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SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN IDENTITIES: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Owing to the limited time available to me after the Organising Committee did me the honour of asking me to present a report on *The South-East European Identity* I have only been able to conduct a review and to pose a few questions connected with the debate unfolded nowadays. First of all, it must be noted that this general subject is part of a recent epistemological trend, which arouse out of the confluence of history and anthropology, fostered within the general context of interdisciplinary studies, and that already has an almost fifty-year history behind it. Indeed, the title of one of the chapters in Fernand Braudel's book *Grammaire des civilisations* is quite revealing: „La civilisation se définit par rapport aux diverses sciences de l'homme“.¹ Of these disciplines, anthropology certainly has its place. More specifically, this confluence has opened the way for new approaches, which we are meeting more and more frequently in both historiography and anthropology: „history of everyday life“, „micro-history“ and „historical anthropology“ respectively.

Of course, this trend relates chiefly to post-war European historiography, because the official Balkan historiography — with a few exceptions, which may be located in monographs as well as in previous Congresses of the Association of South-East European Studies — has not joined in the interdisciplinary debate of the *Annales* school. On the contrary, it has criticised this modern trend, regarding it as a „bourgeois“ form of historiography. The lack of the influence of the *Annales* school in Balkan historiography is chiefly seen in the countries of the then „existing Socialism“ though also, for different reasons, in Greek and Turkish historiography too.

We shall consider the approaches that have been based on the aforementioned debate only in relation to the question of identity. If we are to understand this contemporary historiographical subject more fully, we have to make a comparative study of the ways in which it has been perceived hitherto, its acquired content as a subject of historiography and folklore/anthropology and its social and ideological function in each case. More

¹ FERNAND BRAUDEL, *Grammaire des civilisations*, Paris 1983. See also ANDRÉ BURGUIÈRE, *L'Anthropologie historique*, JACQUES LE GOFF, *La Nouvelle histoire*, Paris, 1988, pp. 137–165.

specifically, we shall start by trying to pinpoint any variations in the approach of 19th-century historians and folklorists; we shall then concentrate on the epistemological and politico-ideological terms that define the subject of identity today.

Historians in all countries have applied their minds to the question of national identity ever since historical science was established, simultaneously with the political programme for the creation of nation-states in the 19th century. So in the European historiography of the last two hundred years, as also in Balkan historiography with some slight delay, the programme for the establishment of nation-states, whether formulated as a political prospect or when it was actually being carried out, has been inseparably bound up with the development of a collective national identity, which functioned as a cohesive force among the citizens of the nation-state. The national phenomenon came to the fore in the Balkans in the second half of the 19th century and has been the undisputed organisational model for sociopolitical life and ideology ever since. Even the incorporation of most of the Balkan countries into the eastern bloc after the War and their acceptance of a model of historical materialism on which to organise the present and by which to interpret the past, and even the renewed influences of European historiography which influenced Balkan historians failed to displace the subject matter of national historiography. During this time, barring some efforts by the so-called „critical school“ at the beginning of the century, which merely consisted in censuring certain historically baseless national myths without discrediting the theoretical foundations of historicism, the national phenomenon has only recently been critically studied, owing to the revival of nationalistic discourse after the end of the Cold War.²

So, although the subject has not been fully examined in relation to the Balkan national identities, we are now in a position to approach the phenomenon of their formation as a process connected with the foundation of the nation-state, rather than seeing them as a „natural“ attribute that has always characterised the citizens on the basis of community of language, race, religion and so forth. That is to say, we should better understand the actual situation when the great empires fell and the transition to the „Europe of nationalities“³, if we regarded the acquisition of a national iden-

² ERNEST GELLNER, *Nations and Nationalism*, Ithaca, New York 1983. ET. BALIBAR, IM. WALLERSTEIN, *Race, Nation, Classe. Les identités ambiguës*, Paris 1988. E. J. HOBBSBAWM, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Programme, myth, reality*, Cambridge 1990. B. ANDERSON, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London, New York 1991, revised edition. ANTHONY D. SMITH, *National Identity*, Penguin Books 1991.

