

Fikret Adanır

Introduction

History-writing on Southeast Europe has traditionally focused either on diplomatic history (“Eastern Question”) or the establishment of national states, the latter again being essentially treated as belonging to the sphere of international relations.¹ But with the political romanticism of the post-Napoleonic era a parallel paradigm has also developed, that of national historiography. Not only did the fate of oppressed peoples attract a growing interest, but also questions as regards ethnic origins caught the public imagination. Scholarly debates, such as the one on Fallmerayer’s “Slav theory” in respect to Greece, deepened the concern for issues of continuity and change, and the historians’ attention, in search of past greatness, moved increasingly along the diachronic axis, not least in order to generate hope for a brighter future, while the current misery was conveniently ascribed to foreign domination.² Under such conditions, comparisons on the socio-historical level that might have led to the cognizance of polyethnic interactions within a supposedly isomorphic cultural environment remained practically out of question. The result was a strange dichotomy of imperial history versus *Volksgeschichte* – two scholarly pursuits that appeared incapable of interrelationship.³

Still, with the appearance of the “Annales school” in the early inter-war period, a more structuralist approach has gained currency also in the field of Southeast-European studies. Having a comprehensive economic, social and cultural history in mind, historians such as Bloch, Febvre and Braudel stressed the importance of social processes and thus encouraged comparative investigation.⁴ This shift received additional impetus in the post-World War II era, when in most Balkan countries a Marxist orientation became the *conditio sine qua non* of academic life. Scholars operating with universal categories such as “social formation” needed

1 Mathew Smith Anderson: *The Eastern Question, 1774–1923. A Study in International Relations*, London 1966; Charles and Barbara Jelavich: *The Establishment of the Balkan National States, 1804–1920*, Seattle/London 1977; Béla K. Király and Gale Stokes (eds.): *Insurrections, Wars and the Eastern Crisis in the 1870s*, Boulder, CO, 1986; I. S. Dostjan (ed.): *Formirovanie nacional’nykh nezavisimyykh gosudarstv na Balkanach. Konec XVIII-70-e gody XIX v.*, Moskva 1986.

2 Emanuel Turczynski: *Innovationsimpulse des Philhellenismus für die Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland und Griechenland*, in: *Der Philhellenismus und die Modernisierung in Griechenland und Deutschland*, Thessaloniki 1986, pp. 9–28. Cf. also Effi Gazi: *La narrazione storica nazionale nella Grecia del XIX secolo*, in: *Passato e Presente* 14 (1996), no. 39, pp. 69–85, and eadem, “Scientific” History: The Greek Case in Comparative Perspective (1850–1920), New York 2000.

3 Georg Stadtmüller: *Osmanische Reichsgeschichte und balkanische Volksgeschichte*, in: *Idem, Grundfragen der europäischen Geschichte*, München/Wien 1965, pp. 119–159; Norbert Reiter: *Über die Balkanologie*, in: K.-D. Grothusen (ed.): *Südosteuropaforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in Österreich*, Bonn 1979, pp. 106–114.

4 Michael Erbe: *Zur neueren französischen Sozialgeschichtsforschung. Die Gruppe um die “Annales”*, Darmstadt 1979; François Dosse: *L’histoire et miettes. Des “Annales” à la “nouvelle histoire”*, Paris 1987.

a more mature interpretation of national history. In this perspective, the concept of *long durée* and particularly Fernand Braudel's geographic structuralism that highlighted the unity of the pre-modern Mediterranean world made an impact upon historians both of the Ottoman Empire and of the successor nation-states.⁵ Quantitative evaluation of a new type of source material, such as the Ottoman poll-tax accounts, cadastral registers, court protocols and the like, proved highly conducive to comparative analysis, whereas previously a privileged use of narrative sources in the respective local languages had been the norm. It did not take long before remarkable works began to appear, heaving the study of demography, settlement, agrarian relations, urban life, artisanal production and commerce to a new level of sophistication.⁶

