

Buchanan, Donna A. (ed.). *Balkan Popular Culture and the Ottoman Ecumene: Music, Image, and Regional Political Discourse*. The Scarecrow Press, Inc. \$85.00 (Hardcover). ISBN-10: 081086021X - ISBN-13: 978-0810860216

With the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Balkans reentered the world's political and cultural arena. The Balkans are a multifaceted region with a complex history. For a long time, this region was the core of the Ottoman Empire. Afterwards, the area lived through social reconstruction that fostered nationalism and the building of nation-states. While the Ottoman Empire was based on a multiethnic, multicultural, multilingual society, the idea of nation presumes a historicized single national unit with a distinctive culture and a separate language, enclosed by non-porous boundaries. The book under review sets out to comprehend the intraregional migration of styles of music, song, and dance in the era of nationalism and does so in the context of Balkanism, post socialism, and EU-topianism. The contributors contextualize their work by examining the role of the Ottoman past and its cultural heritage in the process of identity and state construction. They also look at the Communist past, gender, the effect of post-communist attempts to introduce a market economy, and domestic discourses on nationalism.

In the introductory article "“Oh, Those Turks!’ Music, Politics, and Interculturality in the Balkans and Beyond,” Donna A. Buchanan examines the Ottoman Turkish song “Üsküdarı gider iken,” which circulated widely in the Balkans from the nineteenth century onwards. While earlier scholars sought to trace the geographic spread of this song, Buchanan seeks to determine the reasons behind its continuing popularity. She also tries to see how it functions in constructing identity on the local and transnational levels. Comparing the circulation of different versions of the song in Turkey, Greece, the Jewish Diaspora, the Arabic Middle East, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Albania, Bosnia, Croatia, and Serbia, the author shows how Ottoman culture has continued to exert a creative influence right into the present. The creative impact of Ottoman culture persists, she says, even as post-Ottoman nationalism seeks to downplay its role.

The first article in Part I is Jerk Vedic Rasmussen's "Bosnian and Serbian Popular Music in the 1990s: Divergent Paths, Conflicting Meanings, and Shared Sentiments." Rasmussen focuses on Yugoslavia and explains how the political changes of the late 1980s impacted musical trends. According to the author, these changes led to the

emergence of solidarity songs which, in turn, encouraged battles for independence or self-defense in the fragmented geography of Yugoslavia. The author concludes that the function played by music and musicians in the war period continued to define and produce cultural capital in the successor states. To provide a concrete example, the author chooses the “Turbo Folk.” His analysis displays the complex interplay of changing social dynamics, political challenges, and the effects of various regional and extra-regional musical styles on the platform of Turbo Folk and their construction of Serbian culture. Turbo Folk, the author observes, is emblematic of the musical nationalization process in Yugoslav successor states.

Margaret H. Beissinger contributes “Muzica Orientală: Identity and Popular Culture in Post communist Romania.” In her article, she presents a detailed study of the music and dance style Muzica Orientală which, she argues, is a reflection of contending constructions of Romanian identity. The author observes that post-communist Romania, like most other Eastern Bloc countries, is trying to reassume its place in Europe by downplaying any historical cultural ties to the “Orient.” To Beissinger, the rising popularity of Muzica Orientală is a reaction against efforts to present Romanian culture as inherently European. While the elite may press for acceptance of the Western model of Romania, people in other social strata prefer the mix of Romany, Turkish, Serbian, Bulgarian and traditional music that Muzica Orientală represents. Beissinger contends that Muzica Orientală acts as a negotiating tool in a polarized Romanian society. She also gives a detailed account of the historical development of Muzica Orientală and its relationship to class and gender, as well as to ethnicity.

Vesa Kurkela contributes “Bulgarian Chalga on Video: Oriental Stereotypes, Mafia Exotism, and Politics.” Her article focuses on the most popular music genre in post-communist Bulgaria. Chalga is based on various regional, local, and international musical traditions and has distinct oriental belly dance rhythms. For her study, Kurkela examines commercial music video recordings that were released between 1995 and 2000. She seeks to determine how the “oriental” is produced: the music, the lyrics, and the visuals. The author also tries to draw conclusions about the models used for the oriental elements and the methods employed by musicians, actors and video directors. Kurkela observes that “the political” is central to Chalga for it functions as a tool of social criticism, challenging social values, especially those that emerged after the fall of the Iron Curtain. In her opinion, Chalga with its inherent

mockery, irony and carnivalistic attitude, acts as a counterweight to serious political problems such as corruption and the prevalence of the nouveaux riches, the mafia, machismo, and westernization.

