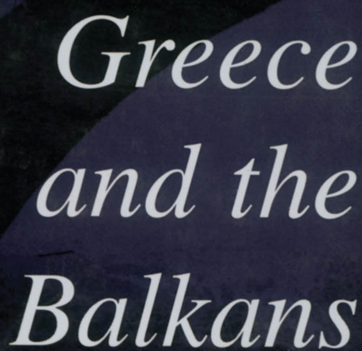

Greece and the Balkans

Identities, Perceptions and Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment

Edited by
Dimitris Tziovas

GREECE AND THE BALKANS

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DIMITRIS TZIOVAS

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Editor's Note

In Greek quotations and titles the monotonic system has been applied throughout with the exception of extensive quotations from Rhigas's *New Political Constitution* in Chapter 9. Initial capitals have been added to Hebrew transliteration. Johann Strauss is using the Ottoman version of the word "Giridî" with the Arabo-Persian rather than the Turkish suffix, as it appears in nineteenth-century sources, whereas Chris Williams uses the modern version "Giritli" as is more appropriate to his subject matter. The reader may notice other instances, too, where differing name and word forms are used in different chapters. It was decided it would be impossible to impose an artificial uniformity throughout the book.

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Introduction

Dimitris Tziovas

The Balkans as a name and a geographical entity have raised questions of origin and definition over the centuries, to which different scholars have given different answers. It is now widely accepted that the word "balkan" is of Turkish origin and means a mountain or mountain range, thus confirming, even in lexical terms, that the Balkans are an Ottoman legacy.[1] The name "Balkans" began to be used in the nineteenth century and established itself only around the time of the Balkan wars. According to Maria Todorova, until the Congress of Berlin in 1878, the most frequently used designations for the area were "European Turkey", "Turkey-in-Europe" or similar expressions.[2] Only afterwards did the name become standardized for the region and gradually acquired political connotations.

More than any other geographical appellation the "Balkans" conjure up pejorative connotations in history, international relations and politics, as well as in everyday discourse. The name reflects an essentialist and ossified image of the region, and this could be one of the reasons why many tend either to avoid it altogether or to use an ostensibly neutral term, such as "Southeastern Europe", to refer to the area. The Albanian writer, Ismail Kadare, aptly describes the power of the name and the attempts of local people to get rid of it.

> Before the Turks even set foot on the peninsula, they baptized it and its people with this name, and this name stuck to them, like new scales on the body of an aged reptile. The people were at their wits' end. They twisted in their sleep as if they were trying to shake off this name, but the result was the opposite —the name clung to them all the more forcefully, as if it wanted to become one with their skin.[3]

1 Maria Todorova in her book *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford 1997) points out that "it is the Ottoman elements (often including Byzantine ones) or the ones perceived as such that are mostly invoked in the current stereotype of the Balkans" (162). Vesna Goldsworthy in her book *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (New Haven 1998, 3) claims that the first use of the name "Balkan" for the region was made by the German geographer August Zeune in 1809.

2 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 27.

3 Ismail Kadare, *Three Elegies for Kosovo*, trans. Peter Constantine (London 2000) 16–17.

It is true that in the minds of most people the Balkans have been identified with blood and conflict, an image which has been reinforced by what has happened in the last ten years or so. The notion of "balkanization" which entered political discourse at the end of World War I does not simply suggest disintegration into smaller states; it has also become synonymous with dehumanization, de-aestheticization and the destruction of civilization.[4] However, this image of the Balkans as the trouble spot of Europe has overshadowed the rich cultural interaction which occurred in the area during the pre-nationalist era and which is showing signs of revival today. The aim of this volume is to explore and highlight issues of identity and perception within the region as well as the patterns and the extent of cultural encounters in which Greek language and culture were major players. It also aims to identify continuities or ruptures in these encounters over the centuries.

In recent years there has been a growing academic interest in the Balkans which falls into two main categories. The first is concerned with the history of the region in an attempt to explain recent problems in the light of past historical developments. Recent books such as Stefan K. Pavlowitch, *A History of the Balkans 1804–1945* (1999), Misha Glenny's *The Balkans 1804–1999: Nationalism, War and the Great Powers* (1999), or Mark Mazower's *The Balkans* (2000) offer a comprehensive examination of the history of the Balkans, that is complemented by the reprint of L.S. Stavrianos's classic study *The Balkans since 1453* (2000). The second scholarly trend is to explore western perceptions of the Balkans by travellers, writers and historians, and the two recent studies which stand out in this respect are: Maria Todorova's *Imagining the Balkans* (1997) and Vesna Goldsworthy's *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination* (1998). The aim of both these studies is to expose the reductionism and stereotyping of the Balkans in the western imagination and it is interesting to note that both titles allude to an invented image of the region as Europe's "other". As Vesna Goldsworthy argues: "the area has presented a blank canvas upon which Europe's political unconscious plays out its taboos and hidden anxieties."[5]

This volume will attempt to explore the ground between historical reality and the western imagination regarding the Balkans by focusing on the cultural relationships between Greece and other Balkan countries in the domains of language, literature, thought, translation and music, and by looking at issues of identity and perception among the Balkan peoples themselves.[6] This aim, however, raises a number of questions. Was there a

4 Mark Mazower (*The Balkans*, London 2000, 5) argues that it is "hard to find people with anything good to say about the region, harder still to discuss it beyond good and evil".