³ This was the political programme of Napoleon III, see the widely diffused pamphlet of an unknown author, *Napoleon III et l'Italie*, Paris 1859. (Greek translation by K. N. STATHOPOULOS, *Το Ιταλικόν ζήτημα και ο Αυτοκράτωρ Ναπολέον Γ'*, Athens 1859).

tity as a conscious choice and as an expression of each citizen's will, rather than as a fait accompli determined exclusively by geography and history. In other words, although the national historiographies have presented national identity as a self-evident, „natural“ product, we know now how forcefully the nation-states steam-rolled regional characteristics, vernaculars and traditional precapitalistic mentalities. This was inevitable, of course, because the homogenisation, that was a prerequisite for the formation and survival of the state, could be achieved only through the development of a collective national identity. In the course of this process, the image that the citizens formed of their collective past, their shared heritage, was one of the basic components that bound them together.

The professional historians of the 19th century played an important part in this.⁴ As committed intellectuals, they forged the image of the past as the „prehistory“ of the nation-state on the basis of Hegelian philosophy and the method of historicism. The folklorists likewise, collecting and recording the creations of folk culture, folk songs, folk tales, and so forth, in the manner established by the German Romantics, constructed an indissoluble continuity for the national character of the „people“ (Volk) over a long historical span. A suitable blend of memory and oblivion, myth and reality produced an image of the historical past through which the nation was presented as an eternal, coherent organism with a soul (Volksgeist). Natural geography in turn linked the geophysical science with „historical rights“, i.e. irredentist policies. Albeit a posteriori, this living heritage not only gave the emerging national group a historical existence and identity, it also legitimised the struggles it was waging to accomplish its integration as a nation.

Historically speaking, then, the development of a national identity was, before the 19th century, a non-issue or at any rate it performed a different social function. As for the last two centuries, it may be understood as the result of a process that was frequently accompanied by tragic experiences, rather than as a question of automatic citizenship from birth. So it would be difficult in the pre-national period to trace the national identities of well-known intellectuals, artists, etc. And it is no accident that historians, art historians and other scholars still wrangle about such cases. The identity of the „Albanian“ painter Onoufrius or the „Greek“ painter Christofor Zefarovich, to name the best known representatives in this sphere, is a matter of national importance for modern scholars, but would have been an inconceivable concept to the artists themselves: the former are interested in legitimising their own national myth; the latter were living in the wider area

⁴ DENNIS DELETANT, HARRY HANAK eds., *Historians as Nation-Builders Central and South-East Europe*, London, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, 1988.

of the Ottoman-held Balkans before the dawn of the national idea, bearing the weight of the Byzantine tradition.

However, if we try to trace the development of national consciousness in the turbulent 19th century, we find that quite a number of intellectuals were preoccupied with the question of their identity: Vasil Aprilov, Gregorius Stavridis (Pärlichev), Nikolaus Pikkolos and others wavered between their local and family culture and an inter-Balkan identity composed, in varying proportions, of elements of the politically dominant Ottoman culture and the ancient Greek language and culture, which were being kept alive by the Greek bourgeoisie and the Church. With this cultural „equipment“ they opted at a certain point for a self-determination that identified their existence and their activity with the former. We could define this choice, using their own terms, as a transition from „Graecomania“⁵ to national identity or, for the southern Slavs, as a transition from the undifferentiated Slavonic family as a whole and a unitarian Yugoslav (Illyrian) identity to the Serbian, Croatian, etc.⁶ A decisive part was played in this change by individual will. This is also the specific distinction between national identity in the modern sense and what Herodotus described as the community among people of the same race, religion and language — not to mention Homer, for whom in most cases the word „ἔθνος“ did not even signify a human group.

Another perception that is based on a specific Balkan identity was constructed by Western Europe mainly in the 19th century. The Westerners regarded Ottoman-held South-Eastern Europe as a crossroad point, geographically and culturally speaking, between East and West, and also as a sensitive underbelly or a powder-keg on their doorstep. This was an

⁵ See the extremely illustrative poem entitled *Graecomania* („Ἡ Γραικομανία“) included in the collection of poems written by P. PROTIC, *Poesii*, București [1875], mainly pp. 21–22, where he is drawing P. Pikkolos' profile, without mentioning his name: „... Εκ Τουρνόβου Βουλγαρίας, και καταγωγής γνησίας πέφυκε βουλγαρικής, Ο σοφός και επιστήμων, και κατ' εξοχήν ειδήμων Γλώσσης της Ελληνικής, Ο εν Κέρκυρα διδάσας και ελληνιστί συγγράψας, Γλαφυρός μεταφραστής της τερπνής μυθιστορίας Παύλου τε και Βιργινίας, και σοφός σχολιαστής του σοφού Αριστοτέλους: Πλην Βουλγάρου επί τέλους Ζήλον πατριωτικόν Έδειξε πριν τελευτήσει, Αν κι ως Έλλην είχε ζήσει, μ' όνομα Ιταλικόν“. I thank my colleague Afrodita Alexieva for her kindness to give me a photocopy of this poem. The national Balkan historiographies usually try to convince about the stable and uni-dimensional character of their national identity. For a more critical approach see R. DETRES, *Ot religiozno do nacionalno sâznanie* (Njakoi nabljudenija vâru nacionalnoto samoosâznavane na Balkanite vâz osnova na materiala za zhivota i tvorcestvoto na Grigor Pärlichev), *Literaturna misâl* 34,5 (1900), pp. 64–78.

