

Introduction to Challenging Crossroads: Macedonia in Global Perspective

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Almost every country in Eurasia and Africa has been labeled a “crossroads” at one time or another. In the Balkans, every country on the Via Egnatia and the Via Militaris was a crossroads simply by virtue of being on the route. In fact, when applied metaphorically, a crossroads need only involve two directions rather than the literal four, and the metaphor often invokes problematic dichotomies—e.g., Christian/Muslim, East/West, center/periphery, tradition/modernity—rather than enlightening complexities. Still, as crossroads go, the territory of the Republic of Macedonia has seen quite a bit of traffic over the millennia, and the presence of seven different language groups with eight centuries or more residence—Slavic, Romance, Albanian, Hellenic, Indic, Armenian, and Turkic—gives it the same linguistic complexity as Greece, although the latter country pays considerably less attention to its multilingual and multiethnic heritage.¹ The illustration on the cover, with signs in two alphabets and four languages (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, and English), taken in a busy commercial district in the capital, Skopje, is intended both to illustrate the everyday nature of this complexity in Macedonia and to acknowledge the global processes of which Macedonia is now a specific part.²

The cluster of articles here takes “challenging” as both an adjective and a participle, i.e. Macedonia as the locus of intersections that challenge the homogeneity of the nation-state and uniform attempts at creating a postsocialist and post-conflict order, and Macedonia as a challenge to crossroads as an analytical concept in a multiply interconnected world. These articles thus seek to center Macedonia within the global processes that intersect the country, from the economic and political restructurings indicative of a growing and deepening European Union to the obstacles faced by nation-states worldwide in an environment of local identity politics, supranational political agendas, and transnational associations. Through articles rooted in ethnographic detail, the cluster explores how such processes affect everyday practices in Macedonia, which practices in turn articulate, comment on, and contest political and social experiences both locally and globally. In part, our effect here is to extend and expand on the themes articulated by Douglas Rogers.³ This cluster critiques and compares approaches to Macedonia not (merely) as postsocialist, and certainly not as post-Soviet bloc—given that Yugoslavia left that configuration in 1948—but rather as part of a transnational scene that

¹ See Victor A. Friedman, “Review Article of Evangelia Adamou, ed., *Le Patrimoine plurilingue de la Grèce. (Le nom des langues II)*,” *Balkanistika* 22 (2009): 215-226. This attitude has even penetrated the world of men’s magazines. The November 2004 issue of *Maxim* featured a photo spread of international “Miss Maxim”s, each a scantily clad and provocatively posed representative of a different country with a putative quotation from the model and a “hometown fact” about the country such as the difference between Netherlands and Holland or the number of bulls killed annually in bullfights in Spain. Miss Maxim Greece’s hometown fact was the following: “According to the Greek government there are no ethnic divisions in Greece” (p. 176).

² The photo was taken by Victor A. Friedman while researching multilingualism in Macedonia (2008-2009) with support from a Fulbright-Hays grant and the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, whose support is gratefully acknowledged. Neither organization is responsible for any opinion expressed here.

³ Douglas Rogers, “Postsocialisms Unbound: Connections, Critiques, Comparisons,” *Slavic Review* 69, no. 1 (Spring 2010): 1-15. He also provides an excellent set of references to relevant work.

both includes and transcends the Euro-Atlantic world, extending to countries such as Iraq (see Brown's article) and beyond.⁴ At the same time, we hope to challenge, or at least to speak across, the boundaries of disciplines as well.

The cluster has its origins in a conference of anthropologists who all did their doctoral field work in, and who have published books and/or articles on, Macedonia since it declared independence in 1991, and it seeks to contextualize Macedonia globally.⁵ Of all the states to emerge from the break-up of former Yugoslavia, Macedonia is in many respects the most contested and, at the same time, a site of efforts—by local actors as well as international organizations—to both enhance and transcend the rivalrous politics of the nation-state. A striking feature of this collection is that the articles all succeed in focusing on Macedonian internal affairs, on the one hand, and international relations, on the other, and at the same time transcending Macedonia's interactions with its sometimes contentious neighbors, all of whom have affected (and in some cases afflicted) Macedonia's international agenda one way or another.⁶ One of the results of this cluster is a demonstration that for all of what can be termed contestations or insecurities of church, language, identity, and territory (the image of crossed swords rather than crossroads comes to mind), the Republic of Macedonia has much to offer general studies in the humanities and social sciences beyond these problematics. The articles in this cluster show how Macedonia can be examined on its own terms and in a larger, global context, as is the case for other nation-states. The impetus for the initial conference was the welcome surge of scholarship on the country; while only five US dissertations in

⁴ While Macedonia has been repeatedly enmeshed in networks of labor migration that result in complex combinations—Macedonia and Iraq are widely separated in geopolitical terms today, but, as Brown points out in his article, they were still part of the same state only a century ago—networks of ideology have led Macedonia, and Greece further afield, to the Hindu Kush, in search of putative descendents of Alexander of Macedon with whom they attempt to claim kinship.