5 Vesna Goldsworthy, *Inventing Ruritania: The Imperialism of the Imagination*, 13.

6 This volume contains a selection of papers first presented at a conference I organized at the University of Birmingham on "Greece and the Balkans: Cultural Encounters since the Enlightenment" (28–30 June 2001).

shared Balkan culture or a common Balkan mentality? Is it possible in a region defined by a multiplicity of languages and religious doctrines to trace the existence of a common Balkan outlook?

Paschalis Kitromilides has shown that although the notion of "Balkan mentality" is a problematic and elusive concept, it may be traced in the world of Orthodox Christianity.[7] He illustrates his argument by reference to the autobiographical writings of Constantine Dapontes (1713/14–84), who, as a monk late in life, took the name Kaisarios. Dapontes's account of his nine-year peregrination in the Balkans records the supranational world of Balkan Orthodoxy of his time; he portrays the region as culturally homogenized by Orthodoxy, untroubled by national divisions and defined by places of worship. A similar Orthodox "mentality", according to Kitromilides, underpins the autobiography of Sofroni (1739–1815), bishop of Vratsa, and the memoirs of Prota Matija Nenadović (1777–1854).

Folklorists and anthropologists were among the first who searched for shared popular aesthetics and symbolic codes in folk art and poetry among the peasantry of different Balkan regions.[8] This attempt to outline a shared folk culture often served nationalistic arguments of ethnic origins and cultural supremacy.[9] From about the 1830s, with the emergence and consolidation of national states in the Balkans, nationalism seems to militate against the idea of a common Balkan culture. As a mode of thought, nationalism emphasizes distinctiveness and separation and, therefore, resists any notion of shared beliefs and symbolic expressions.

The emergence of nationalism eroded the prestige and domination of Greek language and culture in the Balkans.

> Slowly, too, the old assumption that Greek—like Latin in the West—was the route to learning was being challenged as ideas of romantic nationalism, emphasising the cultural value of peasant languages, spread into the Balkans. In the early nineteenth century, Bulgarian, Serbian and Romanian intellectuals—often educated in Greek schools—now began to define themselves in terms of cultural communities for the first time.[10]

7 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "'Balkan Mentality': history, legend, imagination", *Nations and Nationalism* 2 (2) (1996) 163–91.

8 Georgios Megas, "O λεγόμενος κοινός βαλκανικός πολιτισμός", *Laografia* 25 (1967) 418–44 (first published in 1952) and in French "La Civilisation dite Balcanique" *Laografia* 25 (1967) 445–68 (originally delivered as a lecture in 1950 and published in *L'Hellénisme Contemporain*, Athens, 4 (1950) 8–30). More recently M.G. Meraklis, *Παροιμίες ελληνικές και των άλλων βαλκανικών λαών (Συγκριτική εξέταση)*, (Athens 1985) takes its cue from Nikolai Il. Ikonomov, *Balkanska narodna mădrost, usporedici na bălgarski, srăbski, turski, romănski, grăcki i albanski, poslovici i pogovorki* (Sofia 1968). For the disputes concerning the ethnic origins of a number of folk songs see Roderick Beaton, *Folk Poetry of Modern Greece* (Cambridge 1980) 116–22.

9 See Stilpon P. Kyriakides, *The Northern Ethnological Boundaries of Hellenism* (Amsterdam 1980) (originally published in 1955 by the Institute for Balkan Studies, Thessaloniki).

10 Mark Mazower, *The Balkans*, 73.

The idea of modernity in the Balkans marked by the introduction of the nation-state undermined earlier trends towards religious or linguistic homogenization and fostered a secular sense of time and history. If religion united the Balkans up to the nineteenth century, and nationalism divided them afterwards, Greek language and culture emerged for a while as a potential homogenizing force in the area.

Before the emergence of nationalism in the Balkans and the emphasis on national divisions during the nineteenth century, the Balkans enjoyed a period of stability following the termination of Ottoman expansion into Central Europe and the stabilization of external borders. As a consequence, most of the eighteenth century was a period of stability in the Balkans and a time of remarkable freedom of movement which contributed to a trans-Balkan network of commercial activities and fluid linguistic identities.

During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries there was a remarkable fluidity of linguistic and ethnic identities in the Balkan region as a number of individual cases testify. For example, the three multilingual glossaries published by Theodore Kavalliotis in 1770 (Greek-Vlach-Albanian), Daniel of Moschopolis in 1802 (Greek-Vlach-Bulgarian-Albanian) and Theodosios Sinaitis in 1841 (Slavo-Bulgarian, Greek and Karamanlidika)[11] or authors such as Naum Râmniceanu and Dionysios Photeinos, who lived in Wallachia, wrote in Greek, and laid the foundations of Romanian nationalism, point to a linguistic and cultural osmosis. The paradox as regards Râmniceanu and Photeinos is that the earliest manifestations of the Romanian nationalist doctrine were expressed in Greek and thus both writers can "be classified either in the 'Romanian Enlightenment' to whose ideology they contributed or in the 'Greek Enlightenment' in whose language they wrote".[12] When these cases were later interpreted through the logic of nationalism, the prevalence of Greek was perceived as suppressing the development of other Balkan cultures rather than as a means towards consciousness raising.

