

Paschalis M. Kitromilides and Sophia Matthaïou, eds., *Greek-Serbian Relations in the Age of Nation-Building*. Institute of Historical Research - Section of Neohellenic Research, Athens, 2016. 257 pp. Index. €20.00

IN his introduction to the volume Paschalis M. Kitromilides pleads for more historical substance and nuance in describing the relations between the two peoples and two countries that pride themselves with shared religious (Byzantine Orthodox) background and no mutual armed conflict since the early 14th century. Evoking more convergences Kitromilides rightfully wonders what do they mean when so much else changed over centuries, especially the last two?

This collection presents contributions of Greek and Serbian scholars to couple of colloquia held in better years before the Greek financial crisis erupted. Serbian economic situation is less known internationally but suffice to say Serbia is one of the very few countries that has not yet recovered from recession of 2008. A lost decade for the Balkans also meant a long delay for this volume that purports to concentrate on the more recent period of relations between two countries. However, two studies deal with centuries preceding the age of nation building. In the most theoretical of all contributions Marios Hatzopoulos looks at commonalities and differences in recorded cases of premodern messianism among two peoples and provides eloquent justification of this term rather than millennialism previously used by Traian Stoianovich, re-interpreting thereby the few known cases such as that of Stephen the Little in the late 18th century Montenegro. More importantly, by pointing to “Prophetic Structures of the Orthodox Community” as this article is titled, Hatzopoulos sheds new lights on both Serbian and Greek uprisings against the Ottomans in the early 19th century. In addition, Ljiljana Stošić looks at the common motives in visual arts deriving from common religious background but also free movement of artists before the creation of modern states.

The core topic is discussed in four contributions. Based on ample previous research Dušan T. Bataković recapitulates the Serbian-Greek relations in the long 19th century marked by many attempts at alliances and cooperation but equally by their failures over contested interests in Macedonia or simply economic, political and military weaknesses. Vojislav Pavlović looks at ecclesiastic dimension of conflicts whereas Ljubodrag P. Ristić adds foreign, chiefly British, dimension to conflicts among the nascent Balkan states and illuminates the continuous foreign interference. Finally,

Miroslav Svirčević summarizes the development of parliamentary government in two countries.

Whereas these studies charter well-known territories, the articles by Ioannis Koubourlis and Sophia Matthaïou bring new perspectives and together with the above mentioned piece by Hatzopoulos elevate this volume above conventional. Koubourlis analyses how political events influenced perceptions of Serbs and Montenegrins in the works of Constantinos Paparrigopoulos, and then how his views in turn influenced later Greek dispositions and events. This is important as Paparrigopoulos, who famously denounced Jakob Fallmerayer's theories about racial origins of the Greeks, was the key contributor in the formation of historical narrative and conscience among modern Greeks. Sophia Matthaïou's piece on the fortunes of two Koumanidis brothers is the most interesting and telling contribution illuminating the complex relationship between the nascent modern nations on human level often hidden from old-fashioned diplomatic histories. The two brothers of Greek ancestry and Serbian upbringing achieved significant careers in two countries yet their paths were separate and contacts seldom standing as an example for wider relationship between two countries. Koumanidi (Jovan or Ioannis) features also in the piece by Đorđe S. Kostić as the owner of one of the oldest inns in Belgrade, appropriately named Greek Queen (Grčka kraljica), whose fortunes and business operation are told in detail. The two most prominent Serbian populated towns in the Habsburg Monarchy, Novi Sad and Pančevo, in the 19th century acquired names, or shall we say epithets, of Serbian Athens and Sparta, as retold by Sanja Lazarević Radak, testifying to the prominence of Hellenic symbolism in the Serbian imaginary of the period. Oddly, the collection also features an anecdotal piece on a bizarre figure of Eugene de Chernitzky alleged Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich by Čedomir Antić that has no connection to the volume's topic. Thanks to tireless editors this collection finally appeared in English and thus made the travails of Balkan historians available to a wider readership.