Kevin Dawe's contribution is an examination of contemporary music and dance in Greece. He focuses on the negotiation between the regional and the global. Certain regions had connections beyond Greek borders and brought global musical styles and genres into Greece. The author praises the fact that periphery music, such as the folk revival of the 1980s, assumed a central place in Greek musical life. While explaining the factors that created this phenomenon, the author also explains how prioritized regional sounds and images function on the regional, national, and international levels. By doing so, the author tries to see how "local" and "global" meet in Greek popular music.

"Ottoman Echoes, Byzantine Frescoes, and Musical Instruments in the Balkans" by Gabriela Initchi discusses frescoes in Balkan churches, many of which date back to the Ottoman period. She sees them as stimuli to the spread of various Ottoman and pre-Ottoman musical instruments. She underlines the importance of including socio-historical and cultural factors in the interpretation of the frescoes, an approach that has been missing from most contemporary scholarship. Such a methodology, she asserts, would challenge the monocultural, monoethnic and ahistorical constructs of Balkan historiography in general and music-iconographic studies in particular. Although a wide range of potential material is available for the period extending from the 14th to the end of the 17th century, the author limits herself to iconographic representations of the double-headed drum and the zurna.

In "Bulgarian Ethnopop along the Old Via Militaris: Ottomanism, Orientalism, or Balkan Cosmopolitanism" Donna A. Buchanan argues that the Balkans were and continue to be historically interconnected in various, but changing, ways. She examines the contribution that music makes to the Bulgarian construction of Balkan identity. She assumes that the sources of the music were transregional and then studies how music functions in the construction of Bulgarian identity in the 1990s and first years of the 2000s. The author focuses on Bulgarian ethnopop (pop-folk), specifically Chalga and professional women's choirs (e.g. *Le mystère de voix bulgares*) and the contribution these make to Bulgarian musical culture. She also gives a detailed account of the oriental elements in the music.

Jane C. Sugarman's "The Criminals of Albanian Music: Albanian Commercial Folk Music and Issues of Identity since 1990" looks at the

evolution of folk-pop music within the changing social climate of the post-1990 period. Societal confrontations and ongoing negotiations of identity produce commercial Albanian folk music that is characterized by a mix of high technology with the music of the Ottoman realm. This music represents a counter discourse to the modernist/westernist position of the Albanian elite. Sugerman's study sheds light on the evolution of this music, its sources, style, and repertoire.

In his piece "Shedding Light on the Balkans: Sezen Aksu's Anatolian Pop" Martin Stokes draws attention to the rise of musical cosmopolitanism in the Balkan region. He takes Sezen Aksu, a Turkish vocalist and song writer. Stokes locates the influences on Sezen Aksu's music in the cultures of Bulgaria, the former Yugoslavia, and the Republic of Macedonia. He also stresses the importance of the end of the Cold War and Turkish imaginary both of Turkey itself and its Balkan neighbors. Giving detailed personal and professional background information on Sezen Aksu, the author explains his attempts to link Turkish music to Balkan folk expression. He also looks at the changing domestic, social, economic and political factors that influenced this musician's work.

In "Trafficking in the Exotic with 'Gypsy' Music: Balkan Roma, Cosmopolitanism and 'World' Music Festivals" Carol Silverman explores the marketing and consumption of Gypsy music. The author's main aim is to determine how the Roma construct their own imagery and re-shape commercial representations of themselves. After locating the Roma within the discourses of modernity and cosmopolitanism, Silverman looks at Gypsy festivals as places where images of the Roma are constructed. She discusses the concept of "authenticity" as a marketing tool and examines how it is understood by the audience, the promoter and especially the Roma musician.

In "Balkan Boundaries and How to Cross Them: A Postlude" Svanibor Pettan deals with the question of boundaries in the Balkan northwest, namely Croatia. Croatia's historical past and its life under two empires, the author argues, determines current musical domains. The author looks at the contending discourses of Alaturka and Alafranga to explain sociocultural relations within this region. The movement of music and musicians beyond national borders, even when travel was severely restricted, such as during the Cold War and the war within the former Yugoslav territories, brought in international influences. Recent market strategies, the author observes, have also encouraged musical interaction across borders.

The articles included in the book provide valuable insights which show how the Ottoman imperial past continues to exist as a social variable in the Balkans, working within a complex interplay of cultural issues and political contexts. Providing detailed studies at local, national, regional and international levels, the book successfully displays contending and overlapping negotiations of identities, values, meanings, and interests. This is an important collection depicting the continuous process of constructing images of the self and the other.

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