

Д-р Адриана Клаудиа КЪТЕЯ, М. Каталин ДУМИТРАШКУ
(Университет “Овидиус” – Констанца, Румъния)
**БАЛКАНСКАТА КУЛТУРНА ПАРАДИГМА
ПРЕЗ ПЕРИОДА IV–XIII В.: ОПИТ ЗА ДЕФИНИРАНЕ**

Adriana Claudia COTEIA, PhD, M. A. Catalin DUMITRAȘCU
(“Ovidius” University of Constantza, Romania)
**THE BALKAN CULTURAL PARADIGM IN
THE 4TH–13TH CENTURIES: AN ATTEMPT AT DEFINITION**

The polytrophy of Balkan history did not lead, however to a neutral cultural diversity, but to a surplus of variety, to a beneficial stromatic character. The history of Balkan provinces is the history of rerouting and of crises of destiny that was too hard to control by the imperial institution. In the approach of defining the Balkan cultural matrix it seems more to the point to configure the archetypes of a collective unconscious with a decisive contribution on the phenomenology of the Balkan space, dominated by the psychology of the Renaissance. In the process of defining the Balkan cultural matrix, one must mark the stage of mythical geography, the stage of religious homogenization through Christianization, the stage of real geography, with the transient ethnic aspect of the barbarian attacks, the resorting to Hellenism.

Keywords: polytrophy, stromatic character, psychology of the Renaissance, religious homogenization.

The history and culture of the Balkan provinces have always had the mark of *polytrophy* (Liiceanu 1987: 5–7), which makes it a lot more difficult to define a cultural matrix. Their destiny, profoundly marked, after the 4th century, by the Byzantine policy regarding borders, by the *endemic* tendency of the migratory peoples that were attracted by the mirage of this New Rome (Musset 2002), and, last but not least, by the sacralization of the Balkan space through Christianization, had few constant reference systems.

The *polytrophy* of Balkan history did not lead, however, to a neuter cultural diversity, lacking originality, but to a surplus of variety, to a beneficial *stromatic* character, easily perceivable until the final stages of the Byzantine Empire’s history, and in the contact with the successor, the Ottoman Empire (Mantran 2001: 71–79). The history of the Balkan provinces is the history of rerouting and of crises of a destiny that was too hard to control by the imperial institution (Papacostea 1987). The eccentric stance of Constantinople ruled out the possibility of a constant control. Aside from Justinian’s reign, the Macedonian dynasty, and the end of the 12th century, the Balkan Peninsula did not have a single political and religious centre (Obolensky 2002: 13). In the areas adjacent to the Rhodope

Mountains, the Macedonian lakes or the Pindus mountain range, Byzantium was an unstable and inefficient power (Obolensky 2002: 15). Migratory peoples, dissident minorities, “protection” areas, like the Venetian one in the Dalmatian strip, have turned the Balkans into an intermediate *topos* between the East and the West.

Deeply involved in the Arian crisis, the Balkan provinces have offered, in an impulse of religious dissidence, a rationalist variant to the Nicene dogma and to the religious policy of Constantinople’s Church. For almost a century, *Serdica* and *Sirmium* have contested the dogmatic bases of the Holy Trinity’s iconography. The amplitude of the crisis was also increased by the stance of Emperors Constans II and Valens, who were Arians. However, Theodosius, their successor in the East, promulgated the edict in favour of Catholic Orthodoxy, on 28th of February 380, in Thessaloniki (Ware 1999: 22–28). Arianism, which had as fundament the negation of Jesus Christ’s divine nature, would have reduced Christianity to a philosophical monotheism, where revealed truths would have been profoundly deformed.

The *shifting* of the borders re-knit the relations between the communities, determined the appearance of a “unique space, differing from itself”, removed any attempt at cultural or ethnic solipsism, through a balance that was distinctive of the area, between singularity and pluralism (Noica 1999: 147–153). The Balkan culture operated with multiple units, continuously diversifying, at the historical level.

The *stromatic* character of Balkan culture rules out the existence of a prototype – model, of an evolutionary plan, of multiplication through individuation, and it rather seems dominated by a “dissidence of diversity” (Noica 1999: 48), having as sole substratum a space generated by an endogeny of mythical thinking (Blaga 1983: 152–189) that evolved towards the dogmatic paradoxes of Christian thinking. Christianity granted the Balkan space a “synthesis unity”, but it did not succeed in lessening its diversity.

In the approach of defining the Balkan cultural matrix, it is hard to follow the mechanism that Blaga indicated in the Culture Trilogy (Blaga 1969): cultural underlayer-layer-overlay. It seems more to the point to configure the archetypes of a collective unconscious with a decisive contribution on the phenomenology of the Balkan space, dominated by the psychology of the Renaissance. The Renaissance is part of the primordial enunciations, common both to the indigenous mythical underlayer, and to the mythical layers transplanted subsequently. In the process of mythological transplant, the symbols migrate “from the religious community (of belief) to a cultural community (of consciousness) (Liiceanu 2005: 48). The drama of the mysteries (regardless if they are Eleusinian, Dionysian or Orphic) was founded on sacrificial death and rebirth. The Balkan religious spirit was constantly characterized as having a trans-communitarian optimism (Auge 1995: 6), which had as a result a transformation of collective personality in the sense of its multiplication. The Christian overlay added to the subjective experience of the transcendence of life, common moral values, and a religious language of a universalistic vocation (Jung 2003). The old psychological types (Achillean, Odyssean, Apollonian, Dionysian) were replaced, after the metamorphosis of the Self, in the Christian sense. Christian optimism, based on moral values like meekness, renunciation, loving thy fellow man, gave Balkan culture an impulse towards extroversion and tolerance.

