

## ***Book Reviews***

Jane K. Cowan (ed.), *Macedonia. The Politics of Identity and Difference*, (Pluto Press: London - Sterling, Virginia, 2000) pp. xviii+166, Lists of Maps, Figures and Tables, List of Abbreviations, Preface, A Note on names and terms, Maps (3), Contributors, Index.

Some English and American publishers of recent studies on the Balkans have chosen a picture with an "Ottoman touch" for their cover page or jacket illustration: a mosque, a bazaar, armed locals with "traditional" costumes, kilts, woollen cloaks, and rustic boots. Apparently Orientalism still sells in the West even in the days of postmodernism. Pluto Press publishers and Jane Cowan opted for a fez-wearing elderly man walking speedily, hands crossed on his back, along what appears to be an unpaved wet town street surrounded by low provincial houses. The man's face is not visible but he must be very worried judging by his lowered head. Had it not been for the two Renault 4Ls coming from the opposite side, the reader would have been unable to venture a guess as to the location of this Muslim neighbourhood was. This is by all means an excellent shot in the deem light of dusk and indeed a surprising choice for an edited volume with five out of its seven articles dealing with Northern Greece i.e. the Greek part of Macedonia.

Considering its title, Jane K. Cowan's Greek-based expertise might constitute a good reason for this uneven distribution of the topics, yet, I think, not the primary reason. For various reasons, and not simply academic ones, most scholars who have recently focused on Macedonia (at least those who made a name as "Macedonologists"), have been attracted by Greek Macedonia, especially its northwestern part. The prefecture of Florina, in particular, has become a kind of Trobrian island, an ethnographic laboratory for 20th century European scholars. Indeed, the Greek flavour of the book becomes obvious starting from the informative note on names and terms. The editor is fully aware of all the versions and nuances of self-identification in Greek Macedonia and its diaspora but does not go into the same depth when it comes to similar terms used in FYROM —even less in Bulgaria. If this book is about Greece, then this should be openly acknowledged so that, at the very least, librarians may be able to classify it.

It goes without saying that one could hardly expect to find the final verdict on the Macedonian Question in a book on the politics of identity prepared

almost exclusively by social anthropologists. Jane Cowan and Keith Brown, who wrote the introduction —by far the best piece in the book— are well aware of the inherent complexities. While this remains a highly contested issue, their own goals included the exploration of “the dynamics of ‘identity’ and ‘difference’ as social processes”, “to highlight ethnicity as constructed, fluid and variably salient, rather than essential, fixed and already given”. They both know, however, that the only link between the seven papers is an understanding of Macedonia “as a site ... of processes underway, whose qualities inhere not so much in themselves as in the ways in which they are seen and presented” (pp. 2-3). Yet, they hope that by exploring “the multiplicity of inflections through which Macedonia is rendered”, they will contribute in the elimination of ideological barriers which have functioned so far as fixed national categories that have been raised by unproven assumptions.

The contribution of each of the seven papers towards this goal varies. Riki van Boeschoten’s work is as close as one can get to the core. She investigates the conditions under which ethnic difference matters or, to be more precise, why it still matters. She focuses on the consequences of the cultural division of labour and argues correctly, paraphrasing Stuart Hall (as L. Danforth has done in the past), that eventually “ethnicity has become the modality in which class is lived” (p. 355). However her sound theoretical arguments are not sufficiently substantiated and empirically grounded, nor could they be. In a way, ethnic distinction is taken for granted by van Boeschoten at “the beginning of time;” what follows is a “blending procedure” and a variable “re-emergence” determined by geography and time. Yet statistical data relating ethnic background to education, profession etc. are hard to find and this is unrelated to the deficiencies of the Greek bureaucracy. If class is experienced as ethnicity, then social mobility affects ethnic self-determination. Since this is true for both past and present generations, any pattern relating employment to “ratsa” (“race”) is hardly quantifiable or credible. How can we count, for example, how many grocers are Greek in Florina, if running a grocery turned your whole family Greek in 1850? Had van Boeschoten applied her reasoning to the study of periods prior to the interwar years, they would have been equally valid. Perhaps such a venture would have been more productive in clarifying the notion of ethnicity, as opposed to comparing a single village in Central Greek Macedonia to an entire prefecture in Western Greek Macedonia. The differences she has observed between the two regions are only due to the demographic disaster, which struck the western provinces during the 1940s. It seems to me that what is left of the villages in the Western highlands of Greek Macedonia leaves little room for retrospective comparisons.

Piero Vereni zooms on the individual level and shows that in matters of belonging, decision-making can be a very complex issue. A Slav-speaking farmer with elementary Greek education in Western Greek Macedonia self-identifies, in a very special way that disregards current ethnic distinctions, as a "Greek Macedonian". In his notebooks, Vereni's central character juxtaposes Greek national history to his own family history trying to fit himself as naturally as possible within the cutting edges of competing nationalisms. Such individual strategies of identification, although not irrelevant to socio-economic parameters, certainly complicate the use of class analysis or any other deterministic approach of self-identification. It looks as if some people, I suspect far more than we think, create theirs and others future considering not only their present conditions but also selective memories or reflections of their families past conditions. To me it looks as if Vereni has successfully (and literally) reached the bottom of the debate over identities in Macedonia, that is the individual.

