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319; Mladenović, *Urbanism*, 52. For an overview of Scupi's settlement layout and development in general see in Diers, *Urbanism*, 382–390.

[63] Legio V Macedonica came back from Syria in AD 70/71. On its way to its home garrison in Oescus, it might have temporarily stopped at Scupi. Legio I Italica is safely attested in Novae from AD 71 onwards. Accordingly, a short interim stay at Scupi on its way to the Danube around AD 70 is possible, too.

[64] Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions VI*, 74–75.

[65] Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions*, 70–71; Stoev, *Settlement of veterans*, 220; Šašel Kos, *stonecutters' workshops*, 509.

[66] IMS VI 43; Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions VI*, 75–76.

[67] IMS VI 37; Dragojević-Josifovska, *Inscriptions VI*, 71.

[68] Accordingly, the veterans could have been discharged and remained in Scupi until the time of their death.

[69] Jovanova, *Scupi*, 319.

fourth century AD cardo and decumanus of Scupi[70] may contextually attest to the existence and location of a pre-colonial, military-related Roman presence. In any case, they are clear proof for a different layout of Scupi's settlement area at any time prior to the erection of the theatre and the fortifications, on which the later streets were oriented on. Hence, they may as well relate to the pre-colonial and/or early colonial phase in the first century AD.

Although no traces of an actual military camp or accompanying settlement have been found to date, the discussed contextual evidence allows to suggest that such facilities existed in the eastern half of what later was to become the walled colony of Scupi. Moreover, the archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest colonial settlement of Vespasianic or Domitianic Scupi was rather small, spatially un-organised and related to the pre-colonial first half of first century AD military camp.[71] A flourishing period of urbanisation and monumentalisation – apparent for example in the erection of the theatre and fortifications of Scupi – can only be found during the reign of Hadrian. This was at a time, when the province of Moesia was fully consolidated and its legions were permanently stationed along the Danube Limes. Scupi, however, still kept its character as some sort of back-up post for the consolidation of the Danube Limes: An AD 169 *laterculus* from Viminacium lists one third of recruits as originating from the territory of Scupi[72], which without question attests to the character of Scupi as an important recruitment centre in the second century AD.[73]

Ratiaria

Ratiaria is one of the Moesian colonial foundations of Trajan, being safely attested as such by its full title of *Colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria* and the known

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[70] D. Koračević, " Arheološkite istraživanja vo Skupi vo 1982 godina", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 9 (1988), 155–163; D. Koračević, "Urbanizam i arhitektura Skupa o svetlosti arheoloških iskopavanja", Lihnid 7 (1989a), 102–104, 107; J. P. Zeitler, "Ausgrabungen in der römischen Colonia Flavia Scupi, Mazedonien 1998", *Natur und Mensch* 1998, (1999), 84; Diers, *Urbanism*, 384–385 and generally 382–389.

[71] Compare to the overview of the general outline of settlement structures and settlement history in Diers, *Urbanism*, 377–397.

[72] Šašel Kos, *stonecutters' workshops*, 509.

[73] This is further backed up by data from the western cemetery of Scupi: Here, a considerable number of graves from the second and third centuries AD with Mala Kopašnica Sase-type traits were identified, which attests to a continuation of local PRIA traditions in the colonial settlement of Scupi and is believed to be evidence for the presence of a fairly large group of indigenous/local origin in Scupi throughout the Principate: L. Jovanova, "Skupi – zapadna nekropola", *Macedoniae acta archaeologica* 13 (1992), 191–200; *Scupi*, 320–321; *Western* necropolis, 193–206; for an overview of this burial pattern see in Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 20 including further references.

remains of Ratiaria's *lex coloniae*.[74] The exact date of the colonial status granting is not known; yet the phrasing of the title leaves no doubt that it can be assigned to Trajan, its most likely context being the period of AD 106–112.[75] Ratiaria presents different circumstances than Scupi, although resting on the same principle: A pre-colonial presence with different backgrounds than the later, fully developed colonial settlement existed, which needs to be acknowledged and explored in order to fully understand the later, fully developed colonial settlement.

During the second and third centuries AD, Ratiaria clearly became a Danube Limes centre, displaying significant monumental growth and scale.[76] While – admittedly scarce – hints at the existence of a naval base exist[77], Ratiaria's character in this time was largely civilian. Before this civilian urbanisation period of the colonial settlement of Ratiaria, however, two chronological phases were of high relevance for the site of Ratiaria: the beginning of the first century

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[74] For transcript/translation see W. Eck, "Fragmente eines neuen Stadtgesetzes – der lex coloniae Ulpiae Traianae Ratiariae", *Athenaeum* 104 (2016), 538–544.

[75] The earliest known inscription referring to the settlement title dates to the year of AD 125: CIL III 14499, e.g. discussed in V. Velkov, "Prinosi kam istorijata na rimskite gradove v Balgarija 1. Ratsiarija", *Trudove na visshija pedagogicheski institute* 2 (1964/65), 4; M. Mirković, *Rimski gradovi na Dunavu u Gornjoj Meziji* (Belgrade, 1968), 76–77; K. Luka, "Colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria. The rediscovery of the ancient city". In *Ratiaria semper floreat 1. Ratiaria and its territory*, ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2014), 50; V. Dinchev, "From Colonia Ulpia Traiana Ratiaria to Anastasiana Ratiaria". In *Thracian, Greek, Roman, and medieval cities, residences and fortresses in Bulgaria*, ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2015), 173. An overview over additional inscriptions can be found in K. Stoev, "Novi epigrafski pametnitsi ot Ratsiarija i nejnata teritorija". In *Ratiaria semper floreat 1. Ratiaria and its territory*, ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2014b), 230–283.

[76] Diers, *Urbanism*, 156–64, 170–172.

[77] Port facilities per se are not archaeologically attested, but indicated by epigraphic evidence for the existence of a toll station in Ratiaria: CIL III 7429 names a toll station in Ratiaria (Velkov, *Prinosi*, 9; J. Iliev, "Ikonomikata na Ratsiarija (106-271 g.)", *Studentska nauchna sesija* (2006), 67; R. Ivanov, "Ratiaria – pismeni izvori, istorija, gradska teritorija i granitsi prez printsipata i dominate". In *Ratiaria semper floreat 1. Ratiaria and its territory*, ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2014), 35–36, 48; Luka, *Ratiaria*, 50) and an inscription found under the paving of the decumanus maximus of Ratiaria in 2011 most probably dates to the times of either Marcus Aurelius or Caracalla and i.a. reads *P P Illyr* (cat. 3 in Stoev, *Novi pametnitsi*, 237, 239, 282). The discovery of an inscription referring to the donation of a *schola ar[maturarum?]* would then add military character to this suggested port/harbour facility, as it indicates training of soldiers as marines and, hence, the existence of a naval base in Ratiaria: Stoev, *Novi pametnitsi*, 230–235, 282. Further backup for the assumption of a naval base is added by the funerary inscription IMS IV 31 (Petrović, *Inscriptions*), which – although found in Naissus, a considerable distance from the Danube – attests to trainees of the *classis Moesica* by naming a soldier of legio VII Claudia as *disce[n]s epibeta* (also Stoev, *Novi pametnitsi*, 232–233). For the emergence of the *classis Moesica* in general see in T. Sarnowski, "Zur Geschichte der moesischen Provinzialflotte im 1. Jhd. n. Chr.", *Ratiariensia* 3/4 (1987), 261–266.

AD and the time around the end of the first and the beginning of the second century AD, i.e. the time of preparing and fighting the Dacian wars of Trajan.

We can generally act on the assumption that the earliest occupation of Moesia and the Danube Limes proceeded from Macedonia via Naissus along the Timok valley.[78] In this scenario, Ratiaria's location at the end of the Timok valley road from Naissus to the Danube would have made the site one of the earliest centres of occupational politics on the Danube frontier. This, again, makes the existence of an early military garrison in Ratiaria very probable[79]; and the later settlement's prominent site of the Kaleto-plateau, overlooking the Arčarica's confluence with the Danube, would have been a prime geographical position for such a garrison. When looking into possible units for this early first century AD military presence, a temporary deployment of legio IV Scythica has been taken into consideration.[80] At the end of the first century AD, Moesia had already been separated, and the onset of the Dacian wars presented different circumstances. Here, Ratiaria's position on the Danube Limes directly east of the Iron Gates offered a convenient intermediate location between the earliest permanent legionary bases of Moesia in Viminacium (Moesia Superior) and Novae (Moesia Inferior), which should have been utilised in the efforts to man the frontier towards the – then – Barbaricum. For this second period, a temporary deployment of legio IV Flavia has been assumed.[81] Other opinions

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[78] Cassius Dio's report of Marcus Licinius Crassus' Bastarnae campaign (Dio. Cass. LI 24, 4) may be taken as a hint for this assumption. Generally, on the topic of early military approaches in Moesia: Mirković, *Anfänge*, 249–270.

[79] As e.g. assumed in K. Stoev, "Ratiaria: Grundzüge der Stadtgeschichte und Gesellschaftsentwicklung (1.-3. Jh.)". In *Trajan und seine Städte*, ed. I. Piso, (Cluj-Napoca, 2014a), 168.

[80] Again; Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 168. However, note the issue that legio IV Scythica could not have been everywhere at once; and while it is generally attested to have taken part in the erection of the Danube road as early as AD 33/34 (for an overview over the famous Đerdap inscriptions and further references: M. Mirković, "The Iron Gates (Đerdap) and the Roman policy on the Moesian Limes AD 33-117". In *Roman Limes on the Middle and Lower Danube. Đerdapske sveske 2*, ed. P. Petrović, (Belgrade, 1996), 27–40; 2007: 26–27), it is not clear where it might have been stationed before. Scupi is in the running as its Augustan/Tiberian home, too; so assuming that legio IV Scythica moved from Scupi to the Danube via the Timok valley line of approach and was, here, first stationed in Ratiaria is logical, yet there is no conclusive evidence of either epigraphic or archaeological character.

[81] First suggested i.a. by B. Filow, *Die Legionen der Provinz Moesia von Augustus bis auf Diokletian* (Leipzig, 1906); referred to in Mirković, *Gradovi*, 75; later repeatedly stated e.g. in Velkov, *Prinosi*, 5; V. Velkov, "Ratiaria. Eine römische Stadt in Bulgarien", *Eirene. Studia Graeca et Latina* 5 (1966), 157; V. Velkov, "Sulle origine de Ratiaria e sul nome "Ratiaria", Ratiariensia 3/4 (1987), 10; Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 50; J. Atanasova, "Résultats des fouilles de la ville antique de Ratiaria au cours des années 1976 à 1982". In

favour the presence of vexillations of legio IV Flavia or legio VII Claudia over an actual legionary deployment.[82] This could be supported by a comparatively large number of bricks of legio VII Claudia throughout Ratiaria's settlement territory and surroundings.[83] While the presence of military-stamped building material per se is no proof for the presence of respective units, the high percentage of legio VII Claudia material around Ratiaria indeed suggests some sort of local involvement. Adding to the discussion of legionary presence, several auxiliary units are believed to have been present at the site of Ratiaria throughout the pre-colonial period. The evidence, here, is circumstantial at best, comprised of brick and tile finds or singular inscriptions with partly unclear interpretation.[84] The location of a potential military camp in or around the later colony, finally, is as debated as the identification of the military unit occupying it. While earlier research favoured the location of a camp in the plain north of the Kaleto-plateau[85] or on the edge of the plateau west of the western gate of Ratiaria[86], other opinions exist and search the camp in the northern area of the

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Studien zu den Militärgrenzen Roms III. 13. Internationaler Limeskongreß Aalen 1983 – Vorträge. Forschungen und Berichte zur Vor- und Frühgeschichte in Baden-Württemberg 20, ed. C. Unz, (Stuttgart, 1986), 437; R. Ivanov, „L'armata romana a Ratiaria durante al principato (dati epigrafici)", *Ratiariensia* 3/4 (1987), 26; Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 168.

[82] Ivanov, *Ratiaria*, 35–36, 48; Dinchev, *From Colonia*, 173; also considered in Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 168.

[83] See the most recent map of Ratiaria showing the distribution of legio VII Claudia bricks and tiles in Luka, *Ratiaria*, 55. For further context: *Ibid.*, 55, 59.

[84] R. Hoshek, V. Velkov, "New antique finds in Ratiaria (Moesia Superior)", *Eumonia* 2 (1958), 32–35; Velkov, *Prinosi*, 5; *römische Stadt*, 157 with the ala Gallica based on an inscription found in a farmyard in Arčar during one of Velkov's first site inspections in 1956; M. Bollini, "Bolli laterizi di Ratiaria", *Ratiariensia* 1 (1980), 97; Ivanov, *armata romana*, 30 with the cohors I Cretum and an ala M(…) based on stamped tile finds; Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 169 with the cohors VIII Gallica based on stamped tile finds; V. Gerasimova, "Dislokatsija na rimskite pomoshtni vojski v provintsija Mizija ot 44 do 86 g. na n.e.", *Arheologija* 12,4 (1970), 27 with the ala I Claudia nova miscellanea based on CIL III 14217, which names a decurio of the colonia Ratiaria, who served in the ala I Claudia nova miscellanea before he was discharged and settled in Ratiaria. While this inscription is important because it attests to the presence of veterans in Ratiaria and their service in official functions, it does not provide solid evidence that ala Claudia I nova miscellanea was stationed in Ratiaria and not at some other site along the Danube Limes/in the wider surroundings.

[85] Velkov, *Origine*, 10.

[86] D. Giorgetti, "Res ad topographiam veteris urbis Ratiariae pertinentes – prolegomena all'urbanistica della città romana", *Ratiariensia* 3/4 (1987), pl. A, reproduced and discussed in Luka, *Ratiaria*, 54.

later colonial settlement, namely east of the western gate and in the area of the late Roman residence.[87]

In connection to the proposed first century AD military camp, a contemporary settlement has been suggested for Ratiaria as well. As is the case with the military camp, there is circumstantial evidence for its existence in first century AD dated small finds[88] and a large number of Flavian coins as well as several residual Republican coins.[89] Depending on the evidence employed, the pre-colonial settlement has been characterised as a Flavian trade post[90] or as a military settlement.[91] While some scholars have emphasised the trading function of Ratiaria in the first century AD, stating that the economic expansion preceded the military expansion in Moesia[92], I argue that first century AD military presence at the site is far more likely and that the development of a settlement motivated by military presence would have been a strong factor for the development of trade routes and a trade post.

With the Trajanic colonial foundation, new structures of reference were installed both in spatial and administrative terms. The newly planned settlement surely used existing communication systems on regional and inter-regional scales, but if it had been oriented on a pre-existing settlement structure, this would have become apparent in the – admittedly more than fragmented – archaeological record of the site. In the second and third centuries AD, Ratiaria was indeed a major trade node and trans-shipment centre east of the Iron Gates, connecting Moesia Superior with the areas towards the Black Sea. A comparatively large-scale monumental growth of the colony in the second and third centuries AD attests to this.[93] Although Ratiaria is listed as a major recruitment territory in the AD 169 Viminacium *laterculus*[94], there is a sparsity of indigenous names in the epigraphic record of the colony.[95] Also, recent studies have shown that contrary to earlier beliefs Ratiaria was not largely settled by veteran

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[87] Luka, *Ratiaria*, 59, based on the fact that the bricks of legio VII Claudia seem to accumulate in this location.

[88] E.g. published in Velkov, *Prinosi*, 5; *römische Stadt*, 157; Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 48; A. Haralambieva, "Fibuli ot territorijata na Ratsiaria". In *Ratiaria semper floreat 1. Ratiaria and its territory*; ed. R. Ivanov, (Sofia, 2014).

[89] These are part of the unpublished collection of the Historical Museum in Vidin.

[90] Velkov, *Prinosi*, 5; *römische Stadt*, 157; Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 48.

[91] Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 169.

[92] Velkov, *römische Stadt*, 156.

[93] See in Diers, *Urbanism*, 156–166, 170–172.

[94] Mirković, *Gradovi*, 79, see also in Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 178.

[95] Velkov, *römische Stadt*, 165; Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 180; Ivanov, *Ratiaria*, 30–21, 48; Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 176.

deductions.[96] This absence of both large numbers of indigenous population and large-scale veteran deductions as well as the new spatial layout of the colony of Ratiaria demonstrate the independence of the colonial settlement from both pre-Roman Iron Age civitas-centred settlement and first century AD military impact. Acknowledging the latter, however, is vital for the understanding of Ratiaria's extraordinary role as a connector along the Danube Limes and monumental development throughout the second and third centuries AD.

Conclusion

Summing up, two significant discussions for the characterisation of Moesia's settlement landscape have been introduced in this paper, both aiming to illustrate the importance of 'reading the subtext' in settlement studies.

The first coined the term bridge-sites for sites with extraordinary traffic relevance by using the examples of Horreum Margi and Naissus. With their location at traffic nexuses in the hinterland of the Danube, both had a vital position within the primary transport networks of Moesia as installed during the first century AD alongside the gradual occupation of Moesia via the Morava and Timok valleys. Horreum Margi and Naissus remained comparatively marginal, small settlements, probably with recruitment or territorial administration as the main motivators behind their municipalisation. Yet, their exclusion from the settlement landscape would be detrimental to the understanding of Moesian settlement systems and settlement development, as they clearly occupied an important inter-regional role and impacted other settlements as well. The same principle can also be observed in Abritus in Moesia Inferior: The main phase of settlement here lies in the Late Roman period, but an auxiliary presence with a small accompanying settlement 300–400 m west of the later fortification and today's archaeological park of Abritus definitely existed already in the first–third centuries AD, which was clearly due to the extraordinary traffic relevance of the site of Abritus as a connector of the middle Danube

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[96] While Mirković, *Gradovi*, 165 states that the colony would probably have been founded by veteran deductions after discharges after the end of the Dacian wars, and Mócsy, *Moesia Superior*, 107 says that the earliest officials of Ratiaria were also veterans, Mirković, *Moesia Superior*, 49 speaks of numerous immigrations from the West. Stoev, *Grundzüge*, 170–172, 176 then establishes that while B. Gerov, "Romanizmat mezhdu Dunava i Balkana 2. Ot Hadrian do Konstantin Veliki", *Godishnik na Sofijskija Universitet. Istoriko-filologicheski fakultet* 47/48 (1953) still assumed widespread veteran settlement already from Flavian times onwards, the epigraphic evidence from Ratiaria and its territory at the current state actually rather depicts small numbers of veterans both in the settlement and in its offices in favour of people coming to Ratiaria from Italy and the southern areas of the Danube provinces.

Limes and Serdica – Philippopolis communication lines with the Pentapolis at the Black Sea coast.[97]

The second zoomed in on the differences of site emergence and site development factors, using the colonies of Moesia Superior – Scupi and Ratiaria – as examples. Although the archaeological data are lacking or scarce, both had an epigraphic and contextually attested military presence in the pre-colonial phase at different stages throughout the first century AD. The character of the sites differed significantly from the later colonial settlements; yet it is pivotal to the understanding of Moesian settlement systems and the reasons and modes behind status granting at particularly Scupi and Ratiaria. Interestingly, when Scupi and Ratiaria are put in line with the other Moesian colony – Oescus in Moesia Inferior – the same principles can be observed: Before becoming *colonia Ulpia Oescensium* in Trajanic Times, Oescus was home to legio V Macedonica from as early as maybe Tiberian, but surely Claudian times onwards.[98] The legionary camp has been thoroughly located underneath the central area of the later colonial settlement space[99]; yet the newly founded colonia with the only attested forum-and-Capitoline Triad sanctuary complex in Moesia, the Fortuna temple, the winter portico, and the street system displays a change in settlement spheres and layout and considerable as well as privately funded monumentalisation.[100] Hence, a pattern of founding colonial civil centres at the sites of the earliest military presence connected to the occupation of the central Balkans, the Stara Planina, and the Danube Limes is identified. Officially installed settlements offered opportunities for large-scale military recruitment. Also, the earlier military

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[97] For an overview and discussion of Abritus: Diers, *Urbanism*, 460–464. More details in T. Ivanov, *Abritus. Rimski kastel i rannovizantijski grad v Dolna Mizija* (Sofia, 1980); R. Ivanov, *Roman cities in Bulgaria. Corpus of ancient and medieval settlements in modern Bulgaria 1* (Sofia, 2012); J.-P. Carrié, D. Moreau, "The archaeology of the Roman town of Abritus. The status quaestionis in 2012". In *Limes 22. Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Roman Frontier Studies, Ruse, Bulgaria, September 2012*, ed. L. Vagalinski, N. Sharankov, (Sofia, 2015), 601–610. The same also applies to Timacum Minus, which was one of the most significant and earliest traffic nexus sites in Moesia, but is not discussed here because it has been covered elsewhere already: Diers, *Timacum Minus*.

[98] For a historical overview: Diers, *Urbanism*, 198, 204–208.

[99] G. Kabakchieva, "Frührömische Militärlager in Oescus (Nordbulgarien). Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen 1989–1993", *Germania* 74,1 (1996), 95–117; G. Kabakchieva, *Oescus/Castra Oescensia. Rannorimski voenen lager pri ustieto na Iskar* (Sofia, 2000).

[100] For an overview over architectural features in Oescus: T. Ivanov, R. Ivanov, *Ulpia Eskus. Rimski i rannovizantijski grad 1* (Sofia 1998); T. Ivanov, *Ulpia Eskus. Rimski, kasnorimski i rannovizantijski grad II. Grazhdanska bazilika i hram na Fortuna* (Sofia, 2005); for the latest plan of the forum see in V. Dinchev, "Antichnite gradski ploshtadni kompleksi i tjahnata sadba prez kasnata antichnost", *Arheologija* 50, 3/4 (2009), 29; also discussed in detail in Diers, *Urbanism*, 201–204, 209–222.

garrison sites could be used as bases for settlement, because the infrastructure and human resources for supplying a considerable amount of people had already been present in areas that had otherwise not been densely populated or were still in the process of developing between either dislocating or engaging local indigenous people and allotting administrative territories and economic networks; and an economic vacuum potentially needed to be filled.[101]

Concluding, this paper argued that in order to fully understand a settlement in its urban form, its resilience throughout various periods of history, its status, its economic and social embedment into its surroundings, or its relationship to imperial and private agency – or the lack of all or any of these – one has to consult the subtexts of historical events, geographical circumstances, or global and regional developments, due to which the respective settlement came into being and was shaped. It is not necessarily important what to call settlements – their development still needs to be explained irrespective of how we label them; and, in fact, the development up to the point at which a settlement received a label is very much part of the explanatory process.

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[101] This also applies to Troesmis, see reference 8 above.

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Antrešelj
An Early Romanian Remnant in Serbo-Croatian**

Abstract: The paper discusses SCr. *antrešelj* 'gap in the middle of a pack saddle', a Balkan Latin loanword that was transmitted to Serbo-Croatian via either Dalmatian Romance or Romanian, and, based on formal criteria, advocates for the latter as the exclusive intermediary.

Keywords: Etymology, Serbo-Croatian, Romanian, Dalmatian Romance, herding terminology.

1. Introduction

In the vocabulary of a herdsman, there is, in Serbo-Croatian, a term for the 'gap in the middle of a pack saddle', which can be used to store additional load, usually when the saddlebags (on the side of a pack horse or a mule) have already been put to use. It is called *antrešelj*. The term is generally believed to be a remnant of Balkan Latin *intersell(i)um* (< Latin *inter* 'between' + *sella* 'seat, saddle') that was transmitted to Serbo-Croatian via either Romanian or Dalmatian Romance. In this paper, I try to determine which of the two served as the actual intermediary.
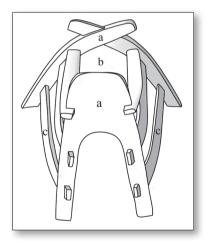

Fig. 1: Front View of a Pack Saddle
a – trees, b – *antrešelj*,
c – side boards

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2. Early Attestations

The earliest attested form is *antarsegl* (= *antrselj*); it appears in the *Bogatstvo i uboštvo* (Wealth and Poverty), an early 18th century poem by Jerolim Kavanjin of Split (Croatia). In the twenty first canto of the poem, which is a vision of Hell, the poet describes the Devil as *u antrselj sideć maše* (sitting in the *antrselj* and flailing his arms); see Kavanjin 1913: 408.

The other early attestations can be found in the 18th and 19th century lexica, the *Dizionario italiano, latino, illirico* of Ardelio Della Bella and the *Rjecso-slòxje* of Joakim Stulli; they are *antarscèglje* (= *antršĕlje*, Ligorio 2016: 191) 'il vacuo trà due fascie, che sono sopra il basto' (Della Bella 1728: 131) and *antarscàlje / intrescèlj / utrescelj* (= *antršălje / intrešĕlj / utrešelj*, Ligorio 2016: 190–93) 'il voto, che lascia a soma in mezzo al basto; vacuum inter sarcinas ephippio impositas jacens' (Stulli 1806: I 3, I 227, III 521). Đ. Daničić deemed *antršălje* a misprint (RJA I 93) but the form was later recorded in Herzegovina; see sec. 3 below.

The first contemporary Serbo-Croatian dictionary, Vuk's *Rječnik*, has *antrèšelj* 'ono što se na natovarena konja metne odozgo među strane' (that which is put atop a laden horse, between the side bags). The word doesn't make appearance until the 2nd edition (1818[1], 1852[2]) of the dictionary; see Караџић 1852[2]: 52.

3. Dialectal Variation

Ever since the first attestations were recorded, it became apparent that *antrešelj* has a variety of dialectal forms. They vary in form, accent, and meaning. A convenient distinction can be made by sorting them according the Anlaut into *an*-forms (*antrešelj* etc.), *in*-forms (*intrešelj* etc.), *u*-forms (*utrešelj* etc.), and forms without either *an-*, *in-*, or *u-* (*trešelj* etc.).

An-forms: *antrešĕlj* (Zagarač and Old Montenegro / Montenegro, EPCJ I 171); *antrèšelj* (Srem / Serbia, Караџић 1852[2]: 5; Dubica and Krajina / Croatia, PCA I 133; Studenci / Croatia, Babić 2008: 25; Lovinac / Croatia, Japunčić 2013: 47; Pridraga / Croatia, Babić 2022: 26; Popovići / Croatia, Tokić–Magaš 2018: 50; Krivošije / Montenegro, EPCJ I 47; Prošćenje / Montenegro, EPCJ loc.cit.); *antrèšelj* (Dragačevo / Serbia, ibid.); *antrèšalj* (Kordun / Croatia, PCA loc.cit.); *antrešalj* (Bukovica / Croatia, Maver 1922: 241); *antréše* (Šibenik / Croatia, ERHJ loc.cit.); *antreš* (V. Vrčević / 19th century, RJA I 93); *anteršelj* (Lika / Croatia, Maver loc.cit.); *antršêlj* (Gacka / Croatia, Kranjčević 2003: 7); *antršelj* (I. Ćipiko / 19–20th century, PCA I 134); *antršelje* (Poljica / Croatia, PCA loc.cit.); *antršalje* (Herzegovina / Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bartoli 1906: II 287); *antràšelj* (Temnić / Serbia, PCA I 133); *antràšĕ(l)* (Trogir / Croatia,

Geić 2015: 27). Derivatives: *antrešeljak* (Kreševo / Bosnia and Herzegovina, JE I 19).

In-forms: *intrèšelj* (B. Đaja / 20th century, PCA VIII 98); *intrèše* (Janjina / Croatia, JE I 19); *intrèšalj* (NW Boka / Montenegro, EPCJ I 133); *intrèšet* (NW Boka / Montenegro, ibid.); *intrišêl* (Smokvica and Korčula / Croatia, ERHJ I 47); *intrìšêl* (Smokvica / Croatia, JE I 19). Derivatives: adv. *intrešijo* (Vis / Croatia, Roki 1997: 165).

U-forms: *utreš* (Stj. M. Ljubiša / 19th century, RJA XX 136).

Forms without *an-*, *in-*, or *u-*: *trèšelj* (folk poetry, RJA XVIII 617; Broz–Iveković 1901: II 588); *trešéj* [*sic*] (Zatrebač / Montenegro, ERHJ I 47), *trešêj* (Kornati and Murter / Croatia, JE I 19; Kornati / Croatia, Skračić 2013: 187); *trȅšъnj* (Krtole / Montenegro, ERHJ I 47). Derivatives: *trešèljāk* (Sarajevo, ibid.).

The *u*-forms and the *an*-forms may or may not reflect different layers of the same proto-form; see EPCJ I 171. In case they do, the *u*-forms reflect the older layer, prior to the shift from Sl. **anC-* to **ǫC-*, and the *an*-forms reflect the younger layer, posterior to it.

4.   Other Forms

The Albanian minority in Zadar / Croatia (*Arbanasi*) have a Serbo-Croatian loanword, *untrèsh*; see Krstić 1987: 124. According to JE I 19, it was borrowed from an *u*-form. Since the *u*-forms are confined to Montenegro (see sec. 3) and the *Arbanasi* hail from Montenegro / Albania, it would appear that the word was borrowed prior to their migration to Zadar and, more precisely, prior to the shift from Sl. **ǫC-* to SCr. *uC*; cf. Sl. **sǫditi* > Alb. *sundoj* 'rule'.

5.   Range of Meaning

Most forms have the same meaning as the early attestations (sec. 2), i.e. 'gap in the middle of a pack saddle'. Developments (evidently of a later date) are few. One group of forms (*antrèšelj*, Dubica, Krajina, Popovići) shifted the original meaning to **'burden'**, the other (*antrešĕlj* Zagarač, Old Montenegro, *antreš* V. Vrčević, and *antràšelj* Temnić) to **'surplus, excess burden'**, and the third (*intrišêl* Smokvica) to **'wineskin'**. Still other forms (*antrèšelj* Srem, *antrèšalj* Kordun, and *antršêlj* Gacka) shifted the original meaning to **'mess'**. The latter shift is comparable to SCr. *samâr* 'pack saddle' → 'mess' (Medulin, Peruško 2013: 210).

6.   Etymological Dilemma

The etymology of SCr. *antrešelj* was established by Đ. Daničić. While editing RJA (1880–82), Daničić derived the word from L *intersellāre*; see RJA I 93. The

proposed etymon is recorded in the *Glossarium mediae et infimae Latinitatis* (with the remark *vulgo dici solet*) and its meaning given as 'indorsare, supra dorsum ponere'; see Du Cange 1885: 346.

The etymology proposed by Daničić received stamp of approval when, in 1906, one of the key scholars of Dalmatian Romance, M.G. Bartoli, included SCr. *antrešelj* in a list of Dalmatian Romance remnants in Serbo-Croatian; see Bartoli 1906: II 287. In doing so, Bartoli implied that he (unlike Daničić) considered *antrešelj* a Dalmatian Romance loanword.

It soon became widely held that *antrešelj* is indeed of Dalmatian Romance provenance.

Early in his career, P. Skok proposed L *intercoxium* 'area between the thighs' (REW⁵ 4488) as the etymon; see Skok 1912: 644. His attempt to question the etymology was, however, to no avail; the proposed alternative failed to catch on. Gi. Maver reverted to Daničić's etymology and amended the etymon (*intersellium* instead of *intersellāre*); see Maver 1922: 245.

Skok himself later gave up on *intercoxium* and adopted Maver's *intersellium*, which he in turn amended to *intersellum*. But in his magnum opus, ERHJ, he observed that *intersellum* needn't have been transmitted to Serbo-Croatian by Dalmatian Romance (as Bartoli and Maver believed to be the case); it could equally, he claimed, have been transmitted by Romanian.

> "Dvije su mogućnosti postanja: **ili je dalmato-romanski leksički ostatak** od vlat. *intersellum, od *sella* 'sedlo' s prefiksom *inter*, **ili je** kao pastirski termin **ostatak jezika srednjovjekovnih Vlaha** od rumunjske sintagme *între + șei* ili *șele* od *șa < sella* 'sedlo', pl. *șele*." (ERHJ I 47.)

> The origin of the word can be twofold: it is **either a Dalmatian Romance remnant**, from VL *intersellum*, from *inter-* and *sella* 'saddle', **or it is** (being a pastoral term) **a remnant of the language of medieval Wallachians**, from Romn. *între + șei* or *șele*, from *șa < sella* 'saddle', pl. *șele*."

Later works on the subject all echo the dilemma expressed by Skok and do not attempt to sway the etymology either way; see Rocchi 1990: 323, EPCJ I 171, and Ligorio 2014 s.v. Being a term of limited, primarily dialectal use, SCr. *antrešelj* was not included into the more general works on Serbo-Croatian etymology such as Gluhak 1993, ERHJ, and ПЕРСJ.

In this paper, I intend to show that one of the options in Skok's dilemma is in fact not tenable. To do this, I will review four salient features of SCr. *antrešelj*. These are: 1. *an-*; 2. *-š-*; 3. *-lj*; and, 4. the geography of its various dialectal forms.

7.   Serbo-Croatian an-

It has been noted that *an-* in *antrešelj* and other *an*-forms (sec. 3) could be indicative of Romanian provenance of the word since, in Romanian, Latin *in-* develops into *în-* [in]; see EPCJ I 171 and cf. e.g. Rosetti 1986: 362f. The shift from L *in*C to SCr. *an*C is, however, not exclusive to Serbo-Croatian loanwords of Romanian origin. It can also be seen in the loanwords of Dalmatian Romance provenance; cf. L *linteolum* > SCr. *lancun* 'bedsheet', L *tingere* > SCr. *tangati* 'color', L *vindēmiam* > SCr. *bandima* 'vintage', etc. See more Ligorio 2014: §43.

Consequently, *an-* in *antrešelj* and other *an*-forms must be taken as **inconclusive**.

8.   Serbo-Croatian -š-

It can be argued that *-š-* in *antrešelj* is indicative of the Romanian provenance of the word since it is aberrant in terms of Dalmatian Romance. L *s-* (as would be the case in *sellam*) yields Dalmatian Romance **s-*, and so does L *-(r)s-* (as would be the case in **inter-sellum*); cf. L *sēpiam* > SCr. *sipa* 'cuttlefish' (ERHJ III 240) and L **fersam* > SCr. *fijersa* 'scar' (op. cit. II 545).

In my PhD thesis, I showed that L *-e-* in *-ellum, -am*, pl. *-ellī, -ae* develops into Dalmatian Romance **-ie-*, which in turn translates to Sl. **-ě-*, i.e. SCr. *-i-/-e-/-je-* (depending on the dialect, Ikavian dialects have *-i-*, Ekavian *-e-*, Jekavian *-je*); cf. L **myrt(ic)ellam* 'myrtle' > Ik. *mirtila*, Ek. *murtela*, Jek. **mrkjela* > *mrčela*. See more Ligorio 2014: §119ff and Лигорио 2015.

Accordingly, one would expect *-sellum* in L **inter-sellum* to develop into Dalmatian Romance **-sjelo*, which should then translate to Sl. **-sělŭ*, or, in Serbo-Croatian terms, Ikavian *-sil*, Ekavian *-sel*, and Jekavian **-sjel* > *-sio*, gen. *-sjela*. However, nothing of the kind (*antre-sil, antre-sel, antre-sio, -sjela* etc.) is to be found amongst the available forms; see sec. 2 and 3.

An objection could be made on the grounds of *-š-* being an expected development of *-sj-* (as in the hypothetical **antresio, -sjela > antresio, -šela >> antrešel*). Notice, however, that this reasoning would hold only for the Jekavian dialect with *sj > š* and *š* is not limited to Jekavian; it is also there in Ikavian (e.g. *antrèšelj*, Pridraga) and Ekavian (e.g. *antràšelj*, Temnić).

It follows that *-š-* in *antrešelj* cannot be explained in terms of Dalmatian Romance.

By contrast, it can promptly be explained in terms of Romanian since it mirrors *ş* in Romn. *şele* < L *sellae*. The development is regular. L *-e-* in *-ellī, -ae* develops into Romn. **-ie-* and the resulting **-si̯-* merges into *ş*; see Rothe 1957: 9, 45. More in Лигорио 2018: 44–47. The merger is Common Romanian; cf. Aromn. and MRomn. *şali* (Cioranescu 1966: 7301).

Consequently, it appears that *-š-* in *antrešelj* speaks decisively **in favor of the Romanian provenance** of the word.

9. Serbo-Croatian *-lj*

It could be argued that *-lj(-)* in SCr. *antršelj(e)* is indicative of the Romanian provenance of the word since, in various Romanian dialects (but particularly in Aromanian and Wallachian, or Vlach), *l* is palatalized when followed by *e*; cf. e.g. Romn. def. pl. *-ele* > Aromn. *-ilĭ* (Papahagi 1963) and Wall. *-ilĭ* (Лигорио 2024). However, Serbo-Croatian *lj* needn't necessarily be of Wallachian or Aromanian origin. In Serbo-Croatian loanwords of Dalmatian Romance provenance, it can occasionally stand for L *ll* (as would be the case in L **intersellum*); cf. L *anguīllam* > SCr. *jegulja* 'eel', L *offellam* > SCr. *filja* 'slice', L *piscellum* > SCr. *peškelj* 'kind of fish', etc. See more Ligorio 2014 s.vv. The same is true in some Common Slavic loanwords of Vulgar Latin provenance; cf. e.g. L *casullam* > Sl. **košulja* 'shirt', whence SCr. *košulja*.

Consequently, *-lj-* in *antrešelj* must be taken as **inconclusive**.

10. Geography of SCr. *antrešelj*

When data from sec. 2 and 3 is mapped (see Fig. 2 below), it immediately becomes apparent that the geography of SCr. *antrešelj* clashes with its tentative
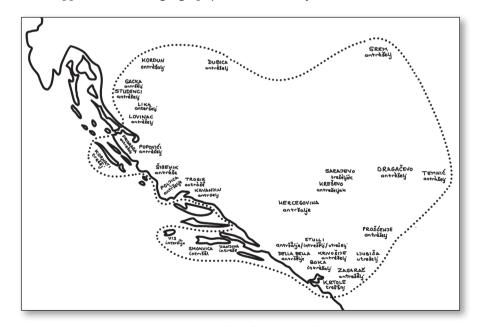

Fig. 2: Geography of SCr. *antrešelj*

Dalmatian Romance provenance. Pins in Bosnia (Sarajevo, Kreševo, Dubica) and Serbia (Srem, Dragačevo, Temnić) speak against it, and, to a lesser degree, so do the pins in other inland regions, i.e. Herzegovina, Lika (Gacka, Studenci, Lovinac), Kordun, and continental Montenegro (Prošćenje).

In his noteworthy supplement to the ERHJ, V. Vinja pointed out that such geography **speaks decisively in favor of a Romanian loanword**; see JE I 19.

11. *Conclusion*

Two of the four features reviewed in this paper have been shown to be inconclusive in terms of the provenance of SCr. *antrešelj* (sec. 7 and 9) while the other two (sec. 8 and 10) favor Romanian as the intermediary, which leads me to conclude that the preponderance of features (but particularly *-š-*) **points to the Romanian provenance of the word**.

12. *Recap*

In the light of the conclusion, we can now address various questions that surround SCr. *antrešelj*, and in particular the details of its transmission and dialectal variation.

From the numerous forms in *-lj*, it can safely be assumed that SCr. *antrešelj* was borrowed from a Wallachian or Aromanian form of *șele*, with the telltale palatalization (*șele > șeľe*).

In the solitary *trešъnj* (Krtole), *lj* was dissimilated to *nj* due to *r–lj*; see ERHJ I 47.

In another solitary form, *intrešet* (NW Boka), *-lj* (or better yet *-elj*) was understood to be the suffix and, under Dalmatian Romance and/or Italian influence, replaced with SCr. *-et* < L *-ittum*.

The only *lj*-less forms are *antràśël* (Trogir), *intrišêl* (Smokvica), *intreše* (Janjina) and, possibly, *antréše* (Šibenik). Theoretically, these could reflect *șele*, with the unpalatalized *l*.

Wall. / Arom. *șeľe* is plural. When the word was borrowed, some identified it with the SCr. *o*-stem accusative plural and, based on that, extrapolated the nominative singular in *-šelj*.

Others identified Wall. / Arom. *șeľe* with neuter *o*-stems in *-e* such as *polje* 'field'; this gave rise to one group of forms having the nominative singular in *-elj* and the other in *-elje*.

Forms in *-šalj* reflect the secondary Wall. / Arom. plural *șaľe*, formed by analogy with the singular form, i.e. *șa*, pl. *șele* (*șeľe*) >> sg. *șa*, pl. *șale* (*șaľe*); cf. Aromn. pl. *șali* in sec. 8.

The only *š*-less form is Kavanjin's *antrselj*. In my opinion, that is the only form that could be of Dalmatian Romance provenance (since it has the expected *s* instead of *š*).

The difference between the *an-* and the *in-*forms is of no consequence for the etymology; it reflects different ways Wall. / Arom. *în-* [in] was adapted to Serbo-Croatian.

*An-*forms are the default. *In-*forms and *u-*forms are both confined to the south, the former occuring in Boka, Dubrovnik, Pelješac, and Korčula, and the latter in Montenegro, and Dubrovnik.

Forms without *an-*, *in-*, or *u-* (Krtole, Zatrebač in the south, Kornati, Murter in the north) are due to the reanalysis of Wall. / Aromn. *între*, the first part of which was mistaken for L *in-*.

Abbreviations

Alb.	Albanian
Aromn.	Aromanian
Ek.	Ekavian
Ik.	Ikavian
Jek.	Jekavian
L	Latin
MRomn.	Megleno-Romanian
Romn.	Romanian
SCr.	Serbo-Croatian
Sl.	Slavic
VL	Vulgar Latin
Wall.	Wallachian (Vlach)

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The Atlas of the Balkan Linguistic Area program

Abstract: This article presents the Atlas of the Balkan Linguistic Area (ABLA), a French-Russian research program that created an online database of language contact phenomena documented in the languages of the Balkans. This resource will be open access after its launch in 2025, enriching the fields of Balkan and areal linguistics. Specifically, ABLA consists of 93 phonological, morpho-syntactic, semantic, and lexical features. Each feature is matched to a map covering 60 localities across Balkan countries. Each map is accompanied by a chapter co-authored by the project contributors. The paper offers some preliminary results for the feature "Infinitive: Forms". The online database in Wordpress is hosted by Huma-Num in France. ABLA, to be published by de Gruyter, is not only the first online database for the Balkans, an area shaped by multilingualism in forms that are rapidly disappearing, but also an example for other linguistic areas in the world

Keywords: areal linguistic typology, Balkan linguistic area, linguistic databases, linguistic atlases, dialectology, minoritized languages, methods of linguistic research.

The concept of "linguistic area"

When contact-induced change and borrowing become systemic across a number of languages and persist over time, language clusters emerge containing languages which, although not genetically related, have become more similar. The areas in which such languages are spoken are referred to as "Sprachbund," "convergence area," and "linguistic area" (Trubetzkoy 1923; 1928).

Though roughly consistent with a geographic area, a linguistic area is not defined by natural boundaries but by the relations between the human groups

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present. The most well-known linguistic area is the Balkans, but more recently, several authors have drawn attention to the existence of numerous linguistic areas around the world (Hickey 2017; Adamou and Matras 2021).

This has revived discussions about the adequacy of the term "linguistic area" to capture such versatile phenomena. How many languages are needed to identify a linguistic area? Clearly, it takes more than one language to form a group, but is two enough? How many language families should be involved? How many linguistic features are needed to consider that there is a linguistic area? What kind of linguistic features are needed (structural and lexical)? In the face of these challenges, some authors take a different stance and suggest: "We should abandon the search for a definitive definition of 'linguistic area'" (Campbell 2006, 21).

Despite the difficulty of convincingly defining linguistic areas, the topic remains very popular in contact linguistics, and increasing numbers of new linguistic areas are being discussed, such as North America, Amazonia, West Africa, Anatolia, Southeast Asia, and Melanesia, among others. Overall, modern linguists prefer to pay attention to the processes of convergence and relate them as much as possible to specific socio-cultural contact processes.

The Balkans as a linguistic area

The Balkans are a geographic area in the southeastern part of Europe, often delimited in the North by the Danube River. However, rather than a geographic region, the Balkans are best understood as a socio-political and cultural area where people share a centuries-long common history, in particular during the Byzantine Empire (4th century to 15th century) and Ottoman Empire (15th to 19th and early 20th centuries). Within this socio-political space, multilingualism was widespread and constant over time. The modern Balkan states have been reshaped multiple times, including recently, after the Yugoslav wars in the early 1990s, and yet despite the current national borders, exchanges and contact in the Balkans are ubiquitous.

Although the Balkans have been central to theoretical discussions regarding linguistic areas since the early 20th century, there is still no consensus over the precise linguistic features and their distribution. On the one hand, Balkan linguistic features (also known as Balkanisms) are not necessarily restricted to the Balkans but can be found in other languages of Europe and the Middle East. So why draw a linguistic boundary at that specific level? In a way, this question parallels the ambiguity in delimiting the Balkans as a geographic or cultural region since it is also part of a larger geographic and cultural area, namely Europe. Indeed, some Balkan states are still members of the European Union while forming smaller regional alliances, and speakers are in mutual contact in the Balkans but also beyond.

On the other hand, Balkan linguistic features are instantiated differently in different language varieties, and multilingualism is distributed differently depending on the region in the Balkans. In that sense, it is more accurate to say that, rather than a homogeneous linguistic area, one could identify a number of small linguistic areas that compose the larger Balkan linguistic area. Wiemer (2004) nicely captures this superposition of areas by the metaphor of the Russian *matryoshka* dolls where a big doll has a smaller one inside it that contains a smaller one and so on.

Despite the complexity of superimposed areas and heterogeneity, many specialists in Balkan languages argue that there is good reason to consider the Balkans as a linguistic area as its inhabitants were traditionally multilingual, had many ties across linguistic communities, as attested in many historical documents, and linguistic changes can often be traced in the written documents of the languages. In addition, a comparison between the languages of the Balkans and languages of the same branch that are spoken outside of the Balkans suggests the presence of unique linguistic developments (Ledgeway 2017; Gardani et al. 2021).

Most languages of the Balkans that are considered to be "Balkan languages" belong to the Indo-European family, albeit to various branches: the South Slavic branch includes Macedonian, Bulgarian, many non-standard Balkan Slavic varieties, and dialects of Serbian, such as Torlak; the Romance branch includes the so-called Balkan Romance languages, such as Aromanian and Meglenoromanian, as well as Romanian, but also Judeo-Spanish or Ladino, a Spanish variety spoken by Jews who arrived in the Ottoman Empire after they were driven out from Spain; the Albanian language and, to some extent, the Greek language, and more significantly some Greek dialects in Northern Greece; as well as some of the Romani dialects belonging to the Indic branch of Indo-European; and possibly also Balkan Armenian. The non-Indo-European languages belong to the Balkan Turkic branch of the Turkic family (Sobolev 2004; Friedman 2021).

In terms of linguistic features, some are well-established and well-researched while others are still in need of more careful consideration. For instance, linguists agree that the rise of a modal future particle based on the volitive 'want' resulted from several parallel contact processes. This feature is found in Greek, Albanian, Romanian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Croatian, and Romani (Joseph 1992).

Another well-known Balkan convergence phenomenon concerns sentences like 'I want to know'. Balkan languages use an optative particle (e.g. Balkan Slavic *da*, Albanian *të*, Romani *te*, Balkan Romance *să, si, s'*, Greek *na*) and a finite verb (i.e. a verbal complement that has tense and subject marking) following the loss or reduction of the infinitive (i.e. a verbal complement that is

nonfinite, that is, has no tense or subject marking), a process described in Joseph (1983). Infinitive reduction is also noted in Balkan Turkish, Armenian, Judeo-Spanish and Corfioto (Judeo-Italian spoken in Corfu).

The use of an enclitic definite article is another convincing result of convergence. Indeed, very few Slavic languages that have grammaticalized definite articles are spoken in the Balkans. It is argued that the grammaticalization of postposed articles in South Slavic languages (e.g., in Macedonian, Bulgarian, Torlak Serbian and other Balkan Slavic varieties) results from both internal and contact-induced factors, as it coincides with a similar development in the Romance languages of the area (e.g. Romanian, Aromanian, and Meglenoromanian) and Albanian (Asenova 2002; Runić 2019).

Regarding the lexicon, Friedman and Joseph (2017) capture the trend by referring to borrowings that are Essentially Rooted in Conversation (ERIC). ERIC borrowings are generally lexical items that are either known to be rarely borrowed, such as pronouns, numerals, kinship terms, and bound morphology or are more frequently borrowed lexical items, such as discourse particles, interjections, and taboo expressions, among others.

Finally, as Friedman (2021) notes, phonology offers a different view of the Balkan linguistic area, with several localized processes of convergence rather than a single process that would apply to all Balkan languages.

The Atlas of the Balkan Linguistic Area (ABLA)

To obtain an up-to-date and detailed picture of what the Balkans as a linguistic area look like, we created an online database that carefully maps the linguistic features of various languages and dialects and related them to the available socio-historical information.

Friedman (2021) points to the need for such an atlas in an overview chapter about the Balkans: "The concept of a multilingual Balkan linguistic atlas, one that could take into account the various dialects of the various languages and oriented toward mapping the actual instantiations and occurrences of various Balkanisms, is, close to a century after it was first mooted […], a desideratum" (Friedman 2021, 398).

Indeed, while the volumes of the *Minor Dialectological Atlas of Balkan languages* (*MDABL*) offer a solid basis, it is restricted to 12 locations covering morphosyntactic and lexical-ethnographic features for south Aromanian, central Geg, northern Tosk, northern Greek, and southern Greek, as well as Slavic in southwestern North Macedonia, southwestern Bulgaria, the Bulgarian Rhodopes, northeastern Bulgaria, southeastern Serbia, southern Montenegro, and Dalmatia in Croatia.

The ABLA project aims to fill this gap by bringing together the scientific and technological experts needed to create an online linguistic atlas of the Balkans. Such an atlas is not only a technological achievement aligned with current open science goals, where the datasets will be FAIR (findable, accessible, interoperable and reusable) (Wilkinson et al. 2016), but would also allow for extensive empirical testing of the concept of the linguistic area by examining how linguistic features intertwine in a given geographical area by taking into consideration smaller contact areas within the larger contact area.

The ABLA also paves the way and provides a model for the creation of databases for other linguistic areas around the world. The authors drew their inspiration from the "Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Language Structures Online" (https://apics-online.info/), elaborated by Michaelis, Maurer, Haspelmath, and Huber (2013) with the collaboration of numerous language experts. This database has not only made data accessible to the academic community and wider audiences, but has also given rise to numerous publications relying on the quantitative analysis of the data compiled in the database, and the Atlas itself was published by Oxford University Press. The recent database "Languages of hunter-gatherers and their neighbors" is another source of inspiration (https://huntergatherer.la.utexas.edu/), elaborated by Bowern, Epps, Hill, and McConvell (2020) in collaboration with many linguists.

