Greece in Serbian periodicals (first half of 20th century)

1. Diffusion of Greek culture

Cultural cooperation between Serbs and Greeks during the first half of 20th century, due to historical and political circumstances, had lived through several ups and downs. It is of interest that the distribution of Greek, particularly ancient Greek and Byzantine, culture in Serbia until 1941 was on the rise. This is understandable, bearing in mind the fact that the issues of Greek history, philosophy, literature and art were treated by scientists who belonged to the Belgrade circle of Hellenists from the Department of Classical Studies (Miloš Đurić, Veselin Čajkanović, Ksenija Anastasijević, Milan Budimir and Nikola Vulić) and Department of Byzantinology (Dragutin Anastasijević and Georgije Ostrogorski). Modern Greek literature was, due to lack of knowledge of the language, presented in a significantly more modest scope, therefore the domination of ancient Greek literature led to considering Greek literature to mean ancient Greek literature.

The importance of the role of Serbian periodicals in rendering ancient Greek and Byzantine subjects more familiar to various intellectual circles is indisputable. Scientific periodicals brought studies about development of Hellenic, philosophic and literature ideas, with special emphasis on Homeric issues, lyricists, tragedians, or studies on archeological findings, traces of Hellenic presence on the soil of contemporary Serbia, or studies on reception of Byzantine ideology and culture. In these periodicals two forms of scientific cooperation between Greeks and Serbs were pointed out, related to the joint work on Balkan issues through contributions to periodicals or at scientific gatherings, like the

1. The relationship between the two neighbouring countries became quite distant in 1922, after the agreement was cancelled on 19 May 1913 by the Government of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians.
Congress of Byzantinology in Belgrade\(^2\). These magazines had remarkable reputation: *Letopis Matice Srpske*\(^3\), *Godišnjica Nikole Ćupića*\(^4\), *Revue des Études Balkaniques*\(^5\), as well as publications of Serbian Royal Academy, *Spomenik*\(^6\) and *Glas*\(^7\) — intended for scientific élite in Serbia.


4. S. Nikolajevič, “Pripovetka u Grka” (Greek short story), *GNČ* (1905) XXIV; V. Čajkanović, “O grčkim I rimskim izvorima Dositejeve zbirke basana” (Hellenic and Roman Sources of Dositej’s collection of the fables), *GNČ* (1914) XXXIII.


6. V. Jagić, “Tipik hilandarski i njegov grčki izvor” (Hilandar Typic and its Greek source), *Spomenik* XXXIV; D. N. Anastasijević, “Dve Dušanove grčke hrisovulje” (Two Tsar Dousan Greek charters), *Spomenik* XL (1922); M. Djurić, “Elefsinske misterije i njihov značaj za etičko držanje” (Eleusins mystery and their consequence in ethics), *Spomenik* XCIV (1941); J. Šafarik, “Tracki konjanik i druge ikone iz antičkog doba” (The Thracian horseman and some ancient icons), *Spomenik* XCVIII (1941).

However, there were magazines for a wider circle of readers, accomplishing much in bringing Greek culture closer to us. Extraordinary place belongs to Srpski književni glasnik (Serbian Literary Herald, hereafter cited as: Herald)8. The materials in the Herald on ancient Hellas and modern Greece provided more complete answers to elementary questions on the country of its origin, on historic circumstances enhancing or diminishing its importance, about its role in forming Serbian towns, and, finally, emphasized its contents and reflections against Serbian and European background.