Agrarian relations have attained a special place in the historiography of Southeast Europe during the post-World War II era. Marxist scholarship claimed that masses of peasants had been expropriated under Ottoman rule and that already in the eighteenth century commercial agriculture had emerged on the basis of wage labour.⁷ More recent research, particularly in the West, has modified this picture somewhat. It showed that peasants on the whole had managed to keep their land and it was noted even as a negative factor that something like *Gutswirtschaft* had not really developed.⁸ The subject has implications also for debates on the related problem of underdevelopment. Influenced by the modernization theory, some historians in the early post-World War II period conceptualized the transition from the multi-ethnic pre-modern empire to the modern nation-state virtually as a linear evolution from the traditional society of the East in the grip of religion to the dynamism of the secularized West.⁹

- 5 Maurice Aymard: *The Impact of the Annales School in Mediterranean Countries*, in: *Review. A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economics, Historical Systems and Civilisations* 1/3–4, Winter-Spring 1978, pp. 53–64; Halil İnalçık: *Impact of the Annales School on Ottoman Studies and New Findings*, in: *Ibid.*, pp. 69–96. See also Samuel Kinser: *Annaliste Paradigma? The Geohistorical Structuralism of Fernand Braudel*, in: *American Historical Review* 86 (1981), pp. 63–105.
- 6 See, among others, Nikolaj Todorov: *Balkanskij grad, XV–XIX vek, Sofija 1972* (The Balkan City, 1400–1900, Seattle/London 1983); AIESEE (ed.): *Structure sociale et développement culturel des villes sud-est européennes et adriatiques aux XVIIe–XVIIIe siècles*, Bucarest 1975; Vasiles Demetriades: *Topografia tës Thessalonikës kata tën epochë tës Tourkokratias 1430–1912*, Thessaloniki 1983; Klaus Roth (ed.): *Handwerk in Mittel- und Südosteuropa*, München 1987; Mollie Mackenzie: *Turkish Athens: the Forgotten Centuries 1456–1832*, Ithaca 1991; Svetla Janeva: *L'artisanat et les corporations de métier dans la partie centrale des Balkans pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle*, Thèse du doctorat, Florence, Institut Universitaire Européen, 1996; Meropi Anastasiadou: *Salonique, 1830–1912. Une ville ottomane à l'âge des Réformes*, Leiden 1997; Molly Greene: *A Shared World: Christians and Muslims in the Early Modern Mediterranean*, Princeton 2000.
- 7 See, for example, Christo Gandev: *Zaraždane na kapitalističeski otnošenija v čifliškoto stopanstvo na severozapadna Bălgarija prez XVIII v.*, Sofija 1962; Christo Christov: *Agrarnijat văpros v bălgarskata nacionalna revolucija*, Sofija 1976.
- 8 Bruce McGowan: *Economic Life in Ottoman Europe. Taxation, Trade and the Struggle for Land, 1600–1800*, Cambridge/Paris 1981; Fikret Adanır: *Tradition and Rural Change in Southeastern Europe During Ottoman Rule*, in: D. Chiror (ed.): *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1989, pp. 131–176. See also Gilles Veinstein: *On the Çiftlik Debate*, in: Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (eds.): *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, Albany 1991, pp. 35–53.

Thus the Balkans began to appear, especially for those with inclinations towards economism, as a case in point for underdevelopment, and the task the historians were expected to tackle was to uncover the causes of economic backwardness.¹⁰ But soon the *dependencia* theories began to challenge this rather unidimensional interpretation. Wallerstein's model of "world systems" and a structural theory of imperialism with its central concepts of "core" and "periphery" were influences strong enough to effect a slightly modified orientation, the emphasis being shifted towards the role of the state, with a concomitant underrating of "civilian" factors in society.¹¹ This amounted to positing that the Balkan countries had made a transition from a pre-modern, Wallersteinian "world-empire", in which the "Asiatic mode of production" was dominant, not to a dynamic, Western-type of society, but to one with a "peripheral" status within the capitalist world economy.¹²

The model of peripheralization, as it has been applied to the history of Southeast Europe since the 1970's, seems to lend verisimilitude to an older and much more familiar topos, that of "Oriental despotism".¹³ It implies a socio-economic and cultural severance of the region from "European developments" such as the Renaissance, Reformation and Industrial Revolution as a consequence of Byzantine and Ottoman traditions and thus serves, among others, as justification for Huntington's exclusion of the Orthodox Christian and Islamic zones of

9 W.R. Polk and R.L. Chambers (eds.): *Beginnings of Modernization in the Middle East: the Nineteenth Century*, Chicago/London 1968, and R.E. Ward and D.A. Rustow (eds.): *Political Modernization in Turkey and Japan*, Princeton 1974.

