

Domesticating Europe: Urban Everyday Life in the 19th century Balkans
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This paper attempts at presenting some observations on the European influences on the urban everyday life in the nineteenth century Balkans, particularly during the second half of this century. At that time the newly established Balkan states as well as the lands still under Ottoman rule were subjected to omnipotent modernization that has always been considered in terms of Europeanization. I personally am more inclined to think about the way Balkans were meeting European Modernity as a process of domestication of “Europe”.

There is a need to explain what Balkan people perceived as “Europe”. “Our Europe” was for Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, by the end of the seventeenth century, the Christian Europe,¹ while for the Romanian intellectuals of 1848 it was the Western part of the continent.² The same shift from East to the West as a reference point was observed in all Balkan lands belonging to the Ottoman Empire. I am afraid it is hardly possible to be more generalizing, but in such a short-time presentation I would prefer to go directly to my main points rather than discussing theoretical (more or less) or preliminary statements. I should only point out that in addition to the shift just mentioned, another feature of the European influence on the Balkans during the nineteenth century was the direct way it came. There was no need of the previously used as channels for communication and interaction regions of Slovenia, Croatia and the Italian-held Greek islands as well as Constantinople and Russia anymore. It were the developments mainly in commerce that created slowly but irreversibly a new Balkan World that was responsive to direct Western European influences.

¹ DUȚU, Alexandru, *Ideea de Europa și evoluția conștiinței europene (The Idea of Europe and Evolution of the European Consciousness)*, ALL Edicational, București, 1999, 22

² As Aleco Russo has put it, in some twenty years the eyes and the thoughts of his generation of Moldavians directed not to the East as it was the case of his parents but to the West. - Quoted by both Stela Mărieș and Dumitru Vitcu, see MĂRIEȘ, Stela, *Das westliche Europa aus der Sicht rumänischer Reisender (erste Hälfte des 19. Jahrhunderts)*, in HEPPNER, Harald (ed.), *Die Rumänen und Europa vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart*, Böhlau Verlag, Wien-Köln-Weimar, 1997, 143-164 (143) and VITCU, Dumitru, “Europa” aus der Sicht der rumänischen 1848er-Generation, *ibidem*, 165-184 (169).

A curious intertwining of Europe and Asia, West and East was observed by people visiting the Balkans at the time. Travellers commented on signs of “European” life such as houses with glass windows, cabarets, or hotels with billiard rooms, railways, etc. But under this modernizing façade there was the same oriental (traditional) substance, deeply embedded into the Balkan societies.

Exactly this two-folded reality – Europeanization (modernization) vs. backwardness - is so interesting to be observed and analyzed. Accommodation (to the point of domestication) of the European influences to the Balkan style of life and Balkan way of thinking is what challenged me to step into the present topic. If in the West intellectual responses to the challenges of modernity were to be observed, in the East (and in the Balkans in our particular case) responses to the challenge of westernization have arisen. It is in this framework of concepts of modernity and modernization (Westernization, Europeanization) that I would like to present my speculations.

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The concept of *everydayness* was formulated within a discourse on modernity that developed in the nineteenth-century Europe. However, a direct and explicit theorization of everyday life came after the Second World War, with Henri Lefebvre's formulation of critique, Michel DeCerteau's reworking of it as a space, and German labour historians (like Alf Lüdtke) who represented the effort to dissolve the separation between bourgeois *everydayness* and the domain of the labourer.³

I am fully aware of the “all-embracing” of the term *everyday life*. It embraces, in fact, almost everything: all what we do from morning till night, from Monday to Sunday (so called “twenty-four seven”), and from the beginning to the end of one’s life. It’s all about the ordinary and trivial, which is very difficult to map and to frame, whether by art, by theory, or

³ LEFEBVRE, Henri, *Critique de la vie quotidienne*, L’Arche, Paris, 1961 (vol. II), 1981 (vol. III); CERTEAU, Michel de, *L’Invention du quotidien*, Gallimard, Paris, 1998 (vol. I), 1999 (vol. II). For German examples, see LÜDTKE, Alf, *The History of Everyday Life*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1995, esp. 3-40, 116-148, 169-197; also BERLINER GESCHICHTSWERKSTATT (ed.), *Alltagskultur, Subjektivität und Geschichte*, Verlag Westfallisches Dampfboot, Münster, 1994.

by history.⁴ The need to limit the subject imposes and there are some limitations that present themselves immediately:

First of them concerns the narrow database as far as private life is concerned. “The place of our pleasures and drudgeries, of our conflicts and dreams” - as the authors of *Histoire de la vie privée* call private life - continued to be a rather closed space in the Balkans. This reticence makes it even harder for the historian, since the predominant majority of population (even the urban one) had been illiterate or not sufficiently literate in order to leave some written evidence of their everyday life behind the walls of their homes. We can find data about the changes that have occurred in the private space, too, but our perception of this part of the everyday life in the Balkans remains very limited. It becomes considerably easier to “decipher” the everyday life of the people when they enter the public space. Due to the existence of the press, in addition to the presence of published and unpublished diaries, memoirs, etc. one can read the town and its life as a text and find signs of Modernity.

A further problem ensues from the fact that everyday life can hardly be considered as a unitary thing. Differences as to social status, ethnicity, age, gender, etc. are so numerous that one can question whether there is such a thing as everyday life. In my opinion, however, when thinking about all this in the light of the invasion of Modernity one can disregard this plurality of everyday lives. Because dissemination and impact of the “European” in the Balkans was quite limited during the period under research. The news coming from West affected above all the towns along the river of Danube and the railway Berlin-Baghdad (called the Baron Hirsch's railway at the time) as well as the capitals of the already present or future Balkan states. Once it found some room for itself in the capitals and bigger towns, the Modern later penetrated step by step in the other towns, too, while the countryside remained for a long time impervious to European influences.

It is as though the emergence of the idea of modernity in the nineteenth-century Europe, with its sharp sense of time moving ahead fast, encouraged a view of the Balkans as a place where “time has stood still”. As we know, Orthodox Christians regarded Catholic and Protestant Europe's move to the Gregorian calendar at that time as an unacceptable innovation. That is

⁴ Stanley Cavell speaks about the “uncanniness of the ordinary” that both resists and invites philosophical discussion. – See CAVELL, Stanley, *In Quest of the Ordinary: Lines of Skepticism and Romanticism*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1988.

why the Balkans were sleeping in the night of 17/18 December 1899 while the other Europe celebrated the coming of the year 1900, say, at “Maxim” in Paris.

Let me present some examples now, which I have organized in two related very much (and from time to time overlapping) but still separate files, “stage” and “actors”.

1.

On 17 July 1856, *Journal de Constantinople* reported about the inauguration of Sultan Abdul Mecid Han’s new palace at Dolmabahce with a state dinner prepared and served in the French manner.⁵ The transfer of the royal residence from Topkapı Sarayı across the Bosphorus to the European section of Istanbul and its manner of celebration in particular were symbolic. After the Anglo-Turkish commercial treaty of 1838 and the Tanzimat charter of 1839, which provided the necessary institutions to foster the Western economic control that the treaty made possible the European impact on the Ottoman Empire was increasing slowly but irreversibly. Until that point the Europeanization was confined to the technological, scientific and educational fields and was almost exclusively oriented toward the improvement of the military forces. Afterwards, the Western intellectual system was imported as well, for farsighted Turks came to realize the necessity for change if their empire was to survive. This resulted in more radical social changes. Foreign observers reported about a perceptive change in the life style of Constantinople, some of them complaining: they found the capital “too europeanized” and, hence, lost some of its exotic charm.⁶

During the nineteenth century, it was not difficult to spot the confrontation of the two models - the Ottoman and the occidental - in the Balkan towns. Performances were rather diverse: violent or peaceful, introduced by a law, but all in all they were irresistible like technical progress and commerce were, for they simply embodied the inevitable development and expansion of the European capitalist economy. This confrontation followed different rhythms as well, depending on political climate, geographical position and historical legacy of each case.

⁵ Quoted by ROSENTHAL, Steven, *The Politics of Dependency: Urban Reform in Istanbul*, Greenwood Press, Westport (Conn.)/London, 1908, 3

⁶ See GEORGEON, François, A la veille de la guerre, des voyageurs, in YERASIMOS, Stephanos (ed.), *Istanbul, 1914-1923 : Capitale d’un monde illusoire ou l’agonie des vieux empires*, Editions Autrement, Paris, 1992, 34. On changes in the capital city of the Ottoman Empire see ROSENTHAL, Steven, *op. cit.* and ÇELİK, Zeynep, *The Remaking of Istanbul: Portrait of an Ottoman City in the Nineteenth Century*, University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 1986

I have already noted that one can witness the first signs of Westernization in the towns along the river of Danube and railway roads as well as in the Balkan capitals. Some examples from Bucharest, Belgrade and Sofia could be illustrative.