A large number of contributions, whether in the form of studies, translations, reviews or notes pointed out the wealth of images of Greece during the first four decades of 20th century, and gave rise to exploring them in a broader and more comprehensive manner.

fables); V. Ćorović, “Utjecaj i odnošaj između grčkih i srpskih zapisa i natpisa” (Relations between Serbian and Greek notes and inscriptions), Glas LXXXIV (1910); M. Vasić, “Kađenje u egejsko-minoskom kultu” (Censering in Aegian-Minos culte), Glas XCIV (1914); V. Ćajkanović, “O atonskom kodeksu grčkih poslovica sa jednim novim Eshilovim fragmentom” (Atho's Codex of Greek proverbs and Aeschylus new discovered fragment), Glas XCVI (1920); N. Vulić, “Protivurečnosti u Omira i u narodnoj poeziji” (Contradictions in Homer’s poems and contradictions in serbian folk poetry), Glas CXIV (1925); M. Djurić, “Vladarska naredba i nepisani zakon u Sofoklovoj Antigoni” (King’s order and unwritten law in Sophokle's Antigon), Glas CLXXI (1936); P. Skok, “Konstantinova Srbica u Grčkoj” (Constantin Porphyrogenitus’ Srbica in Greece), Glas GLXXVI (1938); F. Granić, Odredbe Hilandarskog tipika Sv. Save o haritativnoj delatnosti manastira u vezi s analognim odredbama ranijih i istovremenih tipika grčkih autora (Prescriptions of Saint Sava’s Chilandar Typic on monastic hospitality and their analogies in prescriptions of older and Sava’s contemporary Greek authors); M. Djurić, “Aristotelovo etičko učenje s obzirom na istorijsko-etičko narodno predanje” (Aristotle ethics and folk tradition), Glas CLXXXIV (1940); Rastislav Marić, “Tragovi grčkih istoričara u delima Konstantina Filozofa” (Traces of influence of Hellenic historians in Constantine Philosopher’s works), Glas CXC (1946).

8. Srpski Književni glasnik was a leading periodical in Serbia before World War One, and in the period between the two World Wars. It was started again by Bogdan Popović in February 1901, and he was editor until 1905, when he was succeeded by Pavle Popović (1905-1906), and then Jovan Skerlić. From July 1914 until September 1920, the Herald was not published. The new series was started in 1920 by Bogdan Popović and Slobodan Jovanović, who were editors over a certain period. It was published two times a month, in several volumes a year, so until 1914, 32 volumes or 323 issues were published. The contributors were reputable scientists, authors, literary theorists, philosophers, state ministers and diplomats. The important place among them belongs to Greeks as well, the descendants of Greek families, like Kosta Kumanidis, Dragutin Anastasijević, Djordje Mano Zisi, or Greeks interested in Serbian matters like Michael Lascaris.
2. The Image of Greece

2.1. Political Circumstances

Since the contemporaries were better informed about a current political situation through daily newspapers, the contributors of the Herald column, Political Review, Jovan M. Jovanović, Slobodan Jovanović, Kosta Kumanudis, Milan Milojević, Nikola S. Petrović, Svetislav S. Simić and others, dealt with the analysis of historical and political circumstances. Taking into consideration the concept of the periodical, this column was marginal, but due to its contents, the manner of functioning and concern for the interests of the country, it was one of the most read, and viewed from present time, owing to its authors, it was visionary. The materials provided by the column as a reflection of the times, enriched with the archive materials and the knowledge growing clearer with the passage of time, make it a possible base for a short history of Greece in that period. The readers could learn that Greece had three revolutions within the period of twelve years (1909, 1916, 1922), and that in all of them the names of King Constantine and Venizelos were involved. The causes of these conflicts Bogdan Radiča found to be within the Greek soul, where ancient Hellas was deeply rooted, refusing unification of political expression\(^9\), while Jovan M. Jovanović considered the revolutions to be military conspiracies, the result of external influences\(^10\). The organization of the first coup in 1909 aimed at changing Greek attitude towards major powers regarding Crete issue. The other one, in 1916, was instigated to ensure Greece joining the Great Powers. The September 14, 1922 coup was to attract the benevolence of the Great Powers in solving the Thrace issue. Following the articles in the Herald, a reader could find out more about Venizelos and King Constantine, even from opposing opinions. Venizelos was praised for bringing Greece in line with Great Powers, and, on the other hand, criticized for his unrealistic estimate of Greek power and relying on promises of Great Powers, which resulted in damage to the country, which became distant from Balkan politics and caught in disputes of the Great Powers. Until