The Balkans offer a unique example of how languages that were not closely related (in that they belonged to different branches) have structurally converged over the centuries. This convergence was driven by the multilingualism of the people of the Balkans, who, in many cases, lived in the same villages and cities and formed linguistically mixed households. The Atlas of the Balkan Linguistic Area makes available a much-needed database illustrating the multiple, complex convergence processes across a larger number of datapoints than currently available in the literature.

Language and location selection

The ABLA team selected 60 representative linguistic varieties and corresponding locations across all Balkan countries and their periphery where data are available and relevant for the discussion of the Balkans as a linguistic area to be depicted on maps. We were careful to include non-standard varieties in which the effects of long-term language contact can still be documented among the elders and changes observed among the younger generations (Adamou 2021).

The Indo-European language family is represented by 16 language datasets from the Slavic branch, 11 from the Romance branch, 11 from the Albanian branch, 7 from the Greek branch, 10 from the Indic branch, and 2 from the Armenian. For the Turkic family, we include 3 language datasets from the Oghuz

branch. The comprehensive and detailed list of language datasets is available at https://abla.cnrs.fr/languages.

ABLA offers a unique opportunity to document Balkan languages and dialects, many of which are endangered. To illustrate the linguistic diversity that we capture, we refer to (Sobolev 2021) where the changing multiethnic and multilingual profiles of peoples in various countries of the Balkans were examined, including L1 or L2 speakers of dialectal Greek (Tsakonian in the Peloponnese, Greece; Himariotika in Albania), Albanian (Dibra dialect in Golloborda; Laberia dialect in Himara, Albania; Ana e Malit dialect in Montenegro; Prespa idiom in North Macedonia), Romanian (Iabalcea variety in Karashevo/Caraşova, Romania), Aromanian (Prespa variety in the Republic of North Macedonia), Macedonian (Golloborda dialect in Albania; Prespa dialect in North Macedonia), Serbo-Croatian (Karashevo/Caraşova dialect in Romania; Mrkovići dialect in Montenegro). These are all non-standard varieties in which the effects of long-term language contact can still be documented among the elders and changes observed among the younger generations.

Feature selection

Regarding linguistic features, we have chosen both well-established and extensively researched characteristics, as well as those discussed in typological literature, requiring further careful consideration for the Balkans.

We start by presenting borrowings, greetings, and lexical features that play a key role in the Balkans as they are Essentially Rooted in Conversation (ERIC) (Friedman and Joseph 2017).

We examine about 40 features pertaining to the noun phrase and the verb phrase. About 10 features illustrate complex clause phenomena, about 15 simple clauses, and one is specific to word order.

We also dedicate about 15 features to phonology, phonetics, and prosody. Such features are not as commonly discussed even though they offer a different view of the Balkan linguistic area, with several localized processes of convergence rather than a single process that would apply to all Balkan languages (Friedman 2021).

The full list of linguistic features is present at https://abla.cnrs.fr/features.

Data collection, database and website creation

The data were collected from available existing resources such as standard language grammars and dictionaries, as well as dialectal grammars, dictionaries, and language corpora covering the 20th and 21st centuries. Additionally, proj-

ect participants gathered naturally spoken, written, or elicited data in the field. The project contributors filled in the online database by selecting the appropriate value(s), providing bibliographical references and examples illustrating the feature.

The database and website, developed on the WordPress platform, are archived for long-term preservation.

Infinitive forms: Preliminary results

The ABLA chapter "Infinitive: Forms" illustrates the project's results (Sobolev et al. 2025).

Background

Since (Miklosich 1861) and (Sandfeld 1900; 1930), "the loss of the infinitive" has been considered one of the primary balkanisms (Joseph 1983). Even the most advanced and broadest approach today still regards "all the developments associated with the infinitive – the loss of the infinitive, the prevalence of finite subordination, and the occurrence of two types of finite subordination" (Friedman and Joseph [forthcoming], 743–745) as a Balkan contact-induced convergence. Against this background, the remnants and propagation potential of the Balkan infinitive appeared less relevant and have not been addressed in contact linguistics (Matras 2020, under entry *infinitive (reduction of)*).

Nevertheless, the inherited infinitive, along with its non-finite substitutes and equivalents, here collectively referred to as the "infinitive cluster", play a significant role in the structure of individual Balkan languages, showcasing notable formal and functional similarities, worthy of being presented in ABLA. In this chapter, we are particularly interested in non-finite predicates (Fiedler 2018), primarily the ones like:

> Romanian *se poate face*$_{\text{INF}}$ 'can be done';
> Romanian *trebuie făcut*$_{\text{PTCP}}$ 'must be done';
> Albanian Gheg *duhet bâ*$_{\text{PTCP}}$ 'must be done´;
> Aromanian *va lukrari*$_{\text{VN}}$ 'needs working'.

These Balkan predicates, relatively underexplored from a comparative standpoint, are functionally equivalent to the infinitive in a diachronic perspective (from which the forms in the Romanian and Aromanian examples above directly derive), cf. also (1), (2) and (3):

(1)   Latin
    debet dicere
    debet   *dicere*
    should.PRS.3SG   say.INF
    'should say'

(2)   Old Albanian (Pjetër Budi. Rituale Romanum, 1621)
    duhete me ξξane
    duhete   *me=*   *ξξane*
    should.PRS.3SG   with=   say.PTCP
    'should say'
    (Schumacher, Matzinger 2013, 384–389)

(3)   Old Albanian (Pjetër Budi. Rituale Romanum, 1621)
    duhete ξξane
    duhete   *ξξane*
    should.PRS.3SG   say.PTCP
    'should say'
    (Schumacher, Matzinger 2013, 384–389)

In general, two categories of forms that can function as nonfinite complements of a genuine modal verb should be examined (Joseph 1983; Gabinskii 2002; Fiedler 2018):

Analytic: Albanian Gheg *me=shkru* with=write.PTCP 'to write'; Albanian Tosk *së=shkruari* ART=write.VN.N.ABL.SG; Romanian *a=scrie* INF=write.INF; Romanian *de=scris* of=write.PTCP; Albanian Tosk *për=të=shkru(ar)* for=ART=write.PTCP; Albanian Gheg *për=me=shkru* for=with=write.PTCP;

Synthetic: Greek *γράφ-ειν* write(IPFV)-INF; *γράψ-ιμο* write(PFV)-VN.N.SG 'writing'; Serbian and Croatian *pisa-t(i)* write(IPFV)-INF 'to write'; Serbian and Croatian, Bulgarian *pisa* write(IPFV).INF (the so-called short infinitive) 'to write'; Macedonian *pisa-nje* write(IPFV)-VN.N.SG; Megleno-Romanian *cănta-ri* sing-INF 'to sing'; Romanian *scrie* write.INF 'to write'; *scris* write.PTCP 'written'; Albanian Gheg and Tosk *shkru(e)* and *shkruar* write.PTCP 'written'; Turkish *yaz-mak* write-INF 'to write'.

In scholarly traditions, these forms are usually labeled "infinitive proper", "short infinitive", "Gheg infinitive", "Tosk infinitive", supine, participle, and verbal noun. The primary research objective here will be to enquire into the possibilities of enhancing the systematicity of our understanding of the structure, functioning, and patterns of variation in Balkan languages and dialects in both synchrony and diachrony and to establish a comprehensive and logically coherent framework for systematically delineating and linguistic-geographically map-

ping the regional and systemic variations of infinitives, their equivalents, and substitutes across Balkan languages.

Nevertheless, there is an abundance of forms of different origins, oscillating widely between verbal (person, tense, transitivity, etc.) and nominal (gender, case, definiteness, etc.) properties, and there is also a broad palette of their distribution patterns that cannot be considered in full in ABLA. Therefore, we limit ourselves here to nonfinite verbal forms, both synthetic and analytic, both inherited and developed in the Balkans, used as complements of modals, preferably dependent on core modals of verbal origin (Hansen 2009, 470-471; Arapi 2010; Dragomirescu 2013) in dependent clauses with identical subjects (*tautoprosopy*).

This is illustrated with an example from Megleno-Romanian (Archangelos) in (4), Romanian (Bucharest) in (5) and Albanian in (6):

(4) *Nu la pot priflari*

nu	*la*	*pot*	*prifla-ri*
NEG	3SG.ACC	can.1SG	find.again-INF

'I can't find him/her/it again.'
(Capidan 1935, 8)

(5) *dorinţa de a veni*

dorinţ-a	*de*	*a*	*ven-i*
desire(F)-DEF	of	INF	come-INF

'the desire to come'
(Pană Dindelegan 2013, 211–215)

(6) *Pse s'desha për të martuar*

pse	*s*	*desha*	*për*	*të*	*martuar*
why	NEG	want.AOR.1SG	for	SBJV	marry.PTCP

'Why I didn't want to marry.'
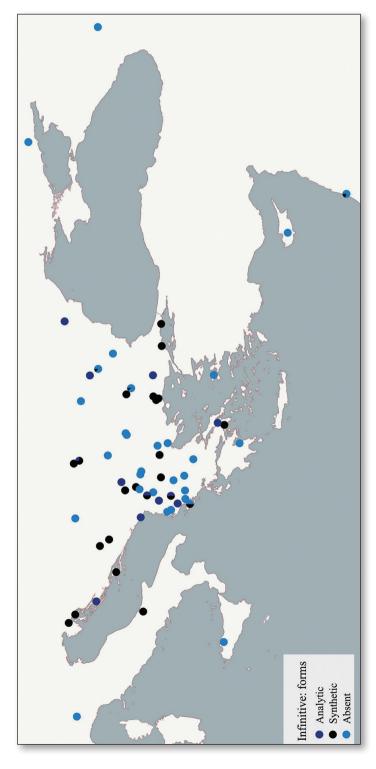(Andon Zako Çajupi "Burri i dheut" [1908])

Figure 1. ABLA language datasets coded for the feature Infinitive: Forms

ABLA results

The map in Figure 1 illustrates the presence of the nonfinite subject-like forms in the ABLA datasets. There are three values for this feature: analytic, synthetic and absent.

Analytic. The various analytic forms are distributed across dialects of Albanian (Donja Klezna, Elbasan, Karakurt, Leshnjë, Mandrica, Markopoulo Oropou, Muhurr, Progonat, Shala e Bajgorës, Zadar) and Romanian (Bozovici, Bucharest). Although they could be interpreted as a general structural parallel between Albanian and Romanian, they do not show any isomorphism, especially in the synsemantic element, and should be interpreted as an internal and independent development in each language under consideration, representing genealogical patterns.

It should be noted that Romanian analytic infinitives rarely combine with modals, preferring phase verbs, as in example (7) from Bozovici:

(7) *şî ia atunśa înśepi a cînta*

şî	*ia*	*atunśa*	*înśepi*	*a*	*cînta*
and	3SG.F.NOM	then	start.PRS.3SG	INF	sing.INF

'And she starts then to sing.'
(Petrovici 2005, 51)

(8) *Cîn ń-apucăm dźi măsurat oili*

cîn	*ń*	*apucăm*	*dźi*	*măsurat*	*oili*
SBJV	REFL.DAT	begin.PRS.1PL	from	measure.PTCP	sheep(F).SG.DEF

'When we start measuring (the milk of) the sheep'
(Petrovici 2005, 155)

Synthetic. As it can be seen on the map, synthetic infinitives are usually inherited "infinitives proper", like in the Romance datasets Romanian (Bozovici), Megleno-Romanian (Archangelos), Istro-Romanian (Žejane), Corfioto (Corfu City, Tel Aviv), and Judeo-Spanish/Ladino (Bitola, Istanbul, Sarajevo). The same applies to Slavic varieties Croatian (Dobrinj, Vrbanj), Molise Slavic (Acquaviva Collecroce), Bosnian-Croatian-Serbian (Fojnica), Serbian (Tuchep), Serbian and Croatian (Karashova), Bulgarian (Pozharevo, Zlatograd) and Pomak (Myki). Standard Western Armenian (Athens) and Turkish (Prizren, Skobelevo, Selero) also belong to this group. In the case of Bulgarian, dialects differ from the Standard language in their retention of the infinitive.

Although rare, examples with identical subjects in the matrix and dependent predicate like *duhesh ecur* should.PRS.NACT.2SG go.PTCP 'you must go' from Albanian (Leshnjë) (Ylli and Sobolev 2002, 180) force us to regard original

participles as full synthetic equivalents of prototypical infinitives. In contrast, the same criterion forces us to rule out the verbal nouns of Greek, Balkan Romance and Balkan Slavic as presented in example (9) from Trebisht:

(9)   *zm'ijata s'akat t'epajne*
      zmij-a-ta   *saka-t*   *tepa-jne*
      serpent(F)-SG-DEF.NTR   will(IPF)-PRS.3SG   kill(IPFV)-VN.N.SG
      'One should kill serpents (Lit. The serpent wants killing).'
      (Sobolev and Novik 2013, 187)

Absent. The category under study is absent from Greek (Thessaloniki), Greek of Southern Albania (Dropull), Tsakonian (Tyros) and the varieties Northern Chiotic (Lagkada), Cypriot (Dymes), Azov Greek (Maloianysol'), and Pontic (Yessentuki). No infinitives are found in Albanian (Piana degli Albanesi), Aromanian (Selenica), Bulgarian (Sofia, Starozagorski mineralni bani), Standard Macedonian (Skopje), Macedonian (Dojran)

Balkan Slavic (Nestorio, Trebisht, Vranishte), nor in any varieties of Romani (Fieri, Kaspičan, Knjaževac, Parakalamos, Piacenza, Pitesti, Skopje, Sofades, Sofia, Šid).

A very restricted usage can be found in Bulgarian of Pozharevo, and variation due to contact in the Balkan environment is witnessed in Corfioto (Corfu City, Tel Aviv).

Summary

ABLA clearly demonstrates that the use of high-quality, representative linguistic materials, meticulous observation of linguistic contexts, enumeration of intrasystemic constraints in the distribution of forms and constructions, the quest for isosemantic, isomorphic, and isofunctional linguistic parallels, as well as contactology and historical interpretation of areal connections, can be applied to Balkan non-finite predicates dependent on modal verbs, namely members of the "infinitive cluster" – infinitives proper, diverse analytic forms and constructions, participles, and deverbal nouns.

The purpose of this chapter has been to showcase the abundance of the nonfinite forms that can serve in the Balkan languages as complements to a genuine modal verb. It is not possible to consider the infinitive as lost in these languages, and its "reduction" in the Balkans (Joseph 1983) and beyond (Masica 2001) can in no way be seen as a teleological process.

Another striking observation is that Balkan languages exhibit maximum complexity. They appear to possess a highly extensive set of non-finite forms,

which are not always entirely free but rather lexically bound, used to express dependent actions with modal verbs.

The isomorphism of finite subjunctive forms in Balkan languages is in full contrast with the complete non-isomorphism of a series of non-finite structures featuring rare, unique, and idiosyncratic combinations of grammatical elements, particles, prepositions, and connective articles, which selectively and freely combine with synthetic forms of true infinitives, participles, and deverbative nouns. The grammatical analysis of such constructions is often ambiguous and challenging.

Despite the variability in different Balkan languages and the linguistic specificity of their inventory of structures and rules of variation, the contact-induced nature of certain binary isosemantic and isomorphic inter-Balkan parallels remains a promising field of research.

The scientific impact of the program

To conclude, the scientific impact of the ABLA program lies in 1) the methodological novelty for the field of areal linguistics, 2) the unprecedented quantity of linguistic data from different Balkan linguistic varieties, and 3) fostering international cooperation between linguists in the field of Balkan and areal linguistics.

In addition, by introducing state-of-the-art practices in digital humanities into the established field of Balkan linguistics, we will set a new benchmark for research in the medium and long term, by adopting a quantitative approach to languages and dialects and linguistic features at all levels and by examining interdependencies across linguistic features, space, and social factors that play a role in the formation of linguistic areas.

Beyond the specific interest for the Balkans, ABLA will also provide a general model for documenting and digitally mapping linguistic areas across the world.

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Urbanisation, Migration, Depopulation and Virtual Ritual Community – The Village Kurban as a Shared Meal

Abstract: The paper deals with the specific use of collective rituals focused on blood sacrifice and a shared meal among Orthodox Christians in the Balkans, known mostly as *kurban*. In studying a variety of feasts, the analytical focus is on the collective gathering and the shared meal, which is celebrated by the small village community as its "homeland", a sense of belonging to a virtual community consisting of people from all over the world. This paper pays particular attention to examples of the collective *kurban* in depopulated villages. Among migrants in big cities born in the same village, the *kurban* is understood as part of a common cultural heritage and a ritual that helps produce and/or re-produce a group identity within a broader national framework and urban social milieu. The *kurban* is also perceived by the participants as a ritual way of creating social cohesion for kinship-based and territory-based communities, beyond confessional attachment. In a selection of cases, the paper demonstrates how a blood sacrifice and a shared meal, as well as the symbolic use of the patron saint of a birthplace, recreates cohesion between the former members and the new migrants from the city to the village.

Keywords: migration, urbanisation, depopulation, virtual community, *kurban*.

Almost two decades ago, when we were preparing Biljana Sikimić's book "The Kurban in the Balkans" (published by the Institute for Balkan Studies SASA in Belgrade, 2007), I wrote that Bulgarian ethnology, which emerged, like ethnography in other countries of South-Eastern Europe, as an academic discipline focused on traditional beliefs, rituals and folklore, continues to be mainly interested in the cultural heritage of its people, which we, the contemporaries, know from older publications and museum collections (Hristov 2007, 245). The situation has not changed much by the mid-2020s. Bulgarian ethnologists and

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anthropologists still face the challenges of new social processes, new cultural phenomena and intense changes in the research priorities and methods. The new generation of scholars studying the process of transition from socialism to democracy trace in detail the social changes in the conditions of a market economy, the "revival", or rather the construction, of tradition in the new, global world of migration amidst pan-European mobility but pay less attention to the peculiarities of the celebration system and ritual practices at the beginning of the 21st century. And although rituals should be among the main topics of ethnographic research, intensive ethnological studies in various regions of post-socialist South-Eastern Europe still tend to neglect the analysis of the ritual process (Creed 2002, 57). I have written before about the processes of (re)constructing tradition in the new pan-European mobility era (Hristov 2012, 985–994), and we believe that each new generation develops its own version and understanding of the cultural heritage of its ancestors, and the importance of ritually-maintained local identity increasingly takes precedence in wider social groups and communities. This applies, in particular, to regions of demographic crisis and depopulation, which we generally call "regions of declining functions".

One such region in Bulgaria is *Znepole*, the region of the town of Tran in Central Western Bulgaria, which, despite its proximity to the capital, Sofia, has experienced depopulation since the socialist era. The region has little fertile land, which has forced the local male population to practice seasonal labour mobility for at least two centuries. Legends are told about the Tran craftsmen – builders who built the capital of Sofia after the liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule (1878) and a number of other cities in the country (Hristov 2015, 38). In the decades after WWII, in the course of accelerated socialist industrialisation and urbanisation, the builders from Tran took their families to larger places like Pernik and Sofia in a short period of time, and seasonal labour mobility very soon turned into permanent resettlement. Furthermore, in the big city, they settled relatively compactly and created the famously efficient Tran communities for mutual help. The connection with their native villages in the Tran region became rather virtual, but the cultural memory and sense of local belonging were preserved in the next generations, already born in the big city. This article discusses the peculiarities of the ritual cycle inherited from the pre-modern era, which helps new generations maintain their ideological cohesion and local identity in the social environment of the big city.

This study[1] is a continuation of the studies of processes that we have been following as trends and characteristics for the last two decades in Bulgaria, but also in some neighbouring countries (Hristov and Manova 2007, 211–231;

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[1]   The study by Petko Hristov was carried out within a joint Bulgarian-Polish academic project titled *Creation of tangible and intangible heritage. Central and South-East European Perspectives* (IC-PL/16/2022-2023).

Hristov 2007, 247–260). It is dedicated to an important group of celebrations with ritual sacrifices and a shared meal with a pronounced social function in some villages of the Pernik region (Central Western Bulgaria), for which the former residents who moved to the city and their descendants return to their birthplaces. To this day, these rituals have remained a characteristic element of the folklore tradition in various regions of the Balkans. They are related to the ritual maintenance of the identity system of various social communities (Assmann 1997, 143; cf. also Cohen 1885, 53). The ritual of joint sacrifice, known among all Balkan peoples (Albanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Macedonian, Turkish, Serbian and Roma) under the name *kurban*[2], is traditionally performed by various ethnic and religious groups, both Christian and Muslim. In folk traditions, the *kurban* functions at different social levels – both as an individual sacrifice performed by one person and a collective sacrifice performed by a kinship- or a territorially-based community.

Our analysis focuses on the social aspects of the village sacrifice *(kurban)* as a celebration and ritual communal meal, reproducing community identity and virtual cohesion. Among the Orthodox people in the Balkans, these ritual practices very often coincide with the day of the village *(the village fair)* and the feast day of the local church's patron saint. This kind of research is particularly interesting in the context of post-socialist migration to big cities and increasing pan-European mobility, where some aspects of the ritual process are revived and others fade and are abandoned. The focus of this study is the social functions of the celebration in the depopulated villages of Central Western Bulgaria and the possible dependence between the demographic crisis and the spontaneous festive reactivation of local identity.

Our question is whether and how the ritual shared meal attracts the inhabitants of the (almost) abandoned villages who have moved to the big cities and to what extent it helps the integration of the newly-settled residents in some of them.

Our direct observations in the various depopulated villages were carried out during the field studies of Tsvetana Manova in 2023 in the western regions of Bulgaria.[3] The ethnographic literature on the matter emphasises the archaic origin of the holidays of the village community, their integrative functions and importance as group markers for different levels in the social structure (compared in detail in Hristov 2004, 166–167). In fact, it is a typical cultural phenomenon of the Eastern Mediterranean, the prototype and ritual matrix of

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[2]   The word *kurban* entered the Balkan languages via Turkish but originated from the Old Testament, from the biblical *korban* (Rengstorf 1993, 860).

[3]   The field materials have been submitted to the Ethnographic Archive of the Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic Museum at BAS.

which can be found in the Old Testament – in the sacrifice of Abraham (according to Asya Popova – cf. Popova 1995, 145) or the sacrifice in the Jerusalem Temple (Katsis 2005, 158–186).

The collective gifts *(kurbans)* and the shared meal were, and still are, the most central and necessary element of many annual village fairs *(sabors)* in Bulgaria throughout the 20th century. The first two decades of the 21st century marked a kind of "revival" of the sacrificial practice both in the village and the city, including the almost abandoned villages with a dozen or even fewer permanent residents. The feast with a shared meal marks the functioning of the village as a birthplace and is associated with the visits of emigrants from the village or relatives (and friends) from other places. Furthermore, by participating in the celebration every year, the villagers bring life to their birthplace and join the symbolic capital (according to Pierre Bourdieu) of their local community.

In the past, when the village was "alive", each family took from the *kurban* and entertained relatives and friends from other places as guests in their house. Migrants from these depopulated villages turn the collective *kurban* into a sign of their community, a ritual marking unity with the patron saint of their church, but also the relationship between people. The ordinary village *kurban* becomes a kind of ideology of local origin and birthplace consciousness (Hristov 2004, 165).

There are 161 villages in Central Western Bulgaria (Pernik region). The population of many of them is alarmingly small. For example, fifteen of the fifty villages in the Tran region have fewer than ten permanent residents, eleven have no more than twenty, and seventeen have no more than fifty. It is similar in the other regions of the district. In most of those villages, however, the traditional village celebrations, the *kurban* and the *sabor*, are still alive today. This fact is of particular interest from the point of view of ethnology, folk psychology and demography.

The celebration in honour of the patron saint of the village church in the Pernik region is accompanied by a joint village gift *(kurban)* and a shared meal for all present. Gifts for the shared meal (money, provisions, wheat) are collected from each household, but there is no specific contribution – everyone gives according to their desire and ability ("*whatever they wish*"). It is believed that these gifts are given for the health and prosperity of the entire village and its residents. A specially elected group of men from the village (usually a church committee) takes care of collecting the gifts and preparing the *kurban*. They also invite the priest to bless the sacrificial lamb.

For the purposes of this paper, suffice it to list just a few examples of such *kurbans*. The text follows the *kurbans* in some of the places and focuses on the conclusions drawn from the presented facts. The examples are from our latest field research campaign in 2023.

In some of the villages, the *kurban* ritual has ceased for decades due to depopulation. For example, today, there is only one resident in the village of Kashle. In the 1930s, the population was 224.[4] Here is what one respondent said:

> Back in the 1970s, a *kurban* was celebrated on Krastovden in our village. They would buy an animal, slaughter it and hold a kurban in the open space in the centre of the village. I was a child, and I remember those kurbans. Then there were no more people, and the *kurbans* stopped. For several decades now, there has been no living person in the village and no *kurban* either. [S. M., 51 years old].

Today, the village of Berende near Zemen has ten permanent residents. In 1980, the village had 200. The *kurban* was held on *Spasovden* in the Kumov Dol area, under an ancient oak tree. Even children participated in it. While the women prepared the sacrificial animal, the schoolchildren wove a wreath of flowers at school, went up to the area and wrapped the wreath around the trunk of the tree. In the 1970s, the oak tree fell and the local people moved the date and place of the *kurban*, marking it on 2 June in the village centre near the monument to those who died for the freedom of Bulgaria. Nowadays, the ten elderly residents of the village no longer hold a *kurban*. (G.G. – 80 years old)

The mayor of the village of Kasilak, which once had a population of 603 people[5] and today has only twenty, shared: "Yes, we used to hold a *kurban* every year on Ilinden. But we don't do it anymore because there is no one to cook it, and there is no one to eat it – there are no people."

Here are some interesting examples where the village *kurban* was interrupted but resumed years later:

Today, five people live permanently in the village of Studen Izvor near Tran. The *kurban* is on 12 July (St. Peter's Day according to the old style) in the courtyard of the Church of St. Peter and Paul. One of the respondents, b. 1936, says that the *kurban* once existed, but when the population dramatically decreased, it ceased. In 2005, the hunting group from the villages of the Tran region gathered for the opening of the season and decided to hold a fair in the village to gather and see the former residents and to organise a *kurban* on the same day for the "health of all the people of Izvor". The animal is always given by people born in the village, even if they live elsewhere now. Here is what one respondent related:

> It doesn't matter that nowadays only a few people live in the village. We are very close to one another. All the people of Izvor who now live in Tran, Pernik, Sofia or other places come to the *kurban*. They also come from the surrounding villages: Radovo, Kozhintsi, Mramor, Busintsi, Vukan, Kosturintsi and Yarlovtsi.

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[4] Population and housing stock census of 4 December 1985. С., 1986, p. 35.

[5] Results of the population census in the Kingdom of Bulgaria, S. 1911, p. 8.

> People from abroad also come specially for the *kurban*. There is a woman from Izvor who lives and works in Brazil but comes every summer on this day. The next *kurban* will be given by her. [B.E., 51 years old]

Without describing the *kurban* itself in detail, it suffices to note that this year, about 130 people attended it, including many young people – 16–18–years of age. (Photo 1)

There are five or six people living permanently in the village of Gorna Sekirna today. In 1910, it had about 451 residents.[6] In the 1950s, the *kurban* was held in the St. Iliya area, on the feast of the Holy Trinity. Then the village was completely depopulated, and naturally, "there was no one to do it". Five or six years ago, several families from Sofia bought villas in the village and now often spend the summer there. Shortly after their arrival, they decided to organise a *kurban* every year but on Ilinden, "so that the village will liven up, to have some life here in the summer because there is none in the winter". (Sn.T., 75 years old)

Today, eight people live permanently in the village of Transka Bankya. In 1926, its population was 274.[7] Until the 1960s, two *kurbans* were held in the village – on Spasovden, in the Razkrasye area, which is in the centre, and on the Holy Spirit Day, in the Mladenovi Koshari area. Then, due to the depopulation of the village, both *kurbans* stopped. In recent years, on the initiative of the people born and raised there but currently living somewhere else, the Spasovden *kurban* resumed. Money is collected from everyone who wants to participate to buy the animal and all the cooking supplies. One of the local women boils it in three cauldrons. Two more women from the village help her. The *kurban* is held in the centre, and many guests gather together. People born in Bankya attend, their friends come, the administration from the town hall of Tran comes, and the tourist association from Surdulitsa in Serbia always attends. One of the respondents told us:

> The village gets buzzing and full of people. There must be two or three thousand! There is a flag pole in the centre of the village. At that time, the Bulgarian flag, the Tran flag and the flag of the tourist association of Surdulitsa are flown. First, the priest blesses the *kurban*; then they give a little bowl of it to each person. People eat their *kurban* for health and the festivities begin. Music plays, and everyone dances and has fun. The party lasts late into the night. When it gets dark, there are fireworks. Then those from Serbia go, and those from other places depart, too. But if you have relatives in the village, you can sleep over at their house. It's very nice at these *kurbans*. They started again about ten years ago. And we haven't missed a year, even during the pandemic. People get together... The village comes to life on this day; this is why we hold it. [G.M., born 1946]

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6   Results of the population census in the Kingdom of Bulgaria, S. 1911, p. 8.

7   The Bulgarian village. Jubilee collection. S., 1930, p. 482.

Photo 1. Kurban in the village of Studen Izvor (photo Tsvetana Manova)

In the village of Ezdimirtsi near Tran, only nine people live permanently, but on the first Saturday after 2 August, Ilinden "in the old style" (Julian) calendar, an annual *kurban* is held in the Svetats area half a kilometre away from the village. Twelve years ago, two enthusiasts, who have roots in this area, decided to build a chapel on that spot. They built it in 2011 and named it "St. Iliya" after Father Iliya associated with the history of the village. They bought a bell for 4,000 BGN and erected it next to the chapel. Since then, the *kurbans* have been an annual event. In the interview with them conducted this year, they said that they did all this "so that there are people, to enliven the village, to enliven the place". About 60 people attended the *kurban*; they came from Sofia, Pernik and Tran. Most are young families with children, but there are some older people, as well. Each of the interviewees explained that they did not live there, but their parents came from the village. There were also several families whose friends or relatives were from there, and they had come with them.

These examples lead to the conclusion that the renewal of the *kurban* usually happens because of the will and desire of people who originate from the given village but have long lived elsewhere. There are a few villages where this is done by families who have bought houses and live in them only in the summer. However, they pointed out that they did it to give life to the otherwise dying village.

Despite the small number of residents, some of the villages we studied hold two *kurbans* per year. For example, in the village of Lyalintsi, which has a population of only twenty[8], the *kurbans* are on Holy Spirit Day and on Nikulden. The Holy Spirit Day *kurban* is held in a clearing above the village where there is a cross and an ash tree. The Nikulden one is in the church courtyard. The young people who live there only in the summer renovated the roof and reinforced it; they organise the Nikulden *kurban* every year. Traditionally, it is a fish *kurban*. During the pandemic, when gatherings were prohibited, they waited a little until the summer passed and held the *kurban* in the autumn, when the prohibitions were not as strict. On the Holy Spirit *kurban*, about 70 people gather because villages are livelier in the summer. (T.M., 40 years old)

The population of the village of Radibosh is 25. They hold their *kurbans* on Spasovden and Petkovden. Both altars are in the courtyard of the old school. For Spasovden, a sheep is bought and cooked with beans, and for Petkovden, a calf is slaughtered and cooked with rice and potatoes. For both *kurbans*, everyone born in the village, even if they live and work in the nearby towns, comes home; people from the nearby villages of Kopanitsa and Bornarevo come, as well. Here is part of the respondents' account:

> They sit at the tables in the old school courtyard, eat from the *kurban* in a bowl, munch on the salads, chat and drink. Then we fill their containers, they pay and leave. We cover all the expenses for the sheep or the calf and other products. There is some money left, and the church board keeps it. Part of the money was used for some repairs in the church. One year, the *kurban* was special and very interesting. There had been a terrible drought before Spasovden. An awful drought! People were scared and desperate. We held the *kurban*. The priest came, blessed it, and then said a prayer for rain. On the *kurban* – a prayer for rain... And just a few minutes after the prayer, it started to rain. Imagine that! We were shocked! [L.I., 72 years old, mayor]

The almost deserted villages in which the *kurban* has never stopped deserve special attention. We will present three cases we attended this year.

First case: The village of Radovo is a typical village from the Tran area. Today, it has 15 permanent residents. Traditionally, on St. George's Day, a *kurban* and a shared meal are held, which, according to the respondents, have never stopped. In the past, the *kurban* was held at the local church and accompanied by the first ritual milking of the sheep for the year, locally known as *premlaz*. After many young residents moved to Pernik and the capital, Sofia, the celebration with the shared meal was moved to a public building in the centre of the village, called "the club", where not only local people but also their offspring and relatives, young families with children who have newly purchased properties and many friends of the locals gathered. For St. George's Day (6 May) this year (2023), a

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8   There were 625 in 1926, The Bulgarian Village. Jubilee collection. S., 1930, p. 482.

Photo 2. Kurban in the village of Radovo (Photo: Tsvetana Manova)

lamb was donated by the son of the long-serving village mayor – "for health". Each housewife prepares ritual bread, and the men take care of the alcohol – everyone brings their homemade *rakiya*. They greet each other upon entry with "*Happy Holiday!*" Lined up at the shared table, they wait for the priest to come and bless the *kurban* and then have their meal. The celebration ends with music and dancing. For next year, a man who has returned to the village and keeps 30 cows in an abandoned building promised to donate a lamb for the holiday. (Photo 2)

Second case: Spasovden *kurban* in the village of Potsarnentsi, near Radomir. Officially, there are 30 residents in the village, but there are also some holiday homes where people come to spend the weekends. The Spasovden *kurban* has never been interrupted, even under socialism. It was traditionally held about 2 km away from the centre of the village, where the Monastery of the Ascension of the Lord used to be. In the 1980s, the local people decided to hold the *kurban* in the village square since the monastery was too far away and difficult to reach for the residents, who were mostly elderly. They built a new church near the school, dedicated it to the Ascension of Christ and moved the *kurban* ritual to its courtyard. As a rule, the locals attend the ritual, but there are also many outsiders who have bought properties in the village and come from Sofia,

Photo 3. Distribution of the kurban in Potsernentsi (Photo: Tsvetana Manova)

Radomir, and Pernik on this day. They arrive especially for the celebration, stay for the day and leave in the evening. This year, on Spasovden, fires were lit early in the morning next to the church to prepare the *kurban* in three large cauldrons. Two sheep were bought and slaughtered for the purpose the day before. The sheep and other foodstuffs (beans, pepper, tomatoes, onions, carrots, and oil) were bought with the funds from the previous year's *kurban*. The celebration was organised by a Sofia family who bought a house there and now live permanently in the village. There is a shed with tables and benches near the fireplace. Some men bring tablecloths, arrange bowls and spoons on the table and sit down to a glass of *rakiya* while waiting for the priest and the others to arrive; the priest is to bless the *kurban* and the set table. Gradually, local residents and guests start to arrive, including young people with children – the locals' relatives or newcomers who have recently purchased houses in the village. The women bring ceremonial bread (*pogachi*), and the men bring Tupperware containers for their *kurban*. The *kurban* is blessed by the priest and given away to all the people present in exchange for some money, and each family takes it home, "for health". There are usually about 90 people at the *kurban*. Many stay at the table "to see each other and eat there". One of the respondents shared: "The kurban makes us closer to each other and better people. It really does, and everyone feels it. This is why we look forward to it." (O.A., 81 years old) (Photo 3)

Third case: The village of Rakilovtsi now has a permanent population of 30. It had 616 in 1910[9], and in 1934 it had 877.[10] The annual *kurban* has always been on Spasovden near a thousand-year-old oak tree, 2 km away from the village. Now all local residents are elderly and cannot walk this distance, so the *kurban* has been moved to the centre of the village. They buy the lamb and the other products with pensioners' club money. People from the town or other places where they now live also come for the *kurban*. Everyone stays until late in the afternoon, happy to be together, feasting on the bread and sweets that the women have prepared, and in the evening, only the local residents remain.

The village of Shipkovitsa near Tran is a special case. Today, it has six permanent residents. In the first decades of the 20th century, there were 608 (i.e. a hundred times more). The *kurban* is held every year in late October. Locals call it the *"Soldiers' Saint"* and associate it with the many residents of the village who died during the wars.

The social aspects of the *kurban* as a celebration and ritual practice are particularly visible in villages that no longer exist. The example of the village of Popovo near Pernik, whose fields were submerged under the waters of the Studena dam in the 1950s, is illustrative. Since the restitution of property in post-socialist Bulgaria in the early 1990s, the former residents and their descendants return to their destroyed houses every year for the village day and hold a *kurban* on the banks of the dam. Each of them takes part in the ritual sacrificial food to the place where the foundations of their old house are and eats it together with their family. In the era of accelerated industrialisation in socialist Bulgaria, these former village residents were forcibly made into metallurgists working in the town (Pernik), and some were scattered throughout the country. After the democratic changes in Bulgaria, the former residents of Popovo gather every year at the village *fair* to make the traditional collective sacrifice (*kurban*) "like in the old days" and "to show everyone that they are still there and that it is their place" (Hristov and Manova 2007, 219). Aside from that time, the village is completely abandoned. Thus, every year, the former peasants, turned into industrial workers, restore the connection with their predecessors and with the past near their destroyed homes.

Depopulating villages support their community identity and social life through new collective blood sacrifices. An interesting example in this regard is the village of Divlya. It now has about thirty residents, but in the first decades of the 20th century, it was almost a small town, with a population of about 1,500.[11] Twenty years ago, on 28 August 1993, a woman from the village lit a fire in the

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[9]   Results of the population census in the Kingdom of Bulgaria, S. 1911, p. 8.

[10]   Population and housing stock census of 4 December 1985. S. 1986, p. 33.

[11]   Statistics of the Principality of Bulgaria, S., 1881. State Printing Office.

Photo 4. The communal table for the kurban in Divlya (Photo: Tsvetana Manova)

hearth of her yard to prepare a meal. She lay down to rest for a bit until it boiled but fell asleep. The fire from her hearth ignited the yard, spread next door, then through the neighbourhood. The whole village caught fire. From that day, 28 August, residents have held a *kurban*. Two people go to each house and collect money. Everyone gives what they can. People who live in Sofia, Pernik or elsewhere but spend the summer in Divlya also donate. They may not be from the village, but they give money for the *kurban*. A dozen tables and benches are built in the churchyard. People come with cakes, salads, sweets and drinks. They call a priest from Zemen to bless the *kurban*, and they distribute it. Everyone brings a container to take some home. People sit at the tables for a few hours together, socialising and having fun, then someone plays the *kaval* and everyone gets up for the wonderful Divlyan dances. They stay together until late in the afternoon. According to the recollections of the respondents, they have not missed a single year since the big village fire. They hold an annual *kurban* on the *Golema Bogoroditsa* day. (Photo 4)

It was important to us to show that the shared village meal with a sacrifice in the deserted villages of Central Western Bulgaria represents a significant part of the ritual basis of the collective community consciousness, on which the local and national identity rests in the conditions of pan-European mobility. This is

probably a factor in their future development in the modern process of globalisation but also the depopulation of entire regions.

We drew the following conclusions from our study:

– In small villages, the *kurban* and the *fair (sabor)* have been the only village celebrations in recent times.
– In the smallest villages of the Tran area, with fewer than 15 inhabitants, the festive *kurbans* are the most popular.
– In the smallest villages of the Tran area, with 15–20 inhabitants, the festive *kurbans* are the most regularly held.
– Most permanent residents of the neighbouring villages also attend each of the *kurbans* in other small villages near Tran.
– Very often, the *kurban* and the village *fair* are on the same day: the *kurban* is held in the morning until around 12–1 pm, and the fair is in the afternoon, at 6 pm. In some villages, they run one right after the other.
– *Kurbans* can also organised by people who do not live permanently in the village, even some who live abroad (e.g. this year's *kurban* in the village of Studen Izvor near Tran).
– In some villages, the *kurban* is no longer held due to the small number of residents (e.g. Kasi Lak, Slishovtsi, etc.), but some small villages hold two *kurbans*.
– The money collected during the payment for the *kurban* is kept for the next *kurban* or used for the village church.
– Those who attended the *kurban* themselves concluded that this gathering "awakens" the village and brings people back to it, at least once a year.

The functioning of the collective sacrifice *(kurban)* as a ritual of community identification and a marker of empathy and unity among the group members is clearly demonstrated in all variants of the festive sacrificial ritual. Holding the celebration with a collective sacrifice *(kurban)*, even when the village is completely deserted, is an interesting phenomenon of the ritual process and folk religiosity at the beginning of the 21st century. These villages are almost deserted for the rest of the year. Territorially scattered, the migrant residents return every year and perform the ritual of collective blood sacrifice and a shared meal with a *kurban*, with the idea that, in this way, the village continues to exist in time: "We might not have a village, but we hold our kurban as if we have one."

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The Landscape of the Monastic Endeavour:
The Choices of St Sava of Serbia

Abstract: This paper approaches the question of the selection of site intended for monastic ascetic pursuits taking the example of St Sava of Serbia. Sava's choices were based on his masterful knowledge of Byzantine eremitic tradition and his own substantial monastic experience. This is evidenced by the *hesychasteria* he founded: he gave physical form to the concept of *locus amoenus* in the Karyes *kellion* of the monastery of Hilandar, while the concept of *locus horridus* was embodied in the cave hermitages of the monasteries of Studenica and Mileševa. The methodological framework of this research is informed by current landscape studies.

Keywords: St Sava of Serbia, Karyes *kellion*, Studenica hermitage, hermitages of Mileševa, monastic *desert*, landscape studies.

In modern scholarly discourse the *landscape* functions as a complex and polyvalent concept open to diverse approaches and interpretations. Most of the more recent and quite extensive work on the subject – particularly rich in substance since the 1980s – is predicated on the premise that the phenomena designated as "natural landscape" and "cultural landscape" are inseparable, i.e. on the view that landscape is both the "object" and "mode of perception". The fact that what we call *nature* is not only physical reality but also a particular *idea* points to a complex interplay between landscape and man, i.e. between the "object" and its perception and interpretation. It is understandable then that more recent approaches in *landscape studies* are focused particularly on various practices associated with nature which, shaping and transforming both nature and man through dynamic processes, result in an organic interweave of the material and spiritual worlds.[1]

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[1] D. Cosgrove, "Landscape and the European Sense of Sight – Eying Nature". In *The Handbook of Cultural Geography*, eds. K. Anderson et al. (London: Sage, 2003), 249–268; for an exhaustive historical overview of the research and relevant results, see *Chris-*

A specific and quite telling medieval understanding of space saw God, man and nature as intrinsically interconnected. Even early Christian exegetes were proponents of a theology of nature that rested on the belief that the landscapes that make up earth are parts of a single whole – the cosmos, God's perfect creation. To the Byzantines, natural features such as oceans and rivers, mountains and deserts, wild and tame places were not mere geographical concepts but parts of a complex topographic system of symbols and a reflection of heavenly reality. These *topoi*/symbols, as rightly emphasized in Veronica della Dora's exceptional study, operate in complementary pairs – wild and domesticated nature, for example – and in order for them to be understood properly they have to be looked at in their totality.[2] In other words, the landscapes of this world are filled with meaning, and their sacred prototypes are to be found in the Bible, patristic and ascetic literature, hagiography. The preeminent of them were the places endowed with particular qualities, those that possessed a "spiritual magnetism", an immanent miraculous power.[3] Such, above all, were spaces associated with the events and protagonists of Sacred History and the feats of renowned saints. In medieval belief, firmly rooted in the theological postulates and popular piety alike, these sacred places could be renewed and "reconstructed" time and again – all across the Christian world and in very different geographical settings – without losing their spiritual essence. What they had in common were charismatic properties, i.e. a symbolic and associative similarity to the traditional *topoi* of Christian sacred topography such as the illustrious deserts and theophanic mountains, the pillar-like dwellings of stylites and the mystical caves of radical ascetics.[4] This delineates the conceptual framework for interpreting the phenomenon of monastic *deserts* as the landscapes of the ascetic endeavour and the supreme Christian accomplishment.

St Sava of Serbia's conception of the *desert* and its landscape – which is the main topic of this paper – may be pieced together relatively well not only

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tian Pilgrimage, Landscape and Heritage. Journeying to the Sacred*, eds. A. Maddrell et al. (New York: Routledge, 2015), 6–7; V. della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred in Byzantium* (Cambridge: University Press, 2016).

[2]   della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 26–28 and passim.

[3]   J. Preston, "Spiritual Magnetism: an Organising Principle for the Study of Pilgrimage". In *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, ed. A. Moranis (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1992), 31–46; M. Winkelmann and J. Dubisch, "Introduction: the Anthropology of Pilgrimage". In *Pilgrimage and Healing*, eds. M. Winkelmann and J. Dubisch, (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005), ix–xxxvi; A. Lidov, ed. *Hierotopy. The Creation of Sacral Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia* (Moscow: Indrik, 2006).

[4]   della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 118–120; examples from Byzantine and Serbian hagiographic heritages have been analysed by I. Špadijer, "The Symbolism of Space in Medieval Hagiography", *Cyrilo-Methodian Studies* 21 (2012), 300–308.

from the surviving written and material sources but also owing to the very stimulating scholarly work which has contributed greatly, especially in recent times, to understanding this important concept of medieval asceticism. In brief, the *desert* is a distinctive kind of space, remote from the world, where the hermit, struggling to transcend the natural limitations of the human body and renounce all earthly values, passes through the stages of ascetic progress towards attaining true virtue, i.e. man's original godlikeness. The *desert* no doubt is an ambivalent concept. It can be, literally and symbolically, a *locus amoenus*, an idyllic landscape comparable to a lush garden as a metaphor for the otherworldly heavenly abode. It seems, however, that it figures more frequently as a *locus terribilis* – a harsh and virtually inaccessible landscape, perilous and menacing, inhabited by wild beasts and haunted by demonic creatures. It is a telling fact – confirmed by the examples from the Bible and patristic and monastic literature – that God reveals himself to his chosen ones at dramatic and charismatic places such as deserts, mountains and caves. The *desert*, whatever its physical form, was a monastic battleground, a space that made the ascetics face major existential challenges. In dealing with them, the hermits followed the highest role models – the biblical desert dwellers, such as the prophet Elijah, St John the Forerunner and Christ himself, and their illustrious continuators, the desert fathers, with St Anthony the Great as their founding figure.[5]

The relationship to the monastic landscape in the medieval Serbian lands may be reconstructed in two ways: based on the written sources and on the natural settings of churches, monasteries or eremitic dwellings. The chronological framework for the topic of this paper is the reign of the first Nemanjić rulers, i.e. the formative, creative period of the late twelfth and early decades of the thirteenth century when the foundations of the Serbian state and church were laid and the principles underpinning these institutions formulated. Needless to say, the pivotal role in that remarkable undertaking was played by St Sava of Serbia,

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[5]   A selection of literature: A. Guillaumont, "La conception du désert chez les moines d'Egypte", *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien* (Paris: Abbaye de Bellefontaine, Spiritualité Orientale 30, 1979), 67–87; J. E. Goehring, *Ascetics, Society and Desert. Studies in Early Egyptian Monasticism* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999); A-M. Talbot, "Les saintes montagnes à Byzance". In *Le sacré et son inscription dans l'espace à Byzance et en Occident, études comparées*, ed. M. Kaplan, (Paris: Byzantina Sorbonensia 18, 2001), 263–318; D. Ø. Endsjø, *Primordial Landscapes, Incorruptible Bodies. Desert Asceticism and the Christian Appropriation of Greek Ideas on Geography, Bodies and Immortality* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); D. Popović, "The Deserts and Holy Mountains of Medieval Serbia: written sources, spatial patterns, architectural designs". In *Heilige Berge und Wüsten, Byzanz und seine Umfeld*, ed. P. Soustal, (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2009), 53–69; D. Popović, "Desert as Heavenly Jerusalem: the Imagery of a Sacred Space in the Making". In *New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces*, ed. A. Lidov, (Moscow: Indrik, 2009), 151–175; della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*.

a prince and a monk, the first head of the autocephalous Serbian Church and chief creator of the dynastic ideology of the first Nemanjić rulers.

And yet, the initiatives that can be attributed reliably to St Sava are preceded by the sacral monuments dating from the reign of his father, grand *župan* Stefan Nemanja (named Simeon in monkhood), which compellingly testify to the well-considered and purposeful attitude to space as an important factor in the dynastic policy of religious patronage. A remarkable example is the sacral complex at the heart of Stari (Old) Ras in the Raška and Deževa river valleys consisting of the ancient cathedral church of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul and, above it, on the top of the conical hill that dominates the landscape, the monastery of Djurdjevi Stupovi – the votive and triumphal monument of the founder of the dynasty.[6] Not far from it, an eremitic cave community came to be nestled, probably also in the reign of Stefan Nemanja, in the cliffs beneath the fortress of Ras, organically blending into the craggy landscape.[7] Its particular relevance to us lies in the fact that it shows, along with some other examples, that not only the anchoritic form of monasticism but also the physical structures specific to it and always inseparable from their natural setting had a long tradition in the Balkans.[8]

The selection of site for setting up a monastic community was very important in the middle ages and depended on many factors. As observed in scholarship long ago, material and spiritual realties, geography and symbolism, the imaginary and the economic, the social and the ideological were interwoven in that process.[9] Examination of the textual material, among which monastic *typika* and hagiographies are especially relevant, has shown that appropriate natural conditions were a very important consideration – seclusion from the world, healthy climate, fertile land, clean water, even the beauty of the landscape. On the other hand, the anchorites intent on pursuing radical asceticism purposely chose isolated and inhospitable environments that would put their dedication

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[6]   D. Vojvodić and M. Marković, *Đurđevi Stupovi u Rasu* (Belgrade: Platoneum, 2023); M. Marković and D. Vojvodić, *Crkva Svetih apostola Petra i Pavla u Rasu* (Novi Sad: Platoneum, 2021).

[7]   D. Popović and M. Popović, "The Cave Lavra of the Archangel Michael in Ras", *Starinar* XLIX/1998 (1999), 103–130; M. Popović, Tvrđava Ras (Belgrade: Arheološki institut, 1999), 278–288.