⁶ During the end of the Cold-War period as well as during the 90s the resurgence of ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia gave rise to shaping of distinctive ethnic identities. From the abundant literature see f.i. ANDREW BARUCH WACHTEL, *Making a Nation, Breaking a Nation, Literature and Cultural Politics in Yugoslavia*, Stanford University Press, 1998. PAYAM AKHAVAN, ROBERT HOWSE eds., *Yugoslavia the Former and the Future. Reflections by Scholars from the Region*, Washinton, Geneva 1995.

other-defined supranational Balkan identity, which soon came to include national value judgements. These latter did not come about by chance, they were directly connected with the geopolitical interests of the Great Powers when the Ottoman Empire was breaking up. These national Balkan categorisations, which reflected the European view of the people of the Balkans, have recently been the subject of monographs which analyse not only politics and history, but also literature and collective mentalities in Europe in the last two centuries.⁷ Owing to the tragic events in former Yugoslavia, the abundant material which they have brought to light has been swelled by an even greater volume of data in recent years. A simple reading of these texts ascertains that such perceptions not only still exist, but are taking on even more negative connotations, which can be exploited by the dominant political forces in view of globalisation. One extreme example of a negatively loaded term is „Balkanisation“.⁸ It is a subject that deserves to be studied in greater depth on another occasion.

The indisputable historical basis of a Balkan community is also the reason why, in the post-war period, when the melting ice of the Cold War favoured inter-Balkan rapprochement, historiographical issues arose that shed light on demographic, social, ideological and other phenomena all over the Balkans. A typical illustration of this trend is seen in Traian Stoianovich' book *A Study in Balkan Civilization*.⁹ Here we are faced with a different Balkan identity, one that derives from the shared Byzantine and Ottoman historical part of the Balkan peoples and also from the encounter between Europe and the Balkans during the Enlightenment and Europe's economic expansion eastwards. In this case too, the modern historian is called upon to analyse the relative proportions of the history and the myth of social interdependence within the Balkans, as also between the Balkan peoples and Europe. In the construction of this identity we may discern the contributions of history and anthropology, but also of social psychology, linguistics and other disciplines.

However, all this speculation, as it evolves in the present circumstances, has more to do with a quest for multiple identities in South-Eastern Europe using key concepts and conceptual tools of anthropology

⁷ Έλλη Σκοπετέα, *Η Δύση της Ανατολής. Εικόνες από το τέλος της Οθωμανικής Αυτοκρατορίας*, Athens 1991. MARIA TODOROVA, *Imagining the Balkans*, New York, Oxford 1997. VESNA GOLDSWORTHY, *Inventing Ruritania. The Imperialism of the Imagination*, New Haven, London 1998.

⁸ Together with the previous note see YVES LACOSTE, *Balkans et Balkanisation*, *Hérodote* 63 (1991), 3–13 (editorial). MILICA BAKIĆ-HAYDEN, ROBERT M. HAYDEN, *Orientalist variations on the theme „Balkans“: symbolic geography in recent Yugoslav cultural politics*, *Slavic Review* 51,1 (Spring 1992), pp. 1–15.

⁹ TRAIAN STOIANOVICH, *A Study in Balkan Civilization*, New York 1967. See also his *Balkan Worlds The First and Last Europe*, M.E. Sharpe, New York... 1994.

than by a quest for socio-economic structures and mindsets in the Balkans. Recent years have seen a great increase in studies that investigate not historical structures and phenomena, but *cultural identities*.¹⁰ These are not identified with *national identities*; there we are not taking about a reappearance of national historiography, though the two trends do have some features in common. We are talking about *ethnic identities*, which are traced through a collaboration between history and anthropology on new terms.¹¹ What, then, are these new terms?