For non-ethnic Greeks who aspired to join the Balkan Orthodox middle class, acculturation into the Greek *ethnie* was the best way to achieve their social elevation. In Belgrade, for example, Serbs were dressed in the Greek style and the Belgrade newspapers included the rubric *Grecia*

11 See Angeliki Konstantakopoulou, *Η Ελληνική Γλώσσα στα Βαλκάνια (1750–1850): Το Τετράγλωσσο Λεξικό του Δανιήλ Μοσχοπολίτη* (Ioannina 1988). For a sample in English of Daniel of Moschopolis's Preface to his glossary see Richard Clogg, *The Movement for Greek Independence 1770–1821: A collection of documents* (London 1976) 91–2. See also E. Zakhos-Papazakhariou, "Babel Balkanique: Histoire politique des alphabets utilities dans les Balkans", *Cahiers du monde Russe et Soviétique* 23 (1972) 145–179. Now available in Greek translation in the volume *Γλώσσες, Αλφάβητα και Εθνική Ιδεολογία στην Ελλάδα και τα Βαλκάνια*, ed. K. Tsitselikis, (Athens 1999).

12 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "Orthodox Culture and Collective Identity in the Ottoman Balkans During the Eighteenth Century", *Deltio Kentrou Mikrasiatikon Spoudon* 12 (1997–98) 95.

(Greece).[13] Also, in Southern Albania many Orthodox Albanians and Vlachs were Hellenized during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Romania during the eighteenth century the Greek influence was so strong that Greek had become the language of the court.[14] Even in 1840, 28 out of 117 private schools in Wallachia were Grecophone.[15] The Greek language became a form of "cultural capital" for many non-ethnic Greeks, offering them prestige and upward social mobility.[16]

Among Romanians and Bulgarians, many European books were available only in Greek translation while, until 1821, Greek books could circulate more freely in the principalities than in mainland Greece due to restrictions imposed by the clergy or the Porte. The irony is that, though the Greeks fostered and supported through Hellenization a shared culture in the Balkans, they later thwarted it by introducing nationalist ideas into the region. It was indeed intellectuals from the Greek diaspora who introduced nationalism into the Balkans and thus undermined a unified written culture in Greek which developed throughout the Balkans in the second half of the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth century.

In spite of the predominance of Greek as the language of Christian Orthodox culture and education, occasionally a form of cultural hybridity emerged as for example in a number of Albanian-language documents (translations of Orthodox religious literature, dictionaries and grammatical notes on the Albanian language) written in Greek script during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[17] This phenomenon developed due to the fact that the Orthodox church (in contrast to the Catholic one) "was never to be convinced of the utility of writing in the vernacular as a means of converting the masses".[18] It was not only Christian Albanians who wrote in Greek and Greek script but even Muslim Albanians, such as Hadji Sechretis who wrote his *Alipasias* (Alipashiad) in Greek, considering it a more prestigious language in which to praise his master, Ali Pasha of Ioannina.

13 Victor Roudometof, "From Rum Millet to Greek Nation: Enlightenment, Secularization, and National Identity in Ottoman Balkan Society, 1453–1821", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 16 (1) (1998) 13.

14 Ibid., 15.

15 Ibid., 16. Peter Mackridge points out that "in the fifty years before the Greek War of Independence, a member of one of the Balkan peoples who wanted an education had to study at a Greek school: secondary education in Romania did not begin until 1818, and in Bulgaria even later". ("The Greek Intelligentsia 1780–1830: a Balkan perspective" in Richard Clogg, ed. *Balkan Society in the Age of Greek Independence* (London 1981) 66.

16 Victor Roudometof, *Nationalism, Globalization and Orthodoxy: The Social Origins of Ethnic Conflict in the Balkans* (Westport, Connecticut 2000) 57.

17 To this Greco-Albanian interaction, the Greek-Albanian grammatical notes by the Greek poet and doctor Ioannis Vilaras (1771–1823) could also be added.

18 Robert Elsie, "Albanian literature in Greek script. The eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Orthodox tradition in Albanian writing", *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 15 (1991) 34.

The shared Orthodox culture of the Balkans during the eighteenth century was promoted and sustained first through the network of higher schools, mainly theological, in Southeastern Europe whose language of study was Greek and secondly through the widespread use of Greek as a *lingua franca* among merchants. The impressive growth of commerce in the course of the eighteenth century produced the phenomenon of the "conquering Balkan Orthodox merchant" as has been defined by Traian Stoianovich in his classic article.[19] One is tempted to see analogies between the commercial activity of the past with the migration of today as many Albanians, Romanians and Bulgarians flock into Greece, seeking a better future. This social mobility might reopen old channels of cultural communication as more and more people from the Balkans learn Greek as a form of cultural and social investment, leading to a situation reminiscent of the eighteenth century.

In short, during the eighteenth century the geographical dispersion and mobility of Greeks in the Balkans transformed them into a Balkan urban class. It should be stressed, however, that the Greeks as an ethnic community during this period included many Grecophone or Hellenized Vlachs, Serbs or Orthodox Albanians. Since the time of Iosipos Moisiodax (*c.* 1725–1800), Dimitrios Darvaris (1757–1823) and Rhigas (1757–98), the Vlach Diaspora of the Balkans had contributed enormously to the development of a cultural network across national cultures and its members had acted as carriers of Greek language and culture due to their continuous migrations.[20] It is worth noting here that the brothers Ioannis and Miltiades Manakis from the village of Avdela in the Grevena area, who in 1905 filmed the first motion picture ever made in the Balkans, were of Vlach descent.[21] The two brothers spent much of their lives in Monastir (Bitola) and recorded, in their photographs and films, faces, events and landscapes from all over the Balkans. Due to limitations of space this volume does not include contributions on either the cinema[22] or architecture—another area in which northern Greece shares a number of common features with the neighbouring areas.[23]

19 Traian Stoianovich, "The Conquering Balkan Orthodox Merchant", *Journal of Economic History* 20 (1960) 234–313. See also Richard Clogg, "The Greek Mercantile Bourgeoisie: 'progressive' or 'reactionary'" in Richard Clogg, ed. *Balkan Society in the Age of Greek Independence* 85–110.