10 John Lampe: *Imperial Borderlands or Capitalist Periphery? Redefining Balkan Backwardness, 1520–1914*, in: Chiro (ed.): *The Origins of Backwardness in Eastern Europe*, pp. 177–209; Michael Palairt: *The Balkan Economies c. 1800–1914: Evolution without Development*, Cambridge 2003.

11 Immanuel Wallerstein: *The Modern World System*, vol. 1: *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*; vol. 2: *Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy, 1600–1750*, New York 1974–1980. On various *dependencia* theories, see Dieter Senghaas (ed.): *Imperialismus und strukturelle Gewalt: Analysen über abhängige Reproduktion*, Frankfurt am Main 1972, and idem (ed.): *Peripherer Kapitalismus. Analysen über Abhängigkeit und Unterentwicklung*, Frankfurt am Main 1974.

12 See Huri İslamoğlu and Çağlar Keyder: *Agenda for Ottoman History*, in: *Review. A Journal of the Fernand Braudel Center for the Study of Economics, Historical Systems and Civilisations* 1/1 (Summer 1977), 31–55; Salgur Kançal: *La conquête du marché interne ottoman par le capitalisme industriel concurrentiel (1838–1881)*, in: J.-L. Bacqué-Grammont/P. Dumont (eds.): *Économie et sociétés dans l'Empire ottoman (Fin du XVIIIe-début du XXe siècle)*, Paris 1983, pp. 355–409; Danica Milić: *Die ökonomische Penetration des Balkans und der Türkei durch die Industriestaaten*, in: R. Melville/H.-J. Schröder (eds.): *Der Berliner Kongress von 1878*, 473–483. Cf. also Daniel Chiro: *Social Change in a Peripheral Society. The Creation of a Balkan Colony*, New York 1976.

13 See Lucette Valensi: *Venise et la Sublime Porte: La naissance du despote*, Paris 1987; further eadem: *The Making of a Political Paradigm: the Ottoman State and Oriental Despotism*, in: A. Grafton/A. Blair (eds.): *The Transmission of Culture in Early Modern Europe*, Philadelphia 1990, pp. 173–203; Malcom E. Yapp, *Europe in the Turkish Mirror*, in: *Past and Present* 137 (November 1992), pp. 134–155; Fikret Adanır and Klaus Schneiderheinze: *Das Osmanische Reich als orientalische Despotie in der Wahrnehmung des Westens im 18.–19. Jahrhundert*, in: E. Kürsat-Ahlers et al. (eds.): *Türkei und Europa: Facetten einer Beziehung in Vergangenheit und Gegenwart*, Frankfurt am Main 2001, pp. 83–122.

the Balkans from the sphere of (West) European civilization.¹⁴ But perhaps more importantly, it also forms a basic tenet of the national history paradigm, which, despite ostensible allegiance to historical materialism, remained dominant under communist regimes; in other words, the Risorgimento type of revivalism that characterized the national historiography of the nineteenth century continued to colour even Marxist interpretations, and once again people were visualized as an organic community of shared destiny.¹⁵ Handicapped, as it were, from the start, the region appeared as lagging behind in almost every field, not least in respect to industrialization. Without a sufficient industrial base, however, neither a “take-off” in terms of economic development nor the formation of a truly proletarian working class appeared conceivable – at least for scholars operating chiefly with categories of growth and decline. This may explain the considerable interest in processes of industrialization which characterized the 1970s and ‘80s.¹⁶ As a natural corollary, also the emergence of an industrial working class, socialist currents, organizational forms of labour movement, as well as left-wing political parties attracted scholarly attention. Where communist regimes were firmly entrenched, working-class history stood as a matter of course at the top of the academic agenda. But even in countries such as Greece and Turkey, where labour-related research could hardly count on public sponsorship, one could observe a growing interest in working-class history.¹⁷