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Venizelos emerged, Greece was secluded from world events. Only with his skills did it become an important political factor. He made the first efforts to systematize Greek foreign policy. Although he was not the originator of the Balkan Alliance, as claimed by his followers, it was a brave move to join that Alliance. The obstacles in the way to joining that alliance were, according to the author, the distrust towards the Slavdom, great respect for Germany and Greeks detesting undertaking actions. The main objectives of the Balkan Alliance were, when it came to Greece, release from the tutorship of the Great Powers, military action leading to uniting Greece with the parts of Macedonia that were ethnically part of it, as well as maintaining Balkan stability. Following the battle on the Marne, friends of England and France, led by Venizelos, were encouraged and claimed that it was the duty of Greece to join the war on the side of the Great Powers, regardless of the fact that Greece had previously pledged to help Serbia. Venizelos also wanted the Powers to provide guaranties to Greece, if it entered the war, that Bulgaria would not attack it. England promised Greece that if it would join the action, it could count on territorial concessions in Asia Minor. This offer meant the turning point in the history of Greece. It meant transferring overseas the largest part of the material power of Greece, abandoning the policy based on Balkan agreements, and entry into large global conflicts. The opponents of Venizelos claimed that he had accepted the proposal by the Great Powers because his Balkan policy had suffered defeat, Romania having abandoned the Alliance. The King did not accept Venizelos' plan, he did not take the side of the Great Powers, and did not abandon the Balkan policy. Venizelos' plan became the national ideal of the Liberal Party, considering that "the future of Greece lays in Asia Minor, and there bringing back to life the one-time Ionian culture". The issue of Greece and her territories depended on the decision on how to divide Turkey. The Herald analyst did not go along with the opinion of the Western politicians, identifying Venizelos with the Greek people. The events from 1920 showed that the Herald contributor, J. M. Jovanović, had a right attitude. Having accepted Grey's offer in 1915, Venizelos wanted to talk the King to accept the war, and then, later on,

11. S. Simić, "Grčka i svetska politika" (Greece in World Politics), SKG 1921, III/1, pp. 39-51.
to establish balance on the Balkans to the advantage of Greece, based on the success in Asia Minor. Such policy did not have the support of the people. Asia Minor policy was not founded on serious ethnic grounds. The results of such politics were the estrangement of Greece from Balkan policy and entering the whirlpool of conflicts between the Great Powers. Venizelos failed to estimate the power of Greece properly, as well as the Great Powers, guiding Greece into agreements it was not ready for.

King Constantine did not inspire confidence in the contributors of the *Herald*, and failed to inspire their affection like King George I or King George II, following the disregard of the agreement with Serbia, concluded in 1913. However, his military capabilities did not go unnoticed. His exile and the affection of part of the Greek people encouraged a contributor of the *Herald* to write about him with kindness. It was noted that he was brought back into the country by the people and met with great enthusiasm. “The crowds loved him because he was born in Greece, because he carried the name of the last Byzantine ruler from the glorious past ... They loved him because they were aristocratic deep in their souls and saw in him that what was best in the country, most superior of all. They loved him for being the King”. The exiled King enjoyed the affection of the people because the people did not appraise his abilities as a ruler. The Great Powers as well did not insist on his leaving. The leaders of the coup by means of that act wanted to gain favour with the Great Powers, and restore Thrace by diplomatic means, which seemed far easier than organizing resistance with the exhausted and demoralized army. It turned out that the sacrificing of Constantine was in vain, since the Great Powers, taking into account their own interests, offered Thrace to Turkey.

The attention of the *Herald* contributors was attracted by the constitutional reforms as well as by conflicts in the Parliament and changes in state authorities.