20 See A. Wace & M. Thompson, *The Nomads of the Balkans: An account of life and customs among the Vlachs* (London 1914) and T.J. Winnifrith, *The Vlachs: The History of a Balkan People* (London 1987).

21 Theo Angelopoulos in his film "Ulysses' Gaze" (1995) has his film-maker hero roam throughout the war-torn Balkans in search of the "missing" reel of film shot by the Manakis brothers.

22 See Dina Iordanova's book *Cinema of flames: Balkan film, culture and the media* (London 2001).

23 On this subject the studies by Machiel Kiel, *Studies on the Ottoman Architecture of the Balkans* (Aldershot 1990) and Alexandra Yerolympos, *Urban Transformations in the Balkans (820–1920): Aspects of Balkan town planning and the remaking of Thessaloniki* (Thessaloniki 1996) could provide a useful starting point.

One of the volume's aims is to explore what happened to this rich cultural interaction in the Balkans during the pre-nationalist era, particularly during the eighteenth century, after the rise of nationalism and the erosion of the common "mentality" of Balkan Orthodoxy. Out of this pre-modern shared cultural perception and network of communication what has survived the nationalist rhetoric of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries? In other words, what was the cultural impact of nationalism and later on of communism in projecting a divided rather than a shared historical and cultural past?

Another interesting aspect to consider is how the idea of Europe impinged upon the Balkan consciousness then and now. The idea of Europe played a crucial role in the transformation and eventual break-up of the common tradition of Balkan culture during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and it could be argued that it plays a similar role today. Although Europe was received with considerable excitement and hope, it "brought with it the secular political logic of nationalism that impregnated Balkan politics with violence, suspicion and fear and destroyed the common world of Balkan Orthodoxy".[24] Given the negative connotations of everything Balkan, Europe serves as a cultural, political and economic ideal and offers an alternative to the idea of a revival of a cultural Balkan commonwealth. There are even those who see a greater role for Greece in the Balkans rather than in the European Union.[25] The Balkans have been aptly described as Greece's dilemma and opportunity.[26]

Greek culture in the pre-modern Balkans has acted as a conduit for cultural change, intellectual and social mobility. However, during the twentieth century Balkan countries looked more towards Europe than to their neighbours, developing closer cultural ties with other European countries rather than among themselves. In this respect "one could talk of the 'distance of proximity' as the dominant cultural pattern of relations in the case of the Balkans".[27] Cultural relations between Greece and other Balkan countries after the Second World War were essentially very formal and state-controlled on the basis of bilateral agreements.[28] The cultural amnesia of a shared past which prevailed during the twentieth century evaporated after the

24 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "'Balkan Mentality': history, legend, imagination", 186. See also Mark Mazower, *The Balkans*, 16.

25 James Pettifer argued that "to be a Balkan, not a European country, in the sense of being part of a potential federal Europe, must be a likely destiny for Greece", *The Greeks: The Land and People Since the War* (London 1994) 237.

26 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "The Greek Cultural Presence in the Balkans" in *Greece and the New Balkans: Challenges and Opportunities*, eds. Van Coufoudakis, Harry J. Psomiades, Andre Gerolymatos (New York 1999) 207–9.

27 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "The Greek Cultural Presence in the Balkans", 194.

28 Karolos Mitsakis catalogues the literary texts from Balkan countries translated into Greek during the period 1945–1979 (*Λογοτεχνικά έργα από τις βαλκανικές χώρες σε νεοελληνική μετάφραση: Μια πρώτη καταγραφή*, Athens 1979).

collapse of the communist regimes between 1989 and 1991, and a period of renewed cultural interaction seems to have started.

Greek-speaking communities in Romania, Bulgaria and Albania have resurfaced and reclaimed their cultural rights. Interestingly some writers (Telemahos Kotsias being the most prominent amongst them) have emerged from the Greek community in Albania and now publish their work in Athens. In the past too a number of writers had dual identities such as Nikolaos Pikkolos, a leading figure in both Greek and Bulgarian intellectual life in the middle of the nineteenth century, Panaït Istrati, hailed by Romain Rolland as the "Gorky of the Balkans",[29] or lesser known figures such as Grigor Părličev (Grigorios Stavridis), a Bulgarian student resident in Athens, who won the Greek national poetry competition in 1860. Moreover, two leading Greek poets, Kostas Varnalis and Andreas Embeirikos, were born in Pyrgos (Burgas) and Vraila respectively.

Though there have been sporadic references to the Balkans in modern Greek literature, mostly on the occasion of historical or political events, such as in the sixth part (no 20) of Kostis Palamas's volume of poems *Η Πολιτεία και η Μοναξιά* [The City and Solitude] (1912), Greek writers of the twentieth century have been either indifferent or critical towards the Balkans. Take, for example, Yorgos Theotokas's view in his polemical essay *Ελεύθερο Πνεύμα* [Free Spirit] (1929) where, though acknowledging the cultural unity in the Balkans in previous centuries, he sees Greece as currently breaking away from the Balkan and Byzantine traditions and seeking a new orientation towards Europe and modernity.[30]

Today a number of workshops on Balkan creative writing and literature are organized in Greece,[31] the literary prize Balkanika has been established, while a number of Balkan writers have been translated into Greek. Moreover, Goran Bregović, dubbed as the composer of the Balkans, has worked together with Greek singers and seems to have made an impact on Greek music, paving the way for new developments in Balkan musical collaboration. However, the renewed interest in the Balkans and its culture among Greeks seems to arise out of a sense of superiority and not solidarity.