Bucharest, the capital of Wallachia and later (from 1859 on) of Romania, made the earliest start to becoming more European. While in 1829 a foreign traveller noted sceptically: “This is by no means an European city.”, 30 years later, in 1859 (a few days after the double election of Prince Cuza), a German witness, Heinrich Winterhalder, wrote: “When you see Mogoșoaia street in the area close to the theatre you feel as if you are in one of the famous European capitals.”⁷ It is well known that at the time they used to call Bucharest “le petit Paris”. This saying, however, was rather an enigma, a part of some imaginative luggage inherited in the family. For, as one Swedish officer wrote in 1888, “Pour petit, le mot est vrai, mais pour Paris c’est autre chose, ...”⁸

The most visible signs of Bucharest modernization were street lightning and new means of transport. Already in 1814, the question about gasification of the street lightning was raised; good intentions turned into reality, at least regarding the central part of the city, by 1856. Then, at the end of the nineteenth century, electricity came. As to the means of transport, at the beginning of the twentieth century carriages and partly cars dominated the traffic in Bucharest. A Bulgarian diplomat recalls: “Being a pedestrian was a sign of a deep poverty. I would often hear: “Don’t have a pound for a cab!” In 1909, the same person describes the traffic in the Romanian capital as “hectic but clean urban, European traffic”.⁹

Travellers who passed Serbia at about 1825-1830 observed mixture between Oriental and Occidental features, with the former still definitely prevailing. For instance, Otto Dubislav Pirch wrote in 1829, after having visited a house in a town: “In one of the rooms everything was European – mirrors, cabinet, furniture in general... In another room they follow the Turkish customs: no furniture, pillows next to the wall and carpets on the floor.”¹⁰

⁷ HEPPNER, H. (ed.), *Hauptstädte in Südosteuropa*, 49

⁸ Quoted by ZAHARIADE, Ana Maria, L’enigme du “Petit Paris” (unpublished paper), 2002, 5. About twenty years earlier Jan Neruda commented in a similar way: ‘... but “Paris on Dâmbovița” is an Oriental Paris.’ – See NERUDA, Jan, *De la Praga la Paris și Ierusalim: Tablouri din străinătate (From Prague to Jerusalem: Pictures from Abroad)*, Editura Minerva, București, 2000, 251.

⁹ NEJKOV, Petar: *Spomeni (Memoirs)*. Publishing house of the OF, Sofia 1990, 144; 138

¹⁰ Quoted by VUCO, Nikola, L’Europeanisation des villes en Serbie au XIXe siècle, in *Istanbul à la jonction des cultures balkaniques, méditerranéennes, slaves et orientales aux XVIe-XIXe siècles*, UNESCO/AIESSE, Bucarest, 1973, 107-113 (108)

Belgrade, which had been for centuries an administrative (and military) centre of the Ottoman Empire, started its transformation from an Ottoman Empire town into a European city in 1870s, after the Turkish military unit based there left the town in 1867. It represents a good example of transformation from a multi-ethnic "Empire" city into a national one in the course of two or three decades. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century the whole city was being redesigned with wide boulevards and large public buildings.

Sofia, like Athens, was a very small place before having been chosen as capital city of Bulgaria. When one turns one's attention to Sofia at the beginning of its capital being, in 1880s, it becomes clear that the town was similar to a big village, to quote a young Bulgarian woman coming from Tulcea.¹¹ Konstantin Irecek shared the same observation when he first came in Sofia, in 1879: "... curved street with trees, opened Oriental small shops on both sides, terribly irregular pavement and dreadful mud. Big village." Only three years later he noted the great progress of Sofia and the appearance of lots of new buildings.¹²

What made observer wonder was the speed of the changes in course: only in less than two decades the town passed through a real building and enlargement "fever". Wide streets with pavements, beautiful houses, many office buildings, banks, shops, coffeehouses, etc. appeared. Still, electricity, for instance, was introduced only to the central streets and houses of the rich people because of the costs; on the other hand, tramway as well as bicycle as symbols of new way of city transport gradually became part of the life of the population. All this did not occur without negative reactions and satirical statements. So, for instance, despite the fact that six tramway lines were ready, by the official opening they started using only two of them. The reason: "to give the population and functionaries some time to become used to the new heavy movement".¹³ "Heavy movement" meant, in fact, 15 km/h! I have to add that the price of the ticket was 15 stotinka¹⁴ for the first class and 10 - for the second class. One might use the difference to buy a cup of coffee or a piece of cake. Moreover, many people preferred to walk instead of taking tram and to have a beer for the same 10 stotinka. Of course, such behaviour had to do with the mentality of people, largely: as a contemporary