[8]   An especially important example is the hermitage of St Peter of Koriša near Prizren, see D. Popović, "The Cult of St Peter of Koriša – Stages of Development, Patterns", *Balcanica* XXVIII (1997), 177; D. Popović, B. Todić and D. Vojvodić, *Dečanska pustinja. Skitovi i kelije manastira Dečana* (Belgrade: Balkanološki institut SANU; Međuodeljenski odbor SANU za proučavanje Kosova i Metohije, 2011), 177; I. Špadijer, *Sveti Petar Koriški u staroj srpskoj književnosti* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2014), 133–153.

[9]   J. Le Goff, "Le désert-forêt dans l'Occident médiéval", *L'imaginaire médiéval* (Paris: Gallimard, 1985), 59–75.

and the strength of their faith to a test.[10] In any case, looking for and finding the "right" site required "conquering" a space. By the founding of a monastery or an eremitic community – which was frequently guided by divine signs or took place after a triumph over demonic forces – the wild nature was transformed and sacralised and, depending on the type and needs of the monastic community, cultivated.[11] In keeping with the belief in an essential synergy between God, man and nature, the monks would have had an active relationship to the natural environment, ever striving to infuse it with the spiritual and shape it over and over again. They thus transformed the wilderness into a sacred place, constructing their community's distinctive religious and cultural identity along the way.[12]

Sava of Serbia purposely uses the *topos* of reshaping waste land and wilderness into a sacred place in the *Life of St Simeon* when referring to the construction of Studenica, his father's foundation and the dynastic funerary church. At the very beginning of the *Life*, he states: "This holy monastery of ours was, as you know, a place like a waste hunting ground of beasts. When he, our lord and autokrator Stefan Nemanja, who reigned over the Serbian land, came here to hunt and when he was hunting here, it pleased him to build here, at this waste place, this monastery for the peace and propagation of the monkhood."[13] Sava noticeably lays a particular emphasis on the statement, by repeating it twice, that the monastery of Studenica was built at a *waste place* "found" in the course of hunting. He skilfully uses the "waste hunting ground" *topos* as a descriptor of the found wild expanse predestined for the monastic endeavour. Likewise, Basil the Great, for example, states in his correspondence that the "paradisiacal" place in the mountains of the Pontus he chose for his anchoritic dwelling had previously

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[10] A-M. Talbot, "Founders' choices: monastery site selection". In *Founders and Refounders of Byzantine Monasteries*, ed. M. Mullet (Belfast: Belfast Byzantine Enterprises, Institute of Byzantine Studies, 2007), 43–52; A-M. Talbot, "Byzantine Monastic Horticulture: the Textual Evidence". In *Byzantine Garden Culture*, eds. A. Littlewood, H. Maguire and J. Wolschke-Bulmahn, (Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2002), 37–41; D. Popović in Popović, Todić and Vojvodić, *Dečanska pustinja*, 203–207.

[11] M. Kaplan, "Le choix du lieu saint d'après certaines sources hagiographiques byzantines". In *Le sacré et son inscription dans l'espace à Byzance et en Occident. Etudes comparées*, ed. M. Kaplan, (Paris: Byzantina Sorbonensia 18, 2001), 183–198; for examples from the Serbian milieu see S. Marjanović-Dušanić, "Zamišljeni i stvarni prostori srpskog srednjeg veka: skica za istraživanje rituala". In *Svet srednjovekovnih utvrđenja, gradova i manastira. Omaž Marku Popoviću*, eds. V. Ivanišević, V. Bikić and I. Bugarski, (Belgrade: Arheološki institut, Grad Beograd – Omladinsko pozorište Dadov, 2021), 179–197.

[12] E. F. Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape. Environment and Monastic Identity in the Medieval Ardennes* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), 22–27, 173–211; della Dora in *Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape and Heritage*, 45–51.

[13] *Sveti Sava*, *Sabrani spisi*, ed. D. Bogdanović, (Belgrade: Prosveta and Srpska književna zadruga, 1986), 97.

been only visited by hunters.[14] The meaning is similar of the claim in the *typikon* of the Constantinopolitan monastery of Kosmosoteria that it was built on a site that was "wild in every respect", inhabited only by snakes and scorpions.[15] The expulsion of wild beasts from the newly-conquered territory had a great symbolic value because it implied the control the monks had established over nature. At play here are deep associative connections underlying the medieval perception of nature and of its layered meaning. These associations were a vital driving force and spiritual reference point in "discovering" and establishing important sacred places, such as Studenica undoubtedly was. Sava does not describe the monastery's natural setting in any detail, but the exceptional qualities of the surrounding landscape are still recognizable.

The account of Stefan the First-Crowned in his *Life of St Simeon* conveys much the same meaning. Namely, he says that Sava found "a waste place in the middle of Mount Athos" and urged his father, Simeon (Nemanja), to "make every haste" to build there – on the site of the abandoned monastery of the Presentation of the Virgin – Hilandar.[16] So, both of the abovementioned monastic communities, royal foundations of the first order, came into existence through the transformation of waste land. Both bore a strong mark of identity, as compellingly evidenced by written sources: Studenica was the funerary church and dynastic foothold of the House of Nemanjić, a metaphor for the Heavenly Jerusalem and the tabernacle of the Serbian people, and, as such, the sacred point of the highest order on native soil, in the Serbian land.[17] Hilandar, on the other hand, was the Serbian foothold on the sanctified soil of Mount Athos, which earned it the epithet of the New Sion of the Serbian fatherland.[18] Not at all by accident, both monasteries operated as hubs and founts of not only liturgical and cultural life but also of the dynastic ideology of the House of Nemanjić. There is no doubt that their construction required enormous effort to overpower and

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[14] After H. Maguire, "Paradise Withdrawn". In *Byzantine Garden Culture*, 33; see also della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 171.

[15] *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents. A Complete Translation of the Surviving Founders' Typika and Testaments*, eds. J. Thomas and A. Constantinides Hero, vol. 2 (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 798.

[16] Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrani spisi*, ed. Ljiljana Juhas-Georgijevska, (Belgrade: Prosveta and Srpska književna zadruga, 1988), 79, 80; M. Živojinović, *Istorija Hilandara*, vol. I: *Od osnivanja manastira 1198. do 1335. godine* (Belgrade: Prosveta, 1998), 57–65.

[17] D. Popović, *Pod okriljem svetosti. Kult srpskih vladara i relikvija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji* (Belgrade: Balkanološki institut SANU, 2006), 71–73 ("O nastanku kulta svetog Simeona").

[18] Lj. Maksimović, "Hilandar i srpska vladarska ideologija". In *Osam vekova Hilandara*, ed. V. Korać, (Belgrade: SANU, 2000), 9–16; S. Marjanović-Dušanić, "Hilandar kao Novi Sion Nemanjinog otačastva". In *Osam vekova Hilandara*, 17–24.

domesticate the wilderness of the sites. This kind of endeavour, physical and spiritual, is vividly and exhaustively described in the *typikon* of the oldest and most distinguished Athonite cenobium, the Lavra monastery.[19] Enormous effort was also put in rebuilding the monastery of Hilandar, as may be seen clearly from the somewhat later texts penned by Domentijan and Teodosije.[20] The aim of such an endeavour, seen many times in the history of medieval monasticism, was to create, in the chosen environment, on the site of the conquered wilderness, the dedicated ones' own microcosm and abode – in a word, a monastic paradise in miniature as a "reconstruction" of the archetypal one epitomized by the Garden of Eden.[21]

That Sava had a crucial role in instituting and organizing monastic life in medieval Serbia is a generally accepted and well-argued view. He drew on the Athonite model, which encompassed diverse forms of monasticism, from the basic, cenobitic, one through transitional to the *kelliotic* or eremitic way of life.[22] His relationship to the natural environment found full expression at his founding of the Karyes *kellion*, for which he wrote a separate *typikon*.[23] As an Athonite learner in his youth and, much later, on his pilgrimages to the most renowned monastic communities of the East in his capacity as head of the Serbian Church, Sava had the opportunity to gain a keen understanding both of the meaning and purpose of monastic *deserts*, and of their natural settings.[24] No wonder, then, that the Serbian *hesychasteria* he founded reveal his great erudition and finely-honed appreciation of the features and symbolic meanings of different landscapes.

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[19] *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. 1, 251–253.

[20] Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeuna*, ed. R. Marinković, (Belgrade: Prosveta and Srpska književna zadruga, 1988), 91–93; Teodosije, *Žitija*, ed. D. Bogdanović, (Belgrade: Prosveta and Srpska književna zadruga, 1988), 138–139 (which claims, among other things, that Sava mustered "a multitude of workers because he wanted to accomplish much in little time").

[21] Arnold, *Negotiating the Landscape*, 22–27, 173–211; della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 170–172.

[22] D. Papahrisantu, *Atonsko monaštvo, počeci i organizacija* (Belgrade: Društvo prijatelja Svete Gore Atonske, 2003), 49–91 and passim; D. Popović in *Dečanska pustinja*, eds. Popović, Todić and Vojvodić, 178–185 (with bibliography).

[23] *Sveti Sava*, *Sabrani spisi*, 41–86; L. Mirković, "Skitski ustavi sv. Save", *Brastvo* 28 (1934), 52–68; I. Špadijer, *Svetogorska baština* (Belgrade: Čigoja štampa, 2014), 18–21 (with complete bibliography); M. Živojinović, *Svetogorske kelije i pirgovi u srednjem veku* (Belgrade: Vizantološki institut SANU, 1972), 91–102.

[24] D. Popović, "Pustinožiteljstvo svetog Save Srpskog". In *Kult svetih na Balkanu II*, ed. M. Detelić, (Kragujevac: Liceum 7, 2002), 61–85; see also M. Marković, *Prvo putovanje svetog Save u Palestinu i njegov značaj za srpsku srednjovekovnu umetnost* (Belgrade: Vizantološki institut SANU, 2009).

As far as landscapes are concerned, it should be noted that Sava followed both models of the monastic *desert* when founding *hesychasteria* – the *locus amoenus* and the *locus terribilis*.[25] What the two had in common was withdrawal from the world into untouched nature which appeared to be meant for ascetic pursuits. The former model – the monastic paradise and Edenic garden – was embodied in the Karyes *kellion*, a hermitage of the monastery of Hilandar, whose first dweller was Sava himself.[26] As for the natural setting of the Karyes *kellion*, its conception is illustrated well by Sava's biographers. According to Domentijan, Sava discovered "a place extraordinarily bright and admirable, adorned with all manner of beauties in the likeness of paradise, in the middle of Karyes, where the holy monks live in the sketic way in every silence."[27] Teodosije's account is not much different. Sava, he says, "found an extraordinary place in the place called Karyes, adorned with good waters and fruit-bearing trees"; having purchased that piece of land from the protos, he had a *kellion* built and a small church dedicated to his patron saint, St Sabas the Sanctified, and dwelt there alone "in silence, psalm-chanting and prayer".[28]

These descriptions clearly show that the conception of the Karyes *kellion* echoed the models of natural environment established in Byzantine literature and art as early as the post-iconoclastic period: the idea of *hesychasterion* as an earthly paradise – a place secluded from the world, nested in a bucolic natural setting, flowery and fragrant, abounding in clean water, singing birds; briefly, a markedly beautiful landscape. It is at the same time a spiritual paradise, the place of the monastic endeavour reserved for the few dedicated monks.[29] The latter approach can be read from one of the main provisions of the *typikon* of Karyes, the one in which Sava prescribes that the *kellion* be the "dwelling for two or three [monks]", and those who are "worthy of the spiritual rule".[30]

The conception of the Karyes *kellion* included a garden or a vineyard. Namely, the reference to wine and fruit in its *typikon*[31] has led researchers to

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[25] I discussed this topic in more detail in a separate paper: D. Popović, "Monastic wilderness as a cultural construct. Case study: the cave hermitages of the monastery of Mileševa". In *Wilderness Revisited: its Essence, Perception, Description and Image in Byzantium and Beyond*, Studies in Historical Geography and Cultural Heritage (in press).

[26] Živojinović, *Svetogorske kelije i pirgovi*, 91–102; M. Kovačević, *Sveta Carska Lavra Hilandar na Svetoj Gori. Arhitekrura i druga dobra* (Belgrade – Hilandar: Zadužbina Svetog manastira Hilandara, 2015) 556–566 (with earlier literature).

[27] Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeuna*, 96.

[28] Teodosije, *Žitija*, 146.

[29] Maguire, "Paradise Withdrawn", 23–35; H. Maguire, *Nectar and Illusion. Nature in Byzantine Art and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

[30] *Sveti Sava*, *Sabrani spisi*, 37–38.

[31] *Ibid.*, 37.

assume that a vineyard and a fruit orchard were planted around it. This is corroborated by written sources which show that Sava successively purchased land in the environs of the *kellion* with a view to planting a vineyard. It is worthy of note that some of that land had been left unploughed and was overgrown with trees, which would have required its cultivation or, in other words, the transformation of the found wild nature.[32] Sava was an heir to an ancient tradition in that respect too. St Anthony the Great, the illustrious founder of anchoritic, *kelliotic* monasticism, is known to have planted a vegetable garden next to his hermitage in the "inner desert".[33] Such gardens were also tended by anchorites in the Judean Desert – St Sabas the Sanctified among them – as claimed by textual sources and confirmed by archaeology.[34] As documented credibly in scholarship, small gardens around anchoritic *kellia* were common in the Byzantine world too.[35]

The described conception of the Karyes *kellion* had a broader context of meaning as well. It is readable from the perception of Mount Athos as a monastic paradise held by Sava of Serbia and his brother Stefan, the future first crowned Serbian king. Sava presented it in his *Life of St Simeon* penned about 1207, and Stefan in the proem of his *Hilandar Charter*, traditionally dated to 1199–1202 and relatively recently re-dated to 1207–1208.[36] Since the two descriptions of Mount Athos as a paradisiacal meadow have been quoted and discussed more than once – and recently received an exhaustive and informative study by Irena Špadijer[37] – I shall only focus on the points of interest to our topic.

In Sava's *Life of St Simeon* Mount Athos is described as the "holy meadow" at which Simeon (Nemanja) came at his son's invitation: "And [Simeon] arrived

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[32] *Natpisi manastira Hilandara*, vol. I: *XIV—XVII vek*, eds. G. Subotić, B. Miljković and N. Dudić, (Belgrade: Hilandarski odbor SANU and Vizantološki odbor SANU, 2019), 121–122 (B. Miljković, who offers detailed commentaries on the statements made in the written sources).

[33] Athanase d'Alexandrie, *Vie d'Antoine*, ed. G. J. M. Bartelink, (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1994), 271–273.

[34] Cyril of Scythopolis, *The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, eds. R. M. Price and J. Binns, (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1991), 20, 96, 118, 126; Y. Hirschfeld, *The Judean Desert Monasteries in the Byzantine Period* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 200–204.

[35] Talbot, "Byzantine Monastic Horticulture", 41–48 (with sources).

[36] Đ. Bubalo, "Kada je veliki župan Stefan Nemanjić izdao povelju manastiru Hilandaru?", *Stari srpski arhiv* 9 (2010), 233–241.

[37] I. Špadijer, "Alegorija raja kod svetog Save i Stefana Prvovenčanog". In *PERIVOLOS, Zbornik u čast Mirjane Živojinović*, eds. B. Miljković and D. Dželebdžić, (Belgrade: Vizantološki institut SANU and Zadužbina Svetog manastira Hilandara 2015), 113–126 (with special reference to the artistic and textual models used by Sava of Serbia and Stefan the First-Crowned, and to the chronological relationship of their compositions).

at the meadow of peace, amongst beautifully tall and fruit-bearing trees in which sweet birds are singing, where he, listening, lived a peaceful and tranquil life, and anchored well in the true faith and shining bright, stood like a beautiful tree in a good harbour, to wit at Mount Athos…"[38] The allegory of the paradisiacal "holy meadow" becomes more detailed in Stefan's donation charter for Hilandar – in the poetic image regarded, and with good reason, as one of the most beautiful in medieval literature, and not only Serbian.[39] Stefan describes his father's vision of paradise as follows: "He [Simeon] was elevated by thought and desired: as if he were standing at an elevated place, in springtime, on a merry day, i.e. sunny, and he saw from afar a smooth meadow, beautiful in appearance, lovely in creation. In the middle of it a beautiful tree stood, with a round crown full of leaves, graced with flowers and heavy with fruit, sending forth a sweet scent. And in the middle of the tree a sweet-voiced bird settled, modest when sitting, soft-toned when singing, joyous when chirping, clear when whispering, one of the wise loving birds, his sweet boy […] called Sava the monk.[40]

The allegory of Mount Athos as a paradisiacal meadow that Sava and Stefan used drawing on the selected Byzantine literary models reveals its full, soteriological significance. It is clear from Stefan's words that Simeon abandoned the world to earn "the meadow described afore" and "attain salvation there". Telling and full of meaning is also his likening of the Athonite monks, pillars of the true faith, to the branches of the paradisiacal tree: "and [Simeon] heard that the life in that meadow is peaceful and tranquil, and that orthodoxy has taken good roots and is shining bright, like a tree that stands beautifully, and its branches are the sanctified and God-fearing and Christ-loving monks…"[41] The same message is conveyed by Sava's description of the Athonite monks as "nice-smelling flowers blooming in that holy desert".[42] This is not merely a beautiful poetic image; it is also the theologically meaningful idea of flowers as a metaphor for piety, virtue and ascetic values. Hence the link between fragrance, floral symbolism and monastic pursuits is an important *topos* in Christian literature.[43] It underlies the interpretation of the monastic *desert* as the anchoritic paradise where a multitude of flowers bloom – the monks and their virtues. This only seeming paradox

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[38] *Sveti Sava, Sabrani spisi*, 108–109.

[39] S. Radojčić, "Hilandarska povelja Stefana Prvovenčanog i motiv raja u srpskom monumentalnom slikarstvu", *Uzori i dela starih srpskih umetnika* (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1975), 195–210; Špadijer, "Alegorija raja", 114, 125.

[40] Stefan Prvovenčani, *Sabrani spisi*, 56.

[41] *Ibid.*, 57.

[42] *Sveti Sava, Sabrani spisi*, 111.

[43] D. Popović, "Cvetna simbolika i kult relikvija u srednjovekovnoj Srbiji", *Zograf* 32/2008 (2009), 69–81 (with sources and literature).

is expressed by the syntagm *desertum floridus*.[44] It reveals an essential goal of the hermits – to "reconstruct" the Garden of Eden in their own living environment and thus anticipate the future abodes of the Heavenly Jerusalem.[45]

Scholars have already put forward the view that Sava's and Stefan's penchant for the motif of paradisiacal meadow, embodied in the monastic setting of Mount Athos, may be accounted for by the brothers' similar artistic taste or common literary source of inspiration. It has also been observed that the *topos* of paradisiacal meadow used by Sava was based on his own experience,[46] a fact that is certainly worthy of being emphasized. It was in the early, formative period of his life that Sava experienced the monastic *desert* and its landscape – "beautiful in appearance, lovely in creation" – as an idyllic backdrop for a "tranquil life". If we are to believe his biographers, the impression that the Athonite practice of eremitism made on him was so strong that it set off a profound inner transformation. No wonder, then, that he retained all his life an especial, emotionally charged relationship to Mount Athos in general, and to the Karyes *kellion* in particular. Under the pressure of duties and worries, he often remembered the days spent in that "divine paradise", yearning to return to his *locus amoenus*.[47]

Sava's immediate and deeply felt experience of the *desert* – and not only at Athos but also at the dwellings of illustrious ascetics of Egypt, Judea and Sinai – included awareness of its other side known as the *locus terribilis* or *locus horridus*. The latter conception, the opposite of the paradisiacal bucolic one embodied in the Karyes *kellion*, was given physical form in the hermitage of the monastery of Studenica he founded in his homeland – of which more will be said later. At any rate, Sava's choices of locations for anchoritic dwellings testify to his familiarity with the tradition of *kelliotic* cave monasticism, including the aspect concerning the symbolic properties of its natural setting.

As far as the landscape is concerned, undoubtedly the central phenomenon and distinctive feature of medieval ascetic monasticism was holy mountains – iconic, theophanic spaces of the first order. They evoked biblical mountains – such as Sinai, Tabor, the Mount of Olives, Golgotha – the sites of the key events of Sacred History as well as the mountains regarded as *loci memoriae* associated

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[44] G. J. M. Beterling, "Les Oxymores desertum civitas et desertum floribus", *Studia monastica* 15 (1977), 7–15; S. Ashbrook Harvey, *Scenting salvation. Ancient Christianity and the Olfactory Imagination* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 56–200.

[45] R. L. Wilken, "Loving Jerusalem Below: the Monks of Palestine". In *Jerusalem, its Sanctity and Centrality to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. L. I. Levine, (New York: Continuum, 1999), 240–250; D. Popović, "Desert as Heavenly Jerusalem: the imagery of a sacred space in the making". In *New Jerusalems. Hierotopy and Iconography of Sacred Spaces*, ed. A. Lidov, (Moscow: Indrik, 2009), 151–175.

[46] Špadijer, "Alegorija raja", 125.

[47] D. Popović, "Pustinožiteljstvo svetog Save", 70–71 (with sources).

with the life and deeds of distinguished ascetics. In the Byzantine mind, they were metaphors for spiritual ascent and the ladder leading to heaven.[48] As many concepts of Eastern Christian asceticism, holy mountains were an ambivalent category when it comes to landscape. They could be a space transformed into a paradisiacal garden through the transformation of wilderness. Documented well in Byzantine writers, this idea – which found a supreme expression in Psellos' description of the Bithynian holy mountain as "a second paradise and a second heaven"[49] – is clearly recognizable, we have seen, in the perception of the Holy Mountain of Athos held by Sava of Serbia and Stefan the First-Crowned.

And yet, holy mountains and monastic *deserts* – although frequently understood as complementary, even interchangeable concepts – as a rule belonged to the *locus horridus* category: a dramatically beautiful but remote, barely accessible and dangerous environment which made the ascetic face the hardest trials. The anchorites leaning towards radical asceticism purposefully settled in such inhospitable and perilous environments. There is textual evidence for many such examples among the old desert fathers. Elias the Hermit, a dweller of the illustrious Egyptian Thebaid, was famed for having spent seventy years in the "horrible desert", without ever descending to the inhabited area. His cave hermitage, high in the rocks, could be reached by a narrow, barely noticeable path along the cliff.[50] The tradition of the desert fathers had its continuators. For example, the hermitage of the distinguished Lazaros of Galesion in an inaccessible mountainous landscape was so difficult to reach that the visitors had to resort to a special technology to cut a path in the rock; a man was reportedly killed while trying to climb to his *kellion* using a rope.[51] Telling in that sense is the Athonite monk John's description of his habitat as "cruel and cheerless" and, therefore, suited to the purpose.[52] In the Serbian milieu, an especially prominent example is the hermit Peter whose vita was penned by Teodosije (Theodosius) of Hilandar. Peter found his *kellion* sometime in the late twelfth century in the inaccessible mountainous area of Koriša which he, characteristically, calls a "holy mountain". A century later, Teodosije used select *topoi* of ascetic literature to describe the hermit's endeavour: "He climbed a tall rock gripping it with his fingers. And

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[48] Talbot, "Les saintes montagnes à Byzance", 263–318; della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 147–175; A. Lidov, ed., *The Hierotopy of Holy Mountains in Christian Culture* (Moscow: Indrik, 2019); for examples from the Serbian milieu see D. Popović, "The Deserts and Holy Mountains of Medieval Serbia", 53–69.

[49] After Talbot, "Les saintes montagnes à Byzance", 275.

[50] *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto (The Lives of the Desert Fathers)*, ed. N. Russel, (London: Mowbray, 1981), 69.

[51] *The Life of Lazaros of Mt. Galesion. An Eleventh-Century Pillar Saint*, ed. R. P. H. Greenfield, (Washington, D. C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 2000), 89, 91.

[52] *Byzantine Monastic Foundation Documents*, vol. 4, 1391.

having laboriously climbed it, like a pillar, he found high up on this rock a cave, as if prepared by God, and, having thanked God greatly, rejoiced at it."[53]

The "cave prepared by God" and the pillar-like rock reminiscent of the dwellings of ancient stylites, whom Peter's *Life* expectedly mentions, point to a fundamental aspect of the eremitic habitats: their rocky and speluncar character. In Christian tradition, natural features such as caves, cliffs and rocks were believed to be God's miraculous "creations" or "not made by human hands". They evoked the creation of the world and were considered to be privileged places for mystical encounters with the divine. They were also the site of the hermit's struggle with demonic forces.[54] That idea underlay so-called *rock-cut architecture*, the practice of building eremitic cells, *parekklesia* and churches, sometimes even entire complexes, in and against caves and cliff faces. This type of architecture, occurring in the parts of the Eastern Christian world where the topography permitted, exemplified the harmony established between natural, "divine" creations and architecture, a work of human hands.[55]

Caves held a special place among those stony "not-made-by-hands" features. They have always been seen as a liminal zone, an "anti-space" as it were, a place of darkness, silence and apophatic mysticism. The cave is almost like the ascetic's grave in which he, in the spirit of the *Ladder*, dwells in the "daily remembrance of death, mortifying the body and ascending in virtue."[56] That place signified in the most literal sense the hermit's abandonment of the world and programmatic narrowing of perception aimed at ridding himself of all superfluous contents.[57] By way of illustration, let me offer a telling example. Elpidius, a radical ascetic, dwelled in the desert in the environs of Jericho. A tall mountain rose in front of his cave, barring his view: for the twenty-five years he spent there he could see neither the sun after six in the morning nor the stars in the

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[53] Teodosije, *Žitija*, 271; D. Popović, "The Cult of St Peter of Koriša", 210–235, 186–188.

[54] della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 147–196.

[55] D. Popović in Popović, Todić, and Vojvodić, *Dečanska pustinja*, 205–207 (with examples from the Eastern Christian world and relevant literature).

[56] Sveti Jovan Lestvičnik, *Lestvica*, ed. D. Bogdanović, (Belgrade: Sveti arhijerejski sinod SPC, 1965), 68–71.

[57] J. Danièlou, "Le Symbole de la caverne chez Grégoire de Nysse". In *Mullus: Festschrift Theodor Klauser, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum 1*, eds. A. von Stuiber and A. Hermann, (Münster: Aschendorf, 1964), 43–51; S. Ćurčić, "Cave and Church. An Eastern Christian Hierotopical Synthesis". In *Hierotopy, The Creation of Sacral Spaces in Byzantium and Medieval Russia*, ed. A. Lidov, (Moscow: Indrik, 2006), 216–236; A-M. Talbot, "Caves, demons and holy man". In *Le saint, le moine et le paysan. Mélanges d'histoire byzantine offerts à Michel Kaplan*, eds. O. Delouis, S. Métivier and P. Pages, (Paris: Byzantina Sorbonensia, 2016), 707–718.

night sky.[58] Apart from offering an abundance of colourful information about the eremitic way of life, vivid stories about the cave dwellers, such as the one about Elpidius, reveal its higher, ethical and spiritual purpose.[59] Finally, the *kelliote*'s dwelling in a cave involved the struggle with demons, embodiments of sins and destructive passions. In the subsequent centuries, the arduous battle to overpower those forces of evil, as a rule accompanied by miraculous signs, and the transformation of the cave into a sacred place became a major *topos* of ascetic and hagiographic literature.[60]

In any case, caves were an important element of the already mentioned topographic system which made it possible for the original meaning of hallowed models – the Old and New Testament caves, as well as those that kept the memory of the famous desert fathers – to be recreated, across the Christian world, in one's own time and place. How great their symbolic power was may be seen from the fact that Eastern Christian exegesis developed a distinctive discourse known as "speluncar theology".[61]

Bearing in mind all these general principles regarding the monastic landscape as the ascetic *locus horridus*, let us return to Sava of Serbia. During his stay at Mount Athos, Sava had the opportunity to acquaint himself with both types of monastic landscape – besides the "Edenic" one, he gained an insight into the "cruellest life" of the ascetics residing on the almost inaccessible slopes of Athos. It is worthy of note that in the Byzantine mind this mountain had special charisma and its summit, likened to Tabor, the mount of Transfiguration, was regarded as the place of divine revelation.[62] The features of this landscape, which has changed little since Sava's times, and Teodosije of Hilandar's well-known description help us form a convincing picture of what young Sava experienced during his visits to the most radical Athonite hermits. According to Teodosije, they dwelled "in high mountains together with deer", had the "sky for a church" and "cramped huts adorned with grass." They resided "in rock clefts and land caves and on sea rocks like birds". The recluses lived in union with nature and

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[58] Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, ed. R. T. Meyer, (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1965), 131.

[59] Of numerous examples, I offer here a selection of classical compositions: *Historia Monachorum in Aegypto*, 56, 61, 69, 70, 91, 92, 99 and passim; Palladius, *The Lausiac History*, 32, 57, 82, 92, 130, 138; Cyril of Scythopolis, *The Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, 11, 12, 58, 103, 108, 110, 117 and passim.

[60] R. P. H. Greenfield, *Traditions of Belief in Late Byzantine Demonology* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1988); T. Pratsch, *Der hagiographische Topos. Griechische Heiligenviten in mittelbyzantinische Zeit* (Berlin: Millenium-Studien, 2005), 160–169; Endsjø, *Primordial Landscapes*, 49–58; Talbot, "Caves, demons and holy man", 707–718.

[61] della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 176–196.

[62] *Ibid.*, 166–170.

were exposed to all of its blessings and whims: "Taught by the hum of trees and the chirp of birds […] nourished by clean and fragrant air", but also "lashed by rain and winds, scorched by sun and heat, chilled by frost and cold". They lived on "the fruits of trees and the herbs of the undergrowth", and drank "the sweet thirst-quenching water running from the mountain stone."[63] Teodosije does not fail to mention Sava's fascination with this "tranquil anchoritic life" and profound understanding of the purpose of anchoritism in the Orthodox monastic system.

Guided by those insights and his own vision, Sava brought the model established at Mount Athos – which included the Karyes *kellion* attached to Hilandar as the mother monastery – to the Serbian lands. He gave it physical form in the vicinity of the monastery of Studenica, the sacral and dynastic centre of the first Nemanjić rulers, by having a *hesychasterion* built, which is still extant and known as Sava's Upper Hermitage.[64] Unlike the Karyes *kellion* whose founding and *typikon* are documented in written sources, all evidence for the founding of the Studenica one is lost – probably in many ravages the monastery and its *kellion* suffered over the centuries. Nonetheless, there is good reason for researchers' undivided opinion that the Studenica hermitage was Sava's brainchild. It is corroborated by the general, conceptual reasons, illustrated well by the words of Sava's biographer Domentijan that Sava "brought the Holy Mountain's good example to his fatherland, to cenobiums, monasteries, hesychasteria".[65] Sava's role in the founding of the hermitage is suggested not only by the enduring local tradition but also by somewhat later written sources. Especially important of these is a note made in a manuscript copy of the *Typikon* of Studenica: "This *typikon*, written by the hand of St Sava, was copied in 1619 in the cave hermitage of St Sava."[66]

While the Karyes *kellion*, as we have seen, epitomized a bucolic landscape and heavenly meadows, the Studenica hermitage exemplified the model based on the "sacred triad" – mountain, rock, cave. The "Upper Hermitage" sits about 12 km to the west of the monastery of Studenica, deep in Mt Čemerno. It can be reached from two directions – from the west, from the village of Bažale, and along the path from the "Lower Hermitage", from the village of Savovo,

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[63] Teodosije, *Žitija*, 116–117.

[64] L. Pavlović, "Beleške o manastiru Studenici", *Saopštenja* XIX (1987), 169–171; S. Temerinski, "Gornja isposnica u Savovu kod Studenice". In *Osam vekova Studenice* (Belgrade: Sveti arhijerejski sinod SPC 1986), 257–260; S. Temerinski, "Konzervatorski problemi u Gornjoj isposnici kod Studenice", *Glasnik Društva konzervatora* 14 (1990), 44–52; N. Debljović-Ristić, "Gornja isposnica Svetog Save u Studenici – obnova drvenog pristupnog mosta ka kuli za stanovanje", *Moderna konzervacija* 6 (2018), 95–104.

[65] Domentijan, *Život Svetoga Save i Život Svetoga Simeona*, 124.

[66] Lj. Stojanović, *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi*, I–VI (Belgrade: SANU, Narodna biblioteka Srbije, Matica srpska, 1982–1988), 293–294.

which means a steep ascent in the last section. Rock-cut paths leading to the cave complex testify to the difficulty of access. At the end of the ascent, from a narrow piece of level land several hundred meters above the Studenica river, a magnificent view breaks upon the visitor – of the whole river gorge and, far in the distance, the slopes of Mt Golija. The Upper Hermitage, a small cave complex, is set up in a spacious funnel-shaped recess in the vertical rock mass. Either approach to it was defended by a wall and gate. The complex consists of several structures whose original medieval layer has been identified under the subsequent additions and more recent reconstructions.[67]

Visually the most imposing is the multi-storeyed residential building known as the "Tower", with its floors organized into several functional wholes. Under it is a two-part chamber, dubbed "Sava's cask" (*Savina kaca*), with a walled water well at one end and a fireplace at the other. The Tower can be accessed by a 20-m-long wooden bridge supported by stone-built pillars. At the other end of the bridge, a natural recess in the rock accommodates a small aisleless church dedicated to St George which shows the same building material and technique as the Tower. The complex includes other elements – such as the cave with the walled-up entrance and a spring inside it above the former gate as well as a lengthy, spacious cave in the immediate vicinity of the Tower.[68]

Viewed as a whole and individually, all the elements described above compellingly show that the architecture of the Upper Hermitage was organically integrated into the landscape. Conservation-restoration and field work revealed a number of important facts and technical details about how the medieval builders adapted the form of buildings to the configuration of the rocks. They cut paths and hewed cave walls, built retaining walls and stone supports, cut holes for wooden beams and grooves of various shapes and purposes. They spanned the chasm by a wooden bridge, and fitted two springs and the fireplace, vital to the survival of the hermits, in the space of the caves. It would not be an overstatement to say that the Upper Hermitage of Studenica is a representative example of "rock architecture" with respect both to architectural form and to the construction method and technique.

The first thing that strikes even the untrained visitor to the Upper Hermitage is its location; in other words, the choice of site that took into account a number of natural-morphological, spatial and microclimatic characteristics.[69] These characteristics, and the perfect harmony between the architecture and the rocky landscape testify to a masterful knowledge of the main elements of

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[67] Temerinski, "Gornja isposnica", 259–260; Temerinski, "Konzervatorski problemi u Gornjoj isposnici", 44–52; Debljović-Ristić, "Gornja isposnica Svetog Save", 99–101.

[68] See n. 64.

[69] Debljović-Ristić, "Gornja isposnica Svetog Save", 97–99.

monastic cave habitats, including those relating to their associative and symbolic meaning, and certainly known perfectly well to Sava of Serbia. It should also be noted that the Studenica hermitage faces the southeast, which means it had excellent sun exposure; hence an unexpectedly diverse plant life on the narrow piece of land around it – including grapevines and cherry and apricot trees.[70] Yet, these "bucolic" details are by no means the distinctive feature of this craggy landscape. The prevailing impression it makes is the dramatic scenery that elicits admiration and delight as much as fear and anxiety in face of the whims of wild nature. Illustrative in that sense is the experience of the visitors caught by a storm and, especially, of the Studenica monks who make an occasional stay at Sava's hermitage. According to them, spending a night there can be quite a trial because of the seclusion of the place, complete darkness and strange, often terrifying sounds.[71] This is a characteristic experience of the ascetics-anchorites who put their spiritual strength and faith to a test in the mystical and dangerous setting of caves and the wilds. That experience, described many times in ascetic literature and known as the *mysterium tremendum*, is the central feature of the type of ascetic habitats that functions and is perceived predominantly as the *locus horridus*.[72]

The origin of yet another cave complex, very similar to the Studenica one in type and purpose, has been attributed to St Sava of Serbia: the hermitages of the monastery of Mileševa (near Prijepolje, south-western Serbia) situated in the gorge of the Mileševka river about two kilometres south of the monastery. Not even in this case is the founding of the *hesychasteria* documented in written sources. But it is linked to Sava directly by local tradition and a note made in 1508 in a manuscript copy of the *Life of Saint Sava* written by Teodosije of Hilandar. The note says that the *Life* was copied by *dijak* Vladislav "in the desert of St Sava".[73] Yet another supporting argument is the fact that Sava had a crucial role in the inception and overall design of the monastery of Mileševa, the foundation and funerary church of his nephew, king Vladislav.[74]

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[70] Personal observations made during field surveys. As for animal life, eagles and falcons are frequently seen flying above the Upper Hermitage, and there are also ravens and swallows.

[71] On this see D. Popović, "Monastic wilderness as a cultural construct" (in press).

[72] della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 196 and passim.

[73] *Stari srpski zapisi i natpisi*, vol. 1, 124.

[74] M. Čanak-Medić and O. Kandić, *Arhitektura prve polovine XIII veka*, vol. I: *Crkve u Raškoj. Crkva Vaznesenja Hristovog u Mileševi* (Belgrade: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, 1995), 129–143; O. Kandić, S. Popović and R. Zarić, *Manastir Mileševa* (Belgrade: Republički zavod za zaštitu spomenika kulture, 1995); B. Todić, "Serbian Monumental Art of the 13th Century". In *Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, eds. D. Vojvodić and D. Popović, (Belgrade: The Serbian National

The hermitages of Mileševa sit in a remarkably picturesque landscape of the almost impassable gorge of the Mileševka river which can still boast rare and even endemic animal and plant species. Their builders used natural rock shelters in the northern vertical cliff beneath the medieval fortress known as Mileševac. The complex consisted of three main units. The so-called "Western Hermitage" served as a dwelling, and so did the "Upper Hermitage", which was set up high in the cliff and probably functioned as a scriptorium as well. The complex known as "Savine vode" (Sava's Waters) was cultic and sacral in character. One of its caves was converted to a chapel, which is still visited by pilgrims. In the cave opposite it is the "holy spring", traditionally believed by the faithful to have healing properties. The remains discovered on the narrow strip of level land within the *Savine vode* area indicate a small, undoubtedly wooden, church. The surviving pieces of church "furniture" – a two-part altar and a seat cut in the rock – are the only of the kind in Serbian "rock architecture". Among the curiosities of the complex is the natural channel connecting the Upper Hermitage and *Savine vode* which ensured the *kelliotes'* safety and relatively easy access to the drinking water from the spring.[75]

Much like the Upper Hermitage of Studenica, the cave complex of Mileševa makes a powerful impression by the dramatic beauty of the landscape which inspires mixed feelings – admiration and fascination on the one hand, and unease and fear over the unknowns such inhospitable and dangerous landscapes might hide.[76] Both complexes may therefore be given the epithet of *locus terribilis* for more than one reason. Also impressive in both cases is the mastery of the repertoire of "rock architecture" shown by the builders. In the Mileševa hermitages it is reflected in many ingenious solutions in rendering the found "God-created", i.e. "not-made-by-hands", rocks and caves suitable for the habitation and activities of the *kelliotes*. Apart from the usual ones – rock-cut paths, steps and handholds, niches and retaining walls – the exploration discovered some quite inventive creations. To be singled out are the already mentioned pieces of church furniture, the interventions in the cave channel and the solutions for bridging vertical distances between the structures at different levels. Some undertakings may be regarded as a true feat, such as the construction of the multi-storeyed Upper Hermitage in a vertical, practically inaccessible rock, and using massive timber elements.[77] All of this suggests not only highly skilled builders, practised

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Committee of Byzantine Studies, P.E. Službeni glasnik, Institute for Byzantine Studies SASA, 2016), 219–220 (with bibliography).

[75] D. Popović and M. Popović, "Isposnice manastira Mileševe", *Saopštenja* L (2018), 9–32 (with bibliography).

[76] More on this in D. Popović, "Monastic wilderness as a cultural construct" (in press).

[77] D. Popović and M. Popović, "Isposnice manastira Mileševe", 12–24, 27–28.

in the art of cave architecture, but also a well-versed originator of the idea. It is not difficult to imagine in that role Sava of Serbia, who walked Mount Athos to "deserts and caves" […] visiting all venerable and righteous men in the deserts",[78] and, on his journey through the Judean desert, carefully "studied the cave of the holy father Sabas and all dwelling places in the desert".[79]

The distinguishing features of the ascetic monastic communities initiated and conceived by St Sava of Serbia have been emphasized in scholarship more than once. Their most important common characteristics were a set of particular rules (*typikon*), regulating the *kelliotic* way of life, and the fact that those hermitages were places for the monastic elite and centres of manuscript copying.[80] To be added to these general characteristics is the choice of their natural setting, well-considered and suited to the purpose. In that respect, as we have seen, Sava followed two main and complementary models of the monastic *desert* – *locus amoenus* and *locus horridus*. As so many of Sava's other works and achievements, these models of anchoritic dwellings became a lasting legacy in the Serbian milieu as regards both the organization of monastic life and the architectural shaping and harmonious integration of the *kellia* into the landscape.[81]

An important aspect of Sava's *hesychasteria* concerns the complex origin of their models and the multiple layers of their meaning. Although patterned on the ancient hallowed models which, with variations, are commonplace in Eastern Christian desert monasticism and "rock architecture", these *hesychasteria* were founded on authentic personal experience – Sava's and his followers' – through personal practice and in one's own milieu; hence their status of special sacred places, *loci memoriae* of a sort bearing a strong mark of identity.[82] It is the landscape endowed with extraordinary natural features that lends a special dimension to such places. Modern scholarly discourse attaches particularly importance to that fact. Researchers in landscape studies emphasize that the landscape is an important visual and environmental setting for spiritual and cultural contents open to a wide range of ideas and messages. What may be taken as a representative example are precisely the anchoritic habitats that combine an iconic picturesque landscape, spiritual contents and cultural heritage, as well

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[78] Domentijan, *Život svetoga Save i Život svetoga Simeona*, 67.

[79] Teodosije, *Žitija*, 225; D. Popović, "Pustinožiteljstvo svetog Save Srpskog", 72–74 (with sources).

[80] D. Bogdanović, "Predgovor". In *Sveti Sava, Sabrani spisi*, 14–16; Popović, Todić and Vojvodić, *Dečanska pustinja*, 202–203; M. Davidović, "Srpski skriptoriji od XII do XVII veka". In *Svet srpske rukopisne knjige (XII do XVII vek)*, eds. Z. Rakić and I. Špadijer, (Belgrade: SANU, 2016), 49–88.

[81] For more on this see D. Popović in Popović, Todić and Vojvodić, *Dečanska pustinja*, 177–186 (with relevant literature).

[82] della Dora, *Landscape, Nature and the Sacred*, 199.

as the opportunity of being experienced firsthand by the faithful and pilgrims, tourists and researchers.[83] Viewed from that perspective, Sava's hermitages, with their immeasurable historical value, spiritual charisma, creative architectural solutions and, moreover, located in the untouched nature of extraordinary qualities, may with good reason be regarded as a national treasure – a source of collective memory and a link between past and present.

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[83] *Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape and Heritage*, 1–21; very stimulating contributions in the edited volumes: *Heritage, Memory, and the Politics of Identity: New Perspectives on the Cultural Landscape*, eds. N. Moore and Y. Whelan (Burlington: Routledge, 2007); *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Heritage and Identity*, eds. B. Graham and P. Howard (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).

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Latin-Byzantine Artistic Interactions and the Church of Saint Basil in Mržep (Montenegro)

Abstract: The present paper offers some thoughts on and a new interpretive frame of the painted program of the small, single-nave church of Saint Basil in Mržep, in the vicinity of Donji Stoliv, in the Vrmac peninsula near Kotor, Montenegro. This monument stands out for the abundance of available information on its history, including the name of the painter (Mihailo), the identity of the donor (Stefan Kalođurđević) and even the date of its construction and pictorial decoration (1451). Nevertheless, the art-historical debate has been mostly puzzled by the *mélangé*, Latin-Byzantine character of the painted images, which has been explained as an outcome of the Union of the Orthodox and Roman churches declared at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438–1439. The analysis provided here emphasizes the scarcity of indications about the impact of the latter's resolutions on the arts and proposes an alternative interpretation that associates the choice of specific forms with the devotional strategies worked by Stefan Kalođurđević for his and his family's spiritual health.

Keywords: Kotor, Montenegro, Mržep, Stefan Kalođurđević, Byzantine-Latin artistic interactions, Council of Ferrara-Florence.

A few years ago, during a study trip to Montenegro, I had a chance to visit the church of Saint Basil in Mržep, a small village in the vicinity of Donji Stoliv, on the coast of the Vrmac peninsula in the bay of Kotor.[1] The building and its wall paintings have been the object of important studies by scholars

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such as Vojislav Korać,[2] Svetozar Radojčić,[3] Dragan Nagorni,[4] Klaus Wessel,[5] Rajko Vujičić,[6] Ivana Prijatelj Pavičić,[7] and Valentina Živković,[8] but an article by the late Prof. Vojislav J. Đurić, published in 1996, was the most comprehensive attempt to contextualise and interpret the monument.[9] Even if these contributions come to different conclusions, they all betray, to some extent, their authors' astonishment at the unconventional appearance of the painted cycle, which seems to oddly combine features associated with both Latin and Byzantine traditions. Such "mixes", which recent scholarly work has shown to be less

[2]   В. Кораћ, "Споменици средњовековне архитектуре у Боки Которској" [Monuments of medieval architecture in Boka Kotorska], *Споменик САН* CIII (1953), 124–125.

[3]   С. Радојчић, "О сликарству у Боки Которској" [On painting in Boka Kotorska], *Споменик САН* CIII (1953), 59–66.

[4]   D. Nagorni, "Die Entstehungszeit der Wandmalerei und Identifizierung ihres Malers nach der Fresko-Inschrift in der Kirche Sv. Bazilje in Donji Stoliv (Golf von Kotor)", *Зограф* IX (1978), 43–49.

[5]   K. Wessel, "Pictores graeci. Über den Austausch künstler Motive zwischen Orthodoxie und Katholizismus in Montenegro". In *Jugoslawien. Integrationsprobleme in Geschichte und Gegenwart. Beiträge des Südosteuropa-Arbeitskreises der Deutschen Forschungsgemeinschaft zum V. Internationalen Südosteuropa-Kongreß der Association Internationale d'Études du Sud-Est-Européen, Belgrad, 11.–17. September 1984*, ed. Klaus-Detlev Grothusen, (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984), 98–104, esp. 101–102.

[6]   R. Vujičić, *Srednjovjekovna arhitektura i slikarstvo Crne Gore* (Podgorica: CID, 2007), 247–252.

[7]   I. Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi za izgubljenim slikarstvom. O majstoru Lovru iz Kotora i slikarstvu na prostoru od Dubrovnika do Kotora tijeom druge polovice XV. stoljeća* (Dubrovnik: Ogranak Matice hrvatske u Dubrovniku, 2013), 214–218; eadem, "Prilog poznavanju ikonografije fresaka u crkvi sv. Bazilija u Mržepu". In *Litterae pictae: Scripta varia in honorem Nataša Golob septuagesimum annum feliciter complentis*, eds. Tine Germ and Nataša Kavčić, (Ljubljana: Filosofska fakulteta Univerze u Ljubljani, 2017), 283–298.

[8]   V. Živković, "Persistenze di tradizione bizantina nella pittura della città cattolica di Cattaro". In *Les chrétientés orthodoxes post-byzantines face à l'Europe de la Réforme et des Temps modernes 1450–1700. Circulations, similitudes, corréspondances*, eds. Sabine Frommel and Pierre Gonneau, (Rome: Campisano editore, 2023), 95–109, esp. 100–103.

[9]   В. Ђурић, "У сенци фирентинске уније: црква Св. Госпође у Мржепу (Бока Которска)" [In the shadow of the Florentine union: the church of the Holy Lady in Mrzep (Boka Kotorska)], *Зборник радова внзантолошког института* XXXV (1996), 9–56. I have dealt with some aspects of the Mržep murals in two articles: M. Bacci, "Western Liturgical Vessels and the Byzantine Rite". In *Ornamenta Sacra. Late Medieval and Early Modern Liturgical Objects in a European Context*, eds. Ralph Dekoninck, Marie-Christine Claes and Barbara Baert, (Leuven: Peeters, 2022), 249–276; and idem, "Along the Art-Historical Margins of the Medieval Mediterranean". In *Out of Bounds. Exploring the Limits of Medieval Art*, eds. Pamela A. Patton and Maria Alessia Rossi (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2023), 79–132.

unusual than previously assumed, challenge traditional stylistic taxonomies and inexorably confront art historians with the methodological limits of their ill-defined discipline.[10]

The building is puzzling for several reasons. First, because of its modest exterior appearance and diminutive dimensions (6.5 x 4 m), emphasized by its location in the open countryside, on the slopes of a hill that also marks the threshold between cultivated fields and woodlands (Fig. 1). Its structure could hardly be simpler: it is a single-nave, apsed space with a single entrance, a small, narrow window on the façade and a larger opening on the south wall. The presence of a tomb slab on the parvis and the remnants of burials unearthed in past excavations clearly indicate that the site was associated with funerary or commemorative rituals. The interior (Figs 2–6) can but impress visitors with its walls entirely covered in paintings and create the illusion of entering a different spatial and temporal dimension, inhabited by heavenly beings and evocative of both the liturgically re-enacted main moments of sacred history and the eschatological perspective of the end of time. At least at first glance, it looks like the coherent iconographic program of an Orthodox church, albeit adapted to a barrel-vaulted rather than domed space, with the three zones of what Otto Demus considered the classical system of Byzantine decoration reserved, respectively, for the saints, the Gospel events corresponding to the twelve major feasts (*Dodekaorton*) of the liturgical year, and the visual epiphanies of God and the Virgin Mary.[11] The stylistic features seem to be in keeping with Late Byzantine conventions. Yet, this impression falters on closer inspection: some iconographic solutions look idiosyncratic, and the rendering of figures is highly differentiated, with some departing from a conventional, frontal and stylized posture to adopt a more fleshy and animated appearance.

The painted décor is arranged so as to direct the gaze according to a reading order that proceeds from west to east and from bottom to top in a boustrophedon manner. Four superimposed layers of sequentially displayed images, delimited by red lines, converge toward the altar space (Fig. 3), dominated by the image of Christ Pantokrator blessing and holding an open book. The visitor's eastward movement is punctuated, in the lower portion of the walls (Figs 2, 4), by a parataxis of saintly figures, two of which – the Latin saints Francis of Assisi and Tryphon of Kotor – are rendered in a three-quarter view looking towards the holy table. On both sides of the door (Fig. 5), which marks the boundary

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[10] For an assessment of "mixes" and the historiographical biases associated with them, cf. M. Bacci, "On the Prehistory of Cretan Icon Painting", *Frankokratia* 1 (2020), 108–164.