29 Panaït Istrati, born in Romania, was the illegitimate son of a Romanian peasant and a Greek smuggler. For more details about his life and his relationship with Kazantzakis see Peter Bien, *Kazantzakis: Politics of the Spirit* (Princeton 1989) 122–132.

30 Yorgos Theotokas, *Ελεύθερο Πνεύμα* (Athens 1979) 6. In an article in the periodical *Ιδέα* ("Πρός την ενότητα", January 1933, 13–17) Theotokas describes the Balkans as exuberantly primitive being untouched by western degeneration, while he gives favourable consideration to the idea of a confederation of Balkan peoples. See also Nikos Nikolaidis's novel *Ο Οργισμένος Βαλκάνιος* [*The Angry Balkan*] (1976).

31 See the proceedings of a *Workshop for Balkan Authors and Translators* (Athens 1999) organized by the National Book Centre of Greece, the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Municipality of Alexandroupolis held in the town of Alexandroupolis in September 1998. See also the issue of *Ithaca* (*Greek Literary Review*, 2, Autumn 1999) on "Identity and Alterity in the Balkans" and *Hellenic Quarterly* 10 (Autumn 2001).

Greek culture since the Enlightenment has served as a channel of western modernization and intellectual change for other Balkan countries. Where once it represented for them a window onto an elusive European modernity, today "the expectation involves a re-enactment of the role played by Greek culture in the Balkans in the period of Enlightenment."[32] However, this re-enactment cannot be carried out in hegemonic terms but must be done in a spirit of partnership and mutual understanding. Indeed, this process of cultural rapprochement among Balkan peoples could be assisted by studying cultural and historical otherness as it has been constructed and presented in literary texts, school textbooks or in other official publications during the age of suspicion.[33]

The cultural iconography associated with the Balkans evokes the image of a bridge or crossroads (see the papers of Olga Augustinos and Ellie Scopetea). The area, according to Todorova, has been compared to a bridge between East and West, thus emphasizing its transitory character and incomplete otherness, compared to the Orient.[34] As a metaphor for the region the bridge may owe a great deal to the literary œuvre of Ivo Andrić; it also symbolically encapsulates the geographical, economic, architectural and cultural reality of the region. In the case of Greece, however, such Balkan cultural imagery contrasts sharply with the dominant Mediterranean images and metaphors. Bridges, stone houses, monasteries, rugged mountain terrains and misty landscapes (as represented in a number of Angelopoulos's films) evoke the sense of an introverted, enigmatic and melancholic space, while the whitewashed chapels of the Aegean islands, the sunny beaches and the blue sea, celebrated by poets and artists, suggest open horizons, brightness and a different attitude to life. The grey Balkanism and mystic Byzantinism seem to compete with a well-established image of classical and pagan Greece, basking in the Mediterranean light and admiring the shadow of ancient columns. Up to now Greece has promoted its Mediterranean image not only for the touristic advantages, but also for the associations with classical antiquity. On the other hand, the Balkan imagery is closely linked to the mysticism of Byzantium and Orthodoxy.

This contrasting cultural iconography suggests that the more Greece emphasizes its identity as a Balkan country the more it underlines its Byzantine and Orthodox heritage. A few years ago Jacques Lacarrière argued that geographically Greece might be situated in the Mediterranean but

32 Paschalis M. Kitromilides, "The Greek Cultural Presence in the Balkans", 208.

33 See the Proceedings of a Conference held in Thessaloniki in October 1998 edited by A. Kapsalis, K. Bonidis, A. Sipitanou, *Η εικόνα του "άλλου"/γείτονα στα σχολικά βιβλία των βαλκανικών λαών* (Athens 2000), Iraklis Millas, *Εικόνες Ελλήνων και Τούρκων: Σχολικά βιβλία, ιστοριογραφία, λογοτεχνία και εθνικά στερεότυπα* (Athens 2001) and Christina Koulouri, *Clio in the Balkans: The politics of history education* (Thessaloniki 2002).

34 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 15–16.

historically, economically and spiritually it belonged to the Balkans and the Orthodox world.[35] This, I think, indicates clearly the cultural implications of the self-perception of Greece as a Mediterranean or Balkan country, considering that James Pettifer also saw the 1990s as signalling for Greece "the rediscovery of itself as a Balkan country and a process of greater distancing from northern Europe".[36] This volume indirectly raises the question of Greece's cultural orientation at the crossroads of Europe, the Balkans and the Mediterranean in the light of the country's cultural encounters with its neighbours since the Enlightenment.

The first section of this volume highlights the fluidity of identities and raises questions of conflicting loyalties by looking at a number of case-studies concerning the pre-modern history of the region. Paschalis Kitromilides discusses three such case-studies which relate to (a) questions of patronage in the Orthodox monasteries of Bucovina; (b) the intentions of the founder as stated in the foundation deed of Dragomirna monastery in northern Moldavia; and (c) the understanding of identity reflected in a codex written by a Greek-speaking resident of the village of Arbanassi in northern Bulgaria. Raymond Detrez also deals with the cultural interaction between Greeks and Slavs in Balkan cities, such as Plovdiv, during the first half of the nineteenth century and demonstrates the anachronistic perception of these relations in terms of national rivalries and ethnic conflicts. These case-studies clearly suggest that a nationalist understanding of history and perception of identity is flawed and anachronistic when applied to the pre-modern Balkans.

