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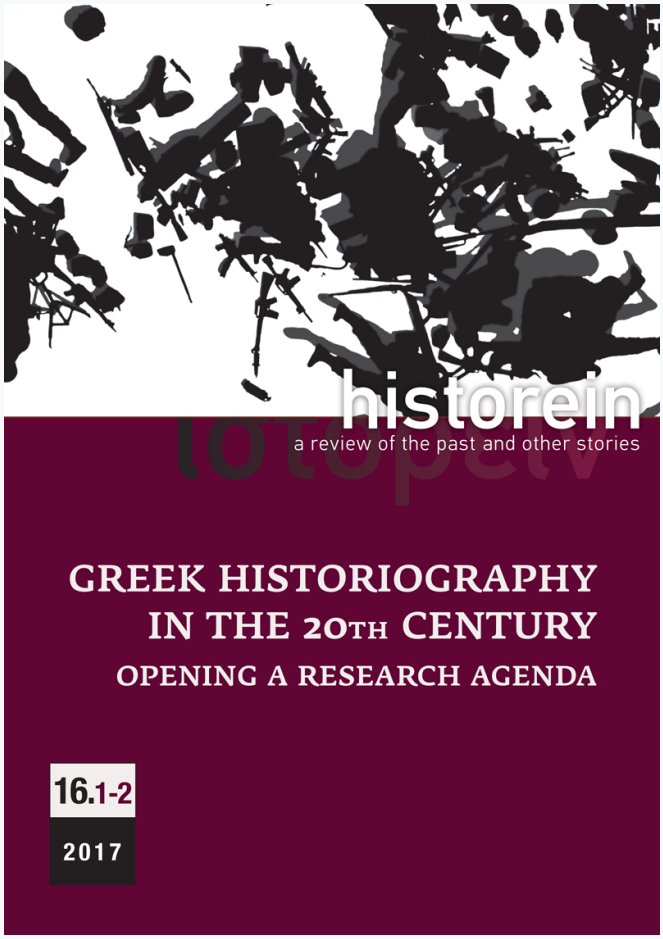

Review of Sevasti Trubeta (ed.), Special issue, Zeitschrift für Balkanologie 50/1 (2014)

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Sevasti Trubeta (ed.)

Special issue, *Zeitschrift für Balkanologie* 50/1 (2014)

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"Social network" is a valuable analytical category for the social and historical studies of the last 25 years or so, describing the extent and complexity of multifarious relationships between various actors in an emerging globalised space.[1] Employing "network" as the central concept of their essays, the six contributors to this volume – which resulted from the conference "Mainstream and Dissident Scientific Networks between the Balkans and Germany" that took place at the Humboldt University in Berlin in September 2012 – examine numerous contacts and interactions between scientists from the Balkans and Germany in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. "Scientists" is used here in a broad sense and includes scholars from the humanities as well. Through the network analysis, the authors present the synergy of science with politics during a period of critical political changes and social transformation in the Balkans.[2] Taking into consideration crucial shifts in the scientific enterprise as well, they offer insight into multiple aspects of the scientific phenomenon in the diverse space of the Balkans.

Although the authors use "network" in different ways, they take care to emphasise its multifaceted structure that enabled mobility and interaction between scientific actors as well as the exchange of scientific knowledge and ideas. Furthermore, they regard networks as part of the broader institutional context of science, justifying historiographical approaches about the importance of institutions for the social and professional organisation of science.[3] As presented in the articles in the volume, scientists and knowledge moved between German and Balkan universities, institutes, academies, scientific societies, congresses, conferences, summer schools and journals. The manifold pursuits and complex relationships of scholars in these institutions demonstrate how essential they were for the circulation of scientific knowledge and the formation of scientific communities in southeastern Europe.

Georgeta Nazarska employs prosopographical and social network analysis in order to identify the scientific networks between Bulgaria and Germany in which Bulgarian female scholars were involved from the 1920s to the 1950s. The author underlines the significance of these networks for the mobility of women involved in graduate and postgraduate studies and their role in the processes of knowledge exchange with Germany. Nazarska's analysis, however, is not static. It involves theoretical concerns from gender studies so as to highlight the professional marginalisation and restrictions imposed on female scientists, under the light of the power relationships that gender hierarchy has created and integrated.[4]

A major consideration of the volume is to bring to the fore the interaction of science and scientists with politics. The use of science in state policies, the interplay of science with nationalism – one of the dominant ideologies in the modern world – as well as the role of politics in the institutionalisation and professionalisation of scientific disciplines are some of the issues touched on by the contributors, indicating how inseparable science and modernity are.