The most important influences concern a shift: i) from the general/social and universal, which modern history has tried to shed light on, to the partial/individual and local; and ii) from the historically defined phenomenon extended in time, mythical representations etc. to the cultural identity of a small group in its current form. These shifts in theory and topic entail a concomitant change in the method of historical research. As the usefulness of history has recently been called into question¹² and historical discourse has been likened to the discourse of (auto)biography, literature, and so on, the familiar historical narrative has turned into a story.¹³ Moreover, the incursion of subjectivity into social history has oriented it towards specific subjects, that is gender, the „other“, the „different“, the public-private.¹⁴

¹⁰ P. MACKRIDGE, EL. YANNAKAKIS eds, *Ourselves and Others. The Development of a Greek Macedonian Cultural Identity Since 1912*, Oxford, New York 1997, p. 2, „We define 'cultural identity' as a community's sense of belonging to a group that shares a specific set of values, attitudes and emotions based on a particular view of the *local historical past* and on a number of assumptions concerning the *ethnic and cultural characteristics of the community itself and of the region which it inhabits*. Such a cultural identity tends to be constructed partly in opposition to the cultural identities of neighbouring communities or of other communities that share the same space“. The emphasis is mine.

¹¹ JOHN HUTCHINSON, *Modern Nationalism*, London 1994. S. CORDELLIER ed., *Nations et Nationalismes*, Paris, La Découverte, 1995. Ana Krásteva et al. eds., *Identitichnosti Mezhduaroden centar po problemite na Malcinstvata i kulturnite vzaimodejstvija*, Sofia 1995. JOHN HUTCHINSON, ANTHONY D. SMITH eds., *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press, 1996. *Les Balkans — carrefour d'ethnies et de cultures: Les aspects éducatifs et culturels*, Les éditions du Conseil de l'Europe, 1996.

¹² See f.i. FRANCIS FUKUYAMA's *The end of History and the Last Man*, New York 1992, and, from a different point of view, GÉRARD NOIRIEL, *Sur la „crise“ de l'histoire*, Berlin, Paris 1996. ROGER CHARTIER, *Au bord de la falaise. L'histoire entre certitudes et inquiétude*, ALBIN MICHEL, Paris, 1998. FRANK FÜREDI, *Mythical Past, Elusive Future. History and Society in an Anxious Age*, London 1992.

¹³ The debate on historical narrative first appeared, as far as I know, in 1979: L. STONE, *The Revival of Narrative: Reflections on a New Old History*, *Past and Present* 85 (Nov. 1979), pp. 3–24. See also Eric Hobsbawm's answer, *On the Revival of Narrative*, *Ibidem* 86 (Feb. 1980) also in the collection of his articles *On History*, London 1997. Also P. VEYNE, *Comment on écrit l'histoire suivi de Foucault révolutionne l'histoire*, Paris 1979.

¹⁴ See f.i. The Newsletter of Central and East European Gender Studies (UK) *Agenda*. NADJA DANOVA ed., *Predstavata za „drugija“ na Balkanite*, Akademichno izda-

And it is this postmodernist orientation of history towards the partial, the synchrony and the subjective that may account for the profound influence of anthropology, as formed by post-modernists, upon it.¹⁵

There is not enough time here for a more extensive account of the discussion that has been going on in the last decades about these epistemological issues. On post-modernism, anthropology and textual history is developing an interesting and stimulating debate, but I am not intended to reproduce it here. I am particularly interested in this new tendency as far as it concerns balkan historiography on ethnic identities. For this reason I shall simply analyse one specific example of Greek historiography to illustrate the debate about cultural and ethnic identity. This consists in studies made by historians and anthropologists in which the interest focuses on small areas or villages in Macedonia where Slav-speakers and refugees from Asia Minor co-exist. It was no accident that the circumstances in which the discussion unfolded coincided with the end of the Cold War, the collapse of Yugoslavia and the recognition of FYROM. It was the time when the map of the Balkans was being redrawn and when nationalistic views known since the 19th century were reappearing in traditional Greek, Slavo-Macedonian and Bulgarian historiography. Such texts as publications by historians and journalists and speeches by politicians at thousands-strong rallies brought unfulfilled national longings back into the limelight. They were epitomized in such slogans as „There is only one Macedonia and it is Greek“ and „The name is our soul“. But this was not the only aspect of the explosion of nationalism. A systematic analysis of the content of such publications has shown that traditional nationalistic discourse existed alongside a likewise polarising discourse with localistic allusions. This revealed a breach between the „southerners“ or „the Athenocentric state“ and the „northerners“, the inhabitants of Macedonia. Various forms of this kind of discourse have been produced by all sorts of representatives of scientific, artistic and economic life in Macedonia and, more significantly, have passed into wider social strata.