2.1.1. *Greece and the Eastern Question*

The whole thematic segment can be seen in the *Herald* devoted to Greece as part of the Eastern Question. Various opinions on the origin of the Eastern Question were mentioned. If it is understood to be conflict between Asia and Europe, then it would go back to pre-Home-
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ric times, since, according to Herodotus, the Trojan War was one of the links in the chain of wars between the two continents. Further bearer of the Eastern Question was Byzantium, then Turkey. Contrary to this opinion, there was a thesis that the origins of the Eastern Question could be dated at the beginning of 17th century, and limited to the problem of Turkey’s survival in the Balkans and its role of defence wall against Russia entering Europe, the Near East and Asia, and on the other hand, referred to the expansion of western powers towards the Middle East. In the Herald several issues of the Eastern Question received special attention, like Crete, Macedonia, Church or Educational. The support was expressed with evident affection to the efforts that Crete, the island of extraordinary geographic and strategic importance, be joined to Greece. Cretan rebels inspired the poet Stevan Kačanski to devote them the poem Panjelinon (Pan-Hellenic).

There in the meadows of Crete
The Crescent fighting the Cross,
The Cross precious and Crete small
Yet shielded by Hellenes brave.
And as the scold of the West
Began the battle uneven,
This handful of great defenders,
Oh, my Serbian brother!

Both in Western and Balkan countries, the bibliography related to the position of Greece in the Eastern Question was extensively and regularly examined. Many books and journals treated this issue, from an objective or one-sided point of view, for scientific or propaganda purpo-sés. Among the highly respected books were the works of Greek authors Ghikas\textsuperscript{12}, Kasasis\textsuperscript{13} and Neoklides\textsuperscript{14}, published outside of Greece. The Herald noted also the lectures held in Belgrade dedicated to a view of Eastern Question by Kosta Kumanudis, “A View of Russia’s and Au-

2.2. Perception of Greece

In addition to objectively reviewing cultural, sociological, political and historic scenery of Greece, special attention was paid to the contributions on the Greece experienced, usually rendered in the form of a letter. They are diverse in style, ranging from essays of indisputable literary value and powerful philosophical intonation, via those where the experiences and images of everyday Greece are emphasized, to the essayistically expert architectural analysis of cities.

Jovan Dučić, infatuated with ancient times, when travelling through Greece, actually travelled through Hellas. He saw it as a poet and a philosopher. Hellas was before his mind’s eye, along with eternal questions by its poets and philosophers who, according to Dučić, ruled the new world as well, and not only the world of Greece, but of Europe as well.

More facts on the life in contemporary Greece were offered by the texts by Jelena Dimitrijević, a poetess and active participant in the suffragette movement. From the letters published in Herald it could be learned that Thessalonica in 1908 was “the most joyful city, a cradle of liberty”. Colourful descriptions of life in Thessalonica, seen through the eyes of an inquisitive woman, including tramway drivers’ strikes, waiters, as well as the cinema in the White Tower, concerning women’s rights.

Greek cities of Thessalonica and Athens and their architectural solutions attracted special attention, and were reviewed in the *Herald* from expert side as well. Architect Pera J. Popović, during his stay in Thessalonica in 1924, critically reviewed the newly erected city, grieving over the architecture that had emphasized oriental atmosphere of the city before World War I. The disasters of war destroyed almost the entire town, and also the church of St. Demetrios, patron saint of this city. Great effort was made on the devastated site for a new town to be erected, with the characteristics of North European cities. The town’s basic structure was determined by the presence of old main roads and monumental buildings not destroyed by fire. Multi-storey buildings were built, mostly in the style of French Renaissance, and a fewer number in Byzantine style. Architectural solutions by experts from the North were not adequate for the climate and the spirit of the town before the War¹⁹.