- 14 See Samuel P. Huntington: *The Clash of Civilizations?*, in: *Foreign Affairs*, 1993/3, pp. 22–49.
- 15 A good example for the emergence of rival nationalist discourses under communism is the Bulgaro-Yugoslav controversy over Macedonia: Stefan Troebst: *Die bulgarisch-jugoslawische Kontroverse um Makedonien 1967–1982*, München 1983. See further Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich: *Die bulgarische Geschichtswissenschaft im Spannungsverhältnis zwischen ideologischem Anspruch und historischer Realität. Die Geschichtsschreibung der Befreiungsbewegung und der Anfänge des Nationalstaates*, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 29 (1981), pp. 412–435; Alexandru Zub: *Southeast European Historiography: Themes and Accents*, in: *East European Quarterly* 24 (1990), 335–347; Fikret Adanır: *The National Question and the Genesis and Development of Socialism in the Ottoman Empire: the Case of Macedonia*, in: M. Tunçay and E.J. Zürcher (eds.): *Socialism and Nationalism in the Ottoman Empire 1876–1923*, London 1994, pp. 27–48; idem, *Balkan Historiography related to the Ottoman Empire since 1945*, in: Kemal H. Karpat (ed.): *Ottoman Past and Today’s Turkey*, Leiden 2000, pp. 236–252.
- 16 N. Todorov (ed.): *La Révolution industrielle dans le Sud-Est Européen – XIX s.*, Sofia 1977; Ivan T. Berend and György Ránki: *The European Periphery and Industrialization 1780–1914*, Cambridge 1982; Holm Sundhaussen: *Neuere Literatur zu Problemen der Industrialisierung und der nachholenden Entwicklung in den Ländern der europäischen Peripherie*, in: *Südost-Forschungen* 43 (1984), pp. 283–303. See also Donald Quataert: *Manufacturing and Technology Transfer in the Ottoman Empire 1800–1914*, Istanbul 1992; idem: *Ottoman Manufacturing in the Age of Industrial Revolution*, Cambridge 1993.
- 17 Georges Haupt: *Le début du mouvement socialiste en Turquie*, in: *Le mouvement social* 45 (Oct.–Dec. 1963), pp. 121–137; Oya Sencer (Baydar): *Türkiye’de işçi sınıfı. Doğuşu ve yapısı*, Istanbul 1969; Abraham Benaroya: *I proti stadiodromia tou ellénikou proletariatu*, Athens 1975; George Haupt and Paul Dumont: *Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda sosyalist hareketler*, Istanbul 1977; Mete Tunçay: *Türkiye’de sol akımlar (1908–1925)*, 2 vols., Istanbul, 4th ed., 1991. Cf. also Donald Quataert: *Labor and Working Class History During the Late Ottoman Period, c. 1800–1914*, in: *Turkish Studies Association Bulletin*, September 1991, pp. 357–369.

However, following the demise of the Soviet system and the dissolution of regional communist regimes, conventional working-class history is getting out of fashion in Southeast Europe as well.¹⁸ Faced with various unfamiliar problems in the wake of “globalization”, scholars begin to challenge even a key category such as the “working class”.¹⁹ Instead of carrying on within institutional frameworks closely connected with official party structures, or producing analyses on unionized labour and its relations with the state, they prefer to open up new fields of investigation. Especially since the so-called “gender turn”, there has been a remarkable increase in innovative approaches in the spheres of social and cultural history.²⁰

