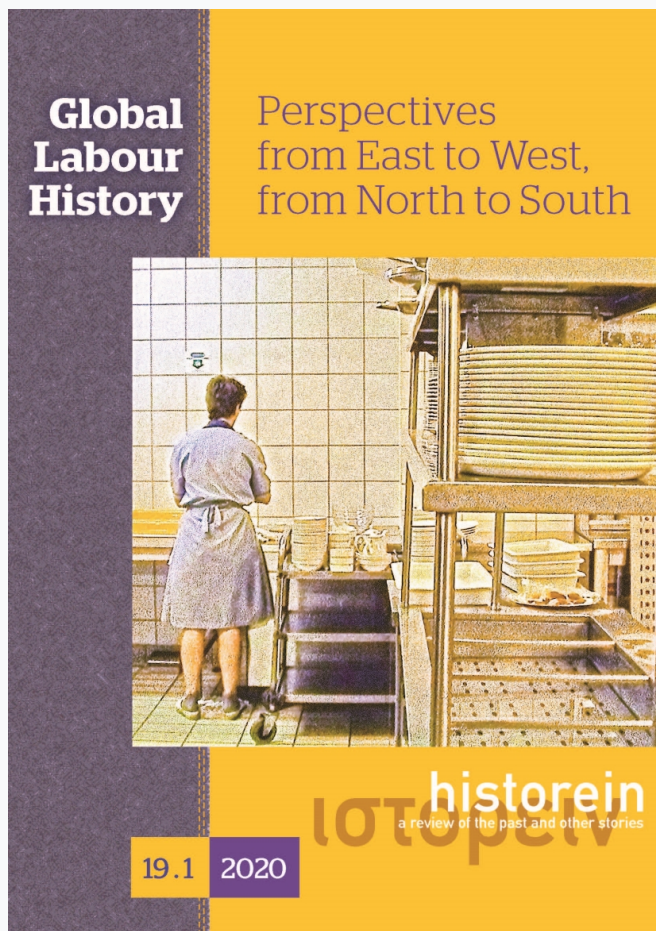


Historein

Vol 19, No 1 (2020)

Global Labour History: Perspectives from East to West, from North to South



Dimitris Stamatopoulos, ed., Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire

Leonidas Moiras

doi: [10.12681/historein.19333](https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.19333)

Copyright © 2020, Leonidas Moiras



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

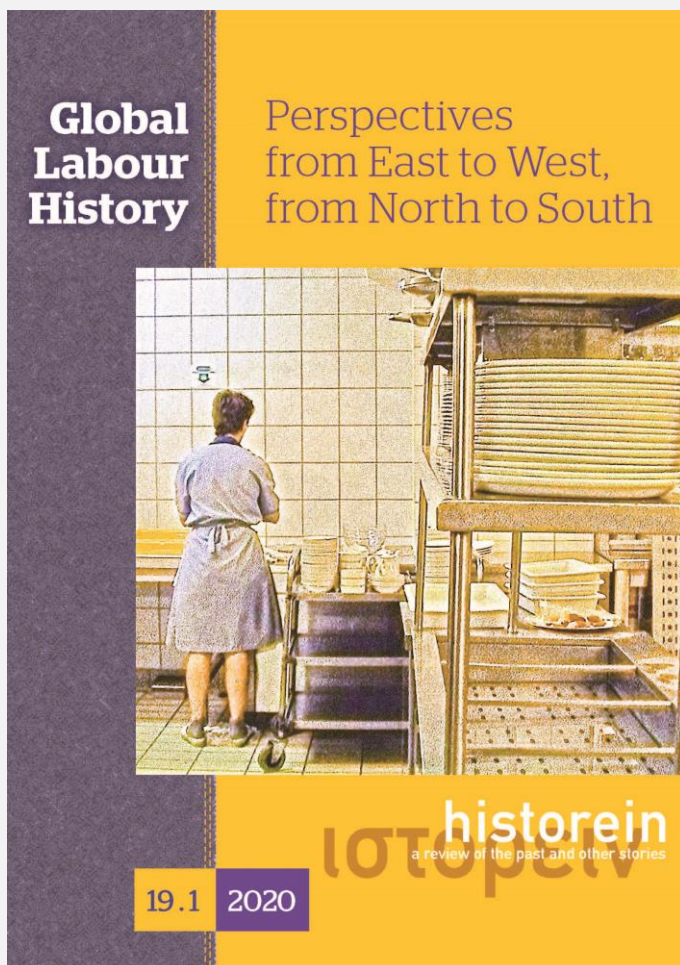
To cite this article:

Moiras, L. (2020). Dimitris Stamatopoulos, ed., Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire. *Historein*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.19333>

Historein

Vol 19, No 1 (2020)

Historein 19/1 (2020)



Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.)
Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire

Leonidas Moiras

doi: 10.12681/historein.19333

To cite this article:

Moiras, Leonidas. 2020. "Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.), *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire*". *Historein* 19 (1).
<https://doi.org/10.12681/historein.19333>.

Dimitris Stamatopoulos (ed.)

Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire

Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2015. 3 vols. 710 pp.

Leonidas Moiras

Democritus University of Thrace

Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire, edited by Dimitris Stamatopoulos, is a powerfully argued, three-volume product of comparative historiographical approaches concerning the awakening and the growth of the rival Balkan nationalist movements within the Ottoman framework. The ambition of this collective is to initiate a new dialogue among scholars about nationalism in the Balkans and to highlight the common aspects and underpinnings of these movements. Thus, the principle aim of this series is not only to explain the various historical processes of the growing Balkan nationalisms and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, but to initiate and reinforce the dialogue among academics of different disciplines, since the convergence of Balkan and Ottoman studies must be considered as a prerequisite for transgressing the stereotypes of nationalist historiography in the Balkans. Based on new theories on the construction of historical knowledge, the outcome is a welcome addition to the very short list of collective works.

The majority of the articles are from the proceedings of two international conferences held at the University of Macedonia to mark the centenaries of the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the Balkan Wars in 1912–13. In his short but insightful introduction, Stamatopoulos describes the peregrinations of historiography in the Balkans as it moved from Orientalism to ethnocentric narrations and comparative history. The articles in the three volumes do not follow a chronological order but have been divided into thematic units for easier access to various topics.

The first volume, entitled *National Movements and Representations* includes 15 articles that discuss national movements during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this volume, a number of Greek scholars traces the new realities and the policy applied by the Greek government after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century. The second volume, *Political Violence and the Balkan Wars*, incorporates ten contributions on rival Balkan national movements and the peaking of political violence that culminated in the final division of Balkan territories after the Balkan Wars. *The Young Turk Revolution and Ethnic Groups*, the final volume, includes 12 articles and is dedicated to the

evolution of the national movements in the Ottoman Empire through the Young Turk Revolution and the multidimensional relationship between the Young Turks and specific ethnic groups in the Balkans.

The first volume opens with an article by Miroslav Hroch, based on his keynote speech at the Balkan Wars centenary conference. Hroch enriches his three-stage scheme for the evolution of nationalism with a comparison of national movements in the multiethnic Ottoman, Russian and Austrian empires. Raymond Detrez uses the small provincial Macedonian town of Ohrid as a case study and argues that it is awkward for historians to depict a clear-cut portrayal of Ottoman identity in late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth century Balkan society. In her contribution, Evguenia Davidova questions the prevailing scholarly discussions on the concept of the Balkan bourgeoisie within national (Bulgarian, Greek, Serbian) and multiethnic Ottoman frameworks, arguing that most interpretations of the social and political change that occurred throughout the Balkan long nineteenth century are based on the notion of the bourgeoisie. Charalampos Minaoglou's analysis focuses on the political behaviour of the Phanariots during the late eighteenth century and concludes that "in the Phanariot world existed a variety of political identity" (73). According to Ștefan Petrescu, in the beginning of the nineteenth century many southern Danubian merchants migrated to the Principalities, where they enjoyed protégé privileges with passports obtained from the consulates of the Great Powers. Greek independence stimulated identity transformations within the community of Orthodox Christians in the Ottoman Empire, since a large number of Ottoman subjects obtained Greek passports. The Ottomans were concerned with the fact and sought solutions in accordance with international law. Athanasia-Marina Tsetlaka's article aims to explain how the rise of Greek nationalism had an impact on the lives of the Greek-speaking Muslim inhabitants (Vallaades) of Anaselitsa and Grevena, a remote district in Western Macedonia. The socioeconomic advantage of the local Christians and the development of Greek nationalism triggered the reaction of the Muslim notables, who tried to push the members of their community into a more conservative behaviour pattern. The establishment of Turkish schools and mosques was the decisive step through which the Vallaades became attached to a strong ethnic and religious identity. Stamatopoulos' article is a well-documented attempt to reconstruct the ousting of Neophytos of Byzantium from Thessaloniki in 1872. He provides an overview of the intracommunity conflict and struggle for the communal representation between different social strata within the framework of a nationalisation of the Orthodox communities, claiming that the Thessaloniki example is applicable to other cases. Nicole Immig explains the gradual vanishing of Muslim-Ottoman architecture in Thessaly and Arta, after the annexation of these regions by Greece in 1881. The decisive factor for the transformation of the urban architectural landscape was the "de-Ottomanisation" project pursued by the Greek state. Ioannis Glavinias examines the relations between the Christian and Muslim

