

## REZENSIONEN

IOANA AMINIAN JAZI, THEDE KAHL (eds.): *Ethno-Cultural Diversity in the Balkans and the Caucasus*. (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Sitzungsberichte, Band 927). Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences. 2023. p. 394. ISBN 978-3-7001-8875-9.

The relation between cultures of dissimilar ethnogenesis opens a challenging scientific horizon and resembles a complex phenomenon that can only be studied within a broader discursive framework. In all cases, not only the appropriate differentiated analytical tools would guarantee to assess the issues at hand and to address the core issues, a deep understanding of the ethnic identity is essential. More than this, further justification is also required, which can be found through the inclusion of the key understanding of the diversity.

This backdrop is precisely where the framework for the book *Ethno-Cultural Diversity in the Balkans and the Caucasus*, edited by Ioana Aminian Yazı and Thede Kahl, is displayed. The approach embraces differences, is less divisive and is more inclusive. Presenting itself as a contemporary overview of the phenomenon of ethnic and cultural identity, the book deals with analytical, and critical perspectives to treat *ethnic historiography* (in the Balkans and in the Caucasus), *historical civilizational proximity* (Ottoman vs Russian Empire; Romanian-Greek encounters), *dominance* (Georgian Highlanders and the former Soviet Union) and *religious distinctiveness* (Orthodox and Muslim). The volume's editors have accomplished something far more significant than merely uniting all of the 14 seemingly distinct studies in terms of their thematic to the comprehension of ethnic consciousness spread in the Caucasus and the Balkans.

The Balkans present numerous opportunities for analysis and have long been recognized for their extraordinary amalgam of social, historical, political, and religious expressions and other forms of cultural idiosyncrasies. But in the case of this book, the constructed perspective multiplies namely because it takes into account another extremely varied anthropological region as the Caucasus is. In fact, only a small number of studies have been able to successfully focus the efforts of academics from various humanitarian disciplines to concentrate them on both transborder and transcontinental perspective. With such as focus and its intersectoral ties, the entire work adds significantly to our general human knowledge. Moreover, the articles that address lesser-known details from the range of the ethno-cultural mosaic (Bosniaks in Turkey, Alans in Northern Caucasus, Azeris, Talysh, Kurds, Tats, Georgians in the Republic of Azerbaijan, etc.) to some differentiated religious expressions (in view of the dancing ethnicity, the heterodox Muslim Shia Islam followers, the Alevis) are of highest value.

To start with, the volume *Ethno-Cultural Diversity* can be thematically divided into a more general part including issues such as dialogue between culture and civilizations (*On the edge of empires* by Keith Hitchins; *Identity and Traditional Law in Albania and Georgia* by Stéphane Voell, *Dancing Ethnicity in the Caucasus and in the Balkans* by Marieta Schneider, *Romanian-Greek Cultural Encounters at the Beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century* by Walter Puchner), ethno-political and religious mapping (*Ethnic Mapping in Central and Eastern Europe* by Patrik Tátrai, *Republic of Azerbaijan: Eth-*

*nic Identity and Census Categories* by Babak Rezvani, *The Turkish Minority in Bulgaria* by Fahri Türk and Kader Özlem, *The Bosniaks in Turkey Between Assimilation and Ethnic Revival* by Christoph Giesel), society and diplomatic correlations (*Archaeology, Society and Politics, or how and why the ancestors were invented in the North Caucasus* by Victor A. Shnirelman, *The diplomatic and military relationship between Georgian Highlanders and the Russian Empire: From the 17<sup>th</sup> Century to the present day* by Florian Mühlfried, *Die Aleviten und schiitisch-alevitisch beeinflusste Sufi-Orden in Südosteuropa* by Christoph Giesel) and studies with a distinctly ethno-linguistic emphases (Aromanian influences in the context of the *Balkan-Caucasian parallels*, outlined by Victor Friedman; *Slavic influences in Romanian from the historical perspective*, provided by Helmut Schaller and *Empathic reflexivization in the Nakh-Dagestani languages*, revealed by Diana Forker.

In fact, a closer look would point to a very important focus of the subjects covered, along with subtle message regarding the topic Ethnic and Cultural diversity in the Caucasus and the Balkans. From this viewpoint, the problems under study can be divided into three categories.

The first group can plausibly be classified as the transcontinental analyses group. Research focusing on the Balkans may be included in the second group, while studies focusing on the Caucasus may be included in the third.

The volume appropriately begins with Keith Hitchins's study of the intersections between South-East Europe and the Caucasus, which is noteworthy for its depth. Hitchins's study raises crucial questions about how small ethnic groups, such as the Wallachians, Moldavians, Bulgarians, and Georgians, navigated their survival and identity "on the edge of empires" at the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In his exhaustive research K. Hitchins examines in a detailed approach the strategies of these groups employed to maintain autonomy, protect their cultural identity and negotiate power in the face of competing imperial influences of the neighboring Great powers Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Launching such an understanding, the author seems to provide more than just a comparative research in the historical realm of that time span. The study of Hitchins discusses the efforts of the peoples in both regions to dwell between Scylla and Charybdis so to strengthen their ties to Europe to counteract Russia, the Ottoman Empire, and particularly to Iran.