Much better and more successful architectural solutions, according to Popović, could be seen in Athens. Architectural solution of this city was given by a German, Schubert. Thus the city acquired its specific, recognizable physiognomy: Renaissance architecture was adapted to the Mediterranean climate. Public buildings, located in the city centre, were built in the classic Greek style, while the houses in the suburbs were found to have Mediterranean atmosphere. The author paid special attention to cultural and state institutions, admiring the solutions of the National Museum and Stadium, paying tribute to Greek donors in the country and abroad, without whose financial support the great buildings would not have been erected²⁰.

Greece was experienced in a distinctly different way by Serbian soldiers in the First Balkan War. More was written about it by General Živko G. Pavlović. The Greeks, as allies, assisted the Serbian army²¹. The siege of Skadar was undertaken with Greek assistance, thus ending the First Balkan War. In the *Herald* special attention was paid to a chapter in Greek-Serbian relations during World War I, when Serbian Army withdrew before the more powerful enemy and found themselves on Greek soil. Corfu was then the heaven for many, and today it is a cult

²¹. Z. Pavlović, “Advance of Our Troops through Northern Albania and Exit to Adriatic Sea in November 1912”, *SKG* 1924, XI/3, pp. 184-188.
Regardless of sporadic discord and breaks in relations, Serbs and Greeks could rely on one another. Serbs expressed their sympathies once again, according to the notes in the Herald, after the earthquake on 22 June 1902 that devastated Thessalonica, through organizing charity concerts. Petar Janković, later assistant to Jovan Cvijić, was sent to Thessalonica in order to work on examining the causes of the earthquake. His conclusions were met with recognition of the leading world seismologists.

2.2.1. Overview of Greek Literature

In addition to closely observing the political turmoil in Greece, the Herald stood out from the other periodicals intended for general public in that it brought studies and translations of ancient Greek literature and philosophy, works of finest Serbian Hellenists. The Herald was exceptional as well in that it was the first periodical in Serbia to publish the translations of the poetry by Modern Greek poets Kavafis, Varnalis and Uranis. The translator, Bogdan Radiča, cultural attaché in Yugoslav consulate in Athens, selected four anthological Kavafis’ poems Scent, Old Man, Town, and Wax Candle, while Varnalis was represented by the poem Abandoned by Destiny and Ouranis by My Life and Intermezzo. The translations are almost literal, so the rhyme and rhythm of the originals were not transposed, but the thought and message were present. B. Radica was the author of the article on development of Modern Greek literature. The facts that B. Radica offered were informative enough to gain insight in the course of Greek literature, as was already noted by M. Lascaris in a review of his22.

The first translation of a novel from Modern Greek received attention in the Herald. It was a book by D. Vikelas, Lukis Laras, published by Srpska književna zadruga (Serbian Literary Society) in its 22nd cycle, as the seventh book for entertainment and moral. The wish was that this cycle, following the end of Balkan Wars, be up to date. Therefore it was decided that one work from the allied countries’ literature be published: Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece. Vikelas’ work Lukis Laras was

chosen from Greek literature. This story from Greek was captivating with its warmth and high values unspoiled by the war, and was well received in world literary circles. Thus the Zadruga for the first time published one entire work of Modern Greek literature, translated by D. Anastasijević, a well-known historian specialist of Byzantinology of Greek origin.

The reviews of the events in Modern Greek literature, as well as translations published by the Herald, signify the very beginning of learning about the creative opus of Modern Greece.

The wealth of texts and contributions in Serbian periodicals referring to Greek politics, history or literature, contribute to the better understanding of this close country. Its legacy was by far more studied than the legacies of other Balkan countries. Greece offered more, the entireness of ancient Greek and Byzantine heritage, which was interwoven in the very fabric of Serbian cultural heritage. The presence of Greek subjects in the magazine for a wide circle of readers like Serbian Literary Herald, also had a political background. This magazine was founded at the culmination of the Eastern Question. One forgotten founder of the Herald, Svetislav Simić, understood this question as a cultural issue, and so in the programme note emphasized that Serbia should be leading the cultural competition, first and foremost with its Balkan rivals, and learn more about them.