In this context, it is worth mentioning an incident which highlighted, through the mass media, a new aspect of the mediaeval past of Thes-

telstvo „Marin Drinov“, Sofia 1995. Much work has been done during 90s on history textbooks: see *Σχολικά εγχειρίδια Βαλκανικών χωρών. Πρακτικά Ημερίδας (17 Μαΐου 1994)*. Thessalonica 1995. S. VOURI, *Ζητήματα σύγχρονης σχολικής ιστοριογραφίας. Τα σλαβικά εγχειρίδια ιστορίας της Βαλκανικής (1991–1993)*, University of Ioannina 1997. *The Image of the Other. Analysis of the high-school textbooks in History from the Balkan countries*, Sofia 1998.

¹⁵ A huge literature has been accumulated on postmodernism: see mainly JEAN FRANÇOIS LYOTAR, *La condition postmoderne*, Paris 1979 and several articles on our specific subject in KEITH JENKINS ed., *The Postmodern History Reader*, Routledge, London, New York 1997. From this point of view it is also worth noting the Directory of the Council of Europe number 1283/1996 on History and its usefulness.

saloniki and of Athens. When those in charge of the Byzantine Museum in Athens refused to return objects from Macedonia to the new Museum of Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki, there was a storm of protest from Thessaloniki's archaeologists. In the debate which followed, arguments were marshaled from both the present and the historical past.

Simultaneously with the first expression of a Greek „Macedonian“ identity in newspapers and periodicals, there was a surge of growth at the economic level. It was no coincidence that the Association of Industrialists of Northern Greece — „the industry's Macedonian fighters“ according to an article — forcefully demanded, as a special department, „larger share of development“ from the Greek state. The „northerners“ dissatisfaction with the „southerners“ and the representation of „Macedonia as a „special department“ indicate that the preconditions are in place for the development of a rhetoric that recalls the one about the European regions.¹⁶

These are not the only indications. The vigorous debate about minorities that is going on in Greece and other Balkan countries at the moment allows us to draw another parallel with the contemporary European historiographical model of the regions, which is not unconnected with the weakening of the nation-state as European integration approaches. In Greece, with regard to the Slavo-Macedonian — to use a term from the 19th century — they have also made a brief appearance both in the press and in the political contests of recent years.¹⁷ Greek scholars have responded both to them and to Europeans, who have spoken out on their behalf,¹⁸ with studies which, as the scholars themselves assert, constitute an interdisciplinary attempt to examine the question of Macedonian ethnic identity „through a correctly structured analysis, ..., about 'bilinguals' of western Macedonia“.¹⁹

¹⁶ See my article „Οι μεταμορφώσεις του λόγου περί Μακεδονίας“ in the newspaper *Εποχή* (Athens 9-1-1993).

¹⁷ See their review *Zora* *Μηνιαία εφημερίδα που εκδίδει η „Μακεδονική Κίνηση Βαλκανικής Ευημερίας“* 1 (Oct. 1993). Also *Greece against its Macedonian Minority. The „Rainbow“ trial*, Greek Helsinki Monitor & Minority Rights Group — Greece, Athens 1998 (Greek-English edition).

¹⁸ See for instance *Macedonian Minorities: The Slav Macedonians of Northern Greece and the Treatment of Minorities in the Republic of Macedonia. A report issued by the British Helsinki Human Rights Group*, Oxford 1994. On the recent European interest on minorities see G. SEEWANN ed., *Minderheiten als Konfliktpotential in Ostmittel- und Südosteuropa*, München 1995. YVES PLASSERAUD, *Les minorités*, ed. Montchrestien, 1998, A. BREDIMAS, L.-A. SISILIANOS eds., *Η προστασία των μειονοτήτων. Η Σύμβαση-πράσινο του Συμβουλίου της Ευρώπης* Athens-Komotini 1997.

¹⁹ B. GOUNARIS et al. eds., forward Th. VEREMIS, *Ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία*, Thessalonica 1997, p. 12. See also MACKRIDGE, YANNAKAKIS, *Ourselves and Others*, op. cit. Cf. ANASTASIA N. KARAKASIDOU, *Fields of Wheat, Hills of Blood. Passages to Nationhood in Greek Macedonia 1870-1990*, Chicago and London, 1997, who emphasizes the complex and multi-dimensional, local as well as Balkan, socio-historical

All these show that the discourse focusing on what is local and different has a variety of provenances and conflicting purposes: on the one hand, a certain European trend together with the „others“ within the nation-states and, on the other, certain intellectuals together with economic and other forces within the nation-states formulate different historical and geopolitical discourses relating to local and ethnic identity. Within this conjunction of circumstances, the promotion of ethnic identities as a subject of historiography, at least apparently, conflicts with the perceptions hitherto of national historiography. Nor does it accord with the social history introduced by the *Annales* school, though the interdisciplinary approach is initially accepted.