¹¹ PETROVA, Sultana, *Moite spomeni (My memoirs)*, Izdatelstvo na BAN, Sofia, 1991, 158

¹² IRECEK, Konstantin, *Bulgarski dnevnik (Bulgarian diary)*, Akademichno izdatelstvo Marin Drinov, Sofia, 1996, vol. I, 21. Compare to vol. II, 524.

¹³ KAZASOV, Dimo, *Iskri ot burni godini (Sparks from adventurous years)*, Izdatelstvo na Otechestveniya Front, Sofia, 1987, 260

¹⁴ Stotinka is the Bulgarian penny. The word is a diminutive of 1/100.

journalist reported, “nobody was in a hurry. All people walked as *chorbadjii*¹⁵ in the streets. Hurrying up and running in particular was considered indecent.”¹⁶

The introduction of new means of transport was a good sign that, without losing its character as a peasant capital yet, Sofia was certainly moving on its way to the Modern. However slowly, Bulgarian society was accommodating some technical novelties into its life. So were doing other Balkan societies too. And exactly this matters, in fact: that society accepts and acknowledges need for some new inventions and their advantages. Sometimes it takes long time and perhaps this made James Watt write to his friend Stall in 1769 “that in life there is nothing more foolish than inventing”.¹⁷

One of the main features of movement to the Modern in the Balkans as well as all over the Europe was the appearance of new modes of sociability that accompanied the rise of the public sphere. One of those new developments was the appearance of special places for walks in the late afternoons or evenings. In Sofia, Belgrade, and in some other Balkan towns walking places called ‘alleys’ or ‘gardens’ existed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. People enjoyed going there, moreover, since it belonged to the new “savoir vivre” to be part of that society and to meet friends or just fellows citizens. Interesting target for walks became railway station, in towns where there was such one. Citizens used to go there for a walk and to look at trains and locomotives; they considered the railway as a channel for the Western influences. In Bucharest there were several places that people frequented during the early evening and which they called ‘promenade’. But the walk along the ‘șosea’ (Șosea Kiseleff) became part of the chic, or *bon ton*, for the high-life in summer evenings. There was one big difference regarding Romanian experience: Bucharest high-life used the fiacre. Nonetheless, their main purpose was the same – to have a look at the others and to show themselves to the others; in fact, this was only possible when the horses ceased galloping at the round point, in order to turn back, otherwise the fiacre moved so fast that there was no opportunity for observations and admiration (or envy), neither for flirting.¹⁸

¹⁵ *Chorbadjii* – wealthy Bulgarians at the time of the Ottoman Empire.

¹⁶ KAZASOV, Dimo, *Iskri ot burni godini*, 261

¹⁷ Quotation after BRAUDEL, Fernand, *Materialna civilizatsia, i ekonomika i kapitalizam, XV -XVIII vek. Tom I: Strukturite na vsekidnevieto: vazmozhnoto i nevazmozhnoto* (Original title: *Civilisation matérielle, économie et capitalisme, XVe-XVIIIe siècle. Tome I : Les structures du quotidien : le possible et l'impossible*). Prozorez, Sofia 2002, 349

¹⁸ See GAVRILOVA, Raina, *Koleloto na zhivota: Vsekidnevieto na bulgarskiya vuzrozhdenski grad (The Wheel of Life: Everyday life in Bulgarian Early Modern Town)*, Universitetsko izdatelstvo, Sofia, 1999, 48-53; *Plovdivski glas* [newspaper], 1899, etc. On the “Corso” of Bucharest see, for instance, LOVERDO, Jean, “Bucarest”, in *Le Monde Moderne*, 1897, 1-14 (9); MARSILLAC. Ulysse de, *Bucureștiul în veacului al XIX-lea*

Another new development was the establishment of places where people could spend some time together while drinking something, playing cards, reading newspapers, or simply chatting. Coffeehouses and popular periodicals were two institutions central to the organization of public life in the Balkans, as it was the case in Western Europe, too. They were, however, only men's area, and women were excluded from that public space. In contrast to other institutions of the new public sphere, the salon was women's way of taking part in the social life and to gradually become visible. Salon was part of the public at the edge of private space and by the end of the nineteenth century it became very popular, especially with Romanians. Nonetheless, Bulgarian and Serbian "high society" women used to have so called *jours fixes*, too.¹⁹ Through the networks of institutions like press and coffeehouse a new notion of the "public" arose and men conformed to the new codes of conduct. All new public places provided the contemporary actors with opportunities to perform many different roles.