Iakovos Michailidis' paper, written in a fairly epic style, covers the same topic. World War II Slav-speaking partisans in Greece were inspired, he argues, by the early 20th century revolutionary tradition, as it was experienced by their own family or village. The same militant tradition has survived in FYROM national historiography and in the policies of the various refugee and diaspora organizations. Personal, family and other memories have been amalgamated with numerous rounds of party politics into a useful national capital: the heritage of "Aegean Macedonia". The importance of this capital for nation building for both Greece and FYROM is well known and understood. But it is the bitter memory of defeat, exile and refuge, which haunts these individuals and renders the much needed historical reconciliation almost impossible.

Loring Danforth's contribution explains how these debates over identity evolve in the Florina diaspora communities and stresses that transitions to new identities are experienced as a kind of religious conversion. Although emigrants in Australia, unlike Vereni's subject in Florina, do not venture to reassemble history, they develop their own theories about identities and belonging trying to explain and justify their own history and their final choice. As in the previous two papers, ethnic affiliation is the outcome of personal choices rather than common cultural bonds. Multicultural policies overseas encourage and facilitate the process of self-ascription to (or rather the formation of) ethnic groups, a phenomenon which can not be understood outside the context of the competing nationalisms of FYROM and Greece.

The impact of the social environment on ethnic relations is also stressed

by Jonathan Schwartz. Very much like in Australia, emigrants arriving from the same state (FYROM in this occasion) in Copenhagen tended to drift apart and shift identities. The tolerance of the Danish society allowed both Albanian- and Slav-Macedonians to remain distant from each other and focus on their minor or major differences in contrast to the customary friendliness dictated by their next-of-keen experience in the course of everyday live back home. But, on the other hand, one could add that in the light of the recent events (spring 2001), "ethnic cocooning" in Copenhagen is perhaps preferable to intimate familiarity, if the latter is to bring so much contempt as it currently does "back home" in Tetovo.

Reading Keith Brown's paper next, one understands fully why "interfacing" in the multiethnic homeland (i.e. FYROM) seems to be collapsing instead of producing "interactions" (cf. p. 119). The issue is also touched by Schwartz, who calls the phenomenon "multi-ethnocentricism" rather than multiculturalism (p. 113), but Brown expands this argument to the deficiencies and dangers of multiculturalism as practice in FYROM (or rather co-existence without interaction), drawing sufficient supporting material from the party politics of nationalism and the "symbolic economics".

Such deficiencies can also be traced in the Greek perceptions of multiculturalism during the 1990s in relation to cultural performances and with regard to the arrival of hundreds of thousands of economic migrants. This is discussed by Georgios Agelopoulos, who is focusing on Thessaloniki, a city which has allegedly experienced successfully (and will probably re-experience) multiculturalism in its long history as a major Balkan urban centre. Agelopoulos explains that "defining Ottoman Salonica as a multicultural society implies projecting our own modern standards onto a society that was organized on a different basis" (p. 143). Cultural pluralism in its many forms is one thing but multiculturalism as a political project which actively encourages the reproduction of cultures (like in Melbourne or Copenhagen) is another. Moreover, it is impossible —to answer Agelopoulos' rhetorical but politically loaded question— to recognise the existence of "others" without an essentialist definition of identity (p. 150). The same negative answer holds for Greece and FYROM, although in the former, revising the ethnic model of the state is a challenge for politicians seeking to meet the needs of immigrants, while in the latter is a matter of existence or partition.

Juxtaposing individual decisions and theories of belonging to various state performances of alleged or real multiculturalism in Greece, FYROM, Australia, and Denmark is indeed crucial for challenging all the accumulated and irreconcilable "truths" told about Macedonia. But it looks as if we have already

gone beyond this stage. Indeed, most of the papers in this book draw too much from earlier works by the same authors —some even draw heavily from these works (not to mention how much work is not acknowledged or ignored). In their introduction, Cowan and Brown link the effectiveness of their deconstructive move to a set of extremely important questions about power: Who, how, and why benefits “by making an ethnic logic appear natural and inevitable”? (p. 22). However, with the notable exception of Brown and Agelopoulos, such questions are hardly touched upon in this book, at least not outside the brilliant introduction. Perhaps it is time to consider them more seriously in the light of other disciplines as well, instead of recapitulating and rephrasing what we already know. Too much ink has been spilled to define ethnic groups and even more blood to define their boundaries. It is time to move on.

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*War over Kosovo. Politics and Strategy in a Global Age*, Andrew J. Bacevich & Eliot A. Cohen (eds) New York: Columbia University Press, 2001, pp. 223.

The Kosovo war, like the Gulf war that preceded it, was widely transmitted by television channels throughout the world. The optical part was more or less similar everywhere, but the narrative differed. The wide consensus that the narrative of the western media forged among western audiences has left regional (Southeast European) views unexamined. This first real war ever to have been waged by NATO, has long since ceased to concern the media but has gradually generated scholarly debate that often questions the initial consensus.

Most of the contributions to this collection of scholarly articles do not place Kosovo within a “broader context” (p. xiii) as the introduction promises, but deal mainly with the impact of the event on US strategy, war posture, civil-military relations and morality (which has a wider connotation). William Arkin embarks on a critical analysis of the air campaign, Eliot Cohen points out America’s new approach to war, James Kurth sees the conflict as a paradigm of a grand strategy encouraged by the end of the cold war, Alberto Coll discusses the moral questions raised by this war and Michael Vickers, unlike Cohen, believes that “Operation Allied Force” did not constitute a break with the cold war tradition of warfare. Only Anatol Lieven leaves