[11] O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration. Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London: Treubner & Co., 1947). Cf. also E. Kitzinger, "Reflections on the Feast Cycle in Byzantine Art", *Cahiers archéologiques* XXXVI (1988), 51–73; J.-M. Spieser, "Liturgie et programmes iconographiques", *Travaux et mémoires* XI (1991), 575–590.
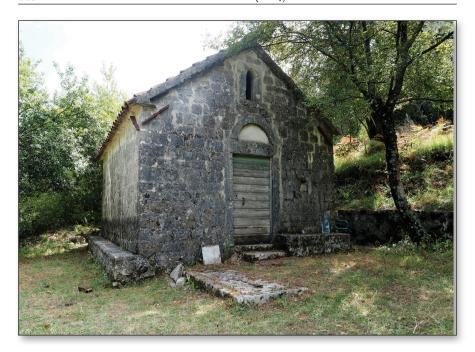
Fig. 1. Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, exterior (photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

Fig. 3. Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, view towards the apse
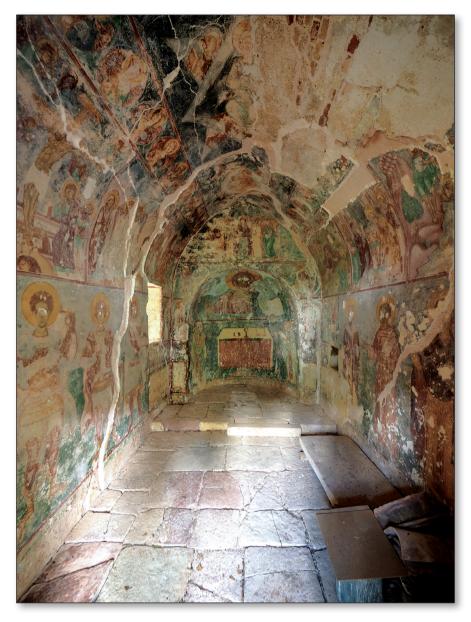(photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

Fig. 2. Painter Mihailo, *Holy Intercessors*, *Dodekaorton scenes*, painted cycle, 1451.
Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, interior, north wall (Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

Fig. 4. Painter Mihailo, *Holy Intercessors, Dodekaorton scenes*, painted cycle, 1451.
Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, interior, south wall
(Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

between the material world and the perspectival, metaphoric dimension of the
divine mediated by liturgical rites, are two figures that were invested, in Catholic
and Orthodox traditions, respectively, with protective and apotropaic qualities:
to the left, Saint Sebastian, whose naked body transfixed by innumerable arrows
metonymically evokes the wounds and pain of the plague victims who relied
on his intercession,[12] whereas the archangel Michael, represented to the right
in military attire and with a huge sword in his hands,[13] manifests his liminal

[12] On the meaning and history of Saint Sebastian's image in general, cf. *Saint Sébas-
tien. Rituels et figures*, exhibition catalogue (Paris, Musée national des arts et traditions
populaires, 25 November 1983–16 April 1984), ed. Jean Cuisenier (Paris: Réunion des
musées nationaux, 1983); J. Darriulat, *Sébastien le Renaissant. Sur le martyre de saint
Sébastien dans la deuxième moitié du Quattrocento* (Paris: Lagune, 1998); P. Pacifici, *San
Sebastiano. Nudità, sangue e peste nella pittura devozionale toscana* (Follonica: Debatte,
2017).

[13] For a general survey of the Archangel's iconography cf. G. Bertelli, "San Michele
nell'arte". In *San Michele Arcangelo*, eds. Giorgio Otranto and Sandro Chierici (Milan:

Fig. 5. Painter Mihailo, *Saint Sebastian, the Archangel Michael, Dormition of the Virgin*, painted cycle, 1451. Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, interior, west wall (Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

function as the heavenly commander who drives evil beings out of the house of God. His presence in the viewer's space is emphasized by a curious detail: the right foot that extends over the lower frame and indicates that he, as a heavenly being whose name formulates the question "Who is like God?", cannot be really contained within a flat, material surface.

Making their first steps, visitors find themselves flanked on both sides by female saints. Despite the tiny dimensions of the building, this iconographic strategy was aimed at marking a gendered arrangement of sacred spaces that, in keeping with traditional notions of the gradation of holiness, reserved the westernmost part of churches for women. Looking south (Fig. 2), one intercepts the gaze of Saints Petka and Nedelja, *graece* Paraskeve and Kyriake, both labelled with Serbian *tituli* and rendered in a perfectly frontal way but with their arms

San Paolo, 2022), 56–77.

Fig. 6. Painter Mihailo, *Holy Officiants, Deesis, Ascension,* painted cycle, 1451.
Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, apse
(Photo: Michele Bacci)

turned eastwards.[14] Viewers are thus invited not to linger in that place and encouraged to get closer to the altar by two figures that, more than for their virtues as martyrs, were venerated for the associations evoked by their names, which made them personifications of, respectively, Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, i.e., Easter. The distinctive roles of both figures are emphasized by their contrasting attires: whereas the former wears a conventional and inconspicuous tunic with a red veil, the latter is shown as an aristocratic lady with a diadem, a white head veil, and a red mantle embroidered with gold and gems.

On the northern wall (Fig. 4), the sequence begins with Saint Catherine of Alexandria. Rather surprisingly, her representation underscores her virtues as a martyr clad in simple female clothes like Petka rather than in princely garments, as she is usually shown in both Byzantine and Western art. Unlike the figures on the facing wall, she does not point eastwards: instead, she adopts a strictly frontal, standing posture, and both of her hands are used to hold attributes. The cross in her right hand is traditionally a generic indicator of martyrdom in Eastern traditions, whereas the spiked wheel displayed in her other hand is an individual signifier that regularly occurs in Western Late Medieval iconography: its inclusion undoubtedly enabled even those who were unable to read the accompanying *titulus* to identify the saint, whose cult had by then become extremely popular in association with pilgrimage to the Holy Land and the Sinai monastery, which housed her body.[15] In the Eastern Mediterranean, the wheel appears almost in the same period in the decoration of churches located in Latin-ruled areas.[16]

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[14] On Paraskeve/Petka's image and cult in the Balkans, in her multiple hagiographic identities, cf. Г. Суботић, *Св. Константин и Јелена у Охриду* [St. Constantine and Jelena in Ohrid] (Београд: Философски факултет– Институт за историју уметности, 1971), 89–104; E. Bakalova, "La vie de saint Parascève de Trnovo dans l'art balkanique du Bas Moyen Âge", *Byzantino-bulgarica* V (1978), 175–209; Д. Поповић, *Под окриљем светости. Култ светих владара и реликвија у средњовековној Србији* [Under the cover of sanctity. The cult of holy rulers and relics in medieval Serbia] (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2006), 271–293; S. A. Gabelić, "Sveta Petka Double Portrait", *Зборник Матице Српске за ликовне уметности* XLIV (2016), 25–40. On Kyriake/Nedjelja cf. D. Mouriki, "The Cult of Cypriot Saints in Medieval Cyprus as Attested by Church Decorations and Icon Paintings". In *The Sweet Land of Cyprus*, eds. Anthony Bryer and Georgios S. Georghallides (Nicosia: The Cyprus Centre, 1993), 252–257; Z. Gavrilović, "Observations on the Iconography of St. Kyriake, Principally in Cyprus". In *Λαμπηδών. Αφιέρωμα στη μνήμη της Ντούλας Μουρίκη*, ed. Mary Aspra-Vardavakis (Athens: Panepistimiakes Ekdoseis E. M., 2003), 255–264.

[15] For a succinct survey of Catherine's cultic history and iconography, cf. D. Balboni and G. B. Bronzini, "Caterina di Alessandria". In *Bibliotheca sanctorum* (Rome: Pontificia Università Lateranense/Città Nuova, 1961–2013), III, 954–975.

[16] N. Patterson Ševčenko, "The Monastery of Mount Sinai and the Cult of Saint Catherine". In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and*

Fig. 7. Painter Mihailo, *The Holy Trinity*, painted cycle, 1451.
Mržep, Church of Saint Basil, vault
(Photo: Thomas Kaffenberger)

On the same wall, the sequence moves forward with a representation of three military saints, Theodore, Demetrius, and George, who, as in many painted cycles throughout the Balkans, are shown in a frontal pose, parading their armour and different weapons – respectively, a lance, a recurved arch of Mongol-Turkish shape, and a sword.[17] Further eastwards is Saint Tryphon, the patron of Kotor,[18] who is represented as a young nobleman, wearing a red mantle and a

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Culture, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 118–137, esp. 129; M. Bacci, "L'attribut en tant que signe d'identification des saints dans l'art du Levant au Moyen Âge tardif". In *Des signes dans l'image. Usages et fonctions de l'attribut dans l'iconographie médiévale (du Concile de Nicée au Concile de Trente)*, eds. Michel Pastoureau and Olga Vassilieva-Codognet (Turnhout: Brepols, 2015), 239–263, esp. 252–254.

[17] C.Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); P. Ł. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843–1261)* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[18] On Saint Tryphon and his role as the focal point of Kotor's local identity cf. В. Живковић, *Религиозност и уметност у Котору, XIV–XVI век [Religiosity and Art*

short blue tunic embellished with golden embroidered bands, and purple hose. He has long, wavy hair and holds a palm branch in the right hand and a model of his city and fortress in his left, reflecting an iconographic scheme that had reappeared already in a 14th-century metalwork repurposed in the majestic golden altarpiece from 1440 in the town cathedral.[19] The formula was a local adaptation of the visual conventions worked out in Italy specifically for the images of city patron saints.[20] The representation is impressive for different reasons: it is rendered in much the same technique as the other murals, as revealed, e.g., by the dark green *proplasmos*, but it intentionally departs from the frontal and standing posture of the other saints and has a more three-dimensional, fleshy, and dynamic appearance in a three-quarter view. In its free adoption of Westernizing features, it seems to anticipate the imaginative solution elaborated in 1658 by the Cretan painter Elias Moskos in an icon now in the treasury of Kotor Cathedral, where the saint is shown against the background of the bay of Kotor.[21]

Saint Tryphon is shown right on the threshold between the nave and the sanctuary, delimited by a slightly raised pavement, and marked by the light that penetrates the church from the tiny nearby window. The protector of Kotor ostensibly invites viewers to direct their gaze towards the Eucharistic miracle re-enacted in that space through the performance of the mass. Much the same attitude is shared by Saint Francis, on the opposite wall (Fig. 2).[22] Labelled in Latin

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[19] in Kotor (Cattaro) in the Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries] (Београд: Балканолошки институт САНУ, 2010), 139–148, 210–212.

[19] M. Milošević, "Tragovi prve srebrne pale kotorske katedrale iz XIV stoljeća", *Prilozi povijesti umjetnosti u Dalmaciji* XXI (1980), 215–224; Живковић, *Религиозност*, 144–145; N. Jakšić, "Srebrna oltarna pala u Kotoru", *Ars Adriatica* III (2013), 53–66.

[20] V. Camelliti, "La città in una mano. Per una storia della rappresentazione di modelli urbani dalle origini all'Occidente medievale". In *Un Medioevo in lungo e in largo (VI–XVI secolo). Studi per Valentino Pace*, eds. Vittoria Camelliti and Alessia Trivellone (Pisa: Pacini, 2014), 289–300.

[21] L. Mirković, "Die Ikonen der griechischen Maler in Jugoslawien und in den serbischen Kirchen ausserhalb Jugoslawiens". In Πεπτραγμένα τοῦ Θ΄ Διεθνοῦς Βυζαντινολογικοῦ Συνεδρίου. 1. Οργάνωσις, πρόγραμμα καὶ πρακτικὰ τοῦ συνεδρίου. Ανακοινώσεις. 1: Ἀρχαιολογία, eds. Stilpon Kyriakides, Andreas Xyngopoulous, and Panagiotes I. Zepos (Thessaloniki: Etaireia Makedonikon Spoudon, 1955), 301–329, esp. 325; V. J. Đurić, *Icônes de Yougoslavie* (Belgrade: Naučno Delo, 1961), 123 no. 64; Z. Demori Staničić, "Entry no. 45". In *Zagovori svetom Tripunu. Blago Kotorske biskupije*, ed. Radoslav Tomić (Zagreb: Galerija Klovićevi dvori, 2009), 217.

[22] On the visual construction of the image of Saint Francis of Assisi cf. esp. K. Krüger, *Der frühe Bildkult des Franziskus in Italien. Gestalt und Funktionswandel des Tafelbildes im 13. und 14. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Gebrüder Mann, 1992); W. R. Cook, *Images of St. Francis of Assisi: In Paintings, Stone and Glass From the Earliest Images to ca. 1320 in Italy. A Catalogue* (Florence: Olschki, 1999); R. Brooke, *The Image of Saint Francis. Responses to Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

as *Sanctus Franciscus*, he is shown turned eastwards, tonsured and wearing the habit of the Minor Friars: he holds a book in his left hand, visibly marked with the *stigma*, and makes a blessing gesture that simultaneously points to the altar and the nearby figure of Saint Nicholas.[23] The latter is heavily visually emphasized: in the sequence, he is the only one rendered in a thoroughly self-contained way and a rigid frontal pose, in contrast to the dynamic image of the saint from Assisi. His sign of benediction with the middle finger resting on the thumb creates a visual assonance with the shape of the nearby figure's hand.

The composition characterizes the Great Thaumaturge of Myra as an almost dematerialized, icon-like presence interposed between the three saints pointing to the altar and the sanctuary. As the "arch-hierarch" of Christ, the bishop *par excellence*, he is most suited for a representation in the vicinity of the easternmost part of the church (Fig. 3). Vojislav Đurić assumed that the latter may have originally been separated from the nave by a low iconostasis or templon,[24] but neither the pavement nor the side walls show any traces of such a structure. Therefore, the zone reserved for the performance of sacred mysteries was fully visible and its distinctive status was conveyed by its painted décor. First, the compositions were arranged differently: in the easternmost portions of the northern and southern wall, as well as to both sides of the apse, the decoration included not only the ornamental band with stylized vegetal scrolls encountered in the nave but also simulated marble plates and hanging curtains, signaling the higher sacredness of that space through such embellishments as golden hems and stylized lilies. A hole in the floor indicates the spot where the altar stood, whose table can perhaps be identified as the thick stone slab now lying against the southern wall. To the right of the apse is a niche that may have been intended for ampullae and vasa sacra. In the upper layer of both sides, more figures of saints are rendered in a smaller format than in the nave: they include the holy physicians Kosmas and Damian – two figures normally not shown in this part of the church[25] – followed, from right to left, by three holy deacons, including, on the northeastern corner, Saints Romanos and Stephen the First martyr. The apse is divided into two zones. The conch displays the half-figure of Christ Pantokrator, blessing and holding an open book as he receives the intercessory prayers of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist, represented as full-

More specifically on the image of Saint Francis in 15th century Italian arts cf. M. Alberto Pavone, *Iconologia Francescana. Il Quattrocento* (Todi: Ediart, 1988).

[23] On Saint Nicholas and his cult and iconography in general cf. M. Bacci, *San Nicola. Il Grande Taumaturgo* (Bari: Laterza, 2009).

[24] Ђурић, "У сенци", 27.

[25] They are most commonly located either in the west part of the naos or in the narthex: cf. B. Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting in the Age of King Milutin* (Belgrade: Draganić, 1999), 180.

length figures in the orant pose. In the lower register, two church fathers, John Chrysostom and Basil the Great, are represented as officiating bishops on both sides of an altar equipped for the mass.

In keeping with Byzantine tradition, the triumphal arch displays the *Annunciation* scene split into two zones, with the Archangel Gabriel rendered in a dynamic posture on the left and the Virgin Mary sitting on a throne on the right.[26] This composition is the starting point for the narrative images that make up the standard *Dodekaorton* cycle and are arranged in inverse order to the one followed so far. The chronological sequence is displayed on the south wall from east to west (Fig. 2) and includes the *Nativity*, the *Presentation in the Temple*, the *Baptism* and a now very fragmentary *Resurrection of Lazarus*. Remnants of a broad *Dormition* can still be detected on the counterfaçade (Fig. 5), a location often reserved for this image in Orthodox churches. The story resumes on the northern side, unfolding from west to east, with the *Entrance into Jerusalem*, the *Crucifixion*, the *Pious Women at the Sepulchre*, and the *Anastasis* (Fig. 4), and finds its conclusion in the scene of the *Ascension* split into two images, the one in the upper portion of the east wall with the apostles and Mary showing their astonishment (Fig. 6), and the other on the easternmost part of the vault with Christ seated in a cloud of light raised to heaven by four angels (Fig. 7). Significantly, the latter could also be read as part of the eschatological composition that dominates the rest of the vault, i.e., as a *Maiestas Domini* glorifying the Son of God close to the epiphany of the Father, as in Prophet Ezekiel's vision, within a lozenge-shaped *kavod* inhabited by the four animals of the tetramorph; to the west, it was followed by a now almost lost representation of the *Hetoimasia* of the Last Judgment. Such an idiosyncratic combination of images was also meant to evoke the heavenly dimension of divine power as manifested in the three persons of the Holy Trinity. The supernatural space is delimited, like in painted Byzantine domes, by medallions displaying representatives of the different angelic hierarchies.

The Mržep cycle was arranged so as to pull visitors into an intense, immersive, and emotion-provoking experience that benefited from an intentional and nonchalant combination of forms associated with both Latin and Byzantine traditions. Starting from the provocative

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[26] On the *Annunciation* scene and its placement in Byzantine churches, cf. I. Varalis, "Παρατηρήσεις για τη θέση του Ευαγγελισμού στη μνημειακή ζωγραφική κατά την μεσοβυζαντινή περίοδο", Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας XIX (1997), 201–219; E. Papastavrou, *Recherche iconographique dans l'art byzantine et occidental du XIe au XIVe siècle: l'Annonciation* (Venice: Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies, 2007).

Fig. 8. Lovro Dobričević (attr.), *Virgin of the Annunciation*, mural painting,
ca. 1450-1455. Herceg Novi, Savina Monastery, church of the Dormition of the Virgin
(Photo: Michele Bacci)

observation that such an unusual decorative program would have aroused discomfort in the most rigorous theologians, Catholic and Orthodox alike, Đurić suggested that it should be understood as a local reflection of the union between the Greek and Latin churches declared at the Council of Ferrara-Florence in 1438–1439. According to this view, the building should, therefore, be assumed to have belonged to a local Orthodox community that, around the mid-15th century, had accepted the unionist policy supported by Marino Contarini, Bishop of Kotor, who had participated in the conciliar meetings in Italy.[27] This suggestion, as already noted by Valentina Živković,[28] raises a number of methodologically relevant questions, namely: to what extent could the blend of styles and iconographies that we are so keen to immediately identify in its derivative qualities be acknowledged by pre-modern viewers as an indicator of a theological compromise? Is it right to assume that the deliberations of the Council of Florence had a direct impact on the decoration of churches? Did the combination of forms and images serve a specific ideological agenda, or was it the outcome of more contextual factors?

The Council of Ferrara-Florence has often been deemed responsible for the emergence of artworks combining Latin and Byzantine visual features. Nevertheless, it is worth stressing that the acceptance of a pro-unionist position did not entail any major change in liturgical matters, and it is, therefore, difficult to evaluate if, and to what extent, liturgical arts were affected by the conciliar resolutions, which were silent on such issues. The only artistic initiative promoted by the Greek fathers in Florence was the tomb of Patriarch Joseph II in the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella, whose portrait, with its frontal, icon-like rendering, albeit made by a local painter, bears witness to their preference for visual conventions evocative of Byzantine painting.[29] Examples of church programs explicitly meant to convey a unionist message in direct connection with the conciliar deliberations are lacking in major Orthodox areas under Latin rule, like Crete or Cyprus, and even later church unions that proved more effective, like those that followed the 1596 Union of Brest and led to the establishment of Greek-Catholic communities in Polish- and Hungarian-ruled Carpathian Rus', did not substantially

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[27] Ђурић, "У сенци", 52–54. Cf. also Prijatelj, *U potrazi*, 209.

[28] Živković, "Persistenze", 100–101.

[29] M. Bacci, "Tomb G at the Chora and the Illusion of Presence", in *Biography of a Landmark. The Chora Monastery/Kariye Camii in Constantinople/Istanbul from Late Antiquity to the 21ˢᵗ Century*, ed. Manuela Studer-Karlen (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 100–134, esp. 109–112.

impact the performative structuring of sacred spaces or engender any radical change in the formal and iconographic repertoire used in their pictorial decoration.[30]

On the other hand, it has been assumed that a reflection of the new ecclesiastical policy may have been the diffusion of icons displaying some specific iconographic formulas, such as *Christ the Vine*,[31] the embrace of the apostles Peter and Paul, or the same saints holding a church model: all these schemes have been interpreted as an immediate outcome of the political détente between Orthodoxy and Catholicism.[32] Such hypotheses do not explain, however, why the scheme spread among communities that did not adhere to the union, as is shown, e.g., in the murals made in ca. 1565–1577 by a painter associated with Mount Athos in the church of the Holy Archangels in Gremi, the capital of the Georgian kingdom of Kakheti.[33] In fact, the *Embrace* image reworked much

[30] On Greek Catholic communities in Carpathian Rus' see the survey by P. R. Magocsi, *With Their Backs to the Mountains: A History of Carpathian Rus' and Carpatho-Rusyns* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2015), 78–86. On the decoration of Greek Catholic churches cf., e.g., P. Bernadett, "The Architecture and Art of Wooden Churches in the Eparchy of Mukacheve (Munkács) in the 17th and 18th Centuries". In *The Light of Thy Countenance*, ed. Szilveszter Terdik (Debrecen: Metropolitan Church of Hungary, 2020), 76–91.

[31] A. G. Mantas, "The Iconographic Subject 'Christ the Vine' in Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art", *Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας* XXIV (1972), 347–360.

[32] M. Vassilaki, "A Cretan Icon in the Ashmolean: The Embrace of Peter and Paul", *Jahrbuch für Österreichische Byzantinistik* XL (1990), 405–422; eadem, "Cretan Icon-Painting and the Council of Ferrara/Florence (1438/39)", *Μουσείο Μπενάκη* XIII–XIV (2013–2014), 115–127. Cf. the critical remarks in E. Despotakis and V. Tsamakda, "Archival Evidence and Byzantine Art in Fifteenth-Century Venetian Crete. The Case of Georgios Mavrianos and Konstantinos Gaitanas", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* LXXVII (2023), 245–319, esp. 308–309. Other studies that interpret the circumstances of the church union as conducive to the adoption of Italianate forms in 15th century Crete include U. Ritzerfeld, "Bildpropaganda im Zeichen des Konzils von Florenz: Unionistische Bildmotive im Kloster Balsamonero auf Kreta", *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* LXXX (2014), 387–407, and A. Drandaki, "Piety, Politics and Art in Fifteenth-Century Venetian Crete", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* LXXI (2017), 367–406.

[33] The representatives of the Georgian church in Florence did not sign the final act: cf. E. Mamistvalishvili, "kartvelebi perara-plorentsiis k'rebaze (XIII–XV ss.)", *Kadmos* VIII (2016), 250–268. On the Gremi murals and the activity of Athonite painters in Georgia cf. S. Amiranashvili, *История грузинского искусства* (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1969), 303; M. Vačnadze, "Некоторые особенности и хронологическая последовательность группы кахетинских росписей XVI века". In *II международный симпозиум по грузинскому искусству* (Tbilisi: Akademija nauk gruzinskoj SSR – Institut istorii gruzinskogo isskusstva im. G. N. Čubinašvili, 1977), 1–14; M. Garidis, *Μεταβυζαντινή ζωγραφική (1450–1600). Η εντοίχια ζωγραφική στον ορθόδοξο κόσμο μετά την πτώση του Βυζαντίου και στις χώρες υπό ξένη κυριαρχία* (Athens: Spanos, 2007), 376–381; N. Datunishvili, "Artistic Tradition of Mount Athos and Pictorial Ensemble Created by Levan, King of Kakheti".

older motifs that conveyed the idea of *concordia apostolorum* and could, there-
fore, be adapted to different situations and interpretations.[34] The same is true of
the compositions that displayed Eastern and Western church fathers, including
canonised popes wearing tiaras, close to each other: in the Latin-ruled, multi-
confessional societies of the Eastern Mediterranean, such images predated the
Council of Ferrara-Florence and stood out for their visual ambiguity, inspiring
some viewers to feel part of a single, undivided Christian community and others
to emphasize the orthodoxy of the bishops of Rome who lived in the pre-Schism
period and contrast it to the heterodoxy of the contemporary Roman church.[35]

In most cases, it remains highly speculative whether, and to what extent,
the emergence of pictorial formulas combining elements from Italian and Byz-
antine traditions should be understood as a kind of visual propaganda, imply-
ing a widespread acknowledgement of the cultural ascendancy of each motif, or,
rather, as the result of both intentional and unintentional accommodations of
artistic motifs circulating in the same environment. When it comes to Mržep,
we are in a much better position because we are well-informed about the chro-
nology of the building and its decoration, as well as its donor and painter, but the
data at our disposal offer little support for an interpretation of the wall paint-
ings as a pro-unionist propaganda tool. The tiny dimensions of the chapel, its
countryside location, the presence of burials, and some specificities of its icono-
graphic cycle indicate that it more served an individual's devotional expectations
than the concerns of contemporary theologians. The bilingual inscription once
displayed in the south-western corner, very close to the image of Saint Sebas-
tian, and on the top of a now walled-up opening that Dragan Nagorni inter-
preted as a side door, despite its being very low, provides basic information about

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In *Georgian Art in the Context of European and Asian Cultures*, eds. Peter Skinner and
Dimiti Tumanishvili (Tbilisi: Georgian Arts & Culture Center, 2009), 275–277.

[34] H. L. Kessler, "The Meeting of Peter and Paul in Rome: An Emblematic Narrative of
Spiritual Brotherhood", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* XLI (1987), 265–275. On the semantic
flexibility of the *Embrace* image cf. also R. Cormack, "… And the Word was God: Art and
Orthodoxy in Late Byzantium". In *Byzantine Orthodoxies: Papers from the Thirty-Sixth
Spring Symposium of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Andrew Louth and Augustine Casiday (Al-
dershot: Ashgate, 2006), 111–120, esp. 119–120, and A. Katsioti, "Το κλίτος του Αγίου
Ιωάννου του Προδρόμου". In Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou, Angeliki Katsioti and
Maria Borboudaki, *Οι τοιχογραφίες της Μονής του Βαλσαμονέρου. Απόψεις και φρονήματα
της ύστερης βυζαντινής ζωγραφικής στη βενετοκρατούμενη Κρήτη* (Athens: Academy of Ath-
ens, 2020), 181–290, esp. 259.

[35] On this point, cf. M. Bacci, "The Art of Lusignan Cyprus and the Christian East:
Some Thoughts on Historiography and Methodology". In *The Art and Archaeology of
Lusignan and Venetian Cyprus (1192–1571). Recent Research and New Discoveries*, eds.
Michalis Olympios and Maria Parani (Turnhout: Brepols, 2019), 21–42, esp. 39–41.

the circumstances of its building.[36] This way of exhibiting foundation texts is frequently encountered in the Balkans, e.g., in Studenica, Žiča, and Gračanica: inscriptions were thus incorporated into the pictorial continuum of the sacred space and became part of the program, operating as graphic components of the latter, which not only epitomized an individual or a group's piety but also immortalized their rights and distinctive association with the ritual activities that the building was meant to host.[37]

The text, written in Italian with strong Venetian inflections, is presented as a notarial document, introduced by a sign of the cross and drawn along parallel lines like those incised on parchments. It reports that the church was originally dedicated to the Virgin Mary and erected from the ground up on the initiative of *Stefano Chalogergi Spedon*, chancellor and Slavic translator in Kotor, in November 1451. Furthermore, it established that its *solemnis dies* was to be on the day of Assumption, August 15th. A Serbian inscription in smaller lettering, added along the lower margin and including a date in Greek characters, specified that the murals were made a little later by a painter called Mihailo of Kotor, a disciple of the master Jovan of Debar.[38] If the Italian text underscored the association of the building with an individual donor and the salvation of his soul, the Slavic version reported the date of its decoration and the identity and professional qualities of the artist responsible for it. He was probably still young, given that he was so keen to make his teacher's name known.

The founder has long been identified as Stefan Kalođurđević, a prominent figure in the social life of Kotor during the first decades of Venetian rule, which started in 1420.[39] Many written traces of him were left in documents preserved in the town archives, which he largely contributed to writing in his role as notary, translator, and registrar. From this documentation, we learn that he was a Latin-rite Christian who got married according to the habits of the Roman

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36 Nagorni, "Die Entstehungszeit", 44.

37 В. Ђурић, "Портрети византијских и српских владара с повељама" [Portraits of Byzantine and Serbian rulers with charters]. In *Есфигменска повеља деспота Ђурђа*, ур. Павле Ивић (Београд: Југословенски завод за заштиту ревија споменика културе, 1989), 20–55, esp. 36–38, 48–52; S. Kalopissi-Verti, "Church Inscriptions as Documents. Chrysobulls – Ecclesiastical Arts – Inventories – Donations – Wills", Δελτίον τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Ἀρχαιολογικῆς Ἑταιρείας XXIV (2003), 79–88; М. Чанак-Медић, Д. Поповић и Д. Војводић, *Манастир Жича* [Žiča Monastery] (Београд: Републички завод за заштиту споменика, 2014), 37–41, 338–345.

38 The inscriptions are transcribed in Ђурић, "У сенци", 11, and Vujičić, *Srednjovekovna arhitektura*, 247–248.

39 Ђ. Петровић, "О Стефану Калођурђевићу и његовој породици" [On Stefan Kalođurđević and his family] , *Годишњак поморског музеја у Котору* XLVIII–XLIX (1999–2001), 41–55.

Church in 1420.[40] In the 1430s, he lived in the quarter of San Martino with his mother Ljubislava, his wife Domuša, his son Nicholas, his daughter Catherine, his nephews Domenico and Palma, and the servants Maruša and Vladitsa.[41] From 1431 onwards, he held the position of *chancellarius* or *notarius sclavus* and, in 1435, became *vigerius communis* (from French *viguier*, "magistrate"). In this role, he participated in several negotiations, dispute resolutions, and embassies: he was on very good terms with the Bishopric and acted as a mediator in issues concerning Catholic and Orthodox monasteries. He certainly belonged to the town's wealthy élite and, like many of his fellow citizens, invested in profitable businesses, such as naval trade and winemaking.[42]

His religious zeal was as intense as his commitment to business. In 1439, he was head (*magister*) of the ancient lay Confraternity of the Holy Cross;[43] later, he and his son Nicholas also joined the Confraternity of the Holy Spirit, where he was soon given a leading role.[44] He seems to have been particularly attached to Saint Sebastian's cult: an early 16th-century document mentions a chapel dedicated to this saint in a garden, close to the church of San Bernardino al Pozzo, which had once belonged to *Stefano Callogeorgii*, so we can assume that it had been erected by Stefan as a token of personal devotion to the protector of plague victims.[45] He also showed his devotion to his namesake: his testament apparently included a bequest of one hyperpyron for the renovation of an image of Saint Stephen.[46] Furthermore, his choice of the name Nicholas for his son bears witness to his veneration for a universal saint whose cult had strong roots in Kotor,[47] and his daughter's name, Catherine, may indicate attachment

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[40] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN III, 451 (21 October 1420).

[41] *Case e persone di Cattaro*, Kotor, Historical Archives, UPM, CCIII, 275–3 (1436): "41 Stefano quondam Chalozorzy chanzelier/ Glubislaua sua madre/ Domussa sua dona/ 18 Nicholo suo figlio/ Chatarina sua figlia/ Dominicho suo nieuo/ Palma suo nieuo/ Marussa sua fante/ Vladica sua fante". The numbers written before his and his son's names indicate their age in 1436, suggesting that Stefan Kalođurđević was born in 1395–1396. The same document indicates that Nicolò (Nicholas) was then eighteen years old, which means that he was born in 1418, two years before Stefan and Domuša's marriage. Cf. Ђурић, "У сенци", 18–19, footnote 48.

[42] Ђурић, "У сенци", 12–13.

[43] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN VI, 509 (23 May 1439).

[44] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN IX, 361 (7 May 1445), where he is described as *chanzelarius sclavus* and *magne fraternitatis Spiritus Sancti magister*.

[45] Ђурић, "У сенци", 24.

[46] Kalođurđević's testament is lost, but the bequest is evoked in a document preserved in Kotor, Historical Archives, SN XIII, 433 (29 January 1467), where mention is made of "unum perperum pro restitutione unius figure Santi Stephani".

[47] Живковић, *Религиозност*, 218–222, 225.

to the cult of the Alexandrian martyr or the new homonymous saint from Siena, whose cult is also well-attested in Kotor.[48]

There are some indications that, like many of his contemporaries, Stefan was obsessed with the perspective of death or, to be more precise, with the risk of dying without having adequately provided for his spiritual health. Although he died in 1467 at the age of seventy-two, he had started making provisions for his family tomb in his youth. He secured a place for himself and his relatives close to the church of Saint Michael in 1426 and another in the church of Saint Francis, outside the town walls, in 1432. Valentina Živković has convincingly argued that the first burial was used for some members of his family who may have died during the pestilence of 1430, given that this entailed sealing the in-humation site.[49] Indeed, the presence of nephews in his house in the following years may mean, perhaps, that a brother or sister of his had been buried there. In any case, the affair of the two tombs testifies to an attitude common at the time of the great epidemics of the 14th and 15th centuries: on the one hand, the poignant conviction of having to prepare the family tomb well in advance and the spasmodic search for a location corresponding to one's social rank and one's expectations of salvation; on the other hand, the perception of the collective burial for the family's contemporary and future members as a fundamental place where people, having survived divine wrath, could affirm their role as patriarchs entrusted with the task of siring a new lineage.

Nevertheless, Stefan Kalođurđević's patriarchal ambitions were thwarted by the ill-fated vicissitudes of life. He was widowed sometime in the 1450s and married his second wife, Nicoletta, in 1460.[50] After his death in 1467, his office as translator and magistrate went to his son-in-law Natalin, son of his next-door neighbour, the goldsmith Matko, rather than to his male heir, Nicholas, as one would expect.[51] This may suggest that Nicholas had died before 1467. As there are no traces of him in documents from around the date of his father's death, it seems plausible to assume that he had passed away several years earlier. This event must have been devastating for Stefan, who, with the death of his only son, lost all hope of becoming the progenitor of a long family line. The visual empha-sis given to Saint Nicholas in the Mržep chapel may have been instrumental to a commemorative strategy, where the Great Thaumaturge of Myra was invoked as

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[48] Ibidem, 225 (Saint Catherine of Alexandria), 233–234 (Saint Catherine of Siena).

[49] В. Живковић, "Култови светитеља заштитника од куге о Котору" [Cults of the pro-tector saints against the plague of Kotor], *Историјски часопис* LVIII (2009), 181–196, esp. 189–190. Cf. also Петровић, "О Стефану Калођурђевићу", 52.

[50] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN XII, 197 (10 February 1461), where mention is made of a house obtained by Stefan "ex donatione sibi facta per dominam Nicoletam eius consortem".

[51] Ђурић, "У сенци", 21–22.

a special intercessor for his namesake. His interest in the restoration of an image of Saint Stephen suggests that he believed that addressing his prayers to a saint sharing his name was particularly beneficial in devotional terms. The selection of saints featured in the murals includes other namesakes: Stephen, prominently shown in the sanctuary, and Catherine, who bore the name of the donor's daughter, close to the door on the north wall. If his wife's name – Domuša – may be interpreted as the diminutive or hypocoristic variant of the name *Dominica*, it is possible that she was evoked by the representation of Saint Nedelja (Kyriaki), "Holy Sunday", on the south wall. In this respect, it is worth remembering that the male form of the same name was represented in the group by his nephew Domenico (*Dominicho*). Finally, Saint George, displayed on the north wall, signalled a connection with Kalođurđe, Stefan's father. His son-in-law Natalin (from Italian Natale, "Christmas") and his other nephew, Palma (whose name referred to Palm Sunday), could associate their names with the scenes of the Nativity and the Entry into Jerusalem. Other figures were connected to the donor's personality and devotional preferences, including the Archangel Michael and Francis, i.e., the titular saints of the churches where the chancellor had chosen burial places for himself and his loved ones, Saint Sebastian, whom he had venerated as a protector against the plague, and Tryphon, the patron saint of Kotor and the titular of the town cathedral, with whose chapter he had a very close relationship.

Overall, the program bears evidence to the founder's religious expectations in the eschatological emphasis conveyed by the program, which proves instrumental to the building's funerary-commemorative function. It is likely that, like the chapel of Saint Sebastian, the Mržep building was erected in lands belonging to Stefan Kalođurđević. Several documents testify to his commitment to viticulture and engagement in buying and renting vineyards throughout the Vrmac peninsula, including the area of Stoliv, Mržep, and Prčanj, whose lands largely belonged to the cathedral chapter of Kotor.[52] In 1437, he was even exempted from paying taxes to the same chapter, to which he was closely connected, for the agricultural exploitation of fields in the same area.[53] The possession of vineyards in Merzeppo (Mržep) is confirmed as late as 1460.[54] It can, there-

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[52] On the lands owned by the cathedral chapter and other church institutions from Kotor in Stoliv and Mržep cf. L. Blehova Čelebić, *Hrišćanstvo u Boki 1200–1500: kotorski district* (Podgorica: Istorijski institut Crne Gore, 2006), 54, 81, 212, 314, 326, 336.

[53] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN VI, 171 (18 May 1437), which explicitly mention a vineyard in Stoliv ("… pro una sua vinea posita in Stalivo").

[54] Kotor, Historical Archives, SN XII, 151–152 (7 December 1460). The specific vineyard mentioned in this document and obtained through the donation of a widow named Radoslava, was sold by Kalođurđević two years later: cf. Kotor, Historical Archives, SN XII, 345–346 (9 January 1462).

fore, be assumed that he used his land to build a private church that would host anniversaries and votive masses for the remedy of his and his relatives' souls, especially of his son Nicholas.

If the program reflects the founder's religious sensibility, fears, and hopes, one may wonder whether the decision to entrust its realization to an artist trained in the Byzantine-Serbian tradition was instrumental in conveying any distinctive message. Vojislav Đurić had no doubts that the adoption of a Byzantine approach to church decoration, with an uninterrupted sequence of images distributed according to a hierarchical principle, implied a direct association with the Orthodox Slavonic rite, and suggested that Stefan Kalođurđević may have been a Catholic convert who, encouraged by the new climate of the church union, wanted to somehow reconcile with his Orthodox ancestry.[55] That, however, is hard to prove. Firstly, his possible association with the later Kalođurđević clan of Paštrovići has no firm grounds,[56] given that his was a patronymic and not a family name. He was the son of the relatively unknown Ljubislava and Kalođurđe; both names were widespread among the different religious denominations of the Montenegrin coast. Kalođurđe probably stemmed from the Greek nicknames Καλογεώργιος/Καλογιώργης ("good George") and was widespread among the nomadic Vlach tribes of Dalmatia and the Orthodox Slavs of the area[57] but also among the Catholics: a notable example is Petar Kalođurđević, the Latin-rite priest of Gorica near Svač, known from a 1445 document.[58]

Stefan's office as translator indicates that Slavic was his mother tongue, but it has been observed that his language had some flaws, e.g., was not familiar with Cyrillic numbers.[59] The fact that he was much more at ease with Italian than with Latin probably indicates that this was the non-native language he had learnt first and more frequently used in his everyday life. For his children, he chose names of universally venerated saints (*Caterina*, *Nicola*) that sounded almost the same in Slavic or Italian. On the other hand, his nephews bore ostensibly Venetian names: Domenico and Palma. Furthermore, it can be assumed

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[55] Ђурић, "У сенци", 52–54.

[56] Ђурић, "У сенци", 13.

[57] M. Pijović, *Vlasi u dubrovačkim spomenicima do 14. stoljeća*, PhD dissertation (Zagreb: University of Zagreb, 2018), 312–313. On Vlachs in the Western Balkans, cf. B. Đurđev, *Postanak i razvitak crnogorskih i hercegovačkih plemena* (Titograd: Crnogorska akademija nauka i umjetnosti, 1984); V. Kursar, "Being an Ottoman Vlach: On Vlach Identity(ies), Role and Status in Western Parts of the Ottoman Balkans (15th–18th Centuries)," *OTAM* 34 (2013), 115–161. I thank Valentina Živković for these references.

[58] И. Божић, *Немирно поморје XV века* [Troubled seas of the 15th century] (Београд: СКЗ, 1979), 89.

[59] As remarked by К. Јиречек, *Споменици српски* [Serbian monuments] (Београд: У државној штампарији краљевине Србије, 1892), 6 and 67 footnote.

that his appointment as *chancellarius sclavus* shortly after the establishment of Venetian rule was facilitated by his belonging to a Latin-rite family, where Italian may have also been spoken.

The use of three different scripts in the Mržep murals is undoubtedly the outcome of the multilingual context in which they were created. However, the *tituli* accompanying the images and the dedicatory inscriptions serve fundamentally different purposes. The painter Mihailo signed his name in Serbian, and he was most likely a Slavic-speaking Orthodox who had learnt his art from an artist named Jovan from Debar, in present-day North Macedonia.[60] On the other hand, this language was deliberately not chosen by Stefan Kalođurđević, as one might expect if he had wanted to promote a church officiated according to the Orthodox Slavonic rite. The choice of Italian indicates that he did not understand it as indicative of his confessional affiliation: in that case, Latin would have been more appropriate, and, in keeping with this principle, he had indeed made use of standardized Latin formulas in his tomb slabs in Kotor. Instead, he chose Italian because he considered it more representative of his high social status as a member of Kotor's town elite, into which he had so seamlessly integrated.

The use of the *tituli* depended more directly on the liturgical and cultic traditions of each of the images. The *Dodekaorton* inscriptions have mostly faded away, but the Serbian script can be detected on two of them. The medallions with prophets are also in Serbian. Of the saints displayed in the nave, Nicholas, Nedelja/Kyriaki, Tryphon, George, Demetrius, Theodore, the Archangel Michael, and even the more "Western" Sebastian were labelled in Cyrillic, whereas Catherine and Paraskeve (Petka) have Greek inscriptions, and Francis is marked in Latin. What is more, all the writings displayed in the apse are Greek. The general impression is that Mihailo basically reproduced the inscriptions he found in works he used as models – including perhaps a sketchbook received from his teacher, master Jovan of Debar.[61] This would also explain the stylistic changes detected in his work: his images of Sebastian, Francis, and Tryphon look Gothic because they were inspired by Italianate visual sources he intentionally imitated. This choice was not due to a lack of iconographic alternatives: in Dečani, the patron saint of Kotor had been rendered as a young, curly-haired martyr, wearing a mantle and a long tunic decorated with golden bands reminiscent of a *loros* and holding a cross in his right hand.[62] Rather than relying on such a conventional, non-individualized solution, the painter decided not only to conform to

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[60] Ђурић, "У сенци", 26, suggests that Jovan of Debar may have been a follower of Metropolitan Jovan, who was responsible for the decoration of the church of Sveti Andrejaš on the Treska river.

[61] Ђурић, "У сенци", 44.

[62] B. Todić and M. Čanak-Medić, *The Dečani Monastery* (Belgrade: Museum in Priština, 2005), 426.

the locally customary iconography but also to evoke the visual effectiveness of Tryphon's dynamic posture and imposing physique.

Nevertheless, the use of Greek inscriptions in the sanctuary, the most important part of the church, shows to what extent Byzantine tradition was seen as authoritative by local Christians, regardless of their denominational distinctions. The Greek script was not alien to the decoration of Catholic churches in Kotor, where it had occasionally been employed in combination with Latin: it was part of a widespread appreciation of Greek religious painting as invested with a special aura of sacredness, whose foundational moment was the work of the apostles and, in particular, Luke the Evangelist.[63]

The emergence of Italianate-Gothic pictorial solutions that apparently departed from the set of forms used in Byzantium in the 14th and 15th centuries did not prevent important Latin-rite institutions from hiring Byzantine or Byzantine-trained artists to decorate their buildings. This is widely witnessed in different contexts, such as Genoa, Venice, Crete, Pera, Rhodes, Cyprus, southern Poland, and Lithuania.[64,]

But perhaps the best examples are the 14th-century churches of Kotor, such as Santa Maria Collegiata or the Cathedral of Saint Tryphon, which were

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[63] M. Bacci, "Alla 'maniera' dell'Evangelista Luca'. In *Immagini medievali di culto dopo il Medioevo*, ed. Vinni Lucherini (Rome: Viella, 2018), 19–39.

[64] Genoa: In ca. 1313–1315, the Genoa Cathedral was decorated with Byzantine murals, possibly by a Constantinopolitan master named Markos and mentioned in a 1313 document: cf. esp. R. S. Nelson, "A Byzantine Painter in Trecento Genoa. The Last Judgment at S. Lorenzo", *The Art Bulletin* LXVII (1985), 548–566; C. Di Fabio, "Bisanzio e Genova tra XII e XIV secolo. Documenti e memorie d'arte". In *Genova e l'Europa mediterranea. Opere, artisti, committenti, collezionisti*, eds. Piero Boccardo and Clario Di Fabio (Genoa: Silvana Editoriale, 2005), 183–203; E. Rentetzi, "Gli affreschi bizantini nella cattedrale di Genova. Una nuova lettura iconografica", *Arte documento* XXVIII (2012), 104–111; F. Volpera "Proposta di lettura delle pitture di cultura paleologa all'interno del Duomo di Genova", *Intrecci d'arte dossier* I (2016), 134–150; K. Krause, "Passionsfrömmigkeit und kommunale Propaganda um 1300. Die "byzantinischen" Fresken im Dom von Genua". In *Inszenierungen von Sichtbarkeit in mittelalterlichen Bildkulturen*, eds. Henriette Hoffmann, Caroline Schärli and Sophie Schweinfurth (Berlin: Reimer, 2018), 163–215; C. Di Fabio, "Le vie dell'ordinario. Genova, il Tirreno e il Mediterraneo nel XIV secolo. Casi artistici e questioni di metodo". In *Per omnia litora. Interazioni artistiche, politiche e commerciali lungo le rotte del Mediterraneo tra XIV e XV secolo*, eds. Alessandro Diana and Caterina Fioravanti (Pisa: Edizioni della Normale, 2024), 11–37.
Venice: The enduring success of Byzantine or Byzantinesque forms in the decoration of Venetian churches is best exemplified by the mid-14th-century mosaics in the Baptistry of San Marco: cf. H. Belting, "Dandolo's Dreams. Venetian State Art and Byzantium". In *Byzantium: Faith and Power (1261–1557). Perspectives on Late Byzantine Art and Culture*, ed. Sarah T. Brooks (New Haven: Yale University Press and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2006), 138–153; V. Pace, "Il ruolo di Bisanzio nella Venezia del XIV secolo. Nota introduttiva a uno studio dei mosaici del Battistero marciano", *Ateneo Veneto* C (2013),

243–253; E. De Franceschi, "I mosaici del battistero, fra il rinnovamento bizantino-pa-leologo e la produzione pittorica veneta dei primi decenni del Trecento". In *San Marco, la basilica di Venezia. Arte, storia, conservazione*, ed. Ettore Vio (Venice: Marsilio, 2019), I, 309–317.

Crete: An extant example of a Latin-rite liturgical space decorated with Byzantine murals is the Dominican church of Saints Peter and Paul in Candia (Heraklion): cf. D. Chronaki and D. Kalomoirakis, "Ο ναός του Αγίου Πέτρου των Δομηνικανών στο Ηράκλειο", in *Πεπραγμένα Θ´ Διεθνούς Κρητολογικού Συνεδρίου, Ελούντα, 1–6.10.2001* (Heraklion: Etaireia Kretikon Istorikon Meleton, 2004), 119–135; E. Delinikola, D. Chronaki and D. E. Kalomirakis, "Restoration of the Dominican Church of St Peter in Heraklion, Crete". In *Routes of Faith in the Medieval Mediterranean. History, Monuments, Pilgrimage Perspectives*, ed. Evangelia Hadjitryphonos (Thessaloniki: European Centre of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Monuments, 2008), 430–440; E. Chorafa, "Ο ιερός ναός του Αγίου Πέτρου *δομινικανών* στο Ηράκλειο Κρήτης: το έργο της αποκατάστασης". In *Αρχαιολογικό Έργο Κρήτης 2: Πρακτικά της 2ης Συνάντησης, Ρέθυμνο, 26–28.11.2010*, eds. Michalis Andrianakis, Petroula Varthalitou and Iris Tzachili (Rethymno: Ekdoseis Philosophikes Scholes Panepistimiou Kretes, 2012), 382–392; V. Sythiakaki, "Τα βενετικά μνημεία του Χάνδακα και η τύχη τους". In *Η γλυπτική στη βενετική Κρήτη (1211–1669)*, eds. Maria Vakondiou and Olga Gratziou (Heraklion: Panepistemiakes Ekdoseis Kretes, 2021), 33–60, esp. 52–53.

Pera: On the murals discovered in the ancient Dominican church of Saint Paul, present-day Arap Camii, cf. esp. R. Quirini-Popławski, *The Art of the Genoese Colonies of the Black Sea Basin (1261–1475)* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 248–274.

Rhodes: Some of the churches that can be safely associated with the Knights Hospitaller (such as, e.g., Hagios Georgios Chostos on Mount Phileremos and Saint George of the "English" in the town walls) were decorated in ways that often combined Byzantine and Western elements. On the multiple cultural elements in the painted decoration of Hospitaller Rhodes cf. E. Kollias, *Η μνημειακή εκλεκτική ζωγραφική στη Ρόδο στα τέλη του 15ου και στις αρχές του 16ου αιώνα. Μνήμη Μανόλη Χατζηδάκη* (Athens: Academy of Athens, 2000); T. Archontopoulos and A. Katsioti, "Η ζωγραφική στη μεσαιωνική πόλη της Ρόδου από τον 11ο αιώνα μέχρι την κατάληψή της από τους Τούρκους (1522): Μια εκτίμηση των δεδομένων". In *15 χρόνια έργων αποκατάστασης στη Μεσαιωνική Πόλη της Ρόδου* (Athens: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 2007), 454–465; T. Archontopoulos, *Ο ναός της Αγίας Αικατερίνης στην πόλη της Ρόδου και η ζωγραφική του ύστερου Μεσαίωνα στα Δωδεκάνησα (1309–1453)* (Rhodes: Hellenic Ministry of Culture, 2010). On Saint George Chostos and its dating, cf. J–B. de Vaivre, "Peintures murales à Rhodes: les quatre chevaliers de Philerimos", *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* CXLVIII (2004), 919–943. On Saint George at the walls cf. I. Bitha and A-M. Kasdagli, "Saint George 'of the English': Byzantine and Western Encounters in a Chapel of the Fortifications of Rhodes". In *Intercultural Encounters in Medieval Greece after 1204. The Evidence of Art and Material Culture*, eds. Vicky Foskolou and Sophia Kalopissi-Verti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022), 131–170.