As we know, in the 19th century, the demographic medley in Macedonia was not viewed positively, because of the various nationalisms that were all trying to incorporate it and made it highly inflammable. It is no accident that the demography of this part of the Ottoman Empire was viewed as a result of „ethnochemical spoilage“,²⁰ nor that it gave its name to a mixed salad (Macédoine).²¹ A hundred years later, however, the racial, linguistic, and other differences among the citizens of the European nations are being reassessed in a more positive light. The voice of the „ethnic others“ is increasingly heard, with the support, moreover, of Europe. It goes without saying, certainly, that the maintaining of cultural differences is a sign of democracy and a positive prospect for the coexistence of the peoples of Europe with those who recently find refuge among them. So from this point of view, the demand that what is different should be preserved and criticism of the programs implemented hitherto with a view to homogenising the nation-state do represent a step forward. On the other hand, the political repercussions of this change, that is the weakening of the nation-state and the concomitant regionalisation of Europe, is not such a self-evidently positive or unambiguous development.²²

processes leading to the shaping of ethnic/national identities. The hostile reactions to this Columbia-University Ph. D. dissertation (1992) in Greece and among Greek diaspora see p. 228 ff., the review *Balkan Studies* 35 (1994), pp. 113–46 and the newspapers *Eleftherotypia* 2–2–1996 and *Kathimerini* 11–2–1996.

²⁰ „Εθνοχημική αλλοίωση της Μακεδονίας“ newspaper *Ακρόπολις* 6–10–1888 (the reference in STEPHANOS A. KOUMANOUDIS, *Συναγωγή νέων λέξεων υπό των λογίων πλασθεισών από της Αλώσεως μέχρι των καθ' ημάς χρόνων*, Introduction K. Th Dimaras, Athens 1980 [1900], p. 327. /σ /η

²¹ Al. R. RANGABES, *Απομνημονεύματα*, vol. 4, Athens 1930, p. 231 (1878) Cf., PAUL ROBERT, *Dictionnaire de la langue française*, 1979, Macédoine.

²² It suffices to refer the recent scepticism of some French politicians regarding the official recognition of local vernaculars, see the first-page article „Les langues régionales cassent la France politique“, *Le Monde* 25–6–1999. According to Jacques Chirac „... une telle perspective, ... aurait pour effet, dit-il, de „balkaniser la France“ et de porter atteinte au concept même du peuple français“ (editorial of the same day).

The question of ethnic groups and their identity is much more complicated when it becomes a subject of historiography, a trend that is rapidly gaining momentum both in the countries of Europe and in those seeking entry to the EU. In the first group we have Greece; in the second, all, or almost all, the other Balkan countries. The aforementioned political and epistemological debate on cultural differences — as reflected in *The Clash of civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* by Samuel P. Huntington²³ — shows not only that the cultural identity of any particular group is historically determined, but above all that, in some periods, such as the one we are living in right now, it constitutes a complex expression of current social and geopolitical issues at stake.²⁴ In this respect, the demand for recognition of a Slavo-Macedonian identity, together with the responses it elicits from the Greek state offers, in the current climate of globalisation, is a revealing example through which to explore these issues. So let us see what trends are once again „balkanising“ the Balkans and what ethnic identity is taken to mean. Comparing modern historical/anthropological texts on ethnic identities, particularly the Slav-Macedonian one, with 19th-century historical texts on national identity one recognises similarities and differences in the ways in which the two identities are perceived.

The similarities:

- 1) Both are described using terminology borrowed from chemistry: „consolidation“ is the term that was usually used in the 19th century; „solidification“ is used today.²⁵
- 2) The personal preference of the citizens is frequently recognised in their choice of national identity. Their incorporation into the national body helps to homogenise the nation-state.²⁶ More or less the same is true of ethnic identity: special importance is attached to the personal will, but in this case it helps to differentiate the individual from the body of the nation-state.

²³ SAMUEL P. HUNTINGTON, *The Clash of civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, New York 1996.