2.

Already at the end of the eighteenth century foreign travellers commented that there were people speaking French and admiring French culture in some Balkan towns, in Romanian lands in particular. Nevertheless, it was the nineteenth century again, which was so largely open for all European influences, that imposed itself as a "French" century par excellence, all over the Balkans.²⁰

In Serbia, stimulus for turning to the West in looking for a model came a bit later but it was quite strong, too. The model to follow was the one of the neighbouring Habsburg Empire. Bulgarians started their "movement" to the West already in the mid-nineteenth century, before throwing off the Ottoman rule. At the beginning they used Greek culture and schools as well as Russia as a mediator, exactly what had happened in the Danubian Principalities. During the late 1860s and 1870s and especially after the establishment of the Bulgarian national state the eyes of its subjects turned directly to the source of modernization, as it was the case of other

(*Bucharest in the Nineteenth Century*), Editura meridiane, București, 1999, 147-158; NEJKOV, Petar, *Spomeni*, 144, where he points out that at the turn of the nineteenth century walking was considered a sign of poverty in Bucharest.

¹⁹ PETROVA, Sultana, *Moite spomeni*, passim; KUNISCH, Richard, *București și Stambul (Bucharest and Istanbul)*, 84-89

²⁰ When saying "French" I use the term as a synonym for "European", for it is hardly possible to differentiate where exactly influences came from – only the general direction, that is from the Western (more precisely, North-Western) part of the continent to its South-Eastern corner, is out of doubt.

Balkan peoples, and the process of accommodating European values and style of life accelerated very much.

No matter where European culture was coming from and which ways of penetration it was using, it gradually found its place in Balkan lands. Meeting it, indeed, was a challenge for the people who wanted to be modern but did not know how to deal with coming modernity or how to accommodate it to the present background. Irrelevant performances were taking place sometimes. [So, for instance, in 1880s, Konstantin Irecek analyzed “the particular childishness” of the Bulgarian society of the time. “Everybody runs and buys European furniture, things unknown until now, ...”²¹ At the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries a lot of indications for the presence of the Western objects in the Balkan societies could be found. Newspapers reported about different novelties – most of them considered being a luxury. All they, however, were too expensive at the time, so that only few families could afford buying them. This, on its turn, is an indicator that new, well-to-do social strata had been appearing.]

Furthermore, Irecek noticed that ‘some politicians think, *dass man mit Repräsentation und dinners eine Gesellschaft gründen kann*’²² In fact, **this** was the problem: people were attracted by the appearance, by the form. The most noticeable changes, which imitated European handwriting, concerned people’s outward appearance. One witnessed invasion of European clothes, which were called differently – and regarding “German” clothes and “French” clothes, the saying “*alafranga*” in Bulgarian went down well. At the beginning they came from the shops of the big European firms in Vienna and Constantinople, later they already found their direct way from Paris and London. It was much easier to change one’s public behaviour, to separate oneself from the community and create a different image than to re-direct the entire society towards the West.

By mid-nineteenth century, however, the fashion trends were still shaking between Istanbul and Paris²³ and only after that the steady Western direction was pursued. The first who wore Western type of clothes in the case of Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia were the richest merchants; they imported the new fashion dresses for their women and daughters too, who were open to all

²¹ IRECEK, Konstantin, *Bulgarski dnevnik*, vol. II, 374

²² Ibidem, italic in the original.