Cyprus: In late-14th-century Famagusta, at least two Latin-rite churches – the Carmelite church of Our Lady and the Benedictine church of Saint Anne – were decorated by Byzantine painters probably from Thessaloniki: cf. esp. M. Bacci, "Patterns of Church Decoration in Famagusta (Fourteenth to Sixteenth Centuries)". In *Famagusta. Volume I: Art and Architecture*, ed. Annemarie Weyl Carr (Turnhout: Brepols, 2014), 203–276, esp. 215–226.

sumptuously decorated with Palaiologan-style murals probably by immigrant painters, the famous *pictores graeci* mentioned in several 14th-century archival documents.[65] What is particularly striking in Mržep is Mihailo's interest in differentiating specifically Latin from universal saints *stylistically*, or, in other words, in reproducing the outward appearance of his models by imitating their three-dimensional modelling technique. In contrast, his predecessors had transformed even Ambrose or Augustine into Greek metropolitans wearing a *polystavrion phelonion* and standing out for their awe-inspiring, austere facial types furrowed with deep wrinkles.[66] Meanwhile, a major change had happened: artists – and viewers – had started acknowledging and emphasizing the visual distinctiveness of Byzantine vs. Western or Italian styles and perceived them as instrumental in expressing different devotional needs, which were, at any rate, not understood as mutually exclusive.

If Italianate forms sparked the viewer's emotional, participative, and empathic response, those evocative of Byzantine traditions endowed sacred images

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Poland: The painted cycles in the collegiate church of Wiślica (ca. 1400), in Sandomierz Cathedral (ca. 1403–1416), in the Royal Chapel of the Holy Trinity in the Castle of Lublin (1418) and in the Virgin Chapel of Wawel Cathedral in Kraków (ca. 1420) were entrusted by King Władysław II Jagiełło to Byzantine-trained painters: cf. A. Różycka-Bryzek, *Bizantyńsko-ruskie malowidła w kaplicy zamku Lubelskiego* (Warsaw: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1983); eadem, *Freski bizantyńsko-ruskie fundacji Jagiełły w kaplicy Zamku Lubelskiego* (Lublin: Muzeum Lubelskie, 2000); eadem, "Malowidła ścienne bizantyńsko-ruskie". In *Malarstwo gotyckie w Polsce*, eds. Adam S. Labuda and Krystyna Secomska (Warsaw: Instytut Sztuki SAN, 2004), I, 155–84; G. Jurkowlaniec, "West and East Perspectives on the 'Greek Manner' in the Early Modern Period", *Ikonotheka* 22 (2009), 71–91; M. Smorąg-Różycka, "Byzantyńskie malowidła w prezbiterium katedry pw. Narodzenia Najświętszej Maryi Panny w Sandomieryu – odkrycia niespodziewane i doniosłe", *Modus* 12–13 (2013), 53–73; P. Ł. Grotowski, *Freski fundacji Władysława II Jagiełły w kolegiacie wiślickiej* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo księgarnia akademika, 2021); G. Mickūnaitė, *Maniera Greca in Europe's Catholic East. On Identities of Images in Lithuania and Poland (1380s–1720s)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2023), 119–160.
Lithuania: Mickūnaitė, *Maniera Greca*, 39–118.

[65] Радојчић, "О сликарству", 57–58; R. Kovijanić, I. Stjepčević, *Kulturni život staroga Kotora (XIV–XVII vijek)* (Cetinje: Istoriski Instut NR, 1957), I, 93–101; В. Ђурић, *Византијске фреске у Југославији* [Byzantine frescoes in Yugoslavia] (Београд: Југославија, 1974), 58; Живковић, *Религиозност*, 277–282; eadem, "*Tota depicta picturis grecis*. The Style and Iconography of Religious Painting in Medieval Kotor (Montenegro)", *Il capitale culturale* X (2014), 65–89; eadem, "In Encountering Western Culture – The Art of the Pomorje (Maritime Lands) in the 14th Century". In *Byzantine Heritage and Serbian Art*, eds. Ljubomir Maksimović and Jelena Trivan, *Volume II: Sacral Art of the Serbian Lands in the Middle Ages*, eds. Danica Popović and Dragan Vojvodić (Belgrade: Institute for Byzantine Studies SASA, 2016), 357–365.

[66] Bacci, "Along the Art–Historical Margins", 89.

with an aura of charismatic authority. Even a cursory glance at the remnants of mid-15th-century monumental paintings in and around Kotor indicates that painters did not cease to resort to *alla greca* iconographic schemes and compositional features in the decoration of sacred spaces, without it preventing them from enhancing the visual impact of religious imagery through the adoption of a "Western" approach to the rendering of bodies and space.[67] Local artists shared the same concerns that drove contemporary Cretan painters to emphasize the dramatic elements of the *Crucifixion* scene and their Venetian colleagues to revitalize the compositional model of Marian icons.[68] On the one hand, they felt the need to update the figurative repertoire with solutions capable of satisfying a devotional sensibility prevalent among the Latins but also fascinating to the Orthodox, which promoted meditation on the humanity of Christ and the Virgin as conducive to a more intimate, direct, and embodied contact with the sphere of the sacred. On the other hand, they tried not to confuse viewers with forms based too explicitly on the optical simulation of sensible reality and potentially contradictory to the evocation of the spiritual dimension at which religious painting was deemed to aim.

The pursuit of a visual compromise between the two approaches is well illustrated by two painted cycles made in the same period as the one in Mržep in a Latin and an Orthodox church. The former is Saint Michael in Kotor, which was used as a burial and commemorative space by many prominent families, including the Kalođurđevićs, as mentioned above. Byzantine schemes, meant to convey fundamentally eschatological meanings, were used in the decoration of the apse in an original way: a *Deesis* was displayed in the conch, the multi-layered symbolism of the veil – hinting at the *parochet* of the Old Jerusalem Temple – was given visual prominence in the lower wall, an *Ascension* was represented above the arch, and an *Annunciation* and images of saints were shown on both sides of the apse. At the same time, the specific ways in which body postures, facial features, and folds were rendered betray the use of "Gothic" modelling devices and stylistic formulas.[69] A similar approach is also detectable in the second example, the mural paintings in the chapel of the Dormition of the Virgin at Savina Monastery near Herceg Novi. As emphasized in scholarship, the cycle follows the standard patterns of Byzantine church decoration and iconography

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[67] Живковић, *Религиозност*, 282–288.

[68] On these two aspects, cf. M. Bacci, "Modèles italiens dans la peinture d'icônes au Moyen Âge tardif: la *Crucifixion* crétoise du Musée national de Stockholm", *Rivista d'arte*, ser. V, VII (2017), 249–261; and idem, "Bellini's Renewed Icons of Mary and Their Appropriation on Crete". In *Revivals or Survival? Resurgences of the Icon from the 15th Century to the Present Day*, eds. Ralph Dekoninck and Ingrid Falque (Cinisello Balsamo: Silvana Editoriale, 2023), 64–78.

[69] Живковић, *Религиозност*, 201–208, and 283–284.

but is rendered in a style that betrays the authorship of an artist trained in, or perfectly acquainted with, contemporary Gothic painting.[70] In both cases, the Virgin of the Annunciation is represented in an elegantly slicing posture designed to impress beholders: at Saint Michael's, she holds her Western attribute, a book, whereas in Savina she stands under an elaborate marble canopy rendered in a foreshortened view (Fig. 8). Analogous Italianate solutions, stemming from the repertoire of contemporary Venetian arts, appear in a number of Cretan *Annunciation* icons from the second half of the 15th century, but their rendering is usually (and intentionally) more lax about the rules of perspective.[71]

Both the murals in Saint Michael and Savina Monastery have been tentatively attributed to the renowned Kotor-born, Latin-rite painter Lovro Dobričević (*post* 1415–1478), who was trained in Venice, painted in a Late Gothic style with elements reminiscent of the Vivarinis' work and also had strong connections with Dubrovnik.[72] Since he was Kalođurđević's next door-neighbour,[73] it is somewhat surprising that he was not entrusted with the decoration of the Mržep church. One can only speculate that this was due to the painter's unavailability, personal issues, or perhaps to the fact that the *chancellarius sclavus* did not want to bother such a famous (and probably quite expensive) artist for the decoration of a small private chapel. Nevertheless, another possibility is that he chose Mihailo, a disciple of Jovan of Debar, because he wanted somebody to embellish his chapel in a distinctively Greek-looking way. The result was a fresco

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[70] В. Ђурић, "Манастир Савина" [Savina Monastery], *Бока* V (1973), 1–18; Vujičić, *Srednjovjekovna arhitektura*, 260–261; Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi*, 210–214.

[71] Notable examples are an icon from ca. 1460 in the Gallery of Vicenza and a contemporary one in a Greek private collection: cf. P. Vokotopoulos, "11. Annunciazione", in *Venetiae quasi alterum Byzantium. Da Candia a Venezia. Icone greche in Italia XV–XVI secolo*, exhibition catalogue (Venice, Museo Correr, 17 September–30 October 1993), ed. Nano Chatzidakis (Athens: Foundation for Greek Culture, 1993), 56–61, and M. Chatzidakis, "113. Royal Doors, right panel. Second Half of the 15th Century". In *Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Art*, exhibition catalogue (Athens, Old University, 26 July 1985–6 January 1986), ed. Myrtali Acheimastou-Potamianou (Athens: Ministry of Culture, 1986), 112. On similar architectural solutions in works attributed to Lovro Dobričević cf. G. Gamulin, "Položaj Lovre Dobričevića u slikarstvu Venecije i Dubrovnika". In *Likovna kultura Dubrovnika 15. i 16. stoljeća*, ed. Igor Fisković (Zagreb: MSG, 1991), 167–178, esp. 169.

[72] On this painter and his work cf. В. Ђурић, *Дубровачка сликарства школа* [Dubrovik school of painting] (Београд: Научно дело, 1963), 90–94, 108–116; K. Prijatelj, *Dubrovačko slikarstvo XV–XVI stoljeća* (Zagreb: Zora, 1968), 18–20; Vujičić, *Srednjovjekovna arhitektura*, 253–268; D. Nagorni, "Dobričević, Lovro Marinov". In *Allgemeines Künstlerlexikon. Band 28: Disney-Donnus* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2001), 152–153; Prijatelj Pavičić, *U potrazi*, 307–311 and *passim*.

[73] Ђурић, "У сенци", 19, underlines that Kalođurđević lived in the same street as Lovro Dobričević.

ensemble that took inspiration from the standard program of Orthodox churches but was adapted to the specificities of a Latin-rite sacred space intended for the performance of *pro anima* masses. This is indicated not only by the odd selection of saints and the eschatological emphasis pervading the cycle but also the highly unusual program of the sanctuary. Two details indicate quite clearly that the building was intended for the Western rite: on one side, Stefan's namesake is shown holding an object that, in its dimensions and shape, looks much more like a pyx, a liturgical vessel used to contain hosts, than as an artophorion. On the other hand, the composition in the apse rules out that the church may have employed the Orthodox rite or a Greek Catholic adaptation of the latter. At first sight, we are obviously reminded of the standard image of the officiating bishops in the bema of Byzantine and Serbian churches.[74] This program, which usually includes several saints, is sometimes adapted to smaller spaces in an abbreviated form, restricted to the figures of Saint John Chrysostom and Saint Basil, as seen, for instance, in the small church of Sveti Andrejaš on the Treska river.[75] Occasionally, the condensed solution was also used in external annexes, like on a fresco located in the narthex of the katholikon of Dečani Monastery, which may have originally been associated with a side altar.[76] Here, as in the larger compositions, the altar is covered with a richly embroidered tablecloth, whose purple colour, evoking both an idea of regality and the red appearance of blood, proves instrumental in conveying the complex spectrum of Eucharistic metaphors that underlie the *Melismos* image.[77]

Even though Mihailo faithfully replicated the general compositional structure of the *Officiating Bishops* scene, he rendered the altar in a completely different way. He refrained from visually staging the sacramental presence of

[74] G. Babić, "Les discussions christologiques et le décor des églises byzantines au XIIᵉ siècle. Les évêques officiant devant l'Hétimasie et devant l'Amnos", *Frühmittelalterliche Studien* II (1968), 368–386; C. Walter, "La place des évêques dans le décor des absides byzantines", *Revue de l'art* XXIV (1974), 81–89; idem, *Art and Ritual of the Byzantine Church* (London: Variorum, 1982), 198–214; J-M. Spieser, "Liturgie et programmes iconographiques", *Travaux et mémoires* XI (1991), 575–590; Todić, *Serbian Medieval Painting*, 145–153; A. G. Mantas, *Τὸ εἰκονογραφικὸ πρόγραμμα τοῦ Ἱεροῦ Βήματος τῶν μεταβυζαντινῶν ναῶν τῆς Ἑλλάδας (843–1204)* (Athens: Ethniko kai Kapodistriako Panapistimio Athinon, Philosophiki Scholi, 2001); A. M. Lidov, *Иконы. Мир свяатых образов в Византии и на Руси* (Moscow: Feoriya, 2013), 168–192.

[75] J. Prolović, *Die Kirche des Heiligen Andreas an der Treska: Geschichte, Architektur und Malerei einer palaiologenzeitlichen Stiftung des serbischen Prinzen Andreaš* (Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 100–104.

[76] Todić and Čanak-Medik, *The Dečani Monastery*, 434.

[77] C. Konstantinide, *Ὁ Μελισμός. Οἱ συλλειτουργοῦντες ἱεράρχες καὶ οἱ ἄγγελοι-διάκονοι μπροστὰ στὴν Ἁγία Τράπεζα μὲ τὰ τίμια δῶρα ἤ τὸν εὐχαριστιακὸ Χριστό* (Athens: Kentro vyzantinon erevnon, 2008).

Christ in the holy bread by representing Christ as either a child or a dead man lying on the table or inside the paten, or even on both the paten and the chalice. This solution, which was common in Orthodox churches of the period, would probably have been met with astonishment by Catholic viewers. The comparison with Simone Martini's *Mass of Saint Martin* (1316–1317) in the Lower Church of Saint Francis in Assisi[78] shows that he represented the altar according to the habits of Latin-rite churches, i.e., covered with two textiles: a larger, purple one, with richly and multi-coloured edges, which completely conceals the front, and a white tablecloth superimposed on it, whose lateral flaps, decorated with ornamental bands, fall along the short sides. The simulated altar worked as a visual double of the real one that stood before it, and, accordingly, even evoked its equipment with the most important *vasa sacra*: an oval paten, an open missal placed on a decorated cushion, and a distinctively Gothic-type chalice, with a wide foot, a roundish knob, and an elongated and tight cup.[79]

All the visual emphasis was laid on the sacred vessels (Fig. 6). If it is true that a variant, widespread in Venetian-ruled Crete, of the *Melismos* – defined by Chara Konstantinide as "realistic" – displayed the *diskos* (sometimes covered with an *asteriskos*) and *poterion* empty or filled with bread and wine instead of visualizing Christ's presence through the image of his lying body,[80] the solution employed in Mržep expanded the binary association by including a third element, the book. This choice was meant to establish a Trinitarian symbolism by way of metonymy, with the vessels used to hint at their contents, which were, in turn, invested with multiple metaphoric associations. The wine with which the chalice was to be filled stood for Christ's divine nature and, by association, for God the Father. Therefore, the object was given the same central position that the Lord of the Universe had in the vault. The empty paten hinted at the bread as the Eucharistic double of Christ's incarnated body and was, therefore, a symbol of the Redeemer. Finally, the open Missal, lying on a cushion according to the Latin fashion, manifested the Word and the Wisdom of the Lord and could be understood as a symbol of the Holy Ghost. In keeping with Western medieval visual conventions, the book was also shown as a material embodiment of

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[78] A. Martindale, *Simone Martini: Complete Edition* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 174–181.

[79] Bacci, "Western Liturgical Vessels", 260–276. On the visual rendering of Latin altars in medieval pictorial arts cf. J. Kroesen and M. Sureda i Jubany, "The Altar and Its Equipment 1100–1350: Liturgy and Art". In *North&South. Medieval Art from Norway and Catalonia, 1100–1350*, exhibition catalogue (Utrecht: Museum Catherijneconvent, 25 October 2019–26 January 2020; Vic, Museu Episcopal, 15 February–15 May 2020), eds. Jurgen Kroesen, Micha Leeflang and Marc Sureda i Jubany (Zwolle: Wbooks, 2019), 17–33.

[80] Konstantinide, *Ο Μελισμός*, 65–73, 162–172.

the liturgical formulas that, once enacted through their recitation by the priest, ensured the sacramental effectiveness of the transubstantiation taking place in the rite of consecration, visually evoked in the mural by the two *vasa sacra*.[81]

As already mentioned, Đurić provocatively stated that if either Orthodox or Catholic theologians had entered the church, they could only have expressed strong reservations about its idiosyncratic iconographic program.[82] The point is that the cycle of paintings aimed less to visualize theological frameworks than to meet the devotional expectations of a layman concerned about his and his loved ones' fate in the afterlife. It gave expression to a deep concern about the soul's *salus* ("health"/"salvation"), which could be ensured by the exercise of charity and the engagement in increasing divine worship, that is, constructing and embellishing new sacred spaces, and using the latter, at least in part, for the performance of prayers and masses *pro remedio animae*. This type of liturgical activity had the power to "buy back" the sins that burdened the soul and bring relief to the deceased undergoing the purification process in purgatory. In keeping with the strong Eucharistic focus of lay piety in Kotor,[83] the apse of the small commemorative chapel in Mržep was decorated with a figurative double of the material altar on which the votive masses for the souls of the chancellor's family were celebrated: its liturgical equipment epitomized the soul-benefiting agency of the rituals expected to be enacted in front of it. The officiating priest and the other attendees of the Mass could thus have the feeling of the simultaneous consecration of the host and wine in both the earthly and heavenly dimensions. The identity of the beneficiaries of these "individualized" rites and the assistance offered to them by the inhabitants of the spiritual realm were evoked by the sequence of many namesake saints in the nave, while the upper part of the walls staged, in all its intensity, the salvific perspective of the Kingdom of Heaven, disclosed by the incarnation, death, and resurrection of the Son of God. Overall, the program declared how confident Stefan Kalođurđević was that, sooner or later, the Lord would reward his meritorious efforts by opening the gates of Paradise to him and his loved ones.

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[81] On this symbolic meaning of the Missal, cf. P. Nourrigeon, *De la* translatio *à la creation. Les images dans les manuscrits du* Rational des divins offices (Paris: Cerf, 2018), 66–67.

[82] Ђурић, "У сенци", 42–43.

[83] Живковић, *Религиозност*, 238–252.

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

Abstract: Analysing the contributions of Jovan Cvijić, Traian Stoianovich, Paschalis Kitro-
milides 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 ar-
guments 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 im-
portant 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 en-
deavoured 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

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[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.

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[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

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[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

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[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: Librairie 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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Beyond Nationalism? The Inter-war Period and Some Features of the Complex Transformation of Southeastern Europe

Abstract: In Southeastern Europe, the end of the First World War marked a profound geopolitical transformation and the start of an important and conflicting process of modernisation of the economic, social and political structures of the countries in the region. Agrarian reforms, changes in political structures, increasing urbanisation, population growth, and ad hoc legislation for minority rights protection were some of the most important issues addressed in those years. This essay aims to elucidate the main knots and contradictions in the internal and international life of the countries of Balkan Europe, showing how efforts to change political and social structures encountered enormous obstacles in the intrinsic weakness of those socio-economic structures, but also in the will of important segments of the Balkan ruling classes, especially those who had realised the nationalistic dreams of the decades before the Great War, to reassert the supremacy of their respective power and ethnic groups. Yet there were changes, and important ones at that. In foreign policy, for example, the Balkans was the only region in Europe where an attempt was made to turn the so-called 'spirit of Locarno' into a concrete achievement, albeit unsuccessfully.

Keywords: interwar years, modernisation, reforms, Balkans, economic policy, foreign policy.

Several years after the end of the First World War, many Western travellers and observers passing through the Balkan Peninsula left a miserable image of the places they had visited, that of savage and backward places far from the standards of true European civilisation, which, in their minds, roughly coincided with the Western part of the continent. Maria Todorova's acute observations about this are well known. In pages of extraordinary lucidity, Todorova did not hesitate to speak of judgments strongly influenced by racist prejudice against the populations of Southeastern Europe.[1] At the same time, peasants and their villages always appeared as miserable places where nothing had changed over the centuries. Yet, Ulf Brunnbauer rightly noted that from the mid-1920s to the early 1930s, in various parts of Southeastern Europe, such as in Bulgaria, many rural

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[1] See M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 204–215.

areas had made significant progress: more and more villages had schools, running water and other basic infrastructures, cooperatives had sprung up and, in some cases, even agricultural financial institutions.[2] Those judgments were also the result of an overall negative view of the new Balkan reality and were certainly influenced by the enormous territorial changes and the emergence of new states, such as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (SHS) and Albania[3] – and drastically changed borders of other countries, which, on the whole, seemed to sanction the affirmation of the most intransigent nationalism and to bury forever the very idea of great multi-ethnic empires, but in a context marked by a long trail of violence, if not by real low-intensity wars.[4] Unrest, wartime events, internal chaos, and population displacement, among other things documented in great detail by the European media of the time and disseminated *en masse* in Western public opinion[5], overshadowed the complex of great social, economic,

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[2] See U. Brunnbauer, "Overview. Challenges of changes. Economic and population growth, social and cultural transformations up to World War II." In *The Routledge Handbook of Balkans and Southeast European History*, eds. John R. Lampe, Ulf Brunnbauer (London: Routledge, 2021), 291. However, it is also fair to point out that particularly after the fall of communist regimes, many historians who have discussed the interwar period have emphasised that, apart from the major and often unresolved problems that burdened the region, for the other half of the continent these were years of consolidation of nation-states, accelerated modernisation of the economy and infrastructure, and greater inclusion and participation of citizens in decision-making processes and political structures of the relevant states. See U. Brunnbauer, "Introduction : (re)writing history in Southeast Europe". In (*Re)writing history: historiography in Southeast Europe after socialism*, ed. Ulf Brunnbauer (Münster, Lit, 2004).

[3] In fact, Albanian independence was proclaimed in Vlora on 28th November 1912 by a group of Shqiptar notables headed by Ismail Qemali. However, despite of the international recognition granted by some important powers, Albania entered a period of chaos and violence that made that declaration of independence an entirely aleatory event. The arrival on the Albanian throne of a king, the German Prince Wilhelm of Wied, who counted on the support of the concert of powers, was insufficient to give substance to that proclamation. Wilhelm's reign, plagued by internal instability and widespread violence, lasted only six months (from March to September 1914). His authority never reached beyond Durrës, where he was defended by the Italian naval infantry. With the outbreak of the Great War, Albania was occupied and divided between the Central Powers and the Entente, and it was not until the early 1920s that the Albanian state painstakingly acquired its first yet fragile state and administrative structure and began its state-building process. See R. Clegg Austin, *Founding a Balkan State: Albania's Experiment with Democracy, 1920–1925* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2012).

[4] See M. Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe Twentieth Century* (London: Allen Lane, 1998), 43.

[5] See K. Ka*ser*, "Visualizing the Balkans: the Balkans Wars, the Great War and Visual Modernity." In *Contextualising Changes: Migrations, Shifting Borders and New Identities in Eastern Europe* (Sofia: Institute of Ethnology and Folklore Studies with Ethnographic

cultural, and other changes that affected interwar societies in the Balkan space.[6] Already in the early 1920s, there was no shortage of those who pointed out that the time had come to move beyond the deep-rooted prejudices of the ruling classes in Southeastern Europe. In fact, as an observer of the time, Hamilton F. Armstrong, pointed out, politicians in the region were authentically European and, while it was certainly true that many Balkan statesmen had in the past put their own interests and those of their power groups before the real needs of their respective populations, "[...]it may fairly be said that the men who have ruled the destinies of the Balkan states during the past five years have been neither more nor less scrupulous than their colleagues in Western Europe".[7]

With the sole exception of Bulgaria, where the protagonist of the early post-war years was the leader of the Bulgarian National Agrarian Union (BZNS), Aleksandar Stamboliyski, other countries had political figures such as Nikola Pašić, Ion I. C. Brătianu or Eleftherios Venizelos with their respective circles of power and clientele, who had dominated the public scene in the prewar years and retained power in the first post-war phase and spearheaded the crucial early stages of the reconstruction and development of Southeastern Europe. In order to better understand this second phase of Balkan modernisation, it is worth clarifying that, albeit with different nuances, all three of these notable Balkan statesmen seemed determined to transform their countries based on the Bismarckian premise that it was better to have the most active forces of society on one's side rather than to move against them. Like Venizelos, both Pašić and Brătianu had organised their respective parties as extensions of their power and were ready to change tactics and principles according to convenience and the specific situation; this would shape the long-term social and political development of their countries.[8] As the political scholar Joseph Roucek noted in the early 1930s, the parties of the Balkan leaders were based on specific interests and, above all, were mainly instruments that served these dominant personalities, who, in turn, represented the backbone of those organisations. Once those political figures disappeared, their parties dissolved, leaving power vacuums that threatened the very survival of the entire system.[9]

Museum Bulgarian Academy of Science – Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Science, 2015), 13–27.

[6]   On endemic violence in the Balkans in the years before and after the Great War see: M. Bionfich, *The Balkans. Revolution, War and Political Violence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[7]   See H. Fish Armstrong, "The New Balkans", *Foreign Affairs* 3, 2 (1924), 293.

[8]   See A. Dimou, *Entangled Paths towards Modernity. Contextualising Socialism and Nationalism in the Balkans* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 352–353.

[9]   See J. S. Roucek, *The Politics of the Balkans* (New York: McGraw–Hill Book Company, 1939), 10–14.

In this article, I focus on analysing some aspects that are less related to military and political violence, trying to highlight the set of novelties and transformations that, in a particularly complex and contradictory context, marked the start of the most important, albeit conflicting, process of modernisation and social change, but also of the gradual reappraisal of the international role of the region as a whole, which had been initiated in Southeastern Europe up to that time. Unlike the first modernising wave, which we can broadly frame in the period between the birth and political consolidation of nation-states – in other words, in the first and second half of the 19th century – up to the First World War, which was marked by the decisive importation of the Western political, economic and social model[10], this second phase saw, on several levels, a much more critical approach to the development pattern of the West and a greater focus on local political and cultural paradigms and traditions.[11] It was, after all, a matter of trying to harmonise some major projects for the transformation of more traditional economic and social structures with the needs determined by new political and ethno-social structures. This was the case with the sweeping agrarian reforms initiated in all new states in the region in the aftermath of the war, albeit with a different spirit and mechanisms. The process of land redistribution, in which national issues were intertwined with those that had to do with agrarian and economic-social dynamics, was subject to extremely complex administrative procedures –not always perfectly linear – that in almost all countries lasted well beyond the end of the 1920s. The combination of these factors also determined the amount of the total land distributed to the peasants. In Bulgaria, for example, where the latifundium practically did not exist, and the outcomes of the two Balkan wars and the Great War – disastrous for the Bulgarians – followed by population displacements to neighbouring states meant that the bulk of the population was compactly ethnically Bulgarian, the expropriated land area did not exceed 3.2% of the total. In contrast, in Romania and the Kingdom of SHS, 12.3% and 8.3% of the available agricultural land, respectively, was expropriated, while a unique case was Greece where, under pressure from the arrival of a huge mass of refugees from Asia Minor and other Balkan territories following the population exchanges agreed with Turkey and Bulgaria, 40% of the entire arable land was expropriated and four-fifths were allocated

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[10] See D. Mishkova, "Modernisation and Political Elites in the Balkans before the First World War". *East European Politics and Societies* 9, 1 (1994), 63–89.

[11] See R. Daskalov, D. Mishkova, "'Forms without Substance': Debates on the Transfer of Western Models to the Balkans." In *Entangled Histories of the Balkans, Vol. Two: Transfer of Political Ideologies and Institutions*, eds. Roumen Daskalov, Diana Mishkova (Leinden: Brill, 2014), 3–4.

to refugees.[12] However, beyond the economic and social results, on the whole rather disappointing and, notwithstanding some significant progress in certain territories, incapable of radically changing the yield and quality of production as well as the living standard of the rural population, the revolution triggered by the agrarian reforms was to accelerate and accentuate the predominant role of the state. It was the state institutions, in fact, that decided on the quantity and quality of land to be expropriated and redistributed to specific social and ethnic groups and, by extension, on the main economic asset of each Balkan country. Thus, the state completely abandoned the liberal spirit to assume the role of decision-maker and active protagonist in economic life.[13] The set objectives were important. Once the great multinational empires had been definitively destroyed, the Balkan successor states, although far from compact in terms of ethnic composition, tried to achieve the so-called 'Staatsnation', i.e., to redefine their national territories to make them as ethnically and culturally as homogeneous as possible and closely attached to a notion of purity; in short, political objectives trumped economic and social ones.[14] In other words, the economy, understood in its broadest sense and based on the principles of integral economic nationalism (highlighted in 1923 at the congress of Turkish economists who gave substance to Kemal Atatürk's vision in which military victory had to be crowned by economic triumph[15]) became an instrument for launching the process of state-building and/or perfecting.[16] In Yugoslavia, more than in any other country in the region, the new authorities' preferred instrument was colonisation, implemented mainly through war veterans generously subsidised by the state and carried out particularly in Kosovo, Vojvodina and Macedonia. Colonisation decrees preceded the issuing of ad hoc agrarian regulations. This practice intensified in the 1930s. According to the most radical exponents of Serbian nationalism, such as Djoko Perin, if the results proved unsatisfactory (and especially

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[12] As Roderick Beaton noted, the exact number of refugees who arrived in Greece between 1922 and 1925 will probably never be known. The most reliable estimates speak of between 1.3 and 1.4 million people, i.e., a quarter of the Greek population before their arrival. According to the 1928 census, every fifth inhabitant of Greece was a refugee. See R. Beaton, *Greece. Biography of a Nation* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019), 251.

[13] See D. Müller, "Statehood in Central, Eastern and Southeastern Europe". In *The Routledge History Handbook if Central and Eastern Europe in Twentieth Century*, Vol. 2, *Statehood*, eds. Włodzimierz Borodziej, Sabina Ferhadbegović, Joachim von Puttkamer (London: Routledge, 2020), 160–161.

[14] See C. Giordano, "Land and ethnic tensions: scenarios in Southeast Europe". In *Potentials of Disorder*, eds. Jan Koehler, Christoph Zürcher (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 75.

[15] See I. T. Berend, *Decades of Crisis. Central and Eastern Europe before World War II* (Berkley: California University Press, 1998), 234.

[16] Cf. U. Brunnbauer, *Overview... op. cit.*, 293.

in Kosovo and Macedonia, the resistance of Albanian communities was quite intense and led to serious clashes), the Kingdom would resort to more extreme measures, such as the expulsion of non-Slavic populations through population exchanges with neighbouring countries.[17] In short, if the overall disappointing result of the bumpy road of agrarian reform seems to have been well trodden, it is no less true that a closer look reveals that the changes that affected the countryside at least helped initiate a process – admittedly a rather difficult one – of transforming Balkan agriculture (and, more generally, the whole of Central and Eastern Europe) towards a more efficient and competitive Western model – albeit for reasons that often had little to do with social equity. The power of large landowners was reduced; societies, albeit timidly, opened up to new trends and techniques, and new social groups emerged with their own expectations and specificities. Indeed, if the agricultural reform progress was incapable of making a qualitative leap in various national economies and the living standards of the peasantry[18], the most significant contribution of the green wave was made in the social sphere: The countryside made its voice heard at the centre, and politicians could no longer afford to turn their head away from its needs, not least because even the minimal improvements in their living conditions meant that their contribution became decisive in the growth of domestic markets that, among other things, underpinned industrial growth.[19] This was also possible by virtue of a process of the progressive emergence of agrarian populist thought, which, influenced by multiple models from the West (Stuart Mill, Michelet, etc.) and the East (Russian populism, Tolstoyan humanitarianism, etc.), was more clearly defined in the Balkans, acquiring an original conceptual and ideological form. In Bulgaria, for example, the years in power of the BZNS (1919–1923), de-

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[17] Cf. D. Müller, *op. cit.*, 162–163.

[18] Here, too, the importance of the emergence of the cooperativist movement should be noted, at least in its theoretical implications, capable, according to many champions of agrarian reform, of being a valid response not only to the problems of the agricultural world but of society as a whole. See J. Eellend, "Agrarianism and Modernization in Inter–War Eastern Europe". In *Societal Change and Ideological Formation among the Rural Population in the Baltic area 1880–1939*, ed. Piötr Wawrzeniuk (Huddinge: Södertön Höhskola, 2008), 42–51. In the Balkan context, the most interesting case is undoubtedly Bulgaria, where the creation of a cooperative system became an integral part of Aleksandar Stamboliyski's process of radical transformation of agriculture and the country itself. The goal was to create a strong national cooperative network, based, in addition to the National Bank of Bulgaria, the effective financial support of two ad hoc banking institutions: the Bulgarian Agricultural Bank and the Bulgarian Central Cooperative Credit. See Ts. Marinova, N. Nonovsky, "Cooperative Agriculture Farms in Bulgaria (1890–1989)." In Munich Personal RePEc Archive, 6–11.

[19] See A. Mai Köll, "Agrarianism and ethnicity – an East Central European survey". In *History and Culture of Economic Nationalism in East central Europe*, eds. Helga Schultz, Eduard Kūbu (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts Verlag, 2006), 143–152.

spite all their contradictions and errors, which certainly helped accelerate its downfall, contributed to clarifying the agrarian specificity and the possibility of carving a third way between Western capitalism and Eastern Bolshevik communism. Beyond Stamboliyski's violent invectives against both of these models, some BZNS champions and associated intellectuals more accurately specified the movement's objectives and ideological structure. For example, the populist Todor Vlajkov focused on criticising what he saw as Marxist dogmatism and, in particular, the elimination of private property, which, according to him, would also lead to an unhealthy proletarianization of the peasantry. On the contrary, according to Vlajkov, land ownership would be a powerful stimulus for generating a civic attitude even among the rural masses, strengthening the state and its structures and easing the way towards an agrarian democracy.[20]

For many observers, this was the period when even in Southeastern Europe the state ceased to be an abstract entity that, at best, appeared for tax collection and conscription. This took place in a context in which the economic role of governments steadily grew, contributing to the reconstruction of the economic fabric first by intercepting and guaranteeing fundamental international loans and then by bestowing generous orders and high protective tariffs[21], measures that strengthened national production in an increasingly globalised and competitive market. Following the shock of the Great Crash of October 1929, there was again a need for direct intervention by various executives to prevent the collapse of agricultural and industrial enterprises and support domestic demand and exports. The state and its institutions became necessary and irreplaceable props not only for defending borders but also for ensuring social and economic security in their respective countries.[22] Another aspect of this vision was the constitutional transformations that affected the state-building process after the war. In Bulgaria, the threat posed by the unprecedented agrarian power to the pivotal concepts of the so-called Tārnovo Constitution (1879), adopted in the aftermath of gaining autonomy from the Ottoman Empire and based on the Belgian constitution of 1831, was a powerful glue that united the traditional par-

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[20] Cf. B. Trencsényi, M. Kopeček, L. Lisjak Gabrijelčič, M. Falina, M. Baár, M. Janowski, *A History of Modern Political Thought in East Central Europe*, Vol. I, *Negotiating Modernity in the 'Long Nineteenth Century'*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 470–471.

[21] The Romanian economist Mihail Manoilescu, one of its most important theorists, saw protectionism as the most powerful weapon to ensure the full success of economic nationalism and the emancipation of small states from the tutelage of great powers. See M. Manoilesco, *La teoria del protezionismo e dello scambio internazionale* (Milan: Treves, 1931), infra.

[22] Cf. M.–J. Calic, *The Great Cauldron. A History of Southeastern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), 431.

ties in a tough opposition to Stamboliyski's agrarian dominance. The all-out de-
fence of the Tārnovo Constitution based on solid principles of liberal-bourgeois
democracy and involving notions such as private property, the separation of state
powers, and a parliamentary monarchy, became the embankment that had to be
defended at all costs to prevent Bulgaria from becoming a dictatorship of the
people based on the 'peasant democracy' preached by Stamboliyski's closest lieu-
tenants, such as Rayko Daskalov. This danger brought together against BZNS
and its leader a composite and intransigent front of traditional political forces,
united in the so-called National Entente, determined to defend the old order by
safeguarding the previous Bulgarian state-building from a green revolution that
seemed to be heading towards a peasant republic, with the recognition of full
citizenship rights and the limitation of all political and social rights to be en-
joyed only by members of the peasant class.[23] Yet, apart from the agrarian re-
form measures and despite numerous aggressive declarations by the agrarian
leaders, during their rule, the right to property enshrined in the Bulgarian con-
stitution was not affected, except in a very limited and almost symbolic way in
the BZNS reforms, and on many occasions the harshness of intentions was suc-
cessfully tempered by an intervention of some of the most authoritative and ex-
perienced BZNS members, such as Finance Minister Marko Turlakov. It was
Turlakov and his men who avoided implementing the most extremist reforms. It
should be noted that in those very years, industrial investments continued re-
ceiving constant attention and full support from the agrarian executive.[24] The
need to explore a third way to modernise the productive and social structures of
their respective countries through developed agriculture and a modern industry
linked to local production (e.g. efficient and large-scale processing of agricultural
products) remained central to the vision of the Balkan agrarians, but these ob-
jectives required a strong state intervention to defend the still weak countryside
from the aggressiveness of financial capitalism and the short-sightedness and
conservatism of urban bureaucracies.[25] Of course, private property was not af-
fected even by the new constitutions approved by the parliaments in Belgrade

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[23] Cf. C. Promitzer, "Interwar Bulgaria Populism, authoritarianism, and ethnic minori-
ties". In *Interwar East–central Europe, 1918–1941. The failure of democracy-building, the
Fate of Minorities*, ed. Sabrina Ramet (London: Routledge, 2020), 185.

[24] Cf. B. Trencsényi, M. Kopeček, L. Lisjak Gabrijelčič, M. Falina, M. Baár, M. Janow-
ski, *A History of Modern Poliitcal Thought in East Central Europe*, Vol. II, *Negotiating Mo-
dernity in the 'Short Twentieth Century' and Beyond*, Part I, 1918–1968 (Oxford: Oxford
University Press, 2018), 144. On the support of agrarian governments' support for the
industry, see A. Basciani, "Growth without Development: The Post-WWI in the Lower
Danube. Perspective and Problems of Romania and Bulgaria", *Journal of European Eco-
nomic History* 3 (2020), 146–156.

[25] *Ibid.*, 153–154.

and Bucharest in 1921 and 1923 respectively, and yet the concept of property "[...] was not regarded as an unrestricted right in the liberal-individualist sense".[26] Article 17 of the Romanian constitution assigned a social function to private property, while Article 37 of the constitution of the Kingdom of SHS, while guaranteeing the right to property, specified that purposes and limits of property would be regulated by statutes.[27] These were not just details, as the subsequent economic, social and political developments in Romania and Yugoslavia clearly demonstrated. In the first case, the undisputed leader of the country's post-war transformation was the Liberal Party (or rather, the National Liberal Party/ PNU, as it was always meaningfully called after the war), led until his death in November 1927 by Ion I.C. Brătianu, the great architect of the so-called financial oligarchy, a small but powerful group of bankers and industrialists grouped around the Romanian Bank.[28] It was precisely Brătianu who gave the country a nationalist economic turn, encapsulated in the motto Prin Noi Înşine! (On our own!), inspired by the eponymous title of an article published by Vintilă I. C. Brătianu, Ion's brother and long-time Minister of Finance, in 1905. The idea, set out in the electoral programme produced by the party in November 1921, reflecting Mihail Manoilescu's corporatist theories, was to promote deep state intervention in the economy and offer strong financial support to businesses by imposing high import duties. Romanians were to become masters at home by excluding foreign financiers and companies even from the most important sector of the national economy: oil. The enterprise was framed as a patriotic measure, but its first beneficiaries would have been precisely the members of the aforementioned liberal oligarchy.[29] After all, throughout the 1920s, the theorists of Romanian liberalism, especially the sociologists Stefan Zeletin and Dimitrie Drăghicescu, had tried to promote the idea that the liberals' dominant role in politics and economy stemmed from the fact that they actually represented the whole country.[30] The other aim of this manoeuvre was to economically marginalise minority elites and, in particular, the Magyar (Hungarian) elites in Transylvania and Banat and Russian elites in Bessarabia by tightening the hold on the Romanian state by, among other things, implementing a rigidly centralised administrative structure in politically important provinces, rich in natural resources but populated by conspicuous non-Romanian populations and on which the bureaucratic machine of Bucharest tightened its grip with suspicious efficiency in the otherwise slow and conflicted process of agrarian reform. As Angela

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[26] Cf. D. Müller, *op. cit.*, 158.

[27] *Ibid.*

[28] See K. Hitchins, *Rumania 1866–1947* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 383.

[29] See A. Harre, "Economic nationalism in Romania", *op. cit.*, 257

[30] K. Hitchins, *op. cit.*, 384.

Harre noted, modernisation, as it was understood by the National Liberals, experienced the imposition of a kind of social harmony dominated by an elitist society and was guaranteed by the rigid combination of national unity and economic nationalism.[31] From the perspective of the Romanian elites, one of the primary goals was the full economic and political integration of the peasantry into the country's political life, transforming them into voting citizens with full rights. However, this was always a functional perspective: the peasants remained largely political tools, and the effort remained limited to granting them the right to vote, improving education and assigning land plots, but this social class never became a real and active political subject.[32] The devastating effects produced by the 1929 crisis in Romania showed that the emperor had no clothes. An industrial economy grown artificially thanks to state protection (orders and duties) and to the detriment of the needs of agriculture (which had, directly and indirectly, financed that growth), was not enough to shelter the country from the storm. Indeed, the effects were even harsher when the main consumers (the peasantry and petty bourgeoisie) were no longer able to buy products, and the fragile domestic market dramatically shrank. The effects of the Liberals' policies and the onset of the crisis also swept away the most modern and ambitious Romanian political project of the inter-war period, the one championed by the National Peasants' Party, which sought to be a synthesis of the best agrarian practices of the old kingdom and the modern nationalism of the Romanian elites of Transylvania. Unlike Stambolijski, the National Peasants' Party did not in any way want to fuel the urban-rural divide and agriculture vs. industry clash, just as they repudiated the economic nationalism of the liberals by heralding, on the contrary, a season of 'open doors' to foreign capital and a focus on the needs of the consumer before those of the producer.[33] The repercussions were terrible: the economic crisis became the grave of the fragile, and imperfect Romanian liberal democracy swept by unprecedented violence fuelled by a poor and lost youth that considered itself betrayed by modernity uncritically imported from the West. Corneliu Z. Codreanu's Iron Guard shrewdly exploited these feelings

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[31] A. Harre, *op. cit.*, 258.

[32] Cfr. S. Radu, "Statul national si integrarea politică a taranilor. O tema de cercetare deschisă". In *România interbelică. Modernizare politico–institutională si discurs national*, eds. Sorin Radu, Oliver Jens Schmitt (Iasi: Polirom, 2023), 128–133.

[33] See A. Harre, *op. cit.*, 261, and R. Daskalov, "Agrarian Ideologies and Peasant Mouvements in the Balkans". In *Entangled Histories of the Balkans*, Vol. II, *Transfers of Political Ideologies and Institutions*, eds. Roumen Daskalov, Diana Mishkova (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 312–318.

of anger and frustration, particularly among the youth, the frustrated generation of students, intellectuals, teachers, etc., in its bloody pursuit of power.[34]

In the new Kingdom of SHS, the response of the Serbian elites to the challenges posed by the emergence of a post-imperial and multi-ethnic state was the implementation of a strongly centralised administrative system, which highlighted the feeling, particularly acute in the newly acquired regions (particularly Croatia), that the entire administrative apparatus was run by Serbs. The fact that of all Yugoslav lands, only Serbia could boast a well-established state bureaucratic tradition could only partially justify Belgrade's clear dominance, which became intolerable in the eyes of other citizens due to the great shortcomings in the technical preparation and moral standing of these bureaucracies.[35] In this way, the Yugoslav ideal, increasingly pervasive in the views of the intellectual elites of the three nations in the new state of the South Slavs[36], was immediately tarnished amidst fierce polemics. This aspect, however, was but one element of a much broader issue that led the new state of the South Slavs to implement a range of measures in the 1920s that made it impossible for non-Yugoslav citizens to participate in economic activities. Strongly desired by politicians and directed by both the central and peripheral bureaucracy, a veritable 'Yugoslavisation' of the economy was initiated to ensure that the vital points of industry, trade and the exploitation of natural resources were placed beyond the reach of foreigners.[37] The tight of this operation by various executives, who quickly succeeded one another at the top of the Kingdom of SHS until January 1929, was aimed at achieving a relatively rapid accumulation of national capital and protecting local industries from competition with high tariffs. However, some of the most important effects were the gradual shift of the economic centre of gravity to Belgrade, a generalised, continuous increase in prices, which severely affected the less privileged classes, and the loosening of the traditional ties of economic cooperation that the most dynamic Croatian and Slovenian enterprises had had with Central Europe.[38] Therefore, the economy became an integral part of the clash between Belgrade and Ljubljana and, even more so, Zagreb, whose entrepreneurial bourgeoisie also felt severely affected by the cumbersome mechanism that imposed a single currency, the dinar, replacing all other currencies in 1918

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[34] See R. Clark, *Holy Legionary Youth. Fascist Activism in Interwar Romania* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2015).

[35] Cf. O. Jens Schmitt, *I Balcani nel Novecento. Una storia postimperiale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2021), 99–102.

[36] See E. Ivetic, *Jugoslavia sognata, Lo jugoslavismo delle origini* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 2012), in particular 153–170.

[37] See Z. Lazarević, "Economy and nationalism in Yugoslavia", *op. cit.*, 270.

[38] Cf. *ibid.*, 270–271.

but failing to stabilise until 1925.[39] Thus, in a Yugoslavia with Serbian political domination, the state directed the economy and took possession, directly or otherwise, of some of the key assets of the Yugoslav economic structure. Transport, the most important mining sites and forestry came under state control (in many cases traceable to the political-economic power groups in Belgrade, ultimately leading to Pašić's Radical Party). The arsenals of Kragujevac and Sarajevo, the largest metallurgical enterprises in the Karadjordjević kingdom, belonged to the state.[40] However, the enormous effort made by the Yugoslav state, despite its limited resources, to finance post-war reconstruction should also be emphasised and, above all, the importance of state guarantees for loans necessary to re-launch investments even in the richest regions, often to the detriment of the poorest ones, such as Montenegro or Bosnia, which remained rather neglected. Similarly, the Yugoslav state invested significant financial resources in developing the railway network in Slovenia and Croatia and funding tourism on the Dalmatian coasts. However, it neglected railways and roads in the central and southern regions to the extent that some Serbian, Bosnian or Macedonian territories appeared to be isolated peripheries with no contact with the most active economic, cultural and political centres.[41]

Despite the negligible political strength acquired in the inter-war period by the Agrarian Party of Greece, the ideas of peasantism also experienced considerable diffusion in the Greek state and exerted considerable influence, especially among intellectuals.[42] Even though certain branches of industry (such as tobacco processing) became important and despite the development of a merchant navy and its relatively lively financial activities (especially in comparison to neighbouring countries), in 1928, 67% of the Greek population lived in villages and small provincial towns with less than 5,000 inhabitants and 53% of the working population was employed in agriculture.[43] However, the intense partitioning of land, resulting in estates too small to develop in a modern manner, antiquated cultivation methods, and the shortcomings of the cooperative

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[39] See J. B. Allock, *Explaining Yugoslavia* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2000), 55–56.

[40] Cf. *ibid.*, 58.

[41] See S. Grgić, "The Kingdom of Diversity and Paternalism. The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes/Yugoslavia, 1918–1941", *op. cit.*, 216–217.

[42] See S. Ploumidis, "Agrarian Politics in Interwar Greece: The Stillborn 'Peasant' Parties (1923–1936)", *Studia Universitas Cibiniensis. Serie Historica* IX 31 (2012), 57–87.

[43] See S. Seferiades, "Small Rural Ownership, Subsistence Agriculture and Peasant Protest in Interwar Greece: The Agrarian Question Recast," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 17 (1999), 278–279.

and credit network (which also saw an interesting development in those years[44]) prevented the development of modern agriculture and were often at the root of unrest and protests. Suffice it to say that in the early 1930s, only 3 kg of fertiliser per inhabitant was used in Greece, compared to 12 kg in France and Denmark.[45] Like in neighbouring countries, in Greece, an agrarian reform without adequate financial support and modernisation of its structures led to stagnant production and an inability to sustain the country's exports.[46] Again, the state played the leading role in steering economic development. For Greek statesmen, the key to developing industry and agriculture seemed to be the rigid application of 'authoritarian corporatism', which resulted in attempts to further limit workers' rights. These practices became much more pronounced from the mid-1930s with the advent of the Metaxas regime.[47] Overall, these measures were far from sufficient to ensure stable and robust industrial growth. On the contrary, even in Greece, following the Great Crisis of 1929, industrial production simply collapsed, shattering the comfortable illusions of the mid-1920s.[48]

The bloody overthrow of the Bulgarian agrarian regime in June 1923 put an end to the already slim chances of overcoming the particularisms of the new Balkan states by returning to a kind of primitive Balkan peasant fraternity often evoked by Stamboliyski but equally ignored by all its neighbours. The possibility of overcoming political and diplomatic peculiarities by promoting the creation of a unified Balkan economic area actually proved rather uncertain because of the incompatibility of these economies, which were not only all based on agriculture but also predominantly relied on grain.[49] Yet, the severity of the economic crisis, the social dangers it portended and the need for a dialogue to try to combat the most pernicious and destabilising effects of economic instability meant that when the most acute phase of the Great Depression ended (and once again in all the Balkans, the direct intervention of the state proved

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[44] See V. Partronis, K. Mavreas, *Agricultural Cooperative Organisations in Greece throughout the 20th Century: A Critical Overview*. At: www.ageconsearch.umn.edu

[45] *Ibid.*, 288–295.