inhabitants of the Greek “New Lands” during the turbulent 1912–23 period. The relations were characterised by mutual hostility derived from intense nationalism, but also from personal and social factors. Despite the war conflicts, the author claims that relations were also characterised by harmonious coexistence and argues that the conditions of symbiosis created during the Ottoman era did not totally collapse after the Balkan Wars. Eleni Kyramargiou’s contribution deals with the de-Ottomanisation and Hellenisation project pursued by the Greek state, which was an attempt to “re-establish the old names of Greece” in Macedonia. The establishment of the Committee for the Study of the Toponyms in Greece in 1909, as well as the annexation of Epirus and Macedonia in 1913 and of Thrace in 1920 by the Greek state, triggered important changes regarding local toponyms. John Mazis reevaluates the political ideas of Ion Dragoumis, a prominent figure in Greek nationalism and proto-fascism. According to Mazis, Dragoumis’ ideas were shaped, to a large degree, by Friedrich Nietzsche. He believed in the superiority of the Greek people and their “historical destiny” to lead the other nations in the Balkans and the Middle East. He also envisioned the establishment of a new Greek state, which would be nondemocratic and governed by the rules of a new socioeconomic system. Ümit Eser provides an excellent analysis of the rise and development of Bulgarian nationalism according to the Hrochian model and discusses the significance of *Under the Yoke*, Ivan Vazov’s most famous historical novel of Bulgarian nationalism, as a product of the nation-building process in Bulgaria. Francesco La Rocca’s contribution deals with the interpretation of Gjergj Fishta’s epic poem *Lahuta e Malcis*, a fascinating political synthesis of the Ottoman past with the new political situation following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire since it portrays of Albanian community in all its complexity. Elias G. Skoulidas detects the ways the ethnic “other” is created inside a Balkan nation-state and the role of the intelligentsia and high-ranking state officers. To do so, he focuses on discourses on Albanians during the age of nationalism in the Greek kingdom. The first volume concludes with Aytül Tamer Torun’s study of the work of three Balkan-origin Turkish intellectuals (Yahya Kemal, Yaşar Nabi and Necati Cumalı). According to the author, these Turkish scholars were affected by national and international politics and their Balkan imagination metamorphosed in the context of the evaluation of Turkish politics.

The second volume opens with Vemund Aarbakke’s article about the repercussions of the Balkan Wars at the local level. Aarbakke examines the Greek–Bulgarian struggle for the allegiance of the Orthodox Christian population and discusses the case of the Pomaks, where “national” and religious criteria came to a confrontation over the identity of these populations. Tasos Kostopoulos describes the horror that revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence between rival Christian communities produced in late Ottoman Macedonia. The contributor also indicates the fact that a considerable part of the local people capitalised on the presence of the armed bands to promote their individual or collective interests. Fuat Dündar’s article is an attempt to highlight the importance of casualty statistics in Balkan ethnic conflicts during the nation-building process. The author