The second section explores Ottoman perceptions of Greek language and culture during the Tanzimat period and how Greek historians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries perceived other Balkan peoples and prospects for the region. First, Johann Strauss looks into the Greek connections of certain Ottoman intellectuals with a Greek family background, training in Greek schools or even, in some cases, matrimonial links. Intellectual contacts are exemplified by the activities of a leading scholar, Şemseddin Sami also known as Samy-Bey Fraschery (1850–1904) and, in particular, in his ideas on the development of the Turkish language.

The aim of Dimitris Livanios's paper is to give an account of the way the Greek historical imagination portrayed Greece's Balkan neighbours during the period stretching from the beginning of the seventeenth century up to 1950. Within that broad framework, an attempt is made to examine how

35 Jacques Lacarrière, "Pour un Grec, l'Orthodoxie, c'est sa maison", *Le Monde* 24 November 1998, 17.

36 Pettifer, *The Greeks: The Land and People Since the War*, 236–7. Robert D. Kaplan also claims that "only in the 1980s would the world begin to find out just how close to the Balkans and to the Middle East Greece really was" (*Balkan Ghosts: A Journey Through History*, New York 1993, 259).

Greek historical writing described, analysed, and made sense of Serbs and Bulgarians. Particular importance is paid to the analysis of the main stereotypes concerning the Balkans, disseminated by Greek writers and historians of the period under consideration, as well as to an investigation of the way in which they ceased to view their neighbours as harmless fellow Christians and began to perceive them as dangerous competitors for much coveted lands.

The third contribution in this section examines how Greek intellectuals bore the burden of the Balkans. It focuses on two intellectuals, Konstantinos Amantos and Ioannis Sofianopoulos, both well acquainted with the region through travel and study, who wrote accounts of the Balkans intended to enlighten their compatriots. Thus an analysis of Greek representations of others in the Balkans will illuminate Greece's own development during the interwar era, as it dealt with the contradictions between its own assertive national distinctiveness and the region's civilizational and cultural commonality. Focusing on Greek encounters with the Balkans in the post-World War I era, Gerasimos Augustinos's essay demonstrates how this collectivity—the Balkans and the individual states that make them up—has figured in Greek self-perceptions of modernity.

The third section deals with developments in the Jewish and Muslim cultures in the Balkans as well as the material culture of the Sarakatsani. The paper by Katherine Fleming focuses on two rabbis, one from Crete and the other from Sarajevo. The first, the Romaniot Rabbi Eliyahu Kapsali of Crete (*c.* 1490–1555), wrote of the rise of Ottoman power and its religious meaning. The second is the Sephardic Rabbi Yehuda Alkalai (fl. 1850s), who spent his career in Zemlin (near Belgrade) and devoted much of his thinking to the meaning of Ottoman decline. The paper highlights the ways in which Jewish writers in the south Balkans shared and were influenced by the same post-Renaissance (and, later, post-Enlightenment) concerns that touched on an array of communities Muslim, Christian, and Jewish. It identifies rabbinic writings as a vital cultural conduit between Greece and the Balkans throughout the early modern period. These two rabbis, read in tandem, show the Jewish community of the south Balkans to be profoundly shaped by the cultural concerns that most preoccupied other communal groups in the region. Their writings suggest that "Jewish history" in Greece and the Balkans is a vital part of the region's early modern history as a whole, and urge us to read all early modern writings not through the prism of twentieth-century nationalism but in the context of the late Ottoman world that shaped them. Finally, they provide one of the most important vehicles of cultural contact across Greece and the Balkans.

The second paper in this section explores the cultural life and cultural perspectives of eighteenth-century Muslims who inhabited the port city of Salonica and the surrounding countryside. Using the eighteenth-century records of the *şeriat* court, known as the *sicil*, Eyal Ginio presents a small

but nevertheless diverse selection of insights into the cultural world of the local elite and their understanding of the meaning of high culture and their perceptions regarding local cultural manifestations. Thus, the paper addresses the question of how the Muslim Balkan elite defined its own culture.

Diana Wardle's paper focuses on the Sarakatsani in the Balkans. During the first half of the twentieth century these nomadic shepherds were familiar in northern Greece and neighbouring areas. They were recognizable by their distinctive costume. In the Ottoman period they moved freely with the seasons between plain and mountain, but when new frontiers were drawn up after the Balkan wars they became separated, in Northern and Southern Thrace and Northern and Southern Macedonia and in Epirus. By identifying the regional costume groups in each area the paper aims to illuminate aspects of the kaleidoscope of populations which made up the western Ottoman Empire before its disintegration.

The next section focuses on cultural communication, metaphors and symbols associated with the Balkans. The first paper in this section raises issues of cultural otherness in the Balkans by examining the *New Political Constitution of the Inhabitants of Roumeli, Asia Minor, the Mediterranean Islands and Vlachobodgamia* published by Rhigas Velestinlis in 1797 which was the first constitutional text of South-Eastern Europe. María López Villalba analyses certain significant changes that can be observed in Rhigas's texts when compared to his French model; changes that can be assumed to follow from his attempt to adapt the contents of the French Constitution of 1793 (a text written in and for a relatively homogeneous society) to the complexities of Ottoman Balkan multiethnic reality at the end of the eighteenth century.