[46] See S. D. Petmezas, "Export-dependent Agriculture, Revenue Crisis and Agrarian Productivity Involution. The Greek Case (1860s–1930s)", *Histoire & Mesure* XV 3–4 (2000), especially 325–337.

[47] See S. Ploumidis, "Corporatist in Inter-war Greece: from Theory to Practice (1922–1940)", *European History Quarterly* 44 (2014), 55–79.

[48] See O. Christodoulaki, "Industrial Growth in Greece between the Wars: A New Perspective", *European Review of Economic History* 5 (2001), 61–89. On the effects of the Great Crisis on the Greek economy, see the seminal work by M. Mazower, *Greece and Inter–War Economic Crisis* (London: Clarendon Press, 1991).

[49] See A. Basciani, *L'illusione della modernità. Il Sud–est dell'Europa tra le due guerre mondiali* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2016), 269–273.

decisive with the creation of consortia and special ad hoc agencies that, by purchasing large consignments of foodstuffs, managed to contain to some extent the ruinous fall in prices[50]), the most conscious and authentically liberal parts of civil societies began to reflect on the failures produced by the creation of the nation-state. In particular, as Pavlos Hatzopoulos pointed out, there was sharp criticism of the so-called fetishisation of borders as the greatest obstacle to serious regional cooperation and the most insidious threat to peacekeeping.[51] It was time to bring out commonalities and put aside differences. Trying to ride the long wave of Locarno (December 1925), a movement was set in motion in the Balkans, which only partly had connections with official circles (governments and parliaments), to overcome the barriers represented by borders to achieve the formation of a Balkan federation. Politicians also seemed to be influenced by the still small but important change of perspective. In fact, the late 1920s saw an intensification of diplomatic activity that led to the signing of a series of bilateral treaties (the 1929 signing of the treaty of conciliation, arbitration and judicial agreement between Romania and Yugoslavia; a bilateral agreement on real estate between Romania and Bulgaria was signed in 1930, followed by a series of bilateral trade agreements between Greece and Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria etc.), which, although of limited political importance, nevertheless facilitated reciprocal contacts and helped to make the general climate less tense by dispelling at least some of the traditional mistrust that had always characterised inter-Balkan relations.[52] This was the beginning of the Balkan Conferences, the most concrete fruit of the International Peace Congress held in Athens between 6 and 10 October 1929, organized by Greek diplomacy and former Prime Minister Alexandros Papanastassiou with the active support of the International Peace Bureau. In order to avoid diplomatic embarrassments and political incidents, the round of consultations ended with the decision that the countries involved (Albania, Yugoslavia, Turkey, Greece and Romania) would send strictly unofficial delegations to the conference – which began in Athens on 5 October

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[50] In 1930, the Yugoslav and Bulgarian governments created special agencies that bought cereals at prices above the international market price; the Hellenic executive for tobacco followed suit in 1931; in 1932, a similar measure was taken by Romania for its own cereal production. See J. R. Lampe, M. R. Jackson, *Balkan Economic History, 1550–1950. From Imperial Borderlands to Developing Nations* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), 434.

[51] See P. Hatzopoulos, *The Balkans Beyond Nationalism and Identity. International Relations and Ideology* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2008), 103.

[52] See S. H. Lukasik, "The Balkan Entente: a Reassessment of an Aspect of Balkan Diplomacy in the Interwar Period", *Journal of Modern Hellenism* 15 (1998), 73–74. For an emblematic case of concrete political and diplomatic rapprochement between two countries in the region see A. Basciani, "Il patto di non aggressione e arbitrage tra Romania e Grecia (12 March 1928)," *La cittadinanza europea* 2 (2007), 177–183.

1930 – but the governments, at the same time, sought to control the final decisions that would be taken by the delegations.[53] Not all states took part in this first meeting, presumably driven by the same intentions suggested by the meagre number of members of the Yugoslavian delegation (7), and yet the host, the Greek Prime Minister Eleftherios Venizelos, did not hide the difficulties of the undertaking, the difficult international economic situation, and the heavy legacy inherited from the national confrontations that had arisen between the Balkan states in the last two decades of the 19th century and what could be termed the Great Balkan War of 1912–1918, and made it clear that the time had come to prepare the ground for closer and friendlier regional relations to start a gradual process of Balkan unification.[54] The Greek statesman was too shrewd not to understand the enormous difficulties of the path he had embarked upon, starting with the grave reservations shown towards the project by the political and diplomatic circles in Belgrade and, in particular, the Yugoslav Foreign Minister Vojislav Marinković, who was openly hostile to the project. However, despite these problems, the negotiating skills of the Greek delegation and, above all, the passion with which the press, the attendees, and public opinion followed the proceedings, which at one point employed the motto 'the Balkans to the Balkan peoples', marked the unhoped-for success of the initiative.[55] It seemed that despite all open questions (first and foremost, the unresolved border questions, most acutely felt by Bulgaria), something had begun to change in the spirit of the political-diplomatic relations between the countries of the region but also in the concrete overcoming of the rigid nation-state scheme from which the extremist nationalism and exasperated imperialism of the previous decades had sprung. The final decisions taken by the participants at the first Balkan conference were undoubtedly important not only because it was decided that problems would be solved in the future without recourse to the intervention of any third major power, but also because the foundations were laid for starting negotiations to form a Balkan Pact. It was also decided to initiate more active cultural and student exchanges and a Balkans-wide press service, and in December 1930, the Balkan Journalists' Association was formed. One can fully grasp the importance of this step if one thinks of the decisive role played by the press of the individual countries in fuelling an extremist nationalism opposed to any

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[53] See T. Turan, E. Tüylü Turan, "The Rise of the Concept of a Balkan Pact and the First Balkan Conference", *History Studies. International Journal of History* 4, 4 (2012), 436–438.

[54] *Ibid.*, 439.

[55] See B. Raditsa, "Venizelos and the Struggle around the Balkan Pact", *Balkan Studies* 6, 1 (1965), 119–130.

compromise, portraying it as a betrayal of the nation's sacred historical rights.[56] Finally, six special commissions were also set up to investigate all major aspects of a possible unification project. Once again, economic issues took centre stage. The aim was to create the conditions for closer economic cooperation through financial and monetary union, a common trade policy, in which the creation of a Balkan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (formed in Istanbul in 1932) was to be the forerunner.[57] In 1933, at the opening of the Third Balkan Conference, hosted in Bucharest, the head of the Yugoslavian delegation stated in his opening speech that in the past, the problems between the states of the region had festered precisely because the only perspective from which they had been dealt with was a rigidly political one: "[...] The day we learn that we must start from an economic, social and cultural rapprochement, solutions to the problems will come more easily!"[58]

        This radical change in Belgrade's attitude towards the Balkan pacification projects should only partly surprise us. The truth is that the entire Balkan society was gradually acquiring a new awareness of its resources, capacities and role, and this climate of greater mutual understanding and closer attention to the needs of the respective peoples was changing not only the old political outlook but also the role that the Balkans were to play in the international context and a new Europe. When, in the summer of 1930, the Yugoslavian national team landed in Uruguay for the first FIFA World Cup and was the only European football team to reach the semi-finals, Belgrade and the entire country felt a surge of pride and enthusiasm, which, for a fleeting moment, seemed capable of overcoming the particularisms poisoning the Kingdom's internal life in those years. Even the historical Belgrade-based daily *Politika* wrote on the eve of the decisive encounter with the hosts that it was now up to the Yugoslav national team to defend the pride of the old world against the sporting arrogance of the new.[59] From an element of crisis, the new Balkans sought to become a factor of stability for the old continent. In October 1933, Alexander I of Yugoslavia and Carol II of Romania visited Sofia together, where they received a warm welcome; this was the start of intense diplomatic activity that would materialise less than a year later with the signing of the Balkan Entente in Athens (9th February 1934), from which, however, Bulgaria and Albania withdrew. The conclusion

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[56] Cf. I. Ilčev, *Rodinata mi – prava ili ne! B'išnopolitičeska propaganda na balkanskite straini, 1821–1923* (Sofja: Izd–vo Universitet Sv. Kliment Ohridski, 1995), infra.

[57] See R. Preshelenova, "Uniting the Balkans: Common Desires and First Initiatives in the Interwar Period". In *Disintegration and Integration in East–Central Europe 1919 – post–1989*, eds. Wilfied Loth, Nicolae Pāun (Nomos: Verlagsgesellschaft, 2018), 96–97.

[58] Speech by Yugoslav delegate Jovanović, quoted in Hatzopoulos, *op. cit.*, 108.

[59] Quoted in M. Calic, *op. cit.*, 432.

of that agreement represented the finalisation of the main objective prepared at the four Balkan conferences, but undoubtedly the non-accession of Bulgaria (adamant not to budge on the border issues that concerned it) also represented its sorest spot.[60] However, the following months and years were marked by the most decisive diplomatic, cultural and economic openness achieved by the four Balkan allies towards Sofia and Tirana, with Yugoslavian diplomacy as its most active protagonist, which found an important backing in the Bulgarian technocratic government, an expression of the "Zveno" circle, which came to power in Sofia with a coup d'état in May 1934 and was determined to renew both the domestic and foreign policy of the Balkan kingdom by any means.[61] It is interesting to note that at these junctures, sport became one of the instruments of diplomatic approach and growing mutual trust.[62] Thus, while in Europe, sport and, in particular football, became a powerful factor in nationalising the masses and by no means a stranger to violence,[63] in Southeastern Europe, the Balkan Games (always held in Athens until 1934) made an important contribution to breaking the climate of suspicion and enmity that had hitherto characterised relations between these countries and their respective civil societies in Southeastern Europe. The conclusion of the Balkan Pact and the attempt to assert a new system of values and relations to which the respective civil societies were hostile represented an important effort on the part of Balkan statesmen to break away from the constraints that intransigent nationalism had imposed in the preceding years and to reaffirm the will to independently resolve the still open political and diplomatic issues. However, economic weakness and the persistence of too many political divisions fuelled once again by border fetishism, but also a substantial lack of interest on the part of the Western powers, perhaps sceptical

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[60] See R. J. Kerner, H.N. Howard, *The Balkan Conferences and the Balkan Entente 1930–1935. A Study in the Recent History of the Balkan and Near Eastern Peoples* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), 133.

[61] See V. Bojinov, "Political Circle "Zveno" between Sofia and Belgrade 1934–1935," *Tokovi Istorije* 3 (2014), 89–97. Writers also tried to make their contribution – albeit with varying results – to broaden the horizons of Bulgarian culture by breaking its isolation and linking it to the main currents of expression and, more generally, to cultural internationalism. See I. Gigova, "The Bulgarian Penn Club: A Study in Interwar Cultural Internationalism", *East European Politics and Societis* 34 (2020), 685–711.

[62] See P. Kissoudi, *The Balkans Games and Balkan Politics in the Interwar Years 1929–1939: Politicians in Pursuit of Peace* (London: Routledge, 2009), esp. see chapters 6 and 7.

[63] See B. J. Keys, *Globalizing Sport. National Rivalry and International Community in the 1930s* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2006). On the violence unleashed by football, particularly in Central Europe, see D. Wojtaszyn, L. Venuti, "The Political and Social Determinants of Football Hooliganism in Central Europe in the Interwar Period," *History of Sport* 40, 10–11 (2023), 997–1016.

about this attempt or too absorbed in their own internal troubles[64], frustrated the most coherent attempt to place the fate of the Balkans into the hands of the Balkan peoples, to paraphrase the (in)famous motto. In 1938, on the eve of the Anschluss, Germany had already paved the way for the creation of its 'informal empire' in the Balkans and, to name just one example, from 1937 to 1940, German investments in the crucial Yugoslav mining sector had risen from 1 to 20 per cent.[65]

However, in the mid-1930s, although the international political situation grew increasingly complicated, the danger of a new Europe-wide war did not seem immediate. Apparently, the strong diplomatic and military relations with France and the two politico-diplomatic systems of the Little Entente and the Balkan Entente, which were moving towards closer military cooperation, seemed capable of protecting the region from possible turbulence.[66] In this context, in Southeastern Europe, too, alongside the attempt to forge a new Balkan spirit that would help cleanse the public spirit of Balkan countries of the ultranationalist toxicity of the previous decades and allow wider margins of autonomy in international relations, an attempt was made to create a new citizenry, which would be strong, physically healthy and well-educated. Between the 1920s and 1930s, the entire region was traversed by a twofold cultural-educational and eugenic campaign in an attempt to radically change the physical and mental appearance of the local populations. Once again, the undisputed protagonist of these initiatives was the state. Between the mid- and late 1920s, all Balkan countries witnessed the construction of thousands of primary schools, libraries (including mobile libraries) and new universities, accompanied (perhaps semi-consciously) by the emergence of eugenic societies.[67] The first of these associations was cre-

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[64] See, S. Economides, "The Balkans and the Search for Security: from Inter-War to Post Cold War", *Contemporary Security Policy* 13, 1 (1992), 121–123.

[65] See P. N. Hehn, *A Low Dishonest Decade. The Great Powers, Eastern Europe and the Economic Origins of World War II, 1930–1941* (New York: Continuum, 2005), 117. For a more complete overview S. G. Gross, *Export Empire. German Soft Power in Southeastern Europe, 1890–1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), in particular the chapters in part two of the volume.

[66] See P. Wandycz, "The Little Entente: Sixty Years Later", *The Slavonic and East European Review* 4, 59 (1981), 548–564.

[67] For Yugoslavia I refer to Pieter Troch's seminal volume, *Nationalism and Yugoslavia: Education, Yugoslavism and the Balkan before Wolrd War II* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); for Romania to I. Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918–1930* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995); for Albania in A. Hoxha; "Education, Religion and Nation–Building in Interwar Albania", *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 70, 3–4 (2022), 463–480; for Greece, finally, see A. Liakos, N. Doumanis, *The Edinburgh History of the Greeks, 20th and Early 21st Centuries* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2023), 106–146.

ated in Cluj, Romania, in 1927. Its members, overwhelmingly considering the peasant village to be the most authentic expression of the national values of their respective nations, did not conceal the severe underdevelopment in which the peoples of these villages lived by proposing measures aimed not only at improving the quality but also the quantity of the race.[68] As the debate on the need to improve the breeding process through selection intensified in Western Europe and Northern Europe, it was also impetuously taken up by eugenic scientists in the Balkans.[69] According to the Greek eugenicist Stavros Zurukzoglou, a modern application of eugenic principles would have provided two fundamental services to the cause of modern state-building: it would have given the nation the responsibility to implement a serious racial policy and ensured the mentally healthy and physically harmonious growth of each individual, who would thus have been able to put their qualities at the service of the needs of the modern state.[70] The consequence was that only the best, the healthiest, the best educated and most professionally successful could serve the nation and steer it towards progress, albeit in a completely reactionary manner.[71] In other cases, the state had to monitor, hide, repress and, above all, prevent the marginalised and defeated from mixing with and contaminating the healthy and active part of society.[72] In Bulgaria, for example, after 1932, eugenic theories attracted the attention of ever larger portions of civil society while eugenic theorists demanded the implementation of strict legislation that would lead to genuine racial hygiene.[73] During the same years, Bulgaria saw the evolution of an educational project linked to physical excellence and the cult of physical education, introducing school curricula in which physical education and the masculinisation of education played a leading role.[74] In Greece, after 1933, the debate on the need to introduce careful race selection through sterilisation in order to reduce the adverse effects of he-

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[68] See M. Turda, "Eugenics and race in Southeastern Europe", *op. cit.*, 342–343.

[69] *Ibid.*, 344.

[70] See M. Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 77.

[71] Cfr. Y. Antoniou, M. Assimakopoulos, K. Chatzis, "The National Identity of Interwar Greek Engineers: Elitism, Rationalization, Technocracy, and Reactionary Modernism", *History and Technology. An International Journal* 23, 3 (2007), 241–261.

[72] Cfr. S. Petrungaro, "Soup Kitchens and Yugoslav Poor Relief between the Two World Wars", *European Review of History* 26 (2019), 141–162.

[73] See C. Promitzer, "Taking Care of the National Body: Eugenic Visions in Interwar Bulgaria, 1905–1940". In *Blood and Homeland. Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe 1900–1944*, eds. Marius Turda, Paul J. Weindling (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 233–239.

[74] See G. Mircheva, "Physical Education in Bulgarian Schools, 1918–1944: the (re)production of masculinity and re-creation of the national body", *Women's History* 20, 4 (2011), 555–567.

reditary diseases became quite lively, although, unlike in neighbouring countries, the debate in Greece always remained confined to scientific circles.[75] Finally, the eugenic debate also flourished in the Kingdom of SHS, where the attempt to create a new Yugoslav man was harshly opposed by the Croats who, defending the specificity of their race, hoped to reject what they saw as the Serbian attempt to increase their strength and influence in the Yugoslav state. Yet, it was precisely in Croatia, that the newspaper *Nova Evropa*, in 1924 announced the forthcoming creation of a Yugoslav man, who, compared to the past, would be distinguished by superior physical and, by extension, moral qualities and capable of becoming a model citizen and bringing not only new and healthy subjects but also concrete economic benefits to his homeland.[76]

The first victim of mounting political, economic, social and international upheavals was democracy. In the aftermath of the First World War, all states in the Balkans had become constitutional monarchies supposed to find their strengths in agrarian reforms, industrialisation, and projects to build large infrastructure networks, while the security of the new borders was to be ensured by a system of collective guarantees embodied in the League of Nations.[77] However, as we soon saw, the difficulties were overwhelming and, as Oliver Schmitt writes, those fragile democracies, in the ten years from 1928 to 1938[78], were swept away one after the other in favour of royal dictatorships that arose primarily as a reaction "[...] to the numerous crises of integration".[79] The peculiarity of these authoritarian regimes was that the leading role was taken not so much by extreme right-wing political movements (in Romania, even the dictatorial King Carol II was the bitterest enemy of the Iron Guard) but rather by members of the bureaucratic, military, educational and clerical elites, who very willingly put themselves at the service of their sovereign by trampling over old constitutions and every democratic rule in the conviction that the season of parliamentarism had utterly failed and only a strong state not enslaved by democratic conventions could build robust national structures capable of truly ensuring the transition from multi-ethnic empires to homogeneous nations, while at the same time eliminating the post-imperial legacies and the more cumbersome legacies of Western democracies, and then shoring up stability while banishing the spectre of Bol-

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[75] See S. Trubeta, "Anthropological Discourse and Eugenics in Interwar Greece", *op. cit.*, 131–135.

[76] See R. Yeomans, "Of "Yugoslav Barbarians" and Croatian Gentlemen Scholars: Nationalist Ideology and Racial Anthropology in Interwar Yugoslavia", *op. cit.*, 90–94.

[77] B. J. Fischer, "Introduction". In *Balkan Strongmen. Dictators and Authoritarian Rulers of Southeastern Europe*, ed. Bernd J. Fischer, (London: Hurst&C., 2007), 1–2.

[78] An exception is Greece, where Prime Minister Ioannis Metaxas became the central political figure in 1936.

[79] Cf. O. J. Schmitt, *op. cit.*, 160.

shevism. The imposition of the monarch's personal regime seemed to be the only possible way to ensure stability for the respective countries in turbulent times, and so the contradictions of the controversial Balkan modernisation meant that the crown, elsewhere in crisis or at least relegated to a marginal role, became the backbone of state-building in Southeastern Europe.[80] It is probable that not even stronger and more experienced state and socio-economic structures would have been able to withstand the storm that from 1939 onwards, with the Italian occupation of Albania, hit the Balkan region, already an economic hostage of the Third Reich. However, the impact of the war was devastating. On the ruins of this second and largely aborted modernisation, the post-1945 period saw (except in Greece) the rise of a diametrically opposite modernisation based on the Soviet model, even more alien to those realities and a harbinger of considerable problems, the signs of which are still evident today in the countries that inherited from that experience.

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[80] See J. S. Roucek, *op. cit.*, 12–13.

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Ritual Objects for the Feast of Sukkot:
Theoretical Analysis of the Talmudic Prescriptions and Some of their Ethnographical Achievements in the Balkans

Abstract: Can we think of the artifact as an integral part of an anthropology of life as it has developed in the wake of the anthropology of nature founded by Philippe Descola? Judaism clearly fits within this perspective since a vast body of normative texts, notably the Babylonian Talmud, defines and discusses the *jewishness of artifacts* – whether ritual or everyday – by endeavoring to determine their *correct* position on a graduated scale ranging from *nature* to *artifice*, understood here as *emic* categories. This article aims to support this reflection by studying two ritual objects related to the festival of Sukkot: the *skhakh*, the roof of the *sukka* hut, and the *lulav*, the bouquet of the four species. As we shall see, the making of the ritual object according to specific rules shows us its place in the encounter with the supernatural, the goal towards which any ritual device aspires. After a theoretical analysis of the Talmudic prescriptions, we will look at some of the practical ways in which the Sukkot hut can be documented photographically in the Balkans, in the broadest sense of the term. We will present examples from Greece, Romania and Bulgaria.

Keywords: rabbinic Judaism, ritual object, anthropology, nature, artifice, Sukkot, lulav, skhakh, Descola.

> 'The artifact is the best messenger of the supernatural: there is easily in the artifact both a perfection and an absence of origin, a closure and a brilliance, a transformation of life into matter (matter is much more magical than life), and to say the least a silence that belongs to the order of the marvelous.'[1]

According to Barthes, the artifact can or must be seen as 'the transformation of life into matter': rabbinic Judaism offers us the best illustration of this representation. Our article aims to show the ontological issues at stake when studying the technological halachic protocol suited for the ritual artifacts of the

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[1]   R. Barthes, *Mythologiques* (Paris: Seuil, 1957), 140. I am grateful to Laura Cotteril for the English revision of the text.

Sukkot festival.[2] While the history of the feast of Sukkot has been the subject of numerous studies[3], none has examined the taxonomic presuppositions of the ritual prescriptions.

Can we think of the artifact as an integral part of an anthropology of life as it has developed in the wake of the anthropology of nature founded by Philippe Descola?[4] Judaism clearly fits within this perspective since it provides comparative research with a theory of objects in due form. A vast body of normative texts, notably the Babylonian Talmud, defines and discusses the *jewishness of artifacts* – whether ritual or everyday – by endeavoring to determine their *correct* position on a graduated scale ranging from *nature* to *artifice*, understood here as *emic* categories. The rabbis constantly circumscribe the *appropriateness*

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[2]   The symbolism of the feast, in the First and the Second Temple period as well as in the rabbinic period, is the subject of several explanatory hypotheses. Historiography associates the origin of the festival either with the ritual of cosmic renewal and enthronement of YHWH, or with the renewal of the covenant. In the first case, the mythical substratum is the creation and cyclical regeneration of the world, the ritual paradigm of which is the Babylonian New Year's festival, *akitu*. This hypothesis is not based on sources that explicitly attest to this, but on a reconstitution based on the biblical psalms seen as residues of ritual texts. It would thus be a festival of the autumn equinox marking the end of the agricultural cycle and celebrating the harvest of the year as well as the request for rain for the year to come. Renewal of time, nature and the cosmos are thus joined in the annual rite of royal renewal. The second explanatory hypothesis associates the feast of Sukkot with the myth of the exodus and the soteriological attributes of God. The ritual would in this case be that of the renewal of the covenant and the constitution not of the cosmos but of the chosen people, no longer a cosmogony but an ethnogony.

[3]   H. Ulfgard, *The Story of Sukkot: The Setting, Shaping, and Sequel of the Biblical Feast of Tabernacles* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), K. W. Weyde, *The Appointed Festivals of YHWH. The Festival Calendar in Leviticus 23 and the Sukkôt Festival in Other Biblical Texts* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), N. Ayali-Darshan, "The Seventy Bulls Sacrificed at Sukkot (Num 29:12–34) in Light of a Ritual Text from Emar (Emar 6,373)", *Vetus Testamentum* 65 (2015), 9–19, P. Piwowarczyk, "The Jewish festival of Sukkot in the eyes of the pagan authors", *Scripta Classica* 7 (2010), 63–72, J. Rubenstein, *The History of Sukkot in the Second Temple and Rabbinic Periods* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995). For an ethnographic approach see G. Hasan-Rokem, "Material mobility versus concentric cosmology in the Sukkah: the house of the wandering jew or a ubiquitous temple?", *Things* (2012), 153–179.

[4]   This comparison has already been made by one of Descola's students: P. Pitrou, "Êtres vivants/artefacts, processus vitaux/processus techniques: remarques à propos d'un cadran analytique". In *Les actes de colloques du musée du Quai Branly Jacques Chirac* [En ligne], 6, 2016, online 20 January 2016, accessed 20 December 2021. The notion of anthropology of life is coined by Pitrou. In our article, Descola's anthropology of nature (*Par-delà nature et culture* (Paris: Gallimard 2005) serves as a framework for reflection and Pitrou's anthropology of life as a corollary.

(*kashrut*) of various objects[5] for the fulfillment of the commandments, the passage from one sample to another within the same class, or the passage from one class to another. Doing so, they reveal the way in which both 'natural things' and man's transformative action and the result of that action are conceived.

This article aims to support this reflection by studying two ritual objects related to the festival of Sukkot: the *skhakh*, the roof of the *sukka* hut, and the *lulav*, the bouquet of the four species. As we shall see, the making of the ritual object according to specific rules shows us its place in the encounter with the supernatural, the goal towards which any ritual device aspires.

The choice of basing our reflection on the analysis of the conditions of being of a ritual artifact is motivated, on the one hand, by the state of the documentation, since the major part of the talmudic evidence pertaining to our topic concern non-ordinary objects, namely those which are not part of everyday use. In particular, objects related to the Jewish holidays are at the centre of legislative debates on their manufacture. Although everyday objects are not absent from rabbinic texts, they are not discussed from the point of view of manufacture, but from the point of view of the transmission of impurity or of their function. On the other hand, Rabbinic Judaism makes distinctions that allow us to avoid a debate on the relevance of the terms 'artifact', 'ritual' and 'ritual artifact'.[6] The rabbis themselves make these categorical distinctions, and their texts appear to be almost a structuralism *avant la lettre*. Two terms designate the notion of object/artifact: The first, *kli*, probably derives from the root *k.w.l.*, which designates the 'whole' or 'completeness'. It is the generic term for 'object'/'artifact' in the rabbinic sense of a thing made with unambiguous human 'intention' (*kavvana*) for a specific purpose. Any misuse or indecision around the intention for its manufacture

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[5] See on this subject E. Hirsch, "Identity in Talmud", *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 23 (1999), 166–180.

[6] The same observation is made by Bernier-Farella and Patéra: "Une brève enquête bibliométrique montre que l'expression "objet rituel" est rarement employée pour aborder le concept lui-même. La rareté du terme dans les titres scientifiques reflète la rareté des approches globales du phénomène dans un contexte donné, l'écrasante majorité des études prenant la forme de monographies attachées à une catégorie précise d'objets supposés intervenir dans le rite." H. Bernier-Farella, I. Patéra, "Avant-propos du dossier L'objet rituel. Concepts et méthodes croisés", *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 231 (2014), 531. On this same subject, see in the same issue: G. Casas, "Les statues vivent aussi. Théorie néoplatonicienne de l'objet rituel", 663–679 ; C. Soussen, "Les objets rituels des Juifs à la fin du Moyen Âge, catalyseurs des sentiments antijuifs ou fédérateurs des identités?", 681–698. See also: J. Svenbro, "Arraisonner la divinité ? Limites religieuses de la pensée technique". In *Dossier « Tekhnai/artes »* (Paris-Athens: Éditions de l'EHESS, 2007); J.-P. Albert, A. Kedzierska-Manzon, "Des objets-signes aux objets-sujets", *Dossier 'La force des objets. Matières à expériences',* *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* 174 (2016), 13–25.

disqualifies the *kli* as a *kli*. The quality of *kli*, 'object'/'artifact', is important in determining the pure or impure nature of the thing as some contract impurity and others do not. In concrete terms, *kli* can refer to dishes, weapons, clothing, musical instruments, furniture, agricultural utensils, etc. It is also the biblical term for 'Temple utensils' (e.g., Exodus 25.9), i.e. all artifacts used in sacrifice and worship. The laws of purity governing the artifact, *kli*, are central to the eponymous tractate of the Mishna, Kelim. (Note the importance of the notion of use or function for which a *kli*-artifact is intended in the process of identifying and classifying artifacts). This explains why the rabbis use a second word to designate the notion of 'artifact', namely the term *tašmiš*, derived from the root *š.m.š.*, 'to use': the 'artifact' exists as such only with a pre-determined usage. It is 'instrumental' in a predefined sense. The use of the two terms is interchangeable. Both *kli* and *tašmiš* refer to both ritual and everyday artifacts. Even in a religion such as Judaism, which codifies almost every gesture of the individual and inscribes it in a system of thought where cosmic order is maintained following the commandments, it is possible to distinguish between a ritual practice properly speaking and a codified daily practice. For the purposes of our article, let us start from the formal distinction that the rabbis make between ritual objects charged with sacredness and ritual objects enabling the fulfillment of a commandment. We find this distinction in a *baraita* mentioned in tractate Megillah 26b:

תָּנוּ רַבָּנַן: תַּשְׁמִישֵׁי מִצְוָה — נִזְרָקִין. תַּשְׁמִישֵׁי קְדוּשָּׁה — נִגְנָזִין. וְאֵלּוּ הֵן תַּשְׁמִישֵׁי
מִצְוָה: סוּכָּה, לוּלָב, שׁוֹפָר, צִיצִית. וְאֵלּוּ הֵן תַּשְׁמִישֵׁי קְדוּשָּׁה: דְּלוּסְקְמֵי סְפָרִים,
תְּפִילִּין וּמְזוּזוֹת, וְתִיק שֶׁל סֵפֶר תּוֹרָה, וְנַרְתִּיק שֶׁל תְּפִילִּין וּרְצוּעוֹתֵיהֶן.

> The sages taught: objects used for a commandment may be thrown away, sacred objects must be concealed. The objects for the commandments are: the *sukka*, the *lulav*, the *šofar*, the *şişit*, The sacred objects are: the book boxes, the *tefillin*, the *mezuzot*, the garment for the Torah book, the receptacle for the *tefillin* and its straps.

Both the bouquet, *lulav*, and the hut, *sukka*, are explicitly mentioned in the category of ritual artifacts that are indispensable for the fulfilment of the commandments and yet lack their own sacredness. Such an object can be characterized, on the other hand, as 'appropriate', *kašer*, or 'disqualified', *pasul*. We therefore operate from the outset with *emic* categories that we will complete by using a comparative approach to link them with the *etic* categories of anthropology.[7] In this last perspective, the choice of the ritual object is also a conceptual choice. It is quite legitimate to inquire which criteria define a ritual object and to try and establish if these criteria obey a specific ontological regime. What is it about its *constitution that* makes it *appropriate* to the *function*? In other words,

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[7] On the distinction between 'holy objects' and 'accessories of holiness' from the perspective of the museum curator, see V. Greene, "Accessories of Holiness: Defining Jewish Sacred Objects", *Journal of the American Institute for Conservation* 31 (2013), 31–39.

we will question the *quiddity of* the ritual object and its *ideal* position between nature and artifice.

The objects selected for analysis, the *skhakh* and the *lulav*, both consist of plant material. However, they do not converge in terms of the quality, quantity nor exclusivity of this material. At first glance, one might conclude that the rabbis do not approach the making of *skhakh* and *lulav* in the same way. A more careful analysis, however, going beyond a literal reading of the talmudic prescriptions, reveals some of the rabbinic concepts that operate in both cases and even beyond these particular devices.

Elsewhere, we have devoted a detailed textual examination of the talmudic prescriptions concerning the making of the *skhakh*[8], respectively the *lulav*.[9] The present article will therefore not be descriptive but conceptual.

Before proceeding with this conceptual analysis, we feel it is important to note two methodological issues that characterize our corpus of analysis, as well as all talmudic extracts. First, it is necessary to note the composite character of the Talmud and more precisely the chronological stratigraphy that this text itself highlights. There is perhaps no better illustration of the term *textus*, as 'fabric of words', than the talmudic page. The Talmud consists, on the one hand, of the quotation of the Mishna, conventionally written around 200 BCE, and, on the other hand, its commentary by the Gemara, itself made up of a succession of rabbinic voices spanning several centuries, from the 3rd to the 7th/8th. In questioning the making of the *skhakh* and the *lulav*, we must take into account this stratigraphy of text which amounts to a stratigraphy of meaning. Indeed, the point of view expressed by the *tannaim*, author-editors of the Mishna, is not identical to that of the *amoraim*, author-editors of the Gemara. History and geography separate them. The only way, in our opinion, to get around this difficulty is to analyze separately the two discourses without forgetting to note the links which, in the Talmud, connect a *lemma* to its *commentary*. This difficulty can thus be transformed into an asset insofar as the analysis of this type of text makes it possible to draw the dynamics of the notion of ritual object, its evolution in time and space between Roman Palestine and Sassanid Babylonia. The second methodological difficulty lies in the dialogical character of the Gemara, sometimes even of the Mishna. The reading of the Talmud is that of a succession of questions and arguments and rarely that of conclusions. The multiplicity of points of view is one of the most salient features of rabbinic production. 'For what reason?', 'Is this really so?', 'To whom do we attribute this statement?'

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[8] The *skhakh* is the subject of a separate chapter in our book *L'idée de nature chez les rabbins antiques. Eléments d'anthropologie historique* (Leuven: Peeters, 2024).

[9] The making of the *lulav* is analysed in detail in our article "L'objet rituel 'par-delà nature et culture': le *lulav* dans le Talmud de Babylone", *Métis* (2022), 83–112, part of the thematic dossier "Nature/natures" that we coordinated.

are some of the recurrent formulas in the Gemara. On the other hand, one can also read statements such as: 'Rabbi So-and-so says this and Rabbi So-and-so that', 'the school of Shammai ruled this way and the school of Hillel that way', 'the matter remains unresolved', '*teiqo*', a word that indicates the situation where a particular argument remains unresolved, with no obvious winners or losers. Under these conditions, what can the historian retain?

In the recurrent and almost systematic absence of conclusions, how can we know what is actually happening in a society? What remains and what is rejected? If, in the following centuries, the collections of *halakhah* will establish and fix the different traditions of practice, as far as the so-called talmudic period is concerned, parallel sources are lacking. Nevertheless, rabbinic dialogue is not totally silent for the historian. Asking this question more than another, addressing this aspect more than another, is informative. The fault lines and uncertainties, the areas and dimensions in which a society is in search of evidence and practical reference points are thus revealed. The hypotheses formulated unfold before our eyes the realm of the plausible. The arguments put forward by each rabbi in support of their ideas and points of view are also a wealth of information about what is evidence in a given situation. Thus, unlike other more enunciative bodies of work, the interest of this corpus lies in the way it follows the path of thought.

The Talmud is a difficult corpus for the positivist historian to grasp, but it is a privileged subject for the anthropological historian. Dialogism favours the constitution of conceptual binomials. As we have already pointed out, the Talmud is almost structuralist. It itself states oppositions that, in other cultures, remain implicit. High-low, right-left, raw-cooked, ripe-green, symmetrical-asymmetrical, round-square and the list could go on. The historian who is interested in anthropology must therefore look further, or rather deeper, because to limit himself to noting these oppositions would be to remain on the surface of things, whereas depth can be found in the analysis of the sometimes very sophisticated demonstrations of the rabbis. Their clues and proofs, their syllogisms and associations of ideas provide us with the main material for our reflection on the status of the ritual object within an analogical ontology[10] and as the result of a relation defined as a relation of production.

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[10] We use here the ontological typology as defined by Philippe Descola. Descola conceives four types of ontology as different associations between interiority and physicality. This combinatory is then reducible to the interplay of identity and relation. Making use of those principles the humans establish resemblances and differences between themselves and the rest of the beings. The four ontologies are: animism (similar interiorities and dissimilar physicalities), totemism (similar interiorities and similar physicalities), naturalism (dissimilar interiorities and similar physicalities), analogism (dissimilar interiorities and dissimilar physicalities). See Descola, *Par delà nature et culture*, chap. 'Les dispositions de l'être', 227–400.

The kosher technology of the skhakh and its concepts

The feast of *Sukkot* is mentioned in the Bible and in the Second Temple literature as one of the three great pilgrimage feasts to the Temple in Jerusalem; it is, during the whole Antiquity, the main Jewish holy day, simply referred to by the word *ḥag*, 'feast'. It involves several rites: the procession with willow branches (ʿarava), libations (*simḥat bet ha-šoʾeva*), the handling of the four essences bouquet (*lulav*), the gathering at the Temple (*haqhel*), the residence in booths, *sukkot*. The huts are first mentioned in the Code of Holiness, Leviticus 23.43, but without describing how they should be built. The question of the roof of the hut, the *skhakh*, which is of interest here, becomes a central topic in rabbinic literature.

For the rabbis, the *skhakh* represents the essential element of a hut and concentrates in it the symbolism of the whole festival. The texts repeatedly state that the purpose of the hut is to produce a shadow larger than the area swept by the sunlight (7b, 8b, 9b). As early as the schools of Shammai and Hillel, the *skhakh* became a consensus 'concept'. The rabbinic discussions do not question its relevance, i.e. the fact that the *skhakh* is to be understood as distinct from the walls of the *sukka* and that it represents the quintessence of the commandment to build a hut. But while the concept is not questioned, many ritual constraints are formulated. The first chapter of the Sukka treatise discusses the many aspects related to the dimensions of the *skhakh*, the permitted materials and the exceptions to the rule.

The *skhakh* must obey a threefold constraint: its constituent elements must 'grow from the earth', they must 'not transmit impurity'[11] and the totality of the structure must correspond to the 'unequivocal intention'[12] of an individual to build a *skhakh*.

Both a reserve of extra-human living principle and an extension of the human personality, it is only under these two conditions that the *skhakh* as a ritual object acquires its own identity and can participate in the accomplishment

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[11] 'This is the general rule: anything that receives ritual impurity or does not grow on the ground, one may not use it as *skhakh*. And anything that does not receive ritual impurity and grows on the ground (*giddulo min ha-ʾaretz*), one may use as *skhakh*.' (Sukka 11a)

The notion of *giddul* or *gedila* implies the idea of natural development, without human intervention. Often it refers to the growth of plants, but the term does not seem to be restricted to the plant realm and its nourishing link with the earth. The tannaitic texts attest to this understanding, which seems to be shared. As for the principle stated in mishna Sukka 1.4, the notion of the natural element required for the construction of the *skhakh* becomes important.

[12] Mishna 1.4 and Sukka 11a ff.

of the rite. A detailed analysis of the rules governing the making of the 'roof of the hut' reveals three important aspects:

a)   The object/non-object dichotomy

Attachment to the ground indicates the zero degree of 'non-artifact': it attests to the non-'objectual' character of that which, when manipulated by man for a ritual function, becomes an object, but without entirely losing its natural character. However, the break must be made in order to create a pure object that is *exclusively* a ritual object.

The action of 'cutting'[13] is therefore highly significant: the radical nature of this act is reinforced by the fact that what has been cut is 'reserved'[14] for seven days in a symbolic, but also effective, process of programmed de-naturalisation. Following this process, one gets the assurance that the cut material will serve a precise and exclusive purpose – the fabrication of the ritual *skhakh*.

On the other hand, it is understood that the raw material *on the way to* be transformed into an artifact, does not entirely abolish its earthly originating roots, since something absolutely artificial – insofar as such a thing could exist – would not be acceptable. It thus becomes clear that the *skhakh* ritual object must be anything but a natural thing, but nonetheless something that *will have been natural*. It also means that ritual cannot be accomplished by the random grace of a fortunate configuration of things and in the absence of an explicit intention. Finally, the structure is expected to perform the function it has been assigned.

b)   The structure/function dichotomy

Things that 'grow out of the ground' are either in the form of oblong woody elements (branches, shoots, stems) or in the form of foliage (*yeraqot*). The former are problematic since they cannot in fact be handled one by one but must be gathered into bundles; the latter are also problematic because of their inherently perishable and ephemeral nature.

In Judaism, the binding, ʾ*eged*, *ḥibbur*, is the mark that a 'thing' has been made: but does such a 'thing' also constitutes an 'artifact' (*kli*)? Or should it still be considered as 'raw material'? An accidental or purposeful unbinding would return the bound elements to their original state and the 'artifact' would no longer be an 'artifact'.

The Gemara dwells on the act of 'cutting' the branches *after* lowering them (Mishna Sukka 1.4, Sukka 11a): 'The *sukka* is not valid if one bent over it the vine, pumpkin or ivy and covered them with branches; if the *sikukh* was more

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13 Mishna 1.4 and Sukka 11a ff.
14 Mishna 1.4 and Sukka 11a ff.

abundant than them or if one cut them, it is lawful.' The quantitative reflection on proportions is complemented by a qualitative reflection on human intervention and its consequences. Can any of the roof's components be *repaired*? The fact that the shoots were only *cut off* at a later stage, *after* having been lowered, indicates that they were originally defective in the sense that they did not meet the requirements of the *kašer*, 'regular', *skhakh*. A whole controversy ensues as to whether cutting the branches makes the *sukka* valid ('cutting is *making* them') or whether things that were originally invalid remain invalid forever.[15] What is the chronological starting point of the roof fabrication? The principle would be that, according to the commandment 'You shall make *sukkot*' (Deuteronomy 16.13), all elements are valid 'from the beginning' and not 'repaired'.[16] This is indeed what the Gemara seems to agree with: 'It is the unanimous opinion that cutting down the branches is not enough to validate (the *skhakh*)' (Sukka 11b). In other words, the branches must first be cut and therefore detached from the soil that nurtures them, reserved for the making of the *skhakh* and in fact used. To the human actions of lowering oaths and cutting after lowering, Rav adds the 'necessity of stirring' the branches after cutting them.

Finally, the criterion of duration is also necessary for the determination of the essence of an artifact because what is attached, the *bundle*, can only be recognized and certified as such if it lasts a minimum length of time. If a movement, such as transportation, undoes them, their reality as a *bundle* is evanescent: they would no longer be usable and could therefore no longer be held as 'thing'. In order for a thing to be fulfilled as a thing, it therefore needs a minimal time but also a minimal space, thresholds below which the thing cannot be said to be *the* same. This same principle explains why *yeraqot*, the 'foliage', is not suitable for the composition of a *skhakh*: drying too quickly, they disappear, leaving the void behind.

c)   The mixture/mechanism dichotomy

The 'roof of the hut' has a hybrid character: it is an artifact but not a substance, insofar as it is composed of regular material (*skhakh kašer*), non-regular material (*skhakh pasul*) as well as intermediate spaces. Therefore, the question of mixing comes up as a leitmotif. The way to solve this question of artifact identity consists, for the rabbis, in postulating that the majority nature cancels the minority nature and that the majority/minority ratio must be respected. Thus, for example, the lowered branch cancels itself out in the cut branch; the edible part – the fruit which, being perishable, runs the risk of catching ritual impurity – cancels

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[15] See the comparison with the ṣiṣiot (11b).

[16] 'A baraita was taught about the *sukka*: "You shall do" – not about what has been done. And it is concluded that the *sukka* is not valid if one has bent over it the vine, pumpkin or ivy and covered them with cut branches.' (Sukka 11b)

itself out in the waste part; the empty space cancels itself out – under certain conditions – in the full. Let us specify that it is not a question here of a fusion that would give birth to *another* entity or nature, but of a set of heterogeneous and unequal parts that a quantitative type of reasoning refuses to think of as a new emerging being.

The discussion on the *roof of the hut* is thus articulated around three poles: the raw material, the qualified artifact and the fragment of an object. We are witnessing a constant search for definitions and signs that would reveal the validity or invalidity of an artifact, in this case a ritual. This ordering quest reveals a way of conceiving the boundary between the natural and the artifactual, the propensity to establish ideal natures-quiddities and the formulation of the limits within which these quiddities are tolerated to be damaged.

The kosher technology of the lulav and its concepts

Many of the essential details enabling the enactment of the *Sukkot* bouquet commandment are not mentioned in the Bible. The verse that instructs about it is Leviticus 23.40:

וּלְקַחְתֶּם לָכֶם בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן פְּרִי עֵץ הָדָר כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים וַעֲנַף עֵץ־עָבֹת וְעַרְבֵי־נָחַל וּשְׂמַחְתֶּם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם שִׁבְעַת יָמִים:

> On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before YHWH your God seven days.[17]

Several questions arise from this verse: What are the species referred to as 'beautiful trees' and 'bushy trees' respectively? What is the meaning of the re-dundancy '*you* shall take *for yourselves*'? What ritual gesture should be performed once the bouquet has been 'taken'?

A first step towards clarifying these details can be made by reading the mishnaic legislation. Indeed, in Mishna Sukka 3.1-8, the four species are identi-fied and named: *lulav* (palm, 3.1), *hadas* (myrtle, 3.2), ʿ*arava* (willow, 3.3), ʾ*etrog* (citron, 3.5-8). The Mishna does not discuss these identifications, it is the Ge-mara that will do so.[18] The Mishna's contribution consists in the establishment

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[17] D. E. S. Stein (ed.), *The Contemporary Torah*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Soci-ety, 2006).

[18] The Mishna is the first text to refer to the 'myrtle', *hadas*, and the 'citron', ʾ*etrog*, and remains the earliest detailed, if late, source on the bouquet ritual. The use of these four species seems to date back to Persian times when the citron, originally from Asia, made its appearance in the land of Israel. The palm tree was cultivated in the region from the

of rules for the use of each species and in particular rules defining which sample is kosher and therefore good for ritual use.

A distinction can be made between generic details applicable to all four species, and specific details for date palm branch, myrtle, willow branch and citron.

The prohibitions common to all four species are the following: a 'stolen' (*gazul*) or 'desiccated' (*yaveš*) specimen; one that would be 'in connection with an ᵓašera/'sacred tree' (*šel ᵓašera*) or from 'a rogue city' (*me-ᶜir ha-nidaḥat*) is not valid (*pasul*). The same prohibition applies to one whose 'end was cut off' (*niqtam ro ᵓšo*) or whose 'leaves were detached' (*nifreṣu ᶜalav*). Let us examine each of these prohibitions.

For the *tannaim*, determining the identity of the ritual plant specimen is a constant preoccupation. This identity is sometimes defined explicitly but more often implicitly. The identity is circumscribed first of all in a *relational way* since each plant must be the property of the practitioner. Secondly, the *maintenance of the form* is another criterion stating the quiddity: what crumbles or is damaged, especially in the upper part, does not count. The predominance of leaves in the case of branches and the state of fruit in the case of citron, i.e. their *status over time*, is also taken into account by the *tannaim*. Those plants specimens are assigned a purpose, a function, a finality, by means of enouncing rules and instituting conventions. Although man has no control over the vital processes of non-cultivated plants, he does control the production of ritual artifacts.[19] The marking of the Sukkot bouquet is the detachment from the ground, the attachment of the four species and the statement of rules for the choice of the ritual specimen. These rules do not seek to institute an artifact going beyond the ordinary, neither by its size nor by other morphological characteristics. These rules aim to keep the plant elements as close as possible to their original state once detached from the ground.

ıv[th] century BC. Several studies trace the identification and use of the four species for the Sukkot ritual, drawing on Akkadian, Greek and iconographic sources: D. Langgut, Y. Gadot, O. Lipschitz, ""Fruit of Goodly Trees": The Beginning of Lemon Cultivation in Israel and Its Penetration into Jewish Tradition and Culture", *Beit Mikra. Journal for the Study of the Bible and its World* 59 (2014), 38–55 (Heb.); S. Arieli, ""Pri Etz Hadar" – Fruit of the "Tree of Life"", *Beit Mikra. Journal for the Study of the Bible and its World* 59 (2014), 5–40; R. Ben-sasson, "Botanics and Iconography Images of the *Lulav* and the *Etrog*" *Ars Judaica* 8 (2012), 7–22. The still classic work for the identification of biblical and rabbinical essences is Y. Feliks, *Types of Fruit Trees. Biblical and Rabbinical Plants* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass Press, 1994) (Heb.).

[19] On the relationship between vital processes and techniques, see *Montrer/occulter. Visibilité et contextes rituels*, ed. Périg Pitrou in collaboration with G. Olivier (Paris : L'Herne « Cahiers d'anthropologie sociale », 2015).

The ritual artifact does not have to be *extra-ordinary*, it just has to be *itself*. The *Amoraim* encompass the thought of the *tannaim* in some respects and differs in others. As is evident from Sukka folios 30a-43b, for the rabbis of the Gemara, quiddity is in a fragile equilibrium as it is constantly threatened by time and transformation. They are therefore more sensitive to signs of decay as well as evolution. Aware of this *fundamental instability* of things, the *amoraim* are also less strict about the *boundaries* that separate them from idolatrous practices and their artifacts. There is also a pronounced taste for the use of *midrash* in problem solving and in stating *halacha*. In contrast, the *amoraim* follow the same pattern, valuing *leaves* and *stems* just as strongly as fruits and flowers, the notion of *attachment*, and an *analytical* conception of artifacts which, in order to exist, must *connect* their constituent parts. Even when it comes to a fruit, the citron, its quiddity, *ṭaʿam*, 'taste, reason', is reduced to that of the rind and it must be kept apart, separate from the leafy branches. Finally, the *amoraim* develop the *tannaitic* notion of beauty, *hadar*, proper to the ritual artifact by instituting aesthetic criteria of symmetry, harmony of form and consistency of matter.

As mentioned previously the Mishna systematically prohibited the use of a stolen sample of palm, myrtle, willow and citron in order to fabricate a kosher *lulav*. Individual ownership of the *lulav* is essential to perform the rite. In folios 39a-41a, Tractate Sukka addresses the ownership debate by questioning the order of priority in situations of superposition and competition of temporal holiness: what is the status of the plants during the sabbatical year, *ševiʿit*? According to the laws of the sabbatical year, the landowner must suspend all agricultural activity. Products that grow without human intervention are declared public property and trade in the products of the year is prohibited. Finally, the products of the sabbatical year must not be destroyed or wasted. The fruits of trees and those from seeds that fell to the ground before the Sabbatical year are allowed as food but must be treated as sanctified food. These regulations can lead to transgressions regarding the making of the *lulav* since the practitioner is required, in most cases, to *purchase* all four species as an unmistakable sign of ownership. The question arises in particular with the *ʾetrog*, the citron, since it is an edible fruit. As for the palm tree, the *Amoraim* debate whether it is merely 'wood' (*ʾeṣim*), an inedible product from which no profit is made, and as such it does not become sacred during the sabbatical year (*qedušat ševiʿit*). This discussion highlights the rabbis' concern about the classification of things and objects and their possible misuse. If such misuse occurs, the status of the object may change as well as its handling.