The two other papers in this group address ethnic identity in relation to more detailed topics. For instance, Stéphane Voell addresses the subject of traditional law practice in Georgia and Albania. The author arrives at the fundamental political and cultural traits of each country by directing the analysis from the center to the periphery, but she is able to postulate these traits against the backdrop of each of the country's unique national identity.

In her fascinating research on the migration of Kosovo Circassians to the North Caucasus, Marieta Schneider explores the essence of ethnic dance culture. Highlighting the identifying power of music, the author raises significant questions about the role of musical culture in shaping ethnic identity. She argues that a deeper understanding of "dancing" ethnicity is essential as a tool against the "erosion of ethnic boundaries" (p. 316).

Faced with a crossroads, the Balkans and the Caucasus have always been and are a place associated with multiple threats. And if to the most sensitive issues belong the

political, religious and nationalist ones, those related to language are among the most vivid. Exactly they display diversity in a manner that seems and sounds apparent. This is best proved by Victor Friedman who brings to light some of the lesser-known facts on the role of the Aromanian for the peculiar linguistic construct between the Balkans and the Caucasus. The author identifies additional similarities in religion, geopolitics, and language between the Caucasus and the Balkans and also contends that geographical similarities and the presence of dominating languages result in analogous linguistic phenomena in both regions. Aromanian's morphosyntactic characteristics to those of other Balkan languages, including Albanian can be treated as an expression of living linguo-ethnic identity as well.

In the second and largest group (comprising of 7 studies) are those that focus on the ethno-culture of the Balkan. Similarly to the first group, there is an introductory study. This is the Patrik Tátrai's work. It emphasizes the understanding of ethnic identity that is attained on the basis of the critical and historiographical approach of mapping. The author manages to unambiguously show the varieties of "awakening of national consciousness" and the accompanying parallels of nation-building processes (p. 38–39) by way of the ethnic mapping approach. The true value of the author's contribution to this work is demonstrated not only by the abundance of analytical and illustrative material, but also by connecting his research paradigm to aspects of the critique of ethnic cartography, such as the deliberate map coloring of ethnic groups, unrecognized and in-between groups. Additional issues that Tátrai raises and which are extremely pertinent to the volume's subject are those of ethnic indicators, such as toponyms, and their function in the creation of ethno-linguistic maps.

The following two developments again point in the direction of assimilation, survival, revival, and/or ethnic identity. In one of them, Cristoph Giesel provides a thorough summary of the debates surrounding the origins and languages of the Bosniak people in former Yugoslavia and Turkey, as well as a well-known private ethnic mapping case (p. 108ff.). The author feels that providing a detailed account of the socialization and transformation processes that have taken place in Turkey since the fall of the Ottoman Empire is insufficient, and that he must also provide analysis based on his own fieldwork. Additionally, he discusses the development of ethnic and cultural organizations as well as Bosniaks' sociopolitical integration in contemporary Turkey.

Once more, it is possible to view the study by Fahri Türk and Kader Özlem (p. 143–157) as a specific example of linguistic-ethnic mapping, or ethnic mapping. This article's primary focus is on the development of Turkish language use in Bulgarian public life and the difficulties the Turkish minority has teaching Turkish as a second language. A more in-depth examination of bilateral relations and potential counter-versions is found in Christoph Giesel's (p. 193–292) larger study, which covers a number of ethnic identity-related topics, including the origins, history, dissemination, and religious and social mindsets, customs, and symbioses of the Alevi and Bektashi in Southeast Europe and as a whole.

A closer examination of culture can reveal some particular phenomena, such as the interactive communication that takes place between the production and the reception of exciting theatrical, musical, or literary events. This is illustrated in Walter Puchner's research, which demonstrates that ethnic diversity in the Black Sea region's cities and harbors, as well as on the hinterland's background, can survive in this way. Thus, the

study appears to provide an answer to the question of whether art, in this case Greek theater, no matter professional or amateur, can fulfill a dual cultural function and be a valuable instrument for promoting linguistic and ethnic awareness in a foreign country.

Looking at culture, and in particular at the specific phenomenon of interactive communication between production and reception through engaging theater productions, musical or literary events in the hinterland and in the cities and harbors surrounding the Black Sea, the work of Walter Puchner appears. Thus, it seems as if the answer to the question whether art, in this case Greek theatre, be it both professional and amateur, can serve not only a particular cultural purpose, but also that it is an important tool for both fostering ethnic and linguistic consciousness in a foreign land. Walter Puchner not only explains the origins of the coexistence of Greek and Romanian theater in the area, but he also provides a more thorough analysis of the social satires about Wallachian themes written in Greek and the amateur theater primarily performed in Bucharest after 1800. Actually, though, the author calls the reader's attention to two more effects: the existence of strong cultural ties between Greeks and Romanians at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the existence of an ethnic identity consciousness.