The next two essays deal with two powerful metaphors associated with the Balkans: the bridge and the crossroads. The bridge, both as a physical marker and as a metaphor, is the nexus of union and at the same time the locus of strife between the defenders of protective frontiers and the agents of change who want to traverse them. Olga Augustinos's essay traces and analyses the interweaving of these antinomies embedded in the narratives of the construction of three Balkan bridges: the ballad of "The Bridge of Arta", Ivo Andrić's *The Bridge on the Drina*, and Ismail Kadare's *The Three-Arched Bridge*. There were three stages in this primal construction of stone and word: separation of man from man and from nature, transition mediated by human sacrifice, and provisional conciliation. Once completed, the bridges became crossings and passages for friends and foes, for travellers and invaders. Andrić, Kadare, and the anonymous balladeer of "The Bridge of Arta", transformed these marvels of masonry into monuments of memory where legend and history intersect. Ultimately, in their texts, the figure of the bridge represents the predicament of sharing the same space to build different identities and of journeying along the same crossing to reach different pasts. In her paper, which also refers to Andrić's novel, the late Ellie Scopetea

discusses another, widely used metaphor for the Balkans, that of the crossroads between East and West. Using examples from the histories of different Balkan nations she deconstructs this notion and raises a number of interesting questions.

The next section opens with a look at the musical history of the years of Greek rule in Romania, a period of great significance in the general history of the Balkan, as well as the central-European, courts. In the musical sphere, the courts of the twenty Phanariot Greek princes, who reigned over the two Danubian principalities (Wallachia and Moldavia) from 1709 to 1821, represented a melting-pot of diverse fashions. As Christian rulers, they encouraged religious music (the first printing-press publishing Byzantine chant was established in Bucharest in 1820); as Turkish appointed officials, they maintained a Turkish military band (*mehterhane*) for ceremonial purposes; as enlightened despots, they kept western European ensembles; for more intimate moments, they employed gypsy musicians who played light music, both local and Greek. A major part of these activities has been preserved in several manuscripts; from the late eighteenth century, the princes encouraged music collections, which record (apart from Greek) Turkish, Arabic, Romanian, French, and Italian compositions popular at the time. With reference to the wider musical context of the Danubian Principalities, John Plemmenos's paper shows how the Phanariot Greeks sought to explore the dominant Ottoman music, while at the same time preserving their own Greek-Byzantine identity.

Vassilis Nitsiakos's and Constantinos Mantzos's paper focuses on the ways polyphonic folk music was treated in the borderland region of Southern Albania and Northwestern Greece and what political meanings were attached by both sides to polyphonic folk songs; how questions of authenticity and ethnic origins were raised in an attempt to construct a genealogy of the polyphonic song that could serve the nationalist discourse in both countries. Moreover, the paper investigates the ways in which the above processes were realized in the reproduction and performance of the polyphonic folk songs. Finally they attempt an assessment of the present condition of folk polyphony as a traditional cultural idiom caught up in a world of social transformation and cultural change.

The last paper in this section, based on original fieldwork undertaken in Greece and Turkey, considers Cretan music before and after the population exchanges that followed the Treaty of Lausanne, taking into account the role of the Cretan Muslims both in Crete and in Turkey. It concludes that the older music of Crete was, on the whole, a shared and local musical culture. It also acknowledges the important contribution of certain individuals in later developments in Cretan music, but argues that the survival of a local musical tradition in Crete is due to its being part of a wider, shared culture.

The sixth section attempts to redirect attention from the comparative

study of Balkan languages and literatures in relation to western European ones by looking into linguistic convergence between Greek and other Balkan languages and exploring images of the Balkans in the Greek literature of the twentieth century. Brian Joseph points out that Greek was significantly influenced by Western European languages, especially French and English, in the post-Enlightenment nineteenth and twentieth centuries, but the single most significant external force shaping the modern form of the language was the intense, sustained, and intimate interaction with speakers of other Balkan languages, especially Albanian, Aromanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Romani, and Turkish. The profound influence of this contact on Greek is evident in the lexicon but, most significantly, also in major grammatical domains, including subordinate clause structure, object marking, and future tense formation. It was not simply, or always, a matter of Greek adopting a foreign structure; in some instances, existing tendencies already present in Greek were enhanced through contact. Conversely Greek extended its influence into these other languages. Thus, the outcome was a massive structural convergence among these languages (creating a so-called *Sprachbund*) so that they remained distinct languages (lexically and phonologically) but came to have a single grammar.

The second paper in this section is about Nikos Engonopoulos, the *enfant terrible* of Greek Surrealism. Although only a few of his writings actually refer to Albania, they are considered significant since Engonopoulos's Albania is an entirely imaginary topos which recalls the numerous representations of the Albanian in the travel literature of the Ottoman period, generated partly as a result of the Greek War of Independence, and also invokes one of the main manifestations of the surrealist marvellous, i.e. romantic ruins. According to Yannis Karavidas, Albania is used by Engonopoulos to test his thesis that poetry is basically an oral creation. The aim of his contribution is to show the multiple roles Albania plays in Engonopoulos's work, and provide a few pointers towards deciphering his poetics. Focusing on a number of contemporary novels, Georgia Farinou-Malamatari discusses the representation of conflict and interaction in the Balkans in Greek fiction of the 1990s, and explores the ways literature engages with questions of ethnic origin, identity and crossing borders.