The *lulav* bouquet is embedded in a set of cultural relationships. By its *freshness*, it must keep the trace of its *link with the environment*; by its *belonging*, it must embody the *link with the practitioner*; by its assigned *function*, it must express *the intention of the practitioner* to make a ritual artifact; by its *species* and

its *integrity*, it must keep its *formal identity* and maintain the quantity of stored substance necessary for the rite.

Anthropology of life, agentivity of ritual artifacts

We have seen how these ritual artifacts acquire their ritual efficacy through compliance with the rules of manufacture. This is what we called a kosher technology. We deduce that the first condition of their effectiveness is their *quiddity*.

Another question is how this quiddity acts and by virtue of what properties and mechanisms does it guarantee ritual action?

The *skhakh* of the hut and the *lulav* do not intervene in the same way in the ritual process and it is questionable whether both manifest their effectiveness in the same type of ritual action.

The *skhakh* should cast a shadow in such a way that when the sun reaches its zenith, the share of the shadow falls mainly within the *sukka*. It is the meaning of the shadow that requires clarification and on this subject the texts are not consensual. Is it a question of reliving the exit from Egypt and experiencing the effective divine protection through the clouds of glory? The practitioner would thus be caught up in the game of *mimesis*, and in this case the ritual would consist of producing the performance of a past drama each year. The intended effect of this ritual is perhaps twofold: both the intellectualisation of historical memory and the emotional experience. It is interesting to also note the effects of its materiality on the human subject: the *skhakh* must allow light to pass through, it must not smell bad, it must not drop leaves, it must allow the experience of sleep and satiety inside the hut. The man should also *know* that the *skhakh* does not transmit impurity.[20] The manner in which the *skhakh* is constituted and manufactured must be the guarantor of these requirements in their entirety.

The *lulav* belongs, at least from a phenomenological point of view, to a different logic. It is not part of a narrative that could be considered a myth, nor does it participate in a dramaturgical recollection device. The *lulav* has to be handled in a certain way and at certain moments of sacred time in order to fulfil a biblical injunction expressed literally by the verb 'to take': the Bible indicates that the practitioner must 'take' the bouquet. When, how and why this taking should be done is up to the rabbis. While fabricating the *sukka* and its *skhakh* means building the scene of the ritual itself and establishing the spatial boundaries of the ritual, the making of the *lulav* has no such function. In rabbinic ritual

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[20] The bibliography on the agentivity of objects is quite rich. Let us just mention B. Latour, *Changer de société, refaire de la sociologie* (Paris: Editions la Découverte, 2006); S. Houdart, O. Thiéry (eds.), *Humains, nonhumains. Comment repeupler les sciences sociales?* (Paris: La Découverte, 2011).

this bouquet is 'taken' in hand and 'shaken' at certain points during the recitation of the Hallel, specifically during the verses *Hodu la-šem ki ṭov, ki le-ʿolam ḥasdo* ('Praise God, for He is good, for His grace is everlasting') and *ʾanna ha-šem hošiaʿnaʾ* ('By grace, O God, save us, by grace'). The gesture is meant to punctuate the recitation but the time and place allocated to it within the ritual varies: before and after the destruction of the Temple, in Jerusalem or in the diaspora, on the first day only or during the seven days of the festival. The object and the gesture are thus conditioned by the liturgical word, in other words by the sacred temporality. As a result, the competition between the sacredness of the Sabbath and the sacredness of the festival is widely discussed by the rabbis who rule on the pre-eminence of the former (Sukka 42b-43a). The handling of the *lulav* also becomes a gesture reviving the memory of the Temple in the period following its destruction (Sukka 44a).

What are the effects on the practitioner of living in the shadow of the *skhakh* and manipulating the *lulav*? Ritual theories have produced explanations of rites of passage, for example, which in all their diversity are expected to mark the symbolic transformation of the individual, his passage from one class – age, civil status, social status, etc. – to another. Others have looked at sacrifice and commensality or prayer, the purpose of which is to establish communication between the worldly order and the divine order. Still others have studied festivals as the overthrow of the social and cosmic order, the purpose of which is precisely to strengthen it.

Rabbinic Judaism places at the centre the notion of commandment, *miṣva*. It is precisely through the *miṣvot* that the cosmic order is preserved, more precisely the order instituted by the demiurge God and within which man must take his part by simply following the commandments. A first level of explanation would therefore be the need to conform to the divine word in order to preserve the world. But this is not a satisfactory explanation because it is not just a matter of putting into practice a received tradition. Indeed, the rabbis are themselves the originators of a multitude of halachic details and thus assert themselves as producers of *miṣvot*. It is as promoters of normativity that the rabbinic imagination must be interrogated.

For the questions that concern us here, namely the agentivity of ritual objects and the transformative scope of ritual action, we can start from a few scattered indications that can be picked up in some talmudic controversies, indications which the rabbis let slip out almost without being aware and without dwelling on them. We have collected such an indication about the *lulav*. Mishna Sukka 3.8 prohibits the tying together of palm, myrtle and willow using another species that would distort the ritual bouquet by adding a fifth species. The Gemara's commentary at this point is very concerned to prevent a foreign body from coming between the ritual *lulav* and the hand that takes it. Two *amoraim* of

the fourth century, Raba and Rava, discuss and contrast their views. For Raba, contiguity and continuity must be ensured and therefore direct contact between man and the plant is the most important thing. Rava, on the other hand, considers the attachment as non-essential, ornamental, and therefore unfit to make a 'separation' (*ḥaṣiṣa*) between man and this same plant. With a more approximate conception of quiddity, Rava even thinks that any taking of the bouquet by means of something else does not call into question the validity of the ritual manipulation. For Raba, not only must a fifth species be banned for fear of 'separation', but any intervention in the constituted bouquet is also dangerous. Slipping the palm branch between the myrtle and willow branches, or cutting the palm branch already attached to the other two, may result in the detachment of some leaves and the creation of a material and ontological barrier between the individual and the bouquet. The *amoraim* reveal here the value of contiguity as a vector of continuity. The ritual process is indebted to it, in the same way that the resident in the *sukka* must, in order for his *miṣva* to be valid, sleep under the *skhakh kašer* or in other words, the part of the roof made of regular material. All this evokes the way Lévi-Strauss and, in his wake, Descola, decipher the role of the animal in the device of ritual sacrifice: 'The characteristic feature of a sacrifice is precisely the fact that it establishes a link between two terms initially unconnected, the purpose of the operation being, to cite Lévi-Strauss's definition,' "to establish a relation, which is not of resemblance, but of contiguity, by means of a series of successive identifications which can be made in both directions [...]: either from the sacrificant to the sacrificer, from the sacrificer to the victim, from the sacred victim to the deity; or in the reverse order". Descola completes this explanation: 'it is precisely this decomposition of the victim's attributes, against the background of decomposing all the existing entities into a multitude of elements, that allows it (the victim) to fulfil a connector function through the identification of each of the actors in the rite with at least one of its properties.'[21]

This passage helps us grasp the ontological logic behind it.[22] The direct contact – established with the *lulav* – or by sympathy – established under the *skhakh* – answers the question of the symbolic effectiveness of these ritual artifacts. The symbolic efficacy consists in establishing a contiguity and, through it, some kind of relationships between distant beings. Thus, for example, spending the night under the *skhakh* is to be interpreted as the sign of an experience of

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[21] Descola, *Par delà nature et culture*, 399, engl. transl. 2013, 229.

[22] Rabbinic Judaism itself modelled its liturgical system on that of the Temple, naming the daily prayers after the different types of sacrifices. Since the work of G. Stroumsa, *La fin du sacrifice. Les mutations religieuses de l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005), Late Antiquity corresponds to the 'end of the sacrifice' and an anthropological mutation occurs at this time. This theory should be widely revised because the rabbinic ontology, of an analogist type, is in continuity with that of the preceding eras.

temporal regression, of a return *illo tempore*, and not only that of the recollection of a historical event.

The substance and structure of the ritual artifacts that mediate this symbolic efficacy are not neutral. Let us begin by recalling the parallels made by the rabbis between the sacrificial animal and *lulav* on the one hand, and the *skhakh* on the other. The anonymous editor of the Gemara makes Rabbi Yohanan's opinion explicit: 'The *sukka* can be compared to the *ḥagiga*' (Sukka 11b) where the word *ḥagiga* means the sacrifice brought on pilgrimage festivals and modelled on the peace sacrifices. And the text continues: 'Just as (the animal for) the *ḥagiga* is a thing not susceptible to impurity and grows on the earth, so (the roof of) the *sukka* is a thing not susceptible to impurity and grows on the earth' (Sukka 11b). Obviously, it is not a question of making up the *skhakh* using 'living things' – *baʿaley ḥayim* – and the author of the Gemara is quick to make this clear in order to remove any misunderstanding since he directs the discussion towards the use of plant stuff 'from the barn and the press'. The rabbis like to alternate levels of meaning by moving from a literal to a metaphorical reading and back again; this is their characteristic exegetical play. The comparison attributed to Rabbi Yohanan reveals the commonality between the roof of the hut and the sacrificial animal, namely their connection to the earth, *qarqaʿ*: the material of the roof, like the animal itself, 'grows from the earth' (*giddulo min ha-ʾareṣ*). The earth provides the vital nourishing flow for animals and plants alike.

The ritual artifact of interest here, the *skhakh*, must be the receptacle of this vital flow and at the same time, as other rabbinic discussions tell us, *cut off* from its source. In this it resembles the *lulav* whose first requirement is that each of its component species be fresh (*loʾ yaveš*). The bouquet must store vital flow during the seven days of the festival and only then will its ritual effectiveness be assured. Moreover, on several occasions we have noted terminological similarities between the way of describing the plant, in this case the species of the *lulav*, and the way of describing the sacrificial animal, the animal fit for consumption and the one with defects. Speaking of the citron, Mishna Sukka 3.6, specifies the defects that invalidate it:

עָלְתָה חֲזָזִית עַל רֻבּוֹ, נִטְּלָה פִּטְמָתוֹ, נִקְלַף, נִסְדַּק, נִקַּב וְחָסַר כָּל שֶׁהוּא, פָּסוּל.
עָלְתָה חֲזָזִית עַל מְעוּטוֹ, נִטַּל עֻקְצוֹ, נִקַּב וְלֹא חָסַר כָּל שֶׁהוּא, כָּשֵׁר. אֶתְרוֹג הַכּוּשִׁי, פָּסוּל.
וְהַיָּרוֹק כְּכַרְתִי
רַבִּי מֵאִיר מַכְשִׁיר
וְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה פּוֹסֵל

    If it has scabs covering most of it, if its protuberance has been removed, if it has been peeled, split or pierced and if anything is missing, it is unfit.
    If only a minor part of it is scabbed over, if its stalk has been removed or if it has been pierced but nothing is missing, it is valid.

A coushite/black citron is unfit. The leek-green one: Rabbi Meir considers it valid and Rabbi Yehuda²³ considers it improper.

The resemblance is striking with the affections which, by touching the skin of animals, make them unfit for sacrifice or consumption. The vocabulary is common for plants and for animals, sometimes also for men: the adjective 'peeled' designates an animal forbidden because it has lost its skin (Hullin 55b), 'split' the one whose windpipe is split (Hullin 45a), 'pierced' the one whose meninx is holed (Hullin 42a); the animal with a *ḥazazit*-like rash is also forbidden (Mishna Bekhorot 6.12); the term *piṭma*, translated here as 'protuberance', refers to the area around the nipple, the 'peduncle', *ʿuqaṣ*, refers to the spine or hip with the tail of a sacrificial animal (Mishna Tamid 3.1, Hullin 93a), the term *kuši* means 'from the land of Kuš/Ethiopia' but also an abnormally dark colour hue (Mishna Bekhorot 7.6, Berakhot 58b).²⁴

The same parallelism can be observed in the malformations of the palm branch. In order to be valid, it must fall within the norms of 'nature', in other words, the way its species was created (*bry ʾiateia*, Sukka 32a). The phrase chosen to denote the opposite of 'natural' is *baʿal mum*. Incidentally, this is what Rav Papa calls the palm tree with asymmetrical branches, attesting to the analogy with the animal of sacrifice forbidden because of its physical defects.

The *skhakh* and the *lulav*, made of vegetable matter, are the intermediaries of communication with divinity. In the case of sacrifice, the active principle is blood, 'which is life', says Leviticus, the same blood that must be released when the animal is sacrificed. In the case of the ritual artifacts analysed here, there is no question of any destruction, their vital flow must remain intact. The chain of juxtaposition and communication is reversed. Lévi-Strauss already questioned the necessity of killing the sacrificial victim and answered this question. The destruction of the victim by humans creates a void in the continuity instituted between the existing entities and provokes in the recipient of the sacrifice, the divinity in our case, the desire to re-establish contact by responding favourably to men.²⁵ The *skhakh* and the *lulav* must, on the contrary, hold, while keeping the trace of their fabrication, of their objectal character. The *skhakh* must embody impermanence – not a tree and not a house; it must also be the manifestation of an unequivocal intention of the man to make it as a ritual artifact. The *lulav* must also share a characteristic with the practitioner: it must belong to him, be

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²³ Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Meir: *tannaim*, ca. 135–170.

²⁴ See Berakhot 58b: 'Whoever saw a person with abnormally black skin, a person with abnormally red skin, a person with abnormally white skin [*lavkan*], a person with abnormally tall and thin skin, a dwarf, or a person with warts [*darnikos*], recites: *Blessed... Who makes creatures different*.'

²⁵ C. Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée sauvage* (Paris: Plon, 1962), 297–298.

his property as a substance and as an object, by virtue of its telluric origin – the plot of origin – and by virtue of its manufacture. These characteristics place these ritual objects halfway between nature and artifice: they are torn from the earth's vital flow and inserted into man's artificial network.

Not only must the flow of life be maintained throughout the festival of *Sukkot*, but the amount of ritual material must fall within a minimum and maximum threshold.

The manufacture of *skhakh* is a mixture of regular *skhakh*, non-regular *skhakh* and empty spaces. Oblong elements such as *šipudin*/'spits' and slats are allowed, provided they are supplemented, *in equal parts*, by 'regular *skhakh*'. The question of measurement is a major concern for the *amoraim*. Therefore, the question remains on how to establish the width of the intermediate space in order to meet the constraint of a *minimum* mixture in equal proportions? The space between the slats, which is intended to be filled with 'regular kosher *skhakh*', can be measured *approximately* – according to Rav Houna – but also *precisely* – as the anonymous writer indicates (Sukka 15a). For Rav Ammi, the space for the regular kosher *skhakh* must be larger and must occupy most of the roof. For Rava, on the other hand, this is not really necessary, since additional width in the *skhakh* compensates for a smaller length and vice versa. The gemara also questions the thresholds at which an empty space and a nonregular roof each invalidate a *sukka*, and especially whether the two natures can add up. Can the natures 'add up' (*miṣtarfim*) and participate together in the validation or invalidation of a *sukka*? If the invalidation threshold for an empty space is three palms and that of the *skhakh pasul* is four palms, can the measure of one be considered to complement the measure of the other and can they form a new blocking entity?

The number of branches of each species making up the lulav is also discussed. In folio 34b the Talmud quotes the Sukka Mishna 3.4 which tells us the quantities required for each of the four species. This Mishna reports a diversity of opinions.

רַבִּי יִשְׁמָעֵאל אוֹמֵר, שְׁלֹשָׁה הֲדַסִּים וּשְׁתֵּי עֲרָבוֹת, לוּלָב אֶחָד וְאֶתְרוֹג אֶחָד, אֲפִלּוּ שְׁנַיִם קְטוּמִים וְאֶחָד אֵינוֹ קָטוּם
רַבִּי טַרְפוֹן אוֹמֵר אֲפִלּוּ שְׁלָשְׁתָּן קְטוּמִים
רַבִּי עֲקִיבָא אוֹמֵר, כְּשֵׁם שֶׁלּוּלָב אֶחָד וְאֶתְרוֹג אֶחָד, כָּךְ הֲדַס אֶחָד וַעֲרָבָה אֶחָת .

Rabbi Ishmael[26] says: 'Three myrtles, two willows, a palm tree and a citron, even two myrtles with broken ends and one not broken'. Rabbi Tarfon[27] says: 'Even three

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[26] *Tanna*, IIIᵉ generation, ca. 80-110.

[27] *Tanna*, IIIᵉ generation, ca. 80-110.

myrtles with broken ends'. Rabbi Akiba said, 'Just as one palm tree and one citron tree are needed, so are one myrtle and one willow.'

The question of the amount of material required for the rite is raised in connection with the citron. The minimum size of the fruit is the equivalent of a nut for Rabbi Meir and the equivalent of an egg for Rabbi Yehuda. These two quantitative criteria can also be seen as thresholds for the visibility of the citron. This is also the maximum size allowed for the transport of stones on shabbat. It can therefore be said that an object becomes visible, and therefore exists, once this quantitative threshold is reached. The maximum size of the citron is also important. Rabbi Yehuda limits it to the capacity of a man to hold two in his palm. An imprecise but pragmatic criterion.

Our analysis of the *skhakh* and the *lulav* outlines a double anthropology: the technologies of the world anthropology, and the anthropology of vital principles. With Roland Barthes, but also with Périg Pitrou[28], we can recognize the technology of the transformation of life into matter. Ritual action establishes a chain of contiguities capable of giving coherence to a world composed of singularities.

Ethnographic variation

Building a *sukka* and holding the *lulav* are still an integral part of the ritual practice associated with the festival of Sukkot. There are, of course, regional and historical variations[29] in this practice. These variations are not the same for the *lulav* and *sukka* respectively. In the case of *lulav*, the issue lies at the crossroads of tradition and science, and relates above all to the citron, *etrog*. For the latter, aesthetic aspects and adaptation to the climate play a decisive role.

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[28] P. Pitrou, "Anthropology of Life and New Technologies", *Techniques & Culture* (2019).

[29] See for example W. Klein, S. Liberman Mintz, J. Teplitsky, (eds.), *Be Fruitful! The Etrog in Jewish Art, Culture, and History* (Jerusalem: Mineged Press, 2022) and R. Sarfati, *A Movable Feast: Sukkahs from Around the World* (Jerusalem: The Israel Museum, 2003), M. Levy Lipis, *Symbolic Houses in Judaism: How Objects and Metaphors Construct Hybrid Places of Belonging* (London: Routledge, 2017).

Figure 1: Frank Sultan, Old man holding branches of hadas, 1920, Yad Itzhaq Ben Zvi, Israel nigleit ha-ain, Franck Sultan Travels in the Holy Land Album, 1923, IL-INL-YBZ-0210-411.*

* שולטן, פרנק, 1881-1942 צלם, יהודי מבוגר מחזיק בידו הדס, אחד מארבעת המינים של חג הסוכות, יד יצחק בן צבי (ישראל נגלית לעין), אוסף מסעות IL-INL-YBZ-0210-411, 1920-1923, סימול YBZ.0210.411;פרנק שולטן בארץ הקודש, יד יצחק בן צבי

Figure 2: Benno Rothenberg, Sukkot Market in Jerusalem, Meitar Collection,
The Pritzker Family National Photography Collection, The National Library of Israel,
NLI nr. 997009857913705171.

The citron and the modern botanical technology

Judaism seeks to integrate the achievements of science and technology and put them at the service of a „better" practice of the commandments. This general attitude towards scientific progress is part of an overall theological view that the world can be improved and that man has not only the right but also the duty to do so. God has certainly created the quiddities, living and non-living, which man must not modify. But he can, on the other hand, equip himself with instruments to better understand these quiddities, to describe them more precisely, and, consequently, to establish new boundaries between the forbidden and the permitted activity, the valid and the invalid artifact. In the case of the citron, contemporary science, especially Israeli but not only, has focused on two elements: establishing the non-hybrid character of the species and the maintenance of the *pitam*, the protuberance.

Figure 3: Gabi Laron, Jerusalem : Sukkot at the Wailing Wall, 15.10.2019,
Gabi Laron Archive, NLI nr 997009977189805171
Holding the lulav bouquet with citron/etrog in the first plan.

The interest in etrog hybridization stems from the Renaissance prohibition on the use of grafted *etrog* (*murkav*, composite) (16th century in Land of Israel, Italy and Poland). The problem of grafted etrogim is not mentioned by rabbis of Antiquity and there is no indication that such a problem existed in the times of the Mishna or Talmud. This practice entered the agricultural culture in the Middle East only in the Middle Ages. Indeed, it is only from this period that we hear about the possibility of grafting an etrog with various trees and the possible connection to other types of citruses. There are extensive references in rabbinic literature to the differences between pure and grafted etrogim. Hybridization can take two forms: the scion-rootstock method and pollination. The rabbinic concern had always been with the scion-rootstock method, in the past as nowadays. Was it because pollination could not be observed, documented, and controlled? This is another way to acknowledge that God's creation must be kept as such and that the hybridization in a natural manner is permitted. Only human intended and human mediated hybridization is forbidden. Given this religious concern, botanists and among them especially Eliezer Goldschmidt from the Hebrew University, undertook the genetical study of the etrog species compared to other citrus species like lemon, pomelo, mandarin, orange etc. This complex research was scheduled as "the search of the authentic citron" recognizing the cultural dimension, in the anthropological sense, of the etrog and, paradoxically, retracting the natural one. This article is a synthesis of the previous literature on the citron, not the publication of primary results; Goldschmidt published extensively on the citron biology and largely on the citrus family. For the purpose of the present presentation, it is nevertheless sufficient to refer to this 2005 article co-authored together with Elisabetta Nicolosi, Stefano La Malfa, Mohammed El-Otmani, and Moshe Negbi.

In its quest for authenticity, science at least partially supports traditional Jewish botanical knowledge. As much as Talmudic knowledge, limited to external observation, can provide the basis for a practice that emphasizes integrity and external beauty, botanical knowledge of the Renaissance and the early modern period does not seem to be able to meet rabbinic requirements. The "non-composite" etrog cannot be systematically identified: the plantings are rare and remote, and the result, the fruit, is not sufficiently characterized. Even less can one use internal criteria, invisible to the naked eye. Today's science invests the inner and the invisible as criteria of identification. However, it cannot provide criteria to establish whether a particular tree has been grafted, but it can support the thesis of the distinction between species, in this case, that of citron in relation to other citrus fruits, and also trace the phylogenetic lineage of the citron to reinforce the idea of an original species.

The second aspect that modern horticulture has focused on is the fruit beauty. According to Talmudic interpretations, the citron must be "beautiful",

hadar. Among these criteria of beauty, in addition to visual symmetry and regular touch, the presence of the *pitam* is most important. A *pitam* is composed of a style (Hebrew: *dad*), and a stigma (Hebrew: *shoshanta*), which usually falls off during the growing process and the passage from flower to fruit. The persistence of the *pitam* makes the fruit more "beautiful" and therefore, valuable. The genetic-physiological basis of style persistence has not been investigated, but synthetic auxins, known to inhibit a range of cutting off events, are effective in this system as well and may promote style persistence. The Picloram is largely used today by the Israeli farmers following the experiments conducted by E. Goldschmidt in the sixties. Working with the Picloram hormone in a citrus orchard one day, he discovered to his surprise that some of the Valencia Oranges of nearby had preserved beautiful, perfect *pitam*. Picloram was adopted by citron growers in Israel and is sprayed on citron trees during flowering as a means to obtain the highly desirable, persistent style citrons. The use of the hormone auxin does not raise *kosher* questions, probably because etrog is traditionally not really edible. It is primarily grown for the Sukkot ritual and secondarily as a scent. To perform the ritual, the appearance is enough to make the fruit valid, *kosher*. As long as the Picloram does not alter this appearance equivalent to quiddity, it is not forbidden, quite the contrary, since it helps to make the etrog, "more" *etrog* or bring it closer to perfection, to the ideal type.

The 'vernacular' sukka – in the Balkans and beyond

I would have liked to be able to deal in full with *sukka* in the Balkans. However, visual documentation is very limited. Generally speaking, the *sukka* is not well documented, despite its inclusion in the Bezalel Narkiss Index of Jewish Art database. My research, based on the catalogue of the National Library of Israel, the ANU Museum of Jewish People in Tel Aviv, the Jewish Museum of Athens, the Jewish Historical Museum in Belgrade, the Jewish Community in Belgrade, the Jewish Community in Zemun, the Federation of Jewish Communities in Serbia and the Centre for the Study of the Jews in Romania, brought to light around ten photographs relating to the festival of Sukkot in the Balkans. Synagogues are largely documented but the ephemeral ritual huts very scarcely.

However brief, the visual documentation speaks for itself, particularly in terms of the contrasts it reveals. For example, *sukka* in Central Asia differs from *sukka* in temperate European countries in the materials used to build the walls. In Central Asia, the partitions are made of carpets, whereas in Europe they are made of wooden planks, or even solid constructions with folding roofs. In Israel, where agricultural production is an important value, the partitions are made from palm branches.

For the Balkans, in the broadest sense of the term, we have three photographs from Romania and three from Greece, which are reproduced below. The oldest, dating from the early 20th century, comes from the Jewish community of Crăciuneşti, a village in Maramureş, Transylvania. The *sukka* is easily recognized by its green roof made of leafy branches, which contrasts with the wooden plank enclosures. A permanent *sukka* is immortalized in the next photo from the Great Synagogue in Braila, a town on the Danube in eastern Romania. The photo was taken before or after *Sukkot*, therefore the roof is not a ritual one but is intended to preserve the structure from year to year. The photo taken inside the *sukka* at Coral Temple in Bucharest does not reveal whether it is a permanent structure, but the appearance of the roof here too obeys Talmudic rules. The *skhakh kosher* and the *skhakh pasul* form a skillful blend governed by the prescribed proportions. In Greece, the three images we have, represent ritual huts adjacent to synagogues: Ioannina, Volos and Thessalonica. In Ioannina, the *sukka* is bounded on three sides by the walls of the synagogue, a situation described in the Talmudic treatise *Sukka*. In Volos, it is the frame that is captured, no doubt outside the festivities. Finally, in Thessaloniki, the sukka also incorporates the walls and the post of a staircase. This is more a case of *bricolage* than construction: you work with the current walls, but you don't build with planks. The frame is there, light but stable. Finally, the roof is as noticeable in Greece as anywhere else.

The last two images we have chosen to include here come from Israel. The photographic corpus is much richer when it comes to the festival of *Sukkot* in Israel, so our choice was more difficult. The first photo shows a *sukkah* in the process of being built, where in all likelihood the walls will be opened in order to emphasize the roof. In the second, representing pioneers in the *Keren ha-yesod* settlements, the roof is also highlighted, this time by the abundance of vegetation contrasting with the body of the *sukkah*.

Together, these images reveal the topicality and strength of the Talmudic conceptual framework, which is not distorted by historical and geographical interpretations.

Figure 4: Sukka at the Coral Temple in Bucharest, Romania, 1990. Photo Alexandru Kalatia, Coll. Federația comunităților evreiești din România), Museum of Jewish People, ANU nr:138420.

Figure 5: Family meeting to honor a visitor from America, Crăciunești, Romania, 1921-1924. A sukka is visible in the first plan. The Oster Visual Documentation Center, Museum of the Jewish People, Courtesy of Harry Walker, ANU nr. 187065.

Figure 6: Brăila Great Synagogue (Templul Coral), Permanent Sukka 2017
(ashkenazi) © Center for Jewish Art, Photographer: Vladimir Levin 2019, ID:303115.

Figure 7: *Old Congregation Synagogue (Kahal Kadosh Yashan) in Ioannina*
© Center for Jewish Art, Photographer: Radovan, Zev, 2001, ID: 36593.

Figure 8: Sukkah and community offices, Volos. Photographic Archive of the Jewish Museum of Greece [20th century]. Judaica Europeana, Greece.

Figure 9: The Monastirio-ton Synagogue of Thessaloniki, view of the exterior, detail from the Sukkah NW courtyard). Photographic Archive of the Jewish Museum of Greece [20th century], Judaica Europeana, Greece.

Figure 10: *Sukka at the children camp, 1958, Yad Mordechai Archive IL-YMOR-001-70-013-001, NLI nr. 997012301788505171.*

Figure 11: Wooden sukkot elevated and covered with the skhakh, Abraham Malavsky, 1940-1941, IL-INL-YBZ-0695-103.*

מלבסקי אברהם
1940–1941,
צלם, סוכות עץ מוגבהות מהקרקע ועליהן סכך, משמאל יושבת נערה וקוראת ספר
IL-INL-YBZ-0695-103,

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From "Religion" to "Spirituality" in Socialist Bulgaria: Vanga, Nicholas Roerich, and the Mystique of History

Abstract: The article delves into processes unfolding in Bulgaria in the 1970s, centring around two figures: Vanga, known as the seer of Petrič, and the mystic painter Nicholas Roerich, to demonstrate the changes in the structure and meaning of categories related to religion that occurred in the period of "mature socialism". The first section looks into the activities of the clairvoyant Vanga and her changing status to uncover the gradual process that transformed her from a local *vračka* (healer/witch) into the "Bulgarian Pythia". The second and longest section is dedicated to the Nicholas Roerich Program of 1978, promoted at the highest level in the framework of the celebration of 1300 years of the Bulgarian state, and its impact on coining a peculiar concept of spirituality. The third and final part explores the links between Roerich, Vanga, the notion of spirituality, and a certain vision of history.

Keywords: Bulgaria, India, Ljudmila Zhivkova, Pythia, Roerich, Russia, Vanga, ancient civilization, clairvoyance, history, mystique, religion, spirituality, Thracology.

Introduction

For the last three decades, it has been *de bon ton* to celebrate the blossoming religious life in post-socialist Balkan countries as a "religious revival", which allegedly occurred after decades of forced atheism or suppressed religiosity. The scarce visibility of religious life under communism cannot be questioned; however, it does not mean a "religious vacuum". There are data and facts on religious life that, at first glance, have little to do with it; also, one can find ways of reading between the lines of a political system that exercised strict control of the standard expressions of religion.

In this paper, by looking at processes unfolding in Bulgaria in the 1970s, I defend the vision of deep changes in the structure and meaning of categories related to religion that occurred during the period of "mature socialism".[1]

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[1] I use of the vocabulary of the time in accordance with the anthropological principle of giving priority to the emic view [from within the studied society]. In the terminology

Its evolution is seen in two directions: discrediting "religion" by conflating acts of religiosity with "superstition", on the one hand, and, on the other, the gradual elaboration of a new discourse favouring spirituality over religiosity. The first line is reflected in the changing place of the clairvoyant Vanga in socialist Bulgaria. The second, already observed in the case of Vanga, unfolds in the case of the celebrated Russian émigré, painter and esoteric philosopher N. K. Roerich in Bulgaria in the late 1970s. Both lines converge to show that semantic engineering became the mark of a new way of publicly speaking of about religious matters without using the vocabulary banned by Marxist ideology. Those new vocabularies and discourses influenced some trends in religious life in the post-socialist decades.

The article is split into three sections. The first discusses the activities of the clairvoyant Vanga and her changing status, uncovering the gradual process of transforming her from a local *vračka* (healer/witch) to the "Bulgarian Pythia". The second section is dedicated to the Nicholas Roerich Program of 1978, promoted at the highest level of the Bulgarian Communist Party and State, and its impact on coining a peculiar concept of spirituality. The Roerich Program is then analysed in the context of cultural policies and preoccupations with the past and national history in Bulgaria of the 1970s and early 1980s. In the final part, I explore the links between Roerich, Vanga, spirituality, and a certain vision of history.

The clairvoyant Vanga: from "superstition" to spirituality

Vanga, or *Petričkata vračka*, the well-known Bulgarian clairvoyant of the 20th century, is a highly ambiguous figure on the margins of religion. Since her first biography appeared in 1989, a flow of publications, countless articles in the press and posts on the Internet and social media contributed to the creation of a template for presenting and speaking of her: today, Vanga is a magnet for enthusiasts of spirituality, mysticism and mysteries from the Balkans, Russia, the former Soviet countries, and beyond. Regarding the first decades of her career and a specific period, which previous research[2] identified as the turning point in

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of the time, the keyword was "mature socialism" [*zrial socializăm*], meant to be the fulfillment of "real socialism", as opposed to "communism", which was seen as a project. This perspective is adopted in C. Hann, "Introduction. Social Anthropology and Socialism". In *Socialism: Ideas, Ideologies and Local Practice*, ed. C. Hann (London: Routledge, 1993), 1–26; see also K. Verdery, *What Was Socialism, and What Comes Next?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 8–9.

[2]   G. Valtchinova, «Entre religion, tourisme et politique : la naissance du pèlerinage de Rupite, Bulgarie», *Ethnologie Française* 28, 3 (1998), 396–405; Eadem, "Between Ordinary pain and Extraordinary Knowledge: The Seer Vanga in the Everyday Life of

her image, I focus on the bulk of ideas and portrayals of her origins and expertise prior to 1989, which form the body of implicit knowledge[3] about Vanga shared by the society where she lived and acted. Here are its main components.

Vanga [Evangelia] Gušterova (1911–1996) was born in Strumica, Ottoman Macedonia, now in North Macedonia. She was seen as "Macedonian" in the sense of regional belonging, which was maintained by her lifelong use of the local dialect, but her Bulgarian national identity was generally not questioned.[4] A central element was Vanga's loss of sight at age thirteen when she was purportedly "struck by a whirlwind" on the outskirts of her father's native village, where the family had moved after her mother's untimely death. This event is considered the beginning of a harsh period in her life but also the start of her visionary experience. The latter manifested itself the day when World War II reached Yugoslavia in April 1941: she reportedly spent the following days or even weeks in an altered state of consciousness, uttering the names of those who would return and those who would disappear before growing crowds in front of her house. The Strumica area fell under Bulgarian occupation, and the soldiers consulted the seer: one of them, Dimitar Gušterov, married and brought her to his native town Petrič in 1942. Thus, Vanga was known as *Petričkata gledarica* and became famous for finding missing people, a common preoccupation during the war. In 1943, she received a visit from the Bulgarian king Boris III, to whom she purportedly predicted his untimely death. During the war and the two postwar decades, her clientele remained largely rural and regional. It was after her husband's death in the early 1960s that she gained nationwide renown.

The shared knowledge of Bulgarians is more consensual about the facts of Vanga's biography than regarding her expertise. If local people referred to her by the terms of *vidovita žena* [woman-who-sees-the-invisible] and *gledarica* [seer], she was commonly known as *vračka*, a term with the predominant con-

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Bulgarians during Socialism (1960s–1970s)", *Aspasia* 3 (2009), 106–130; Eadem, "State management of the Seer Vanga: Power, medicine, and the "remaking" of religion in Socialist Bulgaria". In *Christianity and Modernity in Eastern Europe*, eds. Bruce R. Berglund, Brian Porter-Szücs (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2012), 245–268; Eadem, "Constructing the Bulgarian Pythia: the seer Vanga between religion, memory, and history". In *Saints, Places, and national Imagination. Historical Anthropology of Religious Life in the Balkans* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2019), 209–228.

3   Importantly for my argument, "implicit knowledge" is defined by M. Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 394, as "an inarticulable […] knowing of social relationality […] acquired in social practice but rarely formalized or articulated in official discourses, forming the underpinning of social relations."

4   Here, the presentation of Vanga's case is limited to the topic of the article; I don't discuss issues of Vanga's identity, the border regime imposed on Petrič during socialism, the situation on the border, etc., all of which was covered in my previous publications.

notation of witch. Due to her capacity to "find missing people", which was never challenged, the early attempts at defining her gift oscillate between her capacity for "seeing" the past and "predicting" the future. Starting from the early 1950s and well into the 1980s, two trends in thinking and talking about the seer emerged: in a nutshell, a negative and a positive one. According to the former, more characteristic of the first decades of socialism – Vanga was a "charlatan" who profited from the "superstitious mind" of ordinary folk. This line of thought recycles well-known discourses of the Church against "sorcerers and witches" using the argument *a contrario*, accusing people who "go to a witch" of being "superstitious" and therefore backward. Vanga's ability to recognize her clients' names and her "knowledge" of their personal histories and pasts were attributed to a network of spies she purportedly relied on for gathering information.

According to the latter viewpoint, which gained traction in the late 1960s, Vanga was a natural "phenomenon", an extra-lucid human whose gift took the shape of seeing into the past and the future and thus "knowing" names and facts from peoples' lives. Instead of blaming it on superstitions, it sought to explain her gift by sciences like physiology, psychology, and biophysics. Starting from the mid-1960s, the study of "Vanga's gift" was entrusted to specialists in "suggestology"[5] and parapsychology, who wrapped the interest in Vanga in scientific and medical discourses. By the 1980s, this coating was abandoned in favour of openly discussing spirituality. Reflecting this shift, nobler religious appellations for Vanga – "the Prophetess" or "Pythia", associating her with a distant pre-Christian past – replaced the old-fashioned term *vračka*. This new vision was a result of the conscious work of various collective agencies, as we will shortly see.

In the mid-1960s, Vanga's activities and the flows of visitors converging at her home started to be regulated by the state: a dual change took place. The visitors now paid fees, which differed for nationals and foreigners, and the tax was taken by the municipality. At the same time, she became an object of research as a "phenomenon", and while her gift was studied by scientific tools, her séances were increasingly associated with medicine. Documents show[6] that from 1966/67 on, people were encouraged to speak of their visits to Vanga as a form of consultation using medical terminology.

In the early 1970s, the derogatory term *vračka* gave way to that of *jasnovidka* [clairvoyant], which had a positive connotation. The same period saw another change: after rumours had been circulating for years, it became public knowledge that Vanga had a close connection with Lyudmila Zhivkova (1942–

5　The rich material coming from the "Institute of Suggestology," operational from 1966 to 1984, is analysed in Valtchinova, "State management".

6　Developed in Valtchinova, "Between", 112–125.

1981)[7], the daughter of the party and state leader Todor Zhivkov (First Secretary of the Bulgarian CP from 1956 to 1989). Zhivkova was one of the rare *heirs* (*pace* Bourdieu) of party and state leaders in the Soviet orbit whose convictions and actions exceeded the literal application of communist ideology, and it was precisely in the 1970s that her "whims" for esoteric and Eastern doctrines became evident.[8] The open demonstration of Zhivkova's interest in and protection of Vanga's activities reinforced her image of a personality from communist orthodoxy. In parallel, a circle of Zhivkova's "friends" emerged around the clairvoyant, mostly intellectuals occupying key positions in the party and state leadership.[9] There are reports of regular visits of university professors well-versed in history and philosophy and discussions about "energies", the cosmos, space-time and spirituality.[10]

The spirituality associated with Vanga is a broad and vague concept: alongside the "gift of clairvoyance" [*jasnovidstvo*], the idea of mystical "knowledge" [*poznanie*] was also underlined, a knowledge which was sometimes presented as being inherited from ancient civilisations. Vanga's gift of "seeing [the invisible]" was also attributed to the capture of "energies" or "cosmic phenomena". Thus, while introducing the vocabulary usually associated with the New Age or charismatic healing, this dual sourcing of Vanga's "gift" blurred the boundary between present and future, as well as between past and future. Comparing Vanga to famous oracles of Antiquity had the same effect: launched in the 1960s

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7   On the personality and politics of Zhivkova, see I. N. Atanasova, "Lyudmila Zhivkova and the Paradox of Ideology and Identity in Communist Bulgaria," *East European Politics and Societies* 18 (2004), 2, 278–315; M. Gruev, "Ljudmila Zhivkova – pătiat kam Agni-Yoga" [Lyudmila Zhivkova – the path to Agni-Yoga]. In *Prelomni vremena. In honorem Prof. Ljubomir Ognyanov* (Sofia: Editions of Sofia University, 2006), 796–815, 800–807; I. Elenkov, *Kulturnijat front. Bălgarskata kultura prez epohata na komunizma – političesko upravlenie, ideologičeski osnovanija, institucionalni režimi* [The Cultural Front. Bulgarian Culture during the Communist Era – Political Management, Ideological Foundations, Institutional Regimes] (Sofia: Siela/Institute for the Study of the Recent Past, 2008), 307–311.

8   Western historians who have studied the period tend to view Zhivkova's "caprices" and the cultural policies she pursued (see *infra*) as the only original development in communist Bulgaria. See R. Crampton, *A Concise History of Bulgaria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 204–205; B. Lory, *L'Europe balkanique* (Paris: Ellipses, 1996), 81.

9   This is especially true of the historian Alexandăr Fol (1936–2007), a multifaceted figure holding multiple positions: professor at the Department of Ancient Greek History at Sofia University (the most prestigious in Bulgaria), Director of the Institute of Thracology (a historical discipline which he founded: see below) at the Academy of Sciences, first deputy to and successor of L. Zhivkova as the head of the Ministry of Culture.

10   Developed in Valtchinova, « Entre religion », 387–399 ; "Constructing", 222–225.

and disseminated by a popular book,[11] the association of Vanga and the Delphic Pythia was officialised in 1990, when the seer was celebrated as the "Bulgarian Pythia".[12]

By the late 1960s, Vanga and Rupite—a place near Petrič where she reportedly found inspiration for practicing her gift—became destinations for high-ranking guests from the Committee for Culture, the Party, and the government. The officialisation of Vanga's activities was not yet complete, but there was genuine interest among foreigners residing in Bulgaria. Some data suggest that enthusiasm for a "visit to Rupite," seen as a form of entertainment, was high among diplomats and high-ranking representatives of foreign (Western) enterprises. In all such cases, the name of the place was used as a metonymy for the person and activities that unfolded there.[13] This practice was in full swing in the 1970s: alongside Zhivkova's friends, most guests of the Party and state who visited Bulgaria for various celebrations (see *infra*) were taken there under the guise of visiting "cultural-historical heritage". In the series of visits "to Rupite" made by personalities from the domains of culture and the arts, as well as by political figures from abroad, people linked in some way to Russia and the (former) Soviet Union held a special place. Some, like the journalist and amateur of esoterism Valentin Sidorov, became part of Zhivkova's "inner circle" and took on the role of mediators in organising these visits.[14] Others – such as the famous actor Vyacheslav Tikhonov (the lead in the Soviet-time TV series *Seventeen Moments of the Spring*), filmmaker Nikita Mikhalkov, writers and poets (Yevgeny Yevtushenko, Leonid Leonov) – are reported as being disturbed by the truths Vanga revealed to them during their visits. In 1978, she received Sviatoslav, Nicholas Roerich's son. Retrospectively, the event was reported as the meeting of two sages.

This brief overview shows that behind the interest in the peasant clairvoyant living in a sensitive border area, there was a complex intertwining of old and new trends in politics and ideology. No doubt, the process by which Vanga

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[11] Sh. Ostrander & L. Schroeder, *Psychic Discoveries Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), 263–285 (the book had four reprints within two years). Interviewed in 1967, the director of the Institute of Suggestology, who was entrusted with "exploring Vanga's brain," emphasised the similarities between the seer and the most famous prophetess of antiquity. The book never circulated openly in socialist Bulgaria, but a copy of its second edition is preserved in the archives as evidence of "the international recognition of Vanga's abilities".

[12] The new turn coincided with the change of regime and the publication of the seer's first biography , with a foreword by Professor Fol. See G. Valtchinova, « Vanga, la 'Pythie bulgare': idées et usages de l'Antiquité en Bulgarie socialiste », *Dialogues d'histoire ancienne* 31, 1 (2005), 93–127.

[13] Valtchinova, « Entre religion », 398–401; « Vanga », 101 note 16, 103 note 18.

[14] See V. Sidorov, *Ljudmila i Vanga* [*Ljudmila and Vanga*] (Sofia: "Reporter", 1995).

the *vračka* ended up as "the Bulgarian Pythia" and a quasi-saint overlapped with a broader logic of abandoning religion for spirituality – a logic in which esoteric doctrines played a role alongside knowledge of a remote past and near future.

The 1978 Nicholas Roerich Program in Bulgaria and Beyond

In March 1978, the Central Committee of the BCP established a long-term *Program to Enhance the Role of Art and Culture for the Harmonious Development of the Individual and Society in the Construction of a Mature Socialist Society*, commonly known as the *Program for the Harmonious Development of the Person* (hereafter *PHDP*). Its management was entrusted to the Committee for the Culture led by Lyudmila Zhivkova. The *PHDP* was to be implemented in several phases, each focusing on a prominent figure from the sciences, arts, and letters, or a political figure: Leonardo da Vinci, Rabindranath Tagore, Avicenna, Mikhail Lomonosov, Goethe, Einstein, Lenin. However, Nicholas Roerich was chosen to be the first. The Roerich Program (hereafter *NRP*) was launched in the spring of 1978, proclaimed the Year of Roerich's Memory in Bulgaria.[15]

Why choose Nicholas K. Roerich (1874–1947) – a painter and mystical thinker steeped in theosophy who developed his own esoteric system known as *Agni-Yoga* or *Living Ethics*,[16] to defend a project aiming at "the construction of the harmoniously developed individual" in a communist country? And how should we understand this unprecedented rhetoric launched at the highest levels of the state and party of Moscow's closest ally?[17]

The draft of the *NRP* by historian Alexandăr Fol holds the key to explaining the choice of a person unknown to the Bulgarian public and so sharply

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[15] The facts about these programs, including the Roerich Program, and the analyses that follow are based on excerpts from documents published by Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, especially 311, 317–336, 337–356; I. Baeva (ed.), *Kulturnoto otvarjane na Bălgarija kăm sveta* [The Cultural Opening of Bulgaria to the World], (Sofia: Editions of the University 'St. Kliment Ohridski, 2013), 107–124 and 125–139.

[16] These characteristics were highlighted in the public image of N. Roerich that prevailed in Bulgaria during the *PNR*: see Gruev, "Pătiat", 807–811. On the trajectory of Nicholas Roerich, see M. Osterrieder "From Synarchy to Shambhala: The Role of Political Occultism and Social Messianism in the Activities of Nicholas Roerich". In *The New Age of Russia: Occult and Esoteric Dimensions*, eds. B. Menzel, M. Hagemeister, B. Glatzer Rosenthal (Munich: Sagner, 2012), 101–134; A. Znamenski, *Red Shambhala: Magic, Prophecy, and Geopolitics in the Heart of Asia* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2011).

[17] Several works addressing this question consider the *PNR* an act of rebellion against "sclerotic Marxism–Leninism" imposed by Moscow or the search for a new "third way" between the USSR and the West: see Atanasova, "Lyudmila Zhivkova", 312–314.

at odds with Party orthodoxy.[18] Officially, priority was given to N. K. Roerich because he was a "Russian and Slav", two reasons deemed sufficient to hope for Moscow's support[19] and, at the same time, a cosmopolitan figure. The emphasis was on this latter element: his facets as a "painter, poet, thinker, researcher, philosopher, and fighter for peace" made him an exemplary figure from the perspective of the *PDHP*. The historian described Roerich as a "disciple of Leonardo [da Vinci], deeply influenced" by him and a "continuator of his universal work".[20] Beyond his art, it was Roerich's agency on the international stage – his capacity to speak to political decision-makers, transcending political divides – that fascinated the author of the *NRP*. He praised Roerich's "humanistic and universalistic impact", a reference to his "Pact for the Protection of Cultural Monuments" (also called Banner of Peace), signed in 1935 at the League of Nations under the patronage of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.[21]

According to the *NRP*, the Pact was to spearhead a "new cultural offensive for the preservation of the heritage of all countries", which forty years later led to "the deployment of a peaceful cultural offensive in the Balkans, in Europe, and worldwide." In the same vein, Roerich's Institute of Arts in New York was referred to as the "first attempt, at the beginning of our century, at the synthesis of the arts – an institution [like those] that countries such as France, the United States, Iran, and Bulgaria are establishing today." Roerich's activities, especially those in India and Central Asia, are described as the "first attempt on a global scale in contemporary times to overcome Eurocentrism in science for the mutual fertilization of different cultures and for the exchange of true values worthy of a harmoniously developed person".[22] Combining art, spirituality, attachment to culture as the supreme value, and the will to act to defend or promote the condition of its realization, peace, Nicholas Roerich appears as the template of the "harmoniously developed person" posed as the ultimate goal of the *PDHP*.

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[18] Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, 317, who sometimes quotes entire documents; if no other indication is provided, the quotes cited in this paragraph come from this source. See also V. Mihajlova, "Golemijat startov vzriv". In *Kulturnoto otvarjane na Bălgarija kăm sveta*, ed. I. Baeva (Sofia, 2013), 125–139.

[19] This hope did not correspond to reality. Moscow's reluctance to have Roerich celebrated in Bulgaria has been noted: B. Trencsényi, "Relocating Ithaca: Alternative Antiquities in Modern Bulgarian Political Discourse". In *Multiple Antiquities, Multiple Modernities. Ancient Histories in Nineteenth-Century European Cultures*, ed. G. Klaniczay, M. Werner, O. Gelser (Frankfurt: Campus, 2011), 247–277, here 271.

[20] Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, 336; Mihajlova, "Golemijat", 138.

[21] The author failed to mention that its recognition was limited to the United States of America. The impact of the Roerich Pact at the time of its signing was exaggerated: Ostermeier, "From Synarchy", 113.

[22] See Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, 319–320, for the two latter quotations.

The document thus highlights three elements to emphasise the exemplarity of Nicholas Roerich: 1) an emphasis on the "synthesis" of scientific and artistic work, 2) his Russian roots and his belonging to a culture of the modern West, two determinisms that he overcame to refocus on the timeless and mystical East; 3) the will to act for the common good globally, beyond "nationalistic selfishness" – and does so through persuasive words, addressing reason as much as the spirit.