²⁴ For an interesting analysis of these aspects see YVES LACOSTE, *Vive la nation. Destin d'un idée géopolitique*, Paris 1997.

²⁵ „Παλίωση“, „σύμψηξη“ and „συμπαλίωση“ are the Greek words: see GOUNARIS et al. eds., *Ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία*, op. cit., pp. 12, 14, and, among many 19th-century examples, the newspaper edited by AN. KOULOURIOTIS, *Φωνή της Αλβανίας*, Athens Oct. 1878, p. 1, respectively. On the discourse of the national historiography in general see GEORG G. IGGERS, *The German Conception of History. The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present*, Middletown, Connecticut 1983, revised edition. GEORG G. IGGERS, JAMES M. POWEL eds. *Leopold von Ranke and the Shaping of the Historical Discipline*, Syracuse University Press 1990.

²⁶ On the significance of the conscious preference and will for the formation of the national identity see the classical conference at Sorbonne by Ernest Renan, *Qu'est-ce que la nation?* (11–3–1882), Paris 1882.

- 3) Historical memory is a fundamental component of the formation of both identities, though it is formed through a different theoretical schema (as we shall see in a moment).
- 4) Discourse on national identity almost never makes socio-economic distinctions. The national group on the one hand comprises a very broad stratum, the people. These are the country folk, who, being cut off from and uninfluenced by civilisation, are regarded as guardians of the national heritage, which they have preserved through the spoken word. So history, ethnography and folklore declare this national heritage to be an expression of the soul of the people. We see something equally vague, from a socio-economic point of view, in the definition of the ethnic group, when it is being examined by intellectuals who tend to depreciate it.

The differences:

- 1) Nineteenth-century historians and folklorists believed that the national group had been in a state of „lethargy“ for centuries, but, by a process of constant bloody struggles, had managed to „wake up“ and „regain its integrity“. Conversely, for most scholars the ethnic group not only had not existed centuries before, but had recently arisen out of the policy of the nation-states (oppression, marginalization, socio-economic discrimination).²⁷ The former is a teleological result of a long duration; the latter is rather a process.²⁸ The shaping of the national identity is connected with liberation movements and leads to a new political and social organisation, the nation-state; yet the ethnic identity „comes to the fore at times of social, political and territorial upheavals“. Culture, the main constituent of ethnic identity, gives rise to cultural nationalism which „implies that a certain group views the cultures of the other groups not only as inferior to their own but as threats, which are often considered worth fighting against.“²⁹

²⁷ Some scholars present the formation of the ethnic/cultural Slavo-Macedonian identity as a quite recent phenomenon dated in the interwar period, see f.i. GOUNARIS et al., op. cit., p. 16. Nevertheless we cannot ignore the debate on the national character of the Slavic-speaking Macedonians during the last decade of the 19th century. Neither can we silence the connection of the awareness of a distinctive Macedonian consciousness with socialist ideas. The daily press, among other sources, gives quite illustrative evidence, see f.i. one extracted from the newspaper Philippoupolis 16-4-1896: „Μεταξύ των εν Σοφία σοσιαλιστών υπάρχει και όμιλος εκ Μακεδόνων, όστις παρσκευάζεται να εορτάση την ημέραν της 19/1 Μαΐου. Επί τούτω κατεσκευάσε σημαίαν εξ ερυθρού υφάσματος, φέρουσιν την εξής επιγραφήν: 'Μακεδονικός επανστατικός σοσιαλιστικός όμιλος. Η απελευθέρωσις των Μακεδόνων είναι το έργον των Μακεδόνων'. Προς τούτοις κατεσκευάσθησαν και ταινίαι ερυθρού χρώματος, ας θα περιβληθώσι τα μέλη κατά την εορτήν. Επί των ταινιών αίτινες θα φορούνται ως αι των μεγαλοσταύρων, υπάρχει η επιγραφή: 'Ζήτω η επανάστασις της Μακεδονίας. Ελευθερία ή θάνατος'.“

²⁸ MACKRIDGE, YANNAKAKIS, *Ourselves and Others*, op. cit., p. 4.

²⁹ MACKRIDGE, YANNAKAKIS, *Ourselves and Others*, op. cit. p. 2 and 3. Also Gounaris et al., *Ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία*, op. cit., p. 14-15.

