

IBAC 2015 Call for Papers



IBAC

5th INTERNATIONAL BALKAN ANNUAL
CONFERENCE
25 - 29 November 2015, Sofia

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The Balkans – Past and Present: Mutual Influences and Interactions



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Nov. 25-29, 2015 – Sofia, Bulgaria

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The Balkan Peninsula has often been defined in mass media, history, and popular writing as a bridge between the East and the West, between Islam and Christianity, between civilizations, which until the last decades of the twentieth century met and cohabited without significant conflicts on its territory. For others it has been, and still is, a bulwark of Christian faith facing Islam, a frontier where Christian and Islamic civilizations clash. For most of the twentieth century, 'Westerners,' a term rather fluid, over-emphasized and misleading, have labeled the peninsula and its inhabitants as a powder keg of troublemakers.

By the Ottoman conquest the peninsula had already become a patchwork of ethnic, linguistic and confessional groups, often sharing spaces and forming larger or narrower 'zones of contact' where they lived together. Even major ethnic groups such as Greeks, Bulgarians, Serbs and Albanians, would rarely populate ethnically 'clean' territories, with, for example, large groups of Slavs and Albanians settling deep in the south of the peninsula, but also significant pockets of Greeks along the Black Sea coast, and in what are today southern Bulgaria and southern Albania. Being at a geographic crossroads, long before the Ottomans the Balkans attracted some Turkic tribes, which settled there and disappeared in the 'melting pot.' The Ottoman conquest diversified the Balkan population even more. It is in fact with the establishment of the Ottoman rule that the real spread of Islam in the region began. In the following centuries relations between the ethnic and religious groups went through periods of relatively peaceful cohabitation and violent confrontation. The age of nationalism led to the gradual withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire from the region, its dismemberment and the emergence of a number of successor states with significant religious and ethnic minorities. They engaged in complex relations with the empire but also among themselves. The two world wars brought further changes – political as well as economic, demographic, and cultural in the region.

The ethnic and religious diversity observed in the early modern Balkans does not necessarily mean that Balkan societies and Balkan settlements were less compartmentalised, or that people there were or became less intolerant and even hostile to the 'alien' than others. Cohabitation under Ottoman rule was far from devoid of tensions. Yet, it seems that in the course of centuries of invasions and arrival of new settlers, people inhabiting the peninsula had learnt to live alongside with these differences, allowing the 'other' to exist, and accepting disparities as part of life. In fact, one of the most important consequences of this ethnic and religious diversity has been the accumulation of centuries of experience in living with people who are different – linguistically, culturally, and religiously. Mixed villages and neighbourhoods, guilds or partnerships in trade and production were by no means an exceptional phenomenon throughout the early modern and modern period, as late as the nineteenth century. The diversity of languages and cultures raises a number of questions

concerning their cohabitation. Among them we may cite the issue of polyglotism in most parts of the Balkans as late as mid-20th century, interactions in art and material culture, in architecture, language contacts. Less obvious but equally important seem to have been the mutual influences and relations in economic, political and social life which have recently brought to the fore the 'Ottoman legacy' as a specific research agenda. Today, the new political and economic realities have given rise to new models of interaction within the region, on a bilateral level and within each of the Balkan states.

Scope of the Conference

The conference is scheduled to take place within the series of International Balkan Annual Conference (IBAC), and will be its fifth edition after Skopje (2011), Tirana (2012), Sarajevo (2013), and Bucharest (2014). The co-organisers propose that, without specially avoiding sensitive issues, participants focus on the aspects of life in the Balkans during the last three centuries and until present time. Topics on the pre-18th century interaction and relations will also be accepted as long as they serve as the basis for further developments. For the post-Ottoman era focus would be on the Bulgarian-Turkish relations but wider Balkan perspective is also welcome. Tentative fields would involve:

1. Economic life – agriculture, trade, crafts, manufacturing, transport and infrastructure, tourism;
2. Social life and relations
3. Diplomacy and international relations;
4. Cultural exchange and interaction – art, architecture, language, folklore, music, literature, cinematography;
5. Education – policies, institutions
6. Press
7. Biographical studies
8. Cities and urbanisation
9. (Economic) migration
10. Cultural, economic, social and political legacies
11. Contemporary relations

Important Dates

- **Dates of the Conference:** November 25 - 29, 2015
- **Deadline for Abstract Submission:** September 15, 2015
- **Notification of Acceptance:** October 23, 2015
- **Registrations Start:** October 25, 2015
- **Deadline for registrations:** November 6, 2015

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Please send your proposal to: info@ibacconferences.com

Prof. Dr. Ahmet YEŞİL

Chairman of IBAC 2015 Conference