Roerich's exemplarity is declined in two ways constitutive of the construction of the New Man that the Party called for. On the one hand, Professor Fol, an expert in ancient Greek history, emphasised the need to promote a modern *paideia*[23] – an education suitable for the "harmoniously developed person". On the other hand, the politician and "daughter of the *Premier*," Zhivkova, also a historian, loudly proclaimed the imperative to act for peace, here and now, by transcending the borders of blocs, countries, and generations. Inspired by the Roerich Pact, she promoted a form of political action for the youth called the "Banner of Peace Assembly".[24] Under the slogan "Unity, creativity, beauty", borrowed from Roerich's *Living Ethics*, her initiative materialised in an International Children's Assembly held in 1979. It brought together children from Eastern and Western countries, regardless of the political regimes of their countries, involving them in a collective bell-ringing ritual to proclaim their willingness to live together.[25]

The NR Program filled the year 1978 with numerous cultural events, especially exhibitions, and a few international conferences in Sofia and major cities in Bulgaria.[26] Some of these events were attended by Nicholas Roerich's son Sviatoslav (1904–1993), a painter and mystic with a charismatic outlook like his father who carried "the message" of the latter. He was introduced to his Bulgarian hosts at the highest level, purportedly by Indira Gandhi, who allegedly connected him with Lyudmila Zhivkova.[27] The son's connection with India was further emphasised as he was accompanied by his wife, the Indian actress Devika Rani (who also happened to be the great-niece of Rabindranath

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[23] Bringing together the notions of education, training, and personal development, *paideia* is a central concept in ancient Greek education. The concept was popularized in Bulgarian academic circles in the 1970s and early 1980s by Professor Al. Fol in his teachings on ancient Greece, which contained more than one parallel to the current context of socialist Bulgaria.

[24] See Gruev, "Pătiat", 807; Mihajlova, "Golemijat", 127–128, 132.

[25] See Yu. Ghencheva, "The International Children's Assembly 'Banner of Peace': A Case Study of Childhood under Socialism," *Red Feather Journal* 3, 1 (2012), 11–23; Atanasova, "Liudmila Zhivkova," 297.

[26] A detailed account of these celebrations is given by Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, 325–327.

[27] Atanasova, "Lyudmila Zhivkova", 312.

Tagore).[28] The paintings of the Roerichs, father and son, were displayed at the grand Roerich Exhibition, the climax of the celebration, where the son spoke *for* his father and *about* him. Introduced to the highest circles of power in Bulgaria, Sviatoslav Roerich met with party elites, artists, historians and archaeologists; the peak of his stay was a visit to Vanga.

Sviatoslav Roerich's presence in Bulgaria was given visibility through the national media: an interview he gave to the first national cultural newspaper marked the peak of his public appearances. In it, Sviatoslav Roerich underlined the compatibility between Marxism-Leninism and the *Living Ethics*, drawing parallels between efforts to establish a "new socialist society," which was to replace the "vestiges of the old society", and the ideal of *Living Ethics* for a new humanity based on beauty and human perfection.[29] This interview illustrates the convergence between Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy and the rhetoric inspired by theosophy that characterised Zhivkova's writings.[30]

The *NR Program* was also exported abroad.[31] In Austria, most activities took place in the former house of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein in Vienna, acquired in 1975 by the Bulgarian government, and converted into a museum. The promotion of the Roerich Program was the first major action of the Bulgarian Cultural Centre located there.[32] Unfolding in academic-artistic circles but also appealing to a broader educated audience, the events related to N. Roerich at the Centre became a rallying point for a diverse and bourgeois public interested in philosophy, Eastern mysticism, and even occultism. In Germany, initiatives related to the *NRP* were carried out mainly in university circles. They took place in Bochum and Saarbrücken, where pre-existing university partnerships in ancient history and archaeology helped promote the initiative. Last but not least, it is worth noting that Bulgaria's representative at the 20th UNESCO Conference, held in Paris in the fall of 1978, was a spokesperson for the ideas of the Roerich Pact presented under the title "Banner of Peace" [*Zname na mira*].[33]

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[28]   Mihajlova, "Golemijat", 136. Cf. http://irmtkullu.com/the–roerich-family/devika-rani-roerich/.

[29]   *Narodna Kultura* № 7 /28.04.1978.

[30]   See Gruev, "Pătiat", 802 ; Atanasova, "Lyudmila Zhivkova", 311–313.

[31]   Elenkov, *Kulturnijat,* 328–331.

[32]   The acquisition of the Wittgenstein House was part of the policy of gaining influence in the West pursued by the elites of the countries in the communist bloc; it is a rare case that remains a success. Here, the role of the renowned Bulgarian historian Vassil Gyuzelev, an expert in medieval Balkan and Byzantine history, should be noted: he was instrumental in the acquisition of this 'cultural monument' which hosted the Bulgarian Cultural Center.

[33]   Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, 331; V. Mihajlova, "Golemijat", 134–135.

The PNR and "ancient civilisations"

It is widely accepted that, apart from the central exhibition and the publications in the press (heavily controlled by the Party), the *NRP* had almost no real impact on Bulgarian society at the time: the elitist nature of the Roerich Year celebrations prevented them from gaining widespread popularity among the population.[34] However, *NRP* had lasting effects on the public discourses involving the categories of culture, spirituality, and civilisation.

First of all, the *Program* generated interest in India and the Indian civilisation. The Roerichs' message—the father's and the son's[35] —was associated with the "eternal wisdom" of India, specifically the Himalayan region. It was under the *NRP* that an image of the Mystic Mountain began to take shape. This was related to another part of the *NRP*, unknown to the general public: the ambition to revive the Urusvati Himalayan Research Institute, founded by the Roerichs in 1928 in the Kullu Valley in Punjab.[36] The author of the *NRP* project described Kullu as the "epicentre of universal wisdom" and "the possible location of the mythical kingdom of Shambhala".[37] Clearly, Fol was familiar with the Agni Yoga doctrine and the central role that the belief in "Shambhala" occupies there—an ideal spiritual and physical space, even a specific territory, a "well of wisdom," and a real place inhabited by the mahatmas.[38] This new "N. Roerich-Urusvati Institute", to be placed under the high patronage of UNESCO and managed jointly by the USSR, India, Bulgaria, and Mongolia, was portrayed as a significant step forward in the effort to eliminate eurocentrism in science.[39] This project did not materialise, but rumours about its implementation circulated even after the end of the Zhivkov regime in 1989.

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[34]   A point raised by Elenkov, *Ibid.*, 332 sq.

[35]   In the literature on N. Roerich, the expression "the Roerichs" is typically reserved for the mystic painter and his wife, Elena Shaposhnikova, allegedly the true driving force behind the establishment of the Agni Yoga doctrine. Very little about her was said during the celebrations, which instead focused on the father-son relationship.

[36]   The project is presented *in extenso* by Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, 335; also see V. Mihajlova, "Golemijat", 135–136.

[37]   Elenkov, *ibid.*

[38]   The passages in quotation marks are from the same document. N. K. Roerich conceived "Shambhala" both as an ideal locus and as a real place—a place revealed only to rare initiates but one that physically exists. It is even considered a territory to establish, serving as the earthly projection of the spiritual Shambhala. For details, see Znamenski, *Red Shambhala*; Osterrieder, "From Synarchy", 101.

[39]   For details, see Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, 333–336; 334 for the quote. It is important to note the significance given to socialist Mongolia, where Roerich attempted to locate Shambhala: cf. J. Boyd, "In Search of Shambhala? Nicholas Roerich's 1934–5 Inner Mongolian Expedition," *Inner Asia* 14, 2 (2012), 257–277.

Alongside interest in India and its ancient civilisation, the *PNR* generated interest in Asia in general. While the language used to articulate its grand objectives was evasive, the fantasised Orient itself aroused interest. This Orient corresponded to a concept of Asia whose heart was in India. India and Asia become interchangeable entities in the new way of speaking about "culture" during mature Bulgarian socialism. When mentioned in the press, the qualification of "cradle of ancient civilisations" was usually attached to either of them. A scholarly discourse emerged – a discourse championed by academics but swiftly taken up by the press – which stimulated and nurtured interest in the "civilisations of the East": "ancient", "timeless," or "vanished".

By this time, the interest in the East and its "ancient civilisations" was already intense in Bulgarian educational and research institutions established shortly before the launching of the *NRP*. In 1975, the Centre for the Study of the Ancient East [*Centăr za Drevnija Iztok*] was established at Sofia University. Led by a historian specialising in the Hittites, the Centre became the first Bulgarian research unit to conduct research on the antiquities and archaeology of ancient Egypt, Anatolia (Eastern Turkey) and Mesopotamia. In 1977, an elite school whose admission was based on competitive exams, the National High School of Ancient Languages and Cultures, opened in Sofia. Under the supervision of the Committee for Culture and University[40], its alumni were propelled into the spheres of higher education, research, and cultural management.

Another reflection of the same interest was seen in the press and the popularisation of science. The number of publications about "vanished" civilizations in Asia as well as in Central and South America increased significantly in magazines such as *Naouka i tehnika* [Science and Technology] and *Kosmos* [Cosmos][41], which primarily targeted young readers. Presented like discoveries and "enigmas", the distant worlds of Asia and pre-Columbian America (whose knowledge was prioritised over the real Americas) were all the more attractive to young minds encouraged to explore the past. The openness of these magazines, designed to popularise world advances in technology and the enigmas of "ancient civilisations", also marked a convergence of interest in the future, the "cosmos" and space exploration, with that of the distant past.[42]

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[40]   For the history of this high school, see https://ngdek.com/bg/istoriya-na-gimnazi-yata (accessed on 8th July 2022); the website highlights the decisive role of L. Zhivkova and A. Fol in its establishment.

[41]   *Kosmos*, a scientific-artistic magazine published from 1962 to 1994, has already attracted scholarly attention: see N. Ragaru, "Beyond the Stars: Star Wars and the Cultural History of Late Socialism in Bulgaria," *Cahiers du monde russe* 54, 1–2 (2013), 353–381, especially 369–372.

[42]   *Ibid.*, 371.

Some activities related to the *PNR* suggest a genuine desire to explore the countries of Asia. For instance, a report on the progress of the Roerich Year in the provinces notes that a youth organization in Plovdiv, the second-largest Bulgarian city, organised a trip retracing "the footsteps of Roerich in Central Asia".[43] It is worth noting that Central Asia was understood very broadly and included Mongolia, parts of China, and Tibet. The fantasised Orient sparked a genuine curiosity that extended to a range of countries located between the Himalayas, Tibet, and Soviet Central Asia. Similarly, there was mass interest in yoga at this time, encompassing various systems of "breathing" exercises and dietary regimes (especially Hatha yoga). The enthusiasm for "yoga exercises" among intellectual circles went hand in hand with an interest in vegetarianism and an entire philosophy of life incompatible with communist ideology.[44]

Designed to continue for five years (until 1984) after the "Roerich Year", the *NRP* never materialised on the initial scale. However, it continued with the organisation of a few Bulgarian research expeditions inspired by the Roerichs' grand expedition to Central Asia in the 1920s. Primary destinations included the Indian Himalayas and Chinese Tibet, as well as Mongolia and the mountain ranges adjacent to these countries. Indeed, the Pamir, Altai, and Tian Shan had the advantage of being accessible via the USSR while representing materialisations of the Mystic Mountain.[45] In these expeditions, scientists, journalists, and members of the country's intelligentsia sought and documented ruins and artefacts of "ancient civilisations of the East," as well as customs and beliefs. While the focus was on ancient history, archaeology, ethnography, and folklore, interest in geology, physical phenomena, and local flora was also present. Limited as they may have been – some under the seal of state secrecy – these experiences were reconfigured in different ways until the late 1990s, sustaining a lasting interest in these countries. They contributed to creating an alternative knowledge about the Other and Elsewhere, which was initially spread by word of mouth within closed circles of university intelligentsia. However, via rumours and the press, it gradually seeped into the implicit knowledge of Bulgarians in the 1980s.

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[43] Elenkov, *Kulturnijat*, 327.

[44] See I. Raduychev, "Managing Social Relations in a Bulgarian Yoga Group". In *Living and Working in Sofia: Ethnographies of Agency, social relations and livelihood strategies in the capital of Bulgaria*, ed. Waltraud Kokot (Berlin: LIT, 2012), 57–79 (especially 69–70).

[45] See D. Savelli, « L'Altaï comme champ de transferts religieux selon Nicolas Roerich. Du Shambhala au royaume des Eaux blanches, du bouddhisme à la théosophi ». In *La Sibérie comme champ de transferts culturels: De L'Altaï à la Iakoutie* (Paris: Demopolis, 2018), 183–201.

Culture, history, and the "New Golden Age of Bulgarian Culture"

The *NRP* was part of a broader project of promoting pride in Bulgarian history and cultural treasures that deeply marked the 1970s. The period from 1975 to 1981 was particularly abundant in commemorations of historical events and figures, the proliferation of books and public debates on history. Once again, Lyudmila Zhivkova and the Party-sponsored elite around her, especially historians, held the central position in this large-scale process.

It is well known that Zhivkova was a historian by profession. In the 1960s, history was seen as a noble discipline and a patriotic cause; being a historian was a social asset, opening horizons both in space (trips abroad) and in time. In parallel to her interest in history and art history, Zhivkova became familiar with Theosophy and developed a taste for mystical and occult doctrines, which were thought of as part of "Eastern spirituality" rather than "religion". This inclination was confirmed in the 1970s when she publicly spoke of her friendship with Vanga, showed an interest in Tolstoism, and took members of the White Brotherhood or *dănovists* under her protective wing.[46] Throughout the 1970s, Zhivkova navigated between history and esotericism, which marked her ideas on the role of history and culture.

Although a trained historian, Zhivkova was to pursue a political career, and it was in this field that she made a real breakthrough. Having spent several years as the "first deputy" of the Director of the Committee for Culture and Art – a structure transformed into a supra-ministerial committee in 1975 when Zhivkova took over – she transformed this neglected sector into a dynamic project of socialist construction. At this point, she was already initiated into Roerich's *Living Ethics*[47] and made her first statements regarding the "synthesis of the arts" and other forms of life, as well as the integration of culture into social life. While managing the cultural sector of socialist Bulgaria, she climbed the party ranks, rising, in less than five years, from a member of the Central Committee of the Bulgarian Communist Party to a member of the Politburo (1979). Thus, the institutional foundations were laid to materialise the ideas of the *Living Ethics*. In this crossing of general (state) interests and particular wills,

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[46] *White Brotherhood* (*Bialo Bratstvo*) was the official name of the religious movement created in the aftermath of World War I by Petar Dănov (1882–1944), whose followers were known as "Dănovists." Influenced by Protestant Methodism and Theosophy—especially its interest in the mystical East—during the interwar period, Dănov became a powerful "spiritual master" with international influence. His movement was viewed as dangerous, stigmatized by the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, and prohibited in 1945. See Gruev, "Pătiat", 803 sq.

[47] The term "initiation" is used here by default; testimonies suggest a gradual introduction to esoteric teachings within her inner circle of Bulgarian intellectuals introduced to Theosophy: Gruev, "Pătiat", 805–807.

a new trend of thinking of the relation between the past and future, religion and spirituality, took the form of a cultural "Golden Age".

The "Golden Age of Bulgarian culture" was paired with the celebration of the 1300 years of the establishment of the Bulgarian state (with 681 taken as the year of its formation), aimed at emphasising the cultural contributions of "little Bulgaria" to the "universal treasure of cultures" [svetovna kulturna săkrovištnica].[48] This desire was formulated in the slogan "i nij sme dali neshto na sveta" ["We too have brought something to the world"], understood as contributing to a universal civilisation.[49] The second half of the 1970s was entirely devoted to preparing this celebration in a string of smaller and larger commemorations. The year 1976 marked the official entry into the "new Golden Age" of Bulgarian culture – a Golden Age conceived as reproducing in the context of "class humanism" moments of the greatest political and cultural glory of medieval Bulgaria.[50] The Program for the 1300th anniversary of the foundation of the Bulgarian state announced this new Golden Age, concretising it in a plethora of cultural initiatives revolving around the "Grand Jubilee" (a common term at the time).

In fact, the 1300th Anniversary of Bulgarian statehood did not correspond to a specific date: its celebration lasted from 1976 to 1981, a period that saw numerous commemorations of events or prominent figures in history and culture.[51] The most significant included the Hundred Years of the "Liberation of Bulgaria from Ottoman rule" (March 3, 1878), Thirty-Five Years of the "Bulgarian socialist revolution" (September 9, 1979), and Ninety Years since the founding of the first Bulgarian Communist Party (the "narrow' social-democratic party founded in July 1891). Note the coincidence of the Roerich Year with the centenary of the liberation, which occurred in the context of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 and is at the heart of the grand national narrative focused on "our liberator Russia." Marking the centenary of the start of this war (April

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[48]   The rhetoric of "treasure," specifically the "repository of cultural treasures" [svetovna kulturna săkrovištnica], was developed in sumptuous works offering an overview of Bulgarian history and culture.

[49]   A formula taken from a verse by the national poet Ivan Vazov (1850–1921), the "Bulgarian Victor Hugo's poem "Paisij" from the cycle "Epic of the Forgotten" [Epopeja na zabravenite, 1888]. Dedicated to one of the prominent figures of the Bulgarian National Revival, Paisij of Hilendar, the author of the "Slavo-Bulgarian History" (1762), the poem is central to the rhetoric of romantic nationalism. The verse alludes to the invention of the Slavic alphabet by Cyril and Methodius as a source of national pride.

[50]   See Elenkov, Kulturnijat. The "summits" in Bulgarian history assimilated to a Golden Age were: the reigns of Tsar Simeon (893–927), Tsar Ivan Assen II (1218–1231) and Tsar Ivan Alexander (1331–1371). If the first two reflected political influence and territorial expansion, the latter's reign was a political disaster.

[51]   These "warm-up commemorations" are documented by Elenkov, ibid., 364–365, 370–371.

1877) and the major battles that took place in the Balkan theatre of the war[52], 1977 was dominated by celebrations of the "Liberation War", coinciding with the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution. This was not the case with the end of the war and the date of the "Liberation": opening shortly after March 3rd, the Roerich Year moved away from discourses emphasising "eternal gratitude to our Russian brothers." The coincidence was exploited to award Sviatoslav Roerich and his wife the "100 Years of the Liberation of Bulgaria" order.[53] However, the highlighting of the cosmopolitan Russian-born mystic blurred the image of Bulgaria as a faithful ally of Soviet Russia.

Those commemorative activities emphasised the invention of the Cyrillic alphabet, insisting on Bulgaria's central role in preserving Slavic culture. The celebration in 1982 of the 1120th Anniversary of the invention of the Slavic alphabet by Cyril and Methodius (reference year: 862) allowed linking the achievement of the "Thessalonian brothers" [*Solunskite bratja*] to the strengthening of the Bulgarian state and emphasised the role of Knyaz Boris I (852–889) the Baptiser in transmitting their work. Bulgaria was the first country in the Orthodox world to celebrate Cyril and Methodius as 'Slavic apostles', and this was underscored from the 1970s onward when Bulgaria claimed its role as the primary protector of Slavic letters against Russia, commonly associated with the Cyrillic alphabet in the West. Even if Bulgaria was weak and its uneven history interrupted by long periods of statelessness and political dependence, the claim to assert itself through the Slavic alphabet aimed to recognise the "little brother's" role as a cultural mediator or, more generally, Bulgaria's cultural exemplarity.

Spirituality and the mystique of History

The connection between culture and spirituality [*duhovnost*] in Nicholas Roerich's image was the most appreciated element, which influenced the choice to focus the *PDHP* on him and to place Roerich's Year at the heart of the New Golden Age celebrations. The same term was used when discussing Vanga to describe attitudes that were not identifiable with either "religion" as defined by the Church and, more generally, institutional religiosity, or with "superstition", as Vanga's activities were previously classed. Increasingly associated with medicine and extraordinary abilities in the field of biology and psychology from the late 1960s onward, Vanga's image was transformed by a double recourse to history: her ability to "see into the past" was paralleled by the value of the places she in-

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[52] The existence of the Caucasian theatre of war during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–1878 was generally neglected and absent from the grand narrative of the "Liberation of Bulgaria".

[53] Mihajlova, "Golemijat", 134.

habited as "cultural-historical heritage". This transformation of the seer's expertise, now reframed to align with Roerich's, was the tip of the iceberg of broader social processes unfolding in 1970s Bulgaria. Both exemplify the two ways in which the culture-spirituality continuum was promoted at the highest level of the state and party: *duhovnost* and cultural-historical heritage.

The facts and trends presented above invite us to consider the intertwining of past and future as a peculiar form of thinking and acting we call the "mystique of history". We find it, albeit in different ways, in Roerich's Agni Yoga, concerned with cosmic eras and the flows of time, and in Vanga's gift of seeing both into the past and the future. In both cases, the reversibility between past and future goes hand in hand with the impact of History (with a capital H) on the present.

A somewhat similar vision emerged in a new trend in Bulgarian historical scholarship, which blossomed in the 1970s: thracology, promoted by the historian and classicist Alexander Fol. "Thracology" or Thracian studies aimed at studying ancient Thrace—a definition that included a large part of the Balkan Peninsula north of the Greek city-states—and the populations that inhabited it, the Thracians.[54] As Ilia Iliev (1998) has shown, it resulted in imaginary Thracian ancestors who purportedly contributed to the synthesis, the outcome of which was the Bulgarian nation. That most ancient ethnic and cultural stratum, combined with the Slavs and Proto-Bulgarians, formed a triad of ancestors recalling the Dumézilian three-functional model, where Thracians were given the noble priestly function or esoteric knowledge. It is perhaps not a coincidence that Vanga was called "priestess" in some of the founder's writings.[55]

Thracology was conceived as a synthesis of several disciplines: history, archaeology, ethnology, linguistics, and even physical anthropology. It was also associated with a method (which its inventor called *interpretatio thracica*) to explore and understand ancient societies without literacy (*bezpismeni obštestva*) or, in other words, the societies that "have not produced a discourse about themselves". It involved re-reading authors who wrote in Greek and Latin that might have captured fleeting traces of the world vision and ways of life of nearby illiterate societies and conveyed this kind of information after adapting it to the Greco-Roman cultural or "civilisational" mould [*civilizacionna matrica*]. A further step in this logic, which lays at the core of the concept of *interpretatio thracica* and/or *barbarica*, was a discourse analysis aimed to separate the wheat from the chaff in order to recover "the true" life and culture of these populations. Indeed,

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[54]   On Thracian studies see T. Marinov, "Ancient Thrace in the Modern Imagination: Ideological Aspects of the Construction of Thracian Studies in Southeast Europe (Romania, Greece, Bulgaria)". In *Entangled Histories in the Balkans*, eds. R. Daskalov & A. Vezenkov, vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 10–117.

[55]   Developed in Valtchinova, "Vanga", 117–123.

the method was applied to multiple groups or "tribes" that populated the territories north of Hellas: an immense "North" encompassing the steppes of Asia and several regions bordering the eastern Mediterranean, referred to as "barbarian" by ancient Greek standards. These were the peoples that Herodotus, the father of History, listed in the famous Scythian narrative (*skythikos logos*) in the fourth book of his *Histories*. This North was, therefore, more of a cultural than a geographical notion, and the "Scythian narrative" served as a key to rereading another segment of this foundational work, the much shorter "Thracian narrative" that Herodotus presents later (V: 3–15). Reinterpreting both through the same lens reinforced the advocates of Thracology in their belief in the existence of a "Thracian-Scythian community", clearly recognisable through the centuries.[56]

The notion of "non-literary cultures" was helpful in constructing a genuine philosophy of history for Southeastern Europe and beyond, covering a large part of Asia. The basic tool of this endeavour was comparing cultures without literacy, a comparison based on the writings of those (the Greek and Roman authors) who perceived them as inferior Others. The relationship established between Thracians, Scythians, and peoples related to them went well beyond geographical proximity or spatial contiguity. The concept of the Thracian-Scythian community included the so-called peoples of the steppes who, as the still lively debates attest, are localized on the ground by archaeologists up to the Altai Mountains. The "customs and traditions" of these nomadic peoples, as well as their animal art, had captured the attention of the Roerichs during their Central Asian expedition. One of the first publications on the topic of nomadic animal art was penned by Roerich's eldest son, Yurij/George,[57] who later distinguished himself as a researcher of nomadic cultures. The very term of animal style [*zverinnyi styl'*], applied to the analysis of nomadic cultures from the steppes of Asia to the Hautes Plaines to Tibet, was adopted in the works of thracologists. While history in the strict sense of the word remained silent about these peoples, archaeology and art history focused on manufactured precious objects, which display a symbolic language common to all these societies.

Through the mystique of history, Vanga was inserted into a long temporal line of female visionaries, priestesses and prophetesses, whose authority stemmed from her alleged gift of seeing through time, and leant against the spoken (not written) word. In the same logic, Thracians and Scythians were shoehorned into one community of long-bygone cultures without literacy. Can one go so far as to attribute to the founding father of Thracology the intention

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[56]   An extensive analysis is provided in Valtchinova, *ibid.*, 106–117.

[57]   G. Roerich, *The Animal Style among the Nomad Tribes of Northern Tibet* (Prague: Seminarium Kondakovianum, 1930) (Coll. "Skythika", 3): this is the only publication that makes materials from the Roerichs' expedition available to the academic community.

of transforming "nomadic peoples" into a civilisational banner, akin to Lev Gumilev's concept of Eurasia? The question remains unanswered, at least for the time being.

Instead of a conclusion

This overview suggests that two remarkable social phenomena in socialist Bulgaria could have been related to one and the same deep and multi-faceted process. I chose to develop one of its facets: the move from "religion" to "spirituality" reflected in a variety of events which, at first glance, had little to do with one another. However, taking an actor-oriented approach helps demonstrate the connections between all those social facts.

Alongside this central move, I highlighted a reassessment of "culture" and its centrality, developed mainly through the NR program. The singularity of this reassessment of culture, at the heart of political action in the late 1970s, is reinforced by sensitivity to the past and History with a capital H: with all the rhetorical turns and spirals it used, the *NRP* conveyed the idea that there was no "culture" without roots in "history". On the other hand, it promoted a new vocabulary to relate ongoing social facts and processes. Social realities that were (still) to be condemned or silenced were deliberately reframed in "neutral" terms, such as *spirituality*, a term that covered everything related to religious matters, or *history* as a catch-all term for all things past. The program established connections between Bulgaria and cultural traditions that were seen as carriers of universal wisdom, especially Eastern and mystical traditions. References to India, the Himalayas, and Roerich's esoteric ideals served as bridges between socialism and alternative imaginaries expressed in notions such as peace, beauty, and spirituality – new notions that entered public discourse. The Roerich Program developed in Bulgaria in the late 1970s was part of an ambitious national project: a political renewal through culture, presented as a "New Golden Age" for Bulgaria. This initiative led to an upsurge of interest in cultural-historical heritage and the adoption of a heritage discourse applied to "phenomenons" such as Vanga, accompanied by a new historical discourse.

A new way of talking about the past emerged – a discourse on the longevity of the nation and the people as the subject of their own history, where interest in the distant past was linked to concerns for the present and a prefiguration of the future. Championed by the circle around Lyudmila Zhivkova, this discourse survived her premature death in 1981 to be co-opted into the more aggressive nationalism that precipitated the end of the Zhivkov regime in 1989.

Vanga and Roerich are rarely associated with each other in the still prevailing perspective on socio-religious processes that unfolded in socialist Bulgaria. While Vanga's role was widely recognised, the effect of the *NRP* is considered

of any significance, its only surviving feature being the room dedicated to N. K. Roerich at the National Art Gallery in Sofia. However, Roerich's name still activates a powerful imagination linked to "Lyudmila" and Vanga[58], ethics and "spirituality", the East and the Mystic Mountain, to History and cosmic energies. The persistence of all these notions in the post-communist era is yet to be fully appreciated.

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[58] I was able to assess this impact in my work in post-communist Bulgaria over the last twenty years, on field sites in the central-western regions that benefited from the policy of heritage preservation of religious buildings in the 1970s and 1980s. On several occasions, the memory of the cultural policy "under Ljudmila [Zhivkova]" or an evocation of Vanga came up with the mere mention of Roerich's name.

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You are what you don't eat – Fasting, Ethics, and Ethnography, in Serbia and Beyond

Abstract: This article examines Orthodox fasting in contemporary Serbia. It does so through the theoretical lens of 'ethical affordances', suggesting that food and fasting practices allow a range of people to articulate different ethical evaluations. Food and fasting generate diverse reflections on the importance of rules, spiritual growth, hypocrisy, and sincerity. Thinking anthropologically, we see that people with range of viewpoints on the Church are in fact *united* in making ethical evaluations. More broadly, the article speculates that thinking about the ethical affordances of food might be one way to develop the ethnography of religion after Yugoslav socialism more generally.

Keywords: ethics, food, fasting, former Yugoslavia, Orthodox Christianity, Serbia.

It goes without saying that food is 'utterly essential to human existence' (Mintz and Du Bois 2002, 99). Through studying food, anthropologists illuminate much wider themes about social structure, personal and collective identities, and societal norms, rules, and divisions (Mintz and Du Bois 2002; Watson and Klein 2016). Ingredients, the way in which we prepare, serve, and consume them say something about who we think we are. Likewise, that which we elect to *not* eat is equally integral to the ethical, religious, healthy, or meditative subjects we strive to be. Food, in short, sits at the heart of human social life. As James Watson and Jakob Klein put it: 'Everyone eats and, fortunately for anthropologists, most people like to talk about food' (Watson and Klein 2016, 6).

When I started an ethnographic project about Orthodox Christianity in Serbia, back in the autumn of 2016, my research was not conceived in terms of what people ate. And nor, for that matter, what they chose not to. I had imagined a project which would touch upon some big sounding words – 'eschatology' was one – and speak to debates which were unfolding in the anthropological

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study of Christianity, 'postsocialism', and historical consciousness. As fieldwork progressed – largely conducted in central Serbia[1] – I interviewed a diverse range of people with differing relationships to Orthodoxy: self-identifying 'believers' (*vernici*) who strived to live a 'liturgical life' by receiving frequent Divine Communion, as well as people who understood themselves as 'traditional believers', celebrating their patron saint day (*slava*) and major feasts, but otherwise looking askance at the fervent piety of some of their compatriots. I met others who emphasized their deep scepticism of the Serbian Orthodox Church and its 'hypocritical' clergy, as well as self-declared atheists who were nevertheless keen to 'respect our faith'. What linked all these interlocutors was their readiness to comment on practices of Orthodox fasting. They all had something to say about food.

Fasting is a core dimension of Orthodox Christian liturgical life. In its most basic iteration, to keep a fast means refraining from meat, fish and dairy products at certain times in preparation for a feast. The severity varies: 'fish' and 'wine' are allowed on some days, whilst at other times food should be prepared solely with 'water', not 'oil'. The Orthodox year revolves around four principal fasts: The Nativity Fast in preparation for Christmas, Great Lent in preparation for Easter, the Apostles' fast in preparation for the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, and the Dormition Fast in preparation for the feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. The calendar indicates that the two Feasts of the Cross on 18th January and 27th September are fasting days, as is the Feast of the Beheading of St John the Baptist on 11th September.[2] A fast is kept on Wednesdays to commemorate Christ's betrayal, and on Fridays to commemorate His crucifixion.

With the disintegration of Yugoslav socialism, Orthodox ideas and practices exploded into the Serbian public sphere – a process which has been well documented (for instance Blagojević 2008; Malešević 2006; Radulović 2012). An aspect of this renewed interest in 'our faith' has been an increased engagement by some of the population with fasting practices (Lackenby 2021a, 2022). Those curious about fasting have encountered a set of rules and ideas about what to not eat and when. The rules can seem opaque, unfathomable – and sometimes excessive. Fasting practices generate discussion, especially amongst a generation who grew up in a social climate less conducive to overt religious practice. As one man, who was drawn to Orthodoxy whilst a student in Belgrade in the 1990s, put it: 'we talk about this [fasting] a lot because it's new for us'. During fieldwork, I gathered data about what people thought of fasting, how to prepare

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[1] Initial fieldwork was conducted between 2016 and 2018, largely in and around Kraljevo. I carried out shorter fieldtrips in 2018, 2021, and 2022 in Belgrade, Kruševac, and Kraljevo.

[2] Dates given according to the New Calendar.

fasting food, and the best way to respect the fasting calendar. I recorded people's incredulity at (what they saw as) extreme, performative fasting, and listened as they explained what fasting was '*really* about' in essence. I heard people comment on the tastiness of fasting food and how they felt so much better when slightly hungry. And I received medical advice from a doctor that fasting food was 'heavy' and best avoided.

In my contribution to this issue of *Balcanica* I focus on local ethical debates surrounding food and fasting. Choosing what to consume – and how and when – inevitably involves ethical reflection (Luetchford 2016), and the situation in Serbia is no different. To build the argument, I think with anthropologist Webb Keane's (2014a) idea of the 'ethical affordance'. Keane is drawing on James Gibson's theory of the 'affordance' – the idea that the properties of certain objects 'afford' different uses or possibilities to those who perceive them. In the classic example, a wooden chair might 'afford' sitting, but could also afford other possibilities, such as being a stepladder, or firewood, or a weapon. Affordances are the properties of a thing in relation to 'human activity'; all depends on *how* a person wishes to use something – it is not deterministic. Keane applies affordance theory to the ethnography of ethics – the study of the ways in which people evaluate what they think is good or bad, worth striving for or not. The term 'ethical affordances' describes, then, any 'aspects of people's experiences of themselves, of other people, or of their surround, that they may draw on as they make ethical evaluations and decisions, whether consciously or not' (Keane 2014a, 7).

Keane (2014b) brings his thinking about ethical affordances to bear on the materiality of Orthodox Christian life. He notes that in communities where there is a dominant faith tradition (and Serbia might obviously be considered such) conflicts inevitably emerge about the way a tradition is practised. Such tensions and debates stem from the interplay between three different forces, which he identifies as 'institutions' (the Church, priests, canon law), 'popular practice' (what the laity actually *does*), and 'scripture'. Keane's particular interest is in the role of icons and relics, and the ways the three forces all focus on these material objects, but evaluate them slightly differently. A peasant might see the icon as holding intrinsic curative power. A priest, on the other hand, might rather insist upon more symbolic, theological aspects. Scriptures might seem to be fixed and historically rooted but can be interpreted differently. In the case of icons, Keane notes that:

> The material properties of the icons and all that surrounds them, including the places in which they are to be found and the actions people perform toward and with them, serve as affordances for further actions and reflections on them. They are invitations and provocations (Keane 2014b, S317).

The holy icon, then, does not generate a uniform response from those who engage with it. Different actors respond to it in different ways, making dif-

ferent ethical claims. The material properties of things generate reflection on what is good and bad, holy, blasphemous, and irrational.

Icons and relics are not the only material things which have the capacity to afford ethical reflection. The same may be said of foodstuffs and fasting practices. Food, whether prepared for fasting or not, generates a set of ethical reflections from a range of people across Serbian society about right practice, true faith, commitment, hypocrisy, and sincerity. One way to look at the religious situation in post-Yugoslav Serbia has been to divide people into those who have stronger, weaker, and non-existent relationships to the Church and Orthodox Christian tradition. The emphasis is on difference. Thinking through food, however, offers a different and revealing lens. We can understand the proponents and detractors of fasting as all implicated in a *shared* process of making sense. The atheist sceptic and ardent believer are united in their concern with what fasting is really about. Thinking about the ethical affordances of food allows us to appreciate contemporary Serbia as a site fraught with ethical evaluation.

In what follows, I first offer some ethnographic snapshots of how food and fasting afford diverse ethical evaluations. My approach is non exhaustive but reveals some different perspectives on fasting, from those who take the rules very seriously to those who mock (what they see as) the whole charade. In the second section, I reflect in a more speculative tone on how thinking about the ethical affordances of food potentially has wider relevance, placing the ethnography of Serbian religious life in dialogue with debates outside Serbia. Serbian Orthodox are not the only people who fast in the 'former Yugoslav' region – and thinking about wider commonalities might be productive.

Respecting the rules

Let us start with some of the people who self-identify as 'believers', those who attempt to live a 'liturgical' life by attending church and receiving Divine Communion regularly. People who attend churches in Kraljevo are a demographically diverse network who move in and out of interaction at Liturgies and church events. They are not a homogenous 'community' isolated from the world. Some of my closest interlocutors had spouses or parents who showed no interest in churchgoing. What generally links believers is a shared concern about fasting on Wednesdays and Fridays, and observing the four main fasts throughout the year. Often, people narrate their engagement with liturgical Orthodoxy in terms of when they 'started to fast'. For the people who cleave close to the fasting calendar there are real consequences in the kitchen; ingredients matter.

The first week of Great Lent is known as 'Clean Week', the first three days of which involve an especially strict fast. On the Tuesday of 'Clean Week' I was

invited by Marko for dinner at his small apartment.[3] Marko, a civil servant in his late twenties, made a point about us not being allowed to drink alcohol, jestingly taking a can of lager from the fridge and waving it. Since the fast was strictly 'on water' he prepared potatoes. He diced them evenly, placing them into a baking tray with various herbs and spices but without – he grumbled – any olive oil. When the potatoes came out of the oven 30 minutes later they were steaming, but stuck to the bottom of the tray and needed a considerable amount of scraping to get them off. I have observed situations where the less liturgically-committed have rolled their eyes at such attention to detail – what difference does a drop of olive oil make? But detail mattered for Marko. Cooking is not just the transformation of foodstuffs; it is simultaneously the generation of values (Sutton 2016, 358–361). On a different evening, whilst out with a group of Marko's friends, there was some discussion about whether we could end the night with a delicious *pljeskavica* from the grill on the street corner. Marko looked uneasy, and reminded us that it was Wednesday, a fasting day. We went home. For Marko, minced pork and olive oil are not incidental ingredients, but are 'subject to ethical evaluation' (Keane 2014b, S319), everyday material forms through which much wider claims about a good Orthodox life are made.

	Churchgoers frequently discuss how to fast properly. As Keane notes in his discussion of how the laity relate to holy icons, people bring a variety of perspectives to bear on the object: 'What they have heard and learned enters into the mix but does not necessarily determine it' (Keane 2014b, S318). When it comes to fasting, churchgoers also draw on their various experiences in attempts to assess proper practice, but do not necessarily agree upon – or conclusively determine – what is right. A snapshot of a car journey illustrates this nicely. I was travelling back from a trip to a monastery near Kruševac with two women, both in their sixties. It was March, and the beginning of Great Lent was on the horizon. As we saw with Marko, the first days of Great Lent are an opportunity to practice rigorous discipline. Monastics generally abstain from all food for three days. My travelling companions were chatting about how they observed the beginning of 'Clean Week'. Zorica, sitting on the backseat, suggested that she ate nothing for two days. Ana, who was driving, noted that she could only manage 'one day' without eating anything, but not more. Monks, Ana suggested, were at a different spiritual level and had much greater capacity for fasting. Zorica then mentioned that after 6pm on those days she has 'a slice of bread and a cup of tea'. At this, Ana interrupted: 'Well that's not nothing then!' Zorica retorted that she had heard it was acceptable to have a cup of tea and a slice of bread in the evening. Ana stated adamantly that technically 'you're not eating nothing'. The issue

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[3]   All names are pseudonyms. Some small biographical details have been changed to further protect the anonymity of my interlocutors.

remained unresolved, and the conversation moved on. On this car journey, the idea of a slice of bread and a cup of tea afforded brief ethical reflection on what counted as sincere fasting. Such everyday tussling about right practice patterns Orthodox liturgical life.

Another example comes from the monastery of Dečani in Kosovo. It was a feast day, and the monastery was host to numerous groups who had travelled from Serbia by coach especially for the Divine Liturgy. Shortly before the priest was to serve Divine Communion, a surge of people pushed towards the front of the church. A woman in her seventies wondered out loud whether she was able to receive Communion, seemingly seeking advice from those around her. She said that whilst she had not fasted, a monastery worker had told her that this did not matter. What was at stake was the Eucharistic Fast, the practice whereby a person abstains from eating, drinking, and sexual activity from the night before until the moment of Communion. The woman asked another woman standing next to her, who promptly responded with her own interrogation:

> -Do you fast Wednesdays and Fridays?
> -No
> -Oooojjjjjj! [exclamation of disdain]
> -But I do fast for Christmas and Easter
> -I'm sorry, but I wouldn't know what to say…

Eventually, the first woman received a blessing to commune from a priest who happened to be standing nearby. He asked her whether she 'prays to God'. After she had replied in the affirmative he gave his blessing, adding that – ideally – she should also fast on Wednesdays and Fridays. Again, a banal example, but one which reveals everyday musings on what counts as proper practice. The 'monastery worker' evoked by the first woman purportedly thought that it was not obligatory to observe the Eucharistic fast. The questioner herself seemed genuinely unsure and was seeking confirmation. The fellow congregant, whilst not quite condemning the woman, made her disapproval clear. And the priest was willing – on that occasion at least – to rank prayerfulness over strict rule following. The priest's lenience is noteworthy and introduces another dimension to the discussion.

Fasting is not about food

The priest's blessing speaks to the Orthodox theological emphasis on 'spirit' over 'letter'. That is, an insistence on the spiritual growth generated by a rule, as opposed to blindly following the rule, per se (see also Lackenby 2021b). There is a theological argument which emphasizes that the Church should move away from asserting fasting as obligatory precisely to *deemphasize* food and retain Christianity as the most central value (Jović 2017). For the more theologically-

minded, the point is not just not eating something, but what that act of restraint produces in a person. The idea was put lucidly by Luka, a psychology student in his twenties. He said:

> When you fast you are better at praying, because you are not overwhelmed with food. It's a tool, a device for getting to those traits – that you can forgive, love people. It can help get you there. Like training. It's not the end, it's the means. The end is those values, those Christian values. And when you don't eat meat you're less aggressive. You don't fall so easily into rage. That's my experience when I fast. If you stop having sex during that period then you'll be able to use that energy for praying.

Luka attends to what fasting *facilitates*, the prayerfulness enabled by a degree of restraint. Abstaining from fatty food or sexual intercourse is not an end in itself. Other acquaintances have confided that, in their view, the point was not following a set of prescribed rules, but that they fasted 'in their own way', when it feels right.

Sometimes, people emphatically promote the idea that fasting is 'not about food'. A member of a church choir told a story about the late Atanasije Jevtić (1938–2021), the influential bishop and theologian who taught at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Belgrade. Before one of Atanasije's lectures, a student was eating a ham sandwich in the classroom. It happened to be during Great Lent. Upon seeing this scene, some of her fellow students – struck by an aspiring theologian breaking the fast – criticised her so much that she burst into tears. When Atanasije arrived and saw the scene he promptly took a large bite of the sandwich himself. It was, Atanasije declared, a far worse sin to criticize someone for not fasting than for not fasting oneself. I do not know the extent to which the story is apocryphal, but this is not important. The point is that my friend in the choir could use this story about food to make a bigger claim: 'God prefers penitents to righteous people'. The ham sandwich is ripe with ethical affordances. It can be construed as a violation of the fast, a flagrant breach of the rules. But it is also a way of suggesting that snacking on a ham sandwich was less grave than righteously upbraiding someone else. Fasting is endlessly generative for ethical life: it is centrally about food but, at the same time, is not about food at all.

Hypocritical haters

To this point, I have offered examples involving people who were reasonably involved in Orthodox life. But, being to do with food, fasting can implicate those who have little or nothing to do with the liturgical life of the church – indeed, perhaps especially – those who are very critical of it. Unlike aspects of Orthodoxy which require a degree of learning and deep involvement with the rhythms

of the Church – the words to hymns, or the structure of the Divine Liturgy, say – food is by its nature a substance which pervades public space. Bakeries mark fasting products with little stickers. In supermarkets, one encounters a whole range of foodstuffs labelled *posno!*, fasting. Magazines and newspapers publish simple fasting recipes. Small businesses have sprung up which offer to cater for 'fasting *slava*', to save the hosts the trouble. And just as foodstuffs appear on shelves and behind counters, people who 'fast' appear visibly in public space, at dinners, meetings, and at their jobs.

Elsewhere (Lackenby 2022, 406), I describe a woman called Milica who was taken aback by her friend's sudden insistence on fasting. Milica was amazed that her friend refused to have a cappuccino (because it contained milk) whilst she was 'fasting on water'. What is noteworthy is that this exchange in the coffee shop led Milica to elucidate *her own* understanding of fasting, expanding it beyond the realm of the alimentary. If one is fasting, she told me one should not drink, swear, watch films with sexual content, or think bad thoughts. It is *more* than avoiding milk. She gets annoyed by people whom she sees as performatively fasting, but who fail to meet this standard. Milica's view is not uncommon. Other acquaintances have laughed aloud at the appearance of products such as '*posni kačkavalj*' – fasting cheddar, made on a base of soy. Finding cunning workarounds, they say, is not the point of fasting.

In a 2019 online article for the news portal *Srbija Danas*, the journalist Maja Šolević addressed the tense question of fasting directly.[4] She drew attention to the way in which fasting has come to animate social media: 'While some happily announce that they are beginning a long period of purification, others claim that said purification is an empty promise.' In Šolević's ironic gloss, in present day Serbia the main question is not whether people fast or not, 'but whether fasting is perhaps the most unscrupulous pretence of an individual'. With this, she reproduces a trope commonly associated with fasting: that people who fast are in fact hypocrites, outwardly declaring their piety whilst simultaneously living morally reprehensible lives. As one of the social media posts she cites put it, pithily: "The fast is starting. We can hate without meat". Fasting, then, affords a set of reflections about hypocrisy and about the ways in which Christian practice has been misappropriated and misunderstood. In their own terms, the Twitter critics and people like Milica are leveraging what they see as a legitimate critique of their compatriots who, they feel, have missed the point of fasting. But, if we step back and think anthropologically, we might ask: how different is the Twitter critic to the woman in the monastery who was scornful of someone who did not fast on Wednesdays and Fridays?

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4 See https://www.sd.rs/vesti/drustvo/post-ne-sluzi-da-se-gresi-okaju-jedu-bareni-krompir-mlate-zene-pa-trce-da-se-priceste-2019-11-27 [accessed 25 August 2024].

Common concerns?

The re-emergence of overt Serbian Orthodoxy in the 1990s and 2000s gener-
ated a wealth of scholarship which assessed how different people related to their
professed faith. It became clear that – as in other countries where ethnic and
confessional identities intertwine – whilst most Serbs identified nominally as
'Orthodox' only a minority engaged regularly with Orthodox liturgical prac-
tice. Social scientific work observed the differences in people's relationship to
the Church, whether they were 'traditional believers' or people who were doc-
trinally engaged (Raković and Blagojević 2014; see also Simić 2005; Todorović
2008). The Church formulates its own typologies, drawing distinctions between
committed and 'traditional believers' (see Krstić 2011). I have also been curious
about the objective distinctions which can be tracked in people's relationship to
Orthodoxy, as well as the internal distinctions that my interlocutors draw be-
tween different sorts of believers and their relationships to the Church.

        But I wonder if another productive approach might be to ask – not what
divides people – but what unites them. An ethnographic stance invites us to see
the angry Twitter users and the performative fasters as all engaged in thinking
about what fasting means and the right way to do it. The responses of people
like Milica are not operating in a different realm to the women who had the
conversation in the car about a slice of bread at the beginning of the fast. In fact,
they have a lot in common: All parties take the 'invitations and provocations'
(Keane 2014b, 317) offered by food and fasting and tangle with them, raising
ethical questions.

        In the above examples, all the people mentioned were similarly con-
cerned with food. They all had opinions on what fasting *should be*. At root, I
suspect, is a real concern with (and uncertainty about) what constitutes sincere,
authentic Orthodox practice. As we saw with Šolević's article, discussions about
fasting are riddled with accusations of being '*licemir*', hypocritical. Food raises
broader questions about how people perceive the interplay between external be-
haviour and internal conscience – issues which reach far beyond the confines of
Orthodox liturgical life. How do people assess who – and who is not – a hypo-
critical person? What are the histories of this moral evaluation and why does it
resonate so much with a spectrum of people in contemporary Serbia? What is
more, a focus on the ethical affordances of food puts the Serbian materials in
dialogue with the wider region.

You are what you don't eat

The ethnography of everyday religion in the former Yugoslavia has never really
taken off in the way that it has in, say, formerly Soviet countries. And yet, the

religious, transcendent, and spiritual shape and animate social life across the region. In the previous section, I suggested that a focus on fasting allows us to understand a range of people in Serbia as equally engaged in a process of ethical reflection. This approach also has the potential to reach beyond Serbia, and offer a lens onto the 'former Yugoslav' space more widely. Catholic and Muslim communities throughout Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia, as well as those in Serbia, also engage in fasting practices. Placing the materials on Serbian Orthodox fasting in conversation with the ethnography of Islamic (for instance, Bringa 1995; Henig 2020; Trix 2019) and Catholic fasting (for instance, Barišić 2023) in the region is a potentially productive starting point – however provocative that may seem for some of our research participants and interlocutors.

Henig's (2020) pioneering work about everyday Islam in the Bosnian Highlands is particularly relevant. He observes that in the village where he did fieldwork the inhabitants made sense of the fasting month of Ramadan in different ways. Some of the villagers spoke about fasting in a 'highly reflexive and contemplative' way (*ibid*, 105), recognising Ramadan as a practice which generates a better understanding of 'what it means to be human before God' (*ibid*.). For other villagers, however, Ramadan was more of a 'customary tradition' – 'it is worthwhile to fast', they say, without elaborating on why this might be so. Especially interesting is Henig's observation that during Ramadan, the villagers assessed each others' piety, criticising people who were not fasting. A tension emerges between striving to be a good Muslim (which involves fasting and going to the mosque) and being a good neighbour (which involves visiting each other's homes, but is an act which is not appropriate during Ramadan). Despite the people I described above operating within a Christian cosmology, and Henig's interlocutors within an Islamic one, the parallels between the two contexts are noteworthy. In both cases, we see a widespread social practice involving food becoming the focus of ethical evaluation by a range of actors.

It is a truism that religion has the potential to be divisive. We see this in Serbia: regular churchgoers accuse their compatriots of not being 'real' Orthodox, secular critics lambast the reactionary nature of the Serbian Church and its worrying societal influence. More broadly, the collapse of Yugoslavia was one marked by religious discord, with religious institutions fanning the nationalist fervour (Perica 2002). Countering the trend of analysing religion in southeastern Europe exclusively in terms of the geographically centred nation-state, Henig has called for an attention to 'historically sustained transregional social forms' (Henig 2016, 909). Studying the ethical affordances of food offers an obvious way to start charting such 'transregional' forms across the former Yugoslav countries. What shared concerns might different religious groups have about hypocrisy, rules, and sincerity? Can the study of foodways help further illuminate how

former Yugoslavs subvert bounded, nationalist identities and point to their primary identity as *humans (ljudi)* (see Barišić 2023)? How do memories of shortages, war, and hunger intersect with contemporary concerns about spiritually motivated abstention from food? And how might the ethnography of religious foodways speak to other emergent concerns about food scarcity, environmental change, and even the increasing popularity of vegan diets? 'You are what you eat', goes the famous call to a healthy diet. The ethnography from the former Yugoslavia reminds us that – sometimes – you are what you do not.

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