- 2) Ethnic identity is more restricted in essence than national identity. The latter involves the whole range of individual and collective human life, world views, attitudes and behaviours that determine rational and emotional choices. Ethnic identity, by contrast, is deemed to have only a cultural content (language, mores and customs).
- 3) Historical knowledge plays a major part in the shaping of national identity. As we have seen, the nation-state is legitimised through a specific image of the historical past and it associates with its political programmes for the cohesion of the citizens and for its own expansion. In so far as it has a cultural content, ethnic identity too, by the same token, involves collective historical memory. We are not dealing here, however, with a demographically and geographically widespread group, as is the case with the national group, segments of which are even to be found outside the national borders. The collective memory that is recognisable in ethnic/cultural identity corresponds to a limited geographical space that it inhabits itself — though there may be dispersion here too. Its history is usually an object of local history, a trend that emerged out of the ideological and political needs of the fragmented Germany at the turn of the 19th century and is largely identified with the concerns of the Romantic movement. This coincided with the birth of positivist historicism, though not with the classical form of this scientific trend, as established in the mid-nineteenth century. More specifically, local history, loaded usually with emotions and personal memories, occupies the borderline between history and folklore or, to use modern terms, necessarily turns towards micro-history and history of everyday life, towards synchrony and not diachrony. These, moreover, the local/partial and synchrony, are also what makes nowadays history of cultural/ethnic identities seek appropriate conceptual research tools in anthropology.³⁰
- 4) Lastly, the national and the ethnic group have different goals and expectations; the atmosphere in which they seek to attain them is also different: the forming of a nation and the founding of a nation-state are usually achieved by liberation from a yoke. The rights which the citizens enjoy are officially granted to all, even if the principle of isonomy is not implemented, and the productive processes go forward within a developing economy. By contrast, the emergence of the ethnic group comes about through the inconsistencies of the nation-state, i.e. using force, whether actual or symbolic, and marginalising the ethnic group in order to integrate and homogenise the citizenry. This results in disaffection

³⁰ See supra note 10. Also GOUNARIS et al., op. cit., *Ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία*, p. 25. Some stimulating thoughts on anthropology as applied in history see, ALBAN BÉNSA, *De la micro-histoire vers une anthropologie critique*, JACQUES REVEL ed., *Jeux d'échelles. La micro-analyse à l'expérience*, Paris 1996, pp. 37–70.

and frustration, which are generally agreed to be the hallmarks of ethnic identity.³¹

The above paradigm of contemporary approach of Macedonian identities — Greek and Slavo-Macedonian — would not be worth noting if the concern for cultural/ethnic identities was not a more general Balkan and even European tendency, political and epistemological at the same time. And I think this last point is the most important common trait of the contemporary historical interest in cultural/ethnic identities with the 19th-century historians' interest in national identity: both are politically determined,³² that means something more than the historians' involvement in the contemporary issues. Both, though with different theoretical and methodological assumptions, with different narrative and unequal concern for historical time, try to legitimize, through a suitable image of the past, their contemporary socio-political projects at stake. The former is connected with the 19th-century political program of national homogenisation; the latter is linked with the contemporary crisis,³³ regarding the concern about minority human rights and the maintenance of the nation state in the era of globalisation.

In conclusion, it is clear that historians are now facing a challenge to renew their thematic and theoretical approach to identity in South-Eastern Europe. The conditions, i.e., in which the most disparate racial, religious and linguistic groups co-existed within the great empires until recently, as well as the content of „discrimination“ in mediaeval and modern societies, really are very intriguing questions. But how can historians study them without transferring (post)modern issues and concerns for cultural/ethnic identities to earlier centuries, or without becoming advocates for certain political choices? Can they, unlike the „nation-builder“ historians of the 19th century, avoid being described as „identity-builders“ or even „identity-destroyers“? Should they perhaps study the transition from one identity to another as a historical phenomenon in South-Eastern Europe, or, even more significant, take a critical approach to the tendency to manufacture identities, showing the ambiguous geopolitical and social function of such historiographical questions?

³¹ See supra note 29. Also ERIC J. HOBSBAWM, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today*, GOPAL BALAKRISHNAN, BENEDICT ANDERSON eds., *Mapping The Nation*, Verso, 1996, p. 258. „...ethnicity is one way of filling the empty containers of nationalism.“

³² The debate on ethnic identity of the Slavic-speaking Greek citizens of Macedonia is clearly connected with the breakup of Yugoslavia and the recognition of FYROM, see GOUNARIS et al., *Ταυτότητες στη Μακεδονία*, op. cit., p. 13 and MACKRIDGE, YANNAKAKIS, *Ourselves and Others*, op. cit., p. 1.

³³ ERIC J. HOBSBAWM, *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today*, op. cit., p. 265.