The papers presented in this issue of the *Mitteilungsblatt* were originally submitted to a workshop on the ambitious sounding theme of “The History of the Working-Class Movement in Southeast Europe: Reassessment of Historiography and Perspectives for Future Research”.²¹ As can be easily recognized, ours was a small gathering pursuing in fact a modest goal: we wanted to discuss various aspects of our topic with a view to gaining an idea of the current state of scholarship. We hoped also to learn something about new problems awaiting the researcher in the field, but also about new opportunities emerging, say, as a result of easier access to some state or party archives. A comprehensive re-evaluation of the work done during the past decades, a critical sorting out, and finally a real effort at establishing a new and perhaps larger framework for future research – these all would have been very welcome, but

- 18 Thomas A. Meiniger: *A Troubled Transition: Bulgarian Historiography, 1989–94*, in: *Contemporary European History* V/1 (1996), pp. 103–118; Mark Mazower: *Changing Trends in the Historiography of Postwar Europe, East and West*, in: *International Labor and Working Class History* 58 (October 2000), pp. 275–282.
- 19 See the provoking essay by Geoff Eley and Keith Nield: *Farewell to the Working Class?*, in: *International Labor and Working Class History* 57 (April 2000), (pp. 1–30), and the various responses it received in the same issue. Cf. also Peter Waterman: *Globalization, Social Movements and the New Internationalisms*, London 2001.
- 20 See the articles in the special issue of *International Labor and Working-Class History* (October 2002) devoted to the theme of “Labor History After the Gender Turn”. The following is just a selection of relevant titles: Donald Quataert: *Ottoman Women, Households, and Textile Manufacturing, 1800–1914*, in: N. Keddie and B. Baron (eds.): *Shifting Boundaries: Women and Gender in Middle Eastern History*, New Haven 1991, pp. 161–176; Nataša Mišković: “Mit dem Patriotismus der serbischen Dame hat die Welt noch zu rechnen!” *Der serbische Frauenverein zwischen Patriotismus und bürgerlicher Wohltätigkeit (1875–1914)*, in: *Godišnjak za društvenu istoriju* II/1 (1995), pp. 64–74; eadem, “*Dragi moj Mileta*”. *Geschlechterverhältnisse in der serbischen Jahrhundertwende im Spiegel der Familienkorrespondenz von Jelena Novaković*, in: C. Scheide and N. Stegmann (eds.): *Normsetzung und -überschreitung. Geschlecht in der Geschichte Osteuropas im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, Bochum 1999, pp. 137–149; A.U. Gabanyi and H.G. Majer (eds.): *Frauen in Südosteuropa*, München 1998; M. Jovanović and Sl. Naumović (eds.): *Gender Relations in South Eastern Europe. Historical Perspectives on Womanhood and Manhood in 19th and 20th Century*, Belgrade 2001; Claudia Kraft: *Wo steht die Frauen- und Geschlechtergeschichte in der Osteuropaforschung?*, in: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 50 (2002), pp. 102–107.
- 21 The workshop was held on the premises of the Institute for Social Movements of the University of Bochum on 27–28 June 2002. I would like to thank Professor Klaus Tenfelde, the director of the Institute, as well as his colleagues Dr. Peter Friedemann and Dr. Jürgen Mittag for the generous support accorded to our project. Special thanks also to Christian Mady who rendered valuable assistance during the editing of the papers.

were surely beyond our means. Moreover, we were not very certain as regards our positioning in view of various controversies since the linguistic revolution in social sciences, *vis-à-vis* the spectacular upswing of cultural anthropology and semiotics, or the increasing readiness to refute the processual character of history for the sake of post-modern metaphors.

For my part at least, I continue to believe in the relevance of structuralist approaches for our discipline. The “master discourse” of national historiography in Southeast Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has rendered it difficult to analyse inter-regional as well as inter-national relationships. Especially the legacy of the Ottoman and Habsburg multi-ethnic empires is awaiting an adequate evaluation. But even the economic history of the region might not have reached the level of desired sophistication yet. What about historical demography? Or the history of migrations? Or agricultural history? I think that all these fields of historical research remain intricately connected with that of labour history, and that therefore the history of the working-class movement in Southeast Europe requires today – perhaps more than ever – a pluralistic approach, pluralistic as regards theoretical grounding, scientific methods as well as historiographic paradigms.