The broad field of medicine receives the most attention in the volume. Sevasti Trubeta points out that the social history of medicine has shown that medical discourse is a constitutive

element of modern society and that medicalisation has emerged as "regimes of truth" and – ultimately – power relationships, according to Foucault (85). Thus, it is not accidental that medicine has proved to be a privileged discipline for researchers to explore how the authority of science was merged with politics and policies. Trubeta examines the attempts of the German-educated gynaecologist Nikolaos Louros in the 1930s to affiliate with the prominent Kaiser Wilhelm Society in order to promote his own research and make his professional mark. Louros was determined to advance his arguments about the establishment of a gynaecological institution in Athens in different political environments, by stressing either social needs, such as those of women of the middle and lower social strata to have access to free medical treatment, or cultural "necessities", such as the propaganda of German culture in Greece right before the Nazis' accession to power. Louros' involvement in the sole eugenics society of postwar Greece is evidence of the political dimensions of his medical work.

Racial hygiene, the counterpart of eugenics in Germany, was indeed a fertile ground for the interplay between science and politics.[5] Christian Promitzer applies the Foucauldian notion of "biopolitics" and traces the scientific networks of racial anthropology and racial hygiene in Bulgaria, which were active in two different political periods. The first extends from the establishment of an autonomous Bulgarian state in 1878 to the early twentieth century, when Bulgarian anthropologists and doctors encouraged anthropological research as a vehicle for the consolidation of Bulgarian national identity. The second existed in the interwar period, where Promitzer acknowledges a "culture of defeat" that flourished both in Bulgaria and Germany after their defeat in the First World War. This cultural context favoured the rise of racial hygiene as a field which claimed scientific authority when arguing that it could solve the various social problems and restore the nation's prestige in the international arena. The fact that Bulgarian scientists in the 1930s knew everything about the German theories and practices of racial hygiene, while Germans did not have the slightest idea of Bulgarian scientists' activities, is approached by Promitzer as proof of a one-way contact, which is an interesting aspect of scientific networking.

Theories of racial hygiene appealed also to Konstantinos Gardikas, the founder of criminology in Greece, who sought to apply some of them in the Greek society from the 1920s to 1960s through his key positions in the state mechanism, namely as professor of criminology at the University of Athens and as director of the forensic department of the Greek police. Kostas Georgoulas revisits the hagiography of Gardikas with regard to his liberal views, as these have been accentuated by his biographers, and underlines Gardikas' adherence to scientific theories and practices which were connected to Nazism and which offered him the possibility of a professional career. However, instead of making a mere "revelation" about Gardikas' political stance and ideology, Georgoulas offers a much more elaborate view of the formation of scientific disciplines, as the result of the interaction between political conditions and intrascientific processes. The major question arising from his approach is: could a hopeful criminologist of the 1920s and 1930s become a professional expert without adopting theories and practices of racial hygiene, given that the very discipline of criminology at that time was crucially influenced by such theories and ideas?

The role of scientific networks in the shaping of scientific communities and disciplines is also acknowledged by Maria Zarifi, who explores

the efforts of the emerging Greek medical community in the 1830s. Zarifi clearly shows that as the newborn Greek state required qualified doctors in order to meet urgent social needs, the German-educated medical community was organised primarily around multiple German-like institutions (University of Athens, societies, committees and periodicals) with the intention of defining the basic lines of their profession. Zarifi brings to the fore notions of civilisation and nationalism in the public discourse of doctors – in accordance with the political and ideological context of nineteenth-century Greece – as a tool for their social legitimisation and professionalisation.

The concept of "scientific network" in the early nineteenth century, though, is not the same as that for the twentieth century. The emergence of internationalism in the late nineteenth century and its consolidation as an ideological movement with its own networks in the early twentieth century not only accelerated scientific communication and information but also led to the standardisation in the sciences and the diffusion of policies, resulting in more numerous, more complex and extended scientific networks.[6] The authors of the volume engage the transnational perspective in their analysis. Trubeta explicitly indicates this point, by discussing how health issues in southeastern Europe were negotiated in transnational networks of experts in the early twentieth century, with regard to ideological agendas and policies supported by various actors, such as intellectuals, state authorities, political organisations and others.