⁵ The Conference, entitled "Re-Thinking Crossroads: Macedonia in Global Context," was organized by the University of Chicago's Center for East European and Russian/Eurasian Studies (CEERES) with funding from Title VI (US Department of Education) as well as from the University's Center for International Studies, Department of Anthropology, Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures, Franke Institute for the Humanities, Norman Wait Harris Fund, and Student Government. As Director of CEERES, I wish to thank Meredith Clason, Associate Director of CEERES, and Jeremy Pinkham, then Outreach coordinator of CEERES, for making the conference come together, as well as all of the participants for their contributions, all of which inform this cluster and its introduction. Thanks also to Andrew Graan, who helped both formulate the original idea and see it through to realization, to Susan Gal for advice and support, as well as to the anonymous reviewers for their input and to Mark Steinberg for bringing the cluster to fruition. Finally, and most importantly, I wish to thank my two co-editors, Susan Woodward and Keith Brown, who both expended enormous time and energy in contributing to the quality of these papers and of this introduction. The quality of the entire cluster is a reflection of their hard work, and their comments on the introduction, especially those of Susan Woodward, were crucial to its final shape.

⁶ To the north, the Serbian Orthodox Church claims the Macedonian Orthodox Church as schismatic; to the east the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences still treats Macedonian as a Bulgarian dialect (Ivan Kočev, *Bălgarski dialektien atlas*, Sofia, 2001); to the south the government of Greece rejects that Greece has an ethnic Macedonian minority, that the Republic of Macedonia has a right to its constitutional name, and blocks Macedonia from international organizations such as NATO—even in the US, the Modern Greek Studies Association distributed a call to prevent the Seventh Macedonian-North American Conference on Macedonian Studies from taking place at the University of Utah; to the west and northwest Albania and Kosovo are concerned about the fate of their fellow Albanian-speakers in Macedonia—Macedonia also has an interest in some Macedonian-speakers of Albania—and fears of irredentism exist in various sectors to varying degrees of intensity.

anthropology were based on fieldwork in Macedonia between 1945 and 1991 (all were completed between 1971 and 1982), since independence the number of anthropologists with dissertations and publications on Macedonia is sufficient to fill an entire two-day conference program.⁷ The cluster here is representative of this new knowledge.

Our group of studies opens at the beginning of the 20th century, when "Macedonian" was both contested and transnational in ways characteristic of that time, but with resonances today. Keith Brown skillfully connects his archival research to globalization past and present, including Macedonia's participation in a variety of international networks both transatlantic and transcontinental. His article argues that alongside its status in debates over national identity, Macedonia has been continuously enmeshed in global labor regimes for at least a century. His innovative approach reveals new sources and new questions for the study of the development of Macedonian identity and helps challenge the idea that globalization is a recent phenomenon. In fact, in terms of labor markets, they are more closed now than when Brown's story opens. What he proposes "is to re-envisage the stuff of Macedonian ethnography as routes rather than roots, and as constituted from acknowledged transnational relations rather than contested national essence" (p. [page number goes here]).

Whereas Brown's article focuses on how Macedonia participated and participates in global or globalizing regimes, in the second article, Andrew Graan shows how certain kinds of global—or at least transnational—regimes have penetrated Macedonia. By analyzing the discourse on image (Macedonian *imidž*) and the "marketing" of *imidž*, Graan demonstrates how various forces, particularly with regard to relations with "Europe," have affected Macedonian society. Among the factors Graan identifies as relevant, one is a transnational community known as "the internationals" whose practices undermine Macedonia's sovereignty as it tries to make its way into the Europe of the twenty-first century. Another is the 2001 ethnic Albanian insurgency in Macedonia that resulted in polarization in many respects. Graan makes clear, however, that regardless of ethnicity, a common concern in Macedonia is *imidž*. The framing discourse is thus not postsocialist but post-conflict: the marketing of *imidž* infuses both everyday perceptions and international maneuvering. *Imidž* thus comes to play a vital role, as everyone from grandmothers to presidential candidates invokes it in trying to finesse the challenges arising from the intersections of multiple national, international, and transnational interests.

Rozita Dimova's article examines economic and class factors in Macedonian society thus engaging a different aspect of the global, namely the relationship of consumerism to capitalism and how class and consumption are more effective analytical tools than ethnicity.⁸ Whereas Macedonia's Albanian-speaking community is present in

⁷ The five dissertations were these: David B. Rheubottom, "A Structural Analysis of Conflict and