The collective anamnesis played a major role in the configuration of the Balkan political and religious space, in the reconsideration of the philosophical concepts of Time and Space. The biographies of Christian martyrs have contributed to the delimitation of a symbolic space, having as reference axes the preservation and transmission of the Christian message. The religious anamnesis meant an intensification of the inner life, a continuous updating of the New Testament's message, the progressive contemporaneity with Jesus Christ, the creation of a symbolic memory, capable of rebuilding the experiences of the past (Casirer 1999: 78–79).

The political anamnesis contributed to the awareness of the evolution of local structures. For instance, the Byzantine return at the Lower Danube during the emperor John Tzimiskes was enthusiastically welcomed by the local community, only on the basis of a common experience, but which was no longer necessary during the 10th century; it belonged to a glorious past, one that was impossible to be brought back again, in the new political and economic conditions. *Thema Paristrion* already had its own configuration, determined by the general context of the 6th – 10th centuries. After the invasion of the Slavs into the Balkans, almost the entire peninsula was lost. During the 7th – 9th centuries, Byzantine historiography labelled these lands as “barbarous” (Obolensky 2002: 70). The Roman-Byzantine political and administrative mechanism became obsolete, and the consequence was a cultural regression that would be hard to recover. Nonetheless, the conscience of an ecumenical Christianity survived until the 13th century. The general situation in the Balkans was to the detriment of the Byzantine Empire, in the period we have mentioned. In the North-Western regions, Byzantium's authority stopped at the Adriatic Sea. The Serbians manifested centrifugal tendencies even as early as Heraklius' reign, the Croatians from Dalmatia and North of the Sava river became subjects of the Frankish Empire, the centre and the South of the Balkans were occupied by independent Slav states. During the 9th century, the Petchenegs, the Oghuz and the Cumans settled on the left bank of the Danube. During the 1090–1094 years, the Petchenegs got close to the Aegean coasts and attacked Constantinople, in an alliance with the Smyrna Turkish Emirate, thus determining the formation of the Byzantine-Cuman coalition (Băbuş 2003: 248).

During the 9th century, in the context of the Byzantine Empire's effort to reintegrate South-Eastern Europe, the Balkans started to recover their typically medieval traits (Obolensky 2002: 80–83). The resorting to ancient Hellenism and Christian orthodoxy as a means of assertion of medieval “*Greekness*” became the axes of the Balkan cultural matrix (Ahrweiller 2002: 58–60). The fact of being Greek in the Byzantine sense in the Balkan space involved a long process of political and religious comparison with reference systems that were external to a cultural matrix in continuous formation.

Thus, in the process of defining the Balkan cultural matrix, one must mark:

1. the stage of mythical geography, which contributed to the formation of the collective personality,
2. the stage of religious homogenization through Christianization,

3. the stage of real geography, with the transient ethnic aspect of the barbarian attacks, or the constant one, of the constitution of Slav states on the rightful territory of the Byzantine Empire,

4. the resorting to Hellenism, after the 9th century.

What remains fundamental is the collective anamnesis mechanism, the punctual intersection of past and present which constantly created political and cultural pretensions. The Balkan cultural matrix, extrovert in nature, was conditioned by the mobility of the borders, by the diplomatic concept of the imperial institution, based on the idea of inclusion in the sphere of Byzantine influence of some heterogeneous community structures, controlled by Christianization, subsidies or radical political methods.

The cultural *stromatic* character of the Balkans was essentially the consequence of the Byzantine Empire's universalistic vocation, of the necessity of contesting and exceeding its own borders. A result of political failures and cultural successes, the Balkan *stromatic* character marked the history of this area also in the medieval periods.

NOTES

¹ Liiceanu 1987: 5–7.

² Musset 2002.

³ Mantran 2001: 71–79.

⁴ Papacostea 1987.

⁵ Obolensky 2002: 13.

⁶ Obolensky 2002: 15.

⁷ Ware 1999: 22–28.

⁸ Noica 1999: 147–153.

⁹ Noica 1999 : 48.

¹⁰ Blaga 1983: 152–189.

¹¹ Blaga 1969

¹² Liiceanu 2005: 48.

¹³ Auge 1995: 6.

¹⁴ Jung 2003.

¹⁵ Casirer 1999: 78–79.

¹⁶ Obolensky 2002 : 70.

¹⁷ Băbuş 2003 : 248.

¹⁸ Obolensky 2002 : 80–83.

¹⁹ Ahrweiller 2002 : 58–60.