The work of Helmut Schaller is another example of how to foster cross-cultural exchange and incorporates Slavic elements into the evolution of Romanian. In fact, the topic of the effects of language contact is rarely examined from a diachronic point of view, with the exception of a few strictly comparative studies.

The set of four analyses in the volume, which is devoted to the Caucasus, appears as a the concluding construct. It can be claimed that the exceptional depth of the issues addressed, as well as the analyticism and specificity of the group, set them apart. Considering the national-international binary opposition, for instance V. Shnirelman reveals some peculiarities in the interpretation of ethnogenesis in his analysis of the ethnic culture of the Alans. The author claims that these peculiarities manifest themselves both inwardly, toward the sense of ethnic identity, and outwardly, involving the potential for greater political inclusion and territorial recognition (p. 72).

B. Rezvani also draws attention to the oppressions not only of the underrepresentation of the Talysh, Lezgins, Kurds, Tats, Georgians ethnic groups in the census. He highlights their misuse for political purposes, i.e. "deliberate underestimation" (p. 95) in the case of Tat population in the Republik of Azerbaijan as well.

The final work from the section on the Caucasus is that of D. Forker, whose point of view arises specifically from the understanding of diversity rather than being contradictory or falling under the delicate category of ethnicity. Here, the focus is linguistic, and the author establishes that the definition of enclitics not only serves an emphatic function but also has the ability to express identity based on reflexivization in the Avar, Andic, and Tsezic languages (p. 373ff.).

Lastly, I would like to review the articles from the standpoint of their methodological approach in order to further highlight the potential for comparative research (and why not for future confrontative-coping studies) that can confirm the significance of the issues on Balkanology and Caucasus studies raised by the authors. In this regard, I would like to highlight the fact that the articles in the collection stand out due to their extensive coverage of the topics on ethnicity and culture as well as their solid research instruments.

An interesting insight into ethnic-cultural diversity is presented by these studies that have an *interpretative character* (the two studies: *Diplomatic and military relationship* and *Identity and traditional law*) or descriptive character (the works entitled *Greek cultural activities*, *Romanian-Greek cultural encounters*, *Slavic elements in modern Romanian* and *Emphatic reflexive particles in the Nakh-Daghestanian languages*).

In the second fourth group I would include the studies that apply *critical analysis*, which we can follow in the works on the “Ethnic mapping” and on the “Turkish minority in Bulgaria”.

Then, I estimate the research with an *evidence-based methodology with primary data use* as a separate group in the third category. Geisel’s two major works on the “The Bosniaks in Turkey” and the one on the “Dancing ethnicity” would fall into this group.

Based on the employed methodology, I can further categorize the studies that exhibit a notable analytical quality and possess an overview-like character, to the final fourth group. This group of studies employs a *holistic methodology* and requires a more expansive relationship in terms of culture, language, and evaluative diachronic relations. These are unquestionably Hithcin’s work „On the edge of Empires“ and Friedmans’ “The importance of Aromanian for the study of Balkan language contact”. Considering the methods applied, all studies in the collection volume show research depth of the analysis and ability to capture the co-existence of culture and ethnicity on two big geographic areals.

Moreover, despite the fact that language, history, and religion all contribute to secure civic and national dimensions, it is very challenging to capture phenomena that have went through in parallel within an established dominating majority.

This is why the book *Ethno-Cultural Diversity in the Balkans and the Caucasus*, edited by IOANA AMINIAN YAZI and THEDE KAHL, provides a contemporary overview and offers insightful analysis within a factual and critical framework. It seeks to explore ethnicity through a precise interpretation across two geopolitically distinct, socially complex, and linguistically unique arenas, where diversity must be lived than merely described.

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TEODORA KIRYAKOVA-DINEVA

ANASTAS DODI: *Hyrje në gjuhësi* [Einführung in die Sprachwissenschaft]. Tirana: Naimi 2019. 312 S. ISBN 978-9928-234-42-1.

Die 2019 in Tirana auf Albanisch veröffentlichte *Einführung in die Sprachwissenschaft* von Anastas Dodi (20.07.1933-08.05.2008) stellt einen gelungenen Versuch dar, wichtige linguistische Strömungen, beginnend mit der historisch vergleichenden Sprachwissenschaft bis hin zur Computerlinguistik, und Grundlagen über die albanische Sprache insbesondere für eine universitäre Lehre vorzustellen und einem breiteren Publikum in vor allem albanischsprachigen Gebieten nutzbar zu machen. Sie stützt sich dabei zusammenfassend auf wissenschaftliche Betrachtungen nicht nur einheimischer, sondern vor allem auch international anerkannter anglo-amerikanischer, französischer und osteuropäischer Forscher, häufig aus der zweiten Hälfte des vergangenen und zu