²³ See IONESCU, Adrian-Silvan, *Moda românească 1790-1850: Între Stambul și Paris (Romanian Fashion 1790-1850: Between Istanbul and Paris)*, Editura MAIKO, București, 2001. The book is very rich regarding data the author has used.

the news coming from “Europe”.²⁴ Accommodation to the new developments was to be observed in Belgrade at mid-nineteenth century. Serbian historian M. Milčević wrote in 1870: “What has changed especially fast is the clothing of women – to the point that today it is very difficult to find a lady whose clothes and haircut are other than European ones.”²⁵

Very often it is difficult to separate the costumes from the play of the actors. As for instance in Petar Neykov’s statement from 1909 on the high-life of Bucharest: “Elegant society, dressed tastefully according the last Paris fashion. Flatteries of the best French style. Brave flirts, seldom fruitless. Superficial conversations, very often, however, ambiguous and witty. For this enraptured by the Western models milieu the Romanian language was improper, vulgar; they all spoke French and knew it perfectly.”²⁶

Nineteenth century and especially its second half was not only the time of appearance of a new understanding about the rhythm of the urban life among the population in the Balkan countries. New taste for how one should spend one’s spare time developed, too. Along the already mentioned evening walks, visits to coffeeshouses and attendance of salons some other new ways of entertainment also took place. The high-life in the Balkan capitals became very quickly aware how important (for their reputation and status) it was to give receptions and to be invited to the “right” receptions of the others, too. Assiduous frequentation of dancing parties, balls, etc. was sign of “good manners” which were undoubtedly law-like psychosocial categories. The same concerned the membership with gentlemen’s clubs, committees and societies, and philanthropic organizations.

All points I have made and the examples presented concern mainly the presentation of what was going on in the nineteenth century Balkans. Going back to my point about the appearance having dominated the content, I consider this to be one of the main reasons for the amount of information available about the outside features of the people’s life than about their private life, not to mention their spiritual one. Alterations in the way of thinking and in behaviour of the population, regardless of whether this concerned men or women, were much more difficult to grasp. In addition, they occurred much slower than all the ‘outside’, visible changes. The nineteenth century in the Balkans was still patriarchal at heart. But the old forms and modes were on the wane and new things were being born (or rather “domesticated”).

²⁴ See the reach discussion of GAVRILOVA, Raina, *Koleloto na zhivota*, 159-166.

²⁵ Quoted by VUCO, Nikola, op. cit., 108

²⁶ NEJKOV, Petar, *Spomeni*, 143

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The nineteenth century was the time of “Europe” coming to the Balkans. The new established Balkan states used Western European experience as a model to follow on their way to Modernity, for Europe was in their understanding something superior and, thus, worth to imitate. However fascinated by Europe the people had been, the adaptation of European ways of life to the Balkan constellations turned out to be complicated. The contradiction between the speed of the processes and readiness of the population to “swallow” the new developments resulted in occurrences placed at various points of the spectrum from the ridiculous to the sad, sometimes with touches of absurdness.

To conclude, I would share my opinion about differences and similarities as to how the European influences have been accommodated (or domesticated) into the everyday life in the Balkans:

Differences concern mainly i) timing and ii) situation at the start. The time when European influences make themselves visible diverges in different Balkan countries. First to begin with the accommodation of “Europe” in its South East corner were Romanian lands, then Serbia opened its doors to Europe while Bulgaria was the latecomer although it all took off before Bulgarian state began its modern national being in late 1870s. From the point of view of situation at the start: Wallachia and Moldavia had enjoyed a sort of “freedom” though being a part of the Ottoman Empire (even during the Phanariots’ rule) while Serbia and Bulgaria experienced much more of the Ottoman administrative power. On the other hand, having been on one hand distant from the Russian Empire, Danubian Principalities had to cope with the constant Russian interventions of a different kind. Weighing up these legacies and bearing in mind that already at the end of the eighteenth century Peter the Great had introduced pieces of Europe in his Empire one could argue that actually the first variable (timing) depends very much on the second one.

I would prefer, however, emphasizing on similarities rather than differences: i) European influences reached mainly Balkan urban population; ii) they were not most welcome by a considerable part of society, which brings us to iii) time - but this time from the point of view of how much time it all needed. And now I want to turn our attention back to the view of the

Balkans as a place where “time has stood still”. Balkan people do not like to be in a hurry, probably because of relativism and disposition to leave things in the hands of destiny. Balkan towns, too, had their own rhythm. No matter how strong they were influenced by European world, they always remained strongly attached to one of the core readings of the Oriental, the one characterized by a powerful triptych of words: *yarın*, *rahat* and *kayf*.²⁷ That is why the penetration of European influences in the Balkans took a very long time and the transition from traditional to modern society has been perpetuating itself (in the case of mentality in particular) since the nineteenth century.

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²⁷ ‘Yarın’ (Turk.) means tomorrow; ‘rahat’ (Arab.) – peace of mind, leisure, vacation, *laissez faire*; ‘kayf’ (Arab.) – mood; it denominates the possibility to enjoy the life as much and as often as possible.