uses a statistical table of the total number of political assassinations during the implementation of the Mürzsteg program from 1903 to 1909 to illustrate the importance of the utilisation of population statistics. Cengiz Yolcu investigates the perception of the “atrocious” enemy during the Balkan Wars from the Ottoman point of view, using patriotic and nationalistic poems, theatre plays, novels and propaganda photographs. Igor Despot discusses the role and the activities of Hristofor Hesapchiev, the Bulgarian army representative in Thessaloniki, who was in favour of a compromise with the Greeks on the eve of the Second Balkan War in 1913. Leonidas Rados explores the sphere of public opinion in Romania during the Balkan Wars. Using a plethora of press reports and memoirs, he proves that the media manipulation of public opinion caused a gradual change in the attitude of the Romanian population and authorities and an almost universal demand for Romania to enter the war. Keith Brown’s article explores how trauma travels through oral history and other testimonies in the aftermath of periods of mass violence, arguing for the need for a new theoretical and historical approach to traumatic past that could redirect traumatic history towards forms of resolution. Karl Kaser claims that the Balkan Wars marked for the Balkan countries a transition from traditional forms of visual coverage to documentary media that were about to dominate the twentieth century: press photography and the documentary film. This visual revolution was excessively used for propaganda purposes in the Balkan countries. Michel De Dobbeleer describes Leon Trotsky’s correspondence from the Balkan Wars with comments and observations of the famous revolutionary theorist about the national and social conflicts in the Balkans. The second volume’s last contribution is Ante Bralić’s article about the dilemmas, limitations and scope of the Kingdom of Dalmatia during the Balkan Wars.

The third volume opens with Evangelhos Chekimoglou’s essay about the impact of the CUP regime on the structure of the Greek community of Thessaloniki. The author describes the different perceptions of the Young Turk Revolution among the various social strata of the Greek Orthodox community and investigates its attitude towards the leaders of the CUP, the Patriarchate and the Greek state. Fujinami Nobuyoshi sheds light on the privilege question in the context of multiethnic and multireligious Ottoman constitutionalism, arguing that the Greeks and the other non-Muslim millets won the “game” of the privilege question until 1911 but the subsequent Libyan, Balkan and First World wars eliminated every possible compromise between the Young Turk constitutionalist project and the demands of the various millets. In her article, Ileana Moroni reevaluates the concept of Ottomanism during the Second Constitutional Era. In order to conceptualise new versions of Ottomanism that combine elements of the new national Ottoman loyalty with the particular preoccupations and goals of each group, she coins new terms such as Helleno-Ottomanism, Bulgaro-Ottomanism and Turco-Ottomanism and explains the failure of the Young Turk experiment to synthesise all these different versions into a uniform

Ottomanism. Euripides P. Georganopoulos examines the policy of the Young Turks towards the Greek-speaking population of Pontus in the elections of 1908 and 1912, while Rena Molho's article deals with the impact of the Young Turk movement on the Jews of Thessaloniki. In her analysis, Molho describes how the Jewish community in Thessaloniki organised nationally and created the first Zionist organisation in order to defend their rights against the Greeks. Tina Georgieva discusses the transformation of Russia's Balkan policy after the Young Turk Revolution and the following annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Yura Konstantinova and Zorka Parvanova's articles shed light on the attitudes of the Ottoman Bulgarians towards the Young Turk Revolution. Two contributions (one written by Ilir Kalemaj and Konstantinos Giakoumis and the other by James N. Tallon) correlate the Young Turk movement with the growth of Albanian nationalism and its oscillation between imperial loyalty and provincial autonomy. Duygu Coşkuntuna deals with the perceptions of male CUP members of women as mothers in close relationship with the concept of homeland, symbols, collaborators or aliens. The third volume concludes with an article by Vemund Aarbakke, Vasileios Koutsoukos and Georgios Niarchos on the "experiment" of the Independent Republic of Gumuldjina in 1913 as a new test for Young Turk policymakers.

To sum up, *Balkan Nationalism(s) and the Ottoman Empire* is a highly competent collective attempt to reevaluate important aspects of the Balkan past in the era of growing nationalisms that culminated in the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. This successful endeavour will remain a standard work of reference on the subject for quite some time.