The last paper in the book makes the provocative claim that the Balkans lack any symbolic or allegorical power and that they have failed to excite the imagination of theorists, intellectuals and artists. According to Vassilis Lambropoulos certain regions of the world have great explanatory potential in that, beyond their own local importance, they can be used in a variety of ways (symbolic, allegorical, interpretive, etc.) to illuminate situations that are geographically or historically removed from their own. The idea of the Balkans is coterminous with that of its locus no matter how that may be defined. In the end, the Balkans remain a location, a static concept. That is why the Balkans have not found their way into any speculative genres such

as the essay, the meditation, the philosophical poem, or art criticism. One major reason is that, in contrast, for example, to the Caribbean or Central Europe, local intellectuals and artists have not made a concerted effort to abstract their region from its special history and place, and give it some transcendent significance. For Lambropoulos the Balkans are a place, not a project.

This is a truly multidisciplinary volume which brings together historians, anthropologists, linguists and musicologists with specialists on literature, translation, the history of ideas and religion. By raising issues of cultural hybridity, and nationalist or pre-nationalist interpretations of culture and history it lays claim to a place in the context of studies on nationalism and post-colonialism. This volume may contribute to a recognition of the Balkans as a site, like some postcolonial ones, where identities have become fused, orientalism and eurocentrism blurred and where religion and modernity clashed and coexisted. By approaching cultural encounters between Greece and the Balkans from a fresh and informed perspective, it makes a substantial contribution to the study of a rather neglected aspect in the history of a region which has suffered in the past from narrow-minded, nationalistic arguments.

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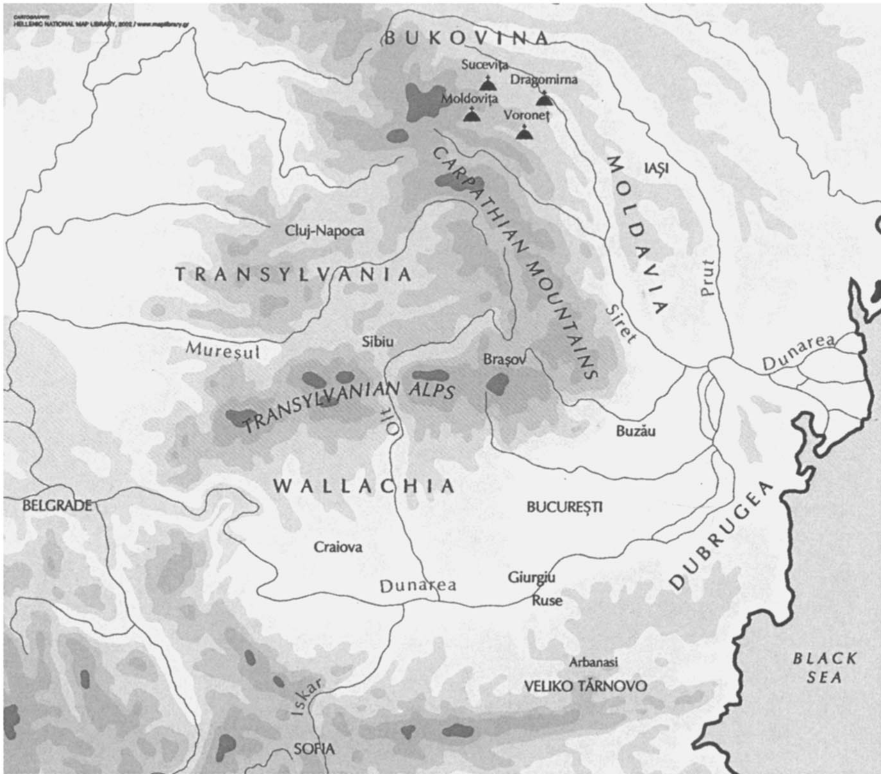
PART I

HYBRID IDENTITIES AND NATIONALIST ANACHRONISMS



Stops on the itinerary in the pre-modern Balkans

Chapter 1

In the Pre-Modern Balkans...: Loyalties, Identities, Anachronisms

Paschalis M. Kitromilides

I

Despite the explosion of scholarly writing and journalism on the Balkans in the last decade, the region, its history and its problems remain a puzzle, a source of bafflement and confusion not only to the Western mind but also to observers locally, to members of the Balkan societies themselves. The failure of self-understanding in Balkan societies could be understood as an instance of what Maria Todorova has called "balkanism", the South-East European version of "orientalism" and of the way it has been internalized by observers and commentators in the Balkans.[1] It is curious, I may add, that at the present conjuncture most of those in the world of scholarship who presume to have opinions and to pass judgements on Balkan politics and conflicts tend to be those who are all the more willing to talk because they know so little and understand even less. Those who know more and have a sense of the complexity of the history of the region tend to be more modest and circumspect in their judgements and pronouncements. I believe we should be that way when talking about the Balkans—modesty and precision have never hurt anyone in the world of scholarship.

With this in mind I propose to try to recapture, through an act of the historical imagination, the ways the concepts of loyalty and identity can be seen to have been lived and acted out over time by recognizable historical actors in the experience of Southeastern Europe. I confess, that in this venture the historian is confronted at an analytical level with many difficulties. A way out may be offered by trying to map out the questions of loyalty and identity in space, to consider them within a geographical dimension in the broad region of Southeastern Europe as they come to the traveller's attention in specific environments. The journey may involve a physical movement in space but it might also be an intellectual peregrination in time, or perhaps both. It is an inevitable part of any attempt to relate to and understand a cultural environment of great diversity and richness and of a historical depth

1 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (Oxford 1997) 3–20.