Nenad Stefanov argues that a transnational approach widens the potential to investigate networks as it reaches "beyond the limiting frame of the national domain" and underscores motives and strategies of the actors participating in these networks (62). He follows the scientific networks of the Yugoslav community of historians from the 1950s to the Yugoslav War in 1991. As he argues, in the 1950s and 1960s, when Yugoslav historians were working within the historiographical context of national history, they developed "fragile" networks with historians of the other Balkan states and Eastern Europe. On the contrary, in the late 1960s and 1970s the Yugoslav historical community, which was critical of Tito's regime and independent of its official academic institutions, created more firm scientific networks with western philosophers of critical theory, by establishing the renowned journal *Praxis*. Although adverse to nationalist ideas, some of them shifted to nationalism in the late 1980s, developing further networks and functioning as spokesmen for the national interests in the turbulent period of the Yugoslav Wars.

As it emerges in this volume, an integral feature of scientific networks of the Balkan area was the efforts of scientific actors to create local scientific communities and legitimise themselves as professionals. Not only were such efforts based on the communication and cooperation with German scientists, but also German sciences functioned as an example for the organisation of local scientific communities. In other words, Germany appears as a "centre" in an unspoken discussion about science in the centre and periphery, whereas Balkan states are treated as an – admittedly fragmented – European periphery which deals with the centre in one way or another.

At this point, some essays in the volume could have conversed with the historiographical approach promoted by the Science and Technology in the European Periphery (STEP) group, comprising historians of science and technology who for over 15 years have examined various processes of scientific activity in the Euro-

pean periphery, reflecting on the relationship between centres and peripheries and on these concepts per se. Drawing on cultural studies of the 1980s, STEP has challenged the simplistic notion of the automatic "transfer" and passive "introduction" of scientific knowledge from centres to peripheries, and has suggested "appropriation" as a key concept to denote the process in which local actors participate actively in the transformation of scientific knowledge and its creative integration in the local context, producing thus a new form of scientific knowledge. Such an approach explicitly avoids the dichotomy between "progressive" centre and "backward" periphery, which reproduces hegemonic ideologies.[7] Trubeta makes a similar point when favouring a multilateral approach to scientific networking and rejecting the notion of bilateral interactions between scientific elites of centres and peripheries that conceals the picture of a backward nation-state (in the European periphery) that strives to introduce scientific knowledge (from the European centre) in order to modernise.

The volume could have perhaps conveyed a more flexible – rather than fixed – image of the scientific enterprise in Germany. STEP historians have argued that the so-called "centres" were also changing in respect to the scientific phenomenon. In other words, not only were the Balkans in a process of scientific making, but Germany was as well, as the history of German eugenics shows.[8] Therefore, the examination of scientific networks between these two regions could also be used to enrich the picture of the German science and scientific communities. Georgoulas actually attempts such an approach by demonstrating the changes that the discipline of criminology underwent in Germany.

In conclusion, either as a sophisticated way to consider the contacts between scientists and their products in an emerging transnational space or as a theoretical and methodological tool, networks are at the core of this volume, which offers insight into many facets of the scientific venture in relation to the formation of policies and politics in the Balkan area.

NOTES

1 See, indicatively, Manuel Castells, *The information age: economy, society and culture*, vol. 1: *The rise of the network society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996).

2 Andreas Lyberatos, ed., *Social transformation and mass mobilization in the Balkan and eastern Mediterranean cities* (1900–1923) (Iraklio: Crete University Press, 2013).

3 See, indicatively, David Cahan, "Institutions and communities," in *From natural philosophy to the sciences: writing the history of nineteenth-century science*, ed David Cahan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 291–328.

4 See, indicatively, Jennifer S. Light, "When computers were women," *Technology and Culture* 40/3 (1999): 455–83.

5 Peter Weingart, "German eugenics between science and politics," *Osiris,* 2nd ser., 5 (1989): 260–82.

6 W. Boyd Rayward, ed., *Information beyond borders: international cultural and intellectual exchange in the belle époque* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

7 Kostas Gavroglu et al., "Science and technology in the European periphery: some historiographical reflections," *History of Science* 46 (2008): 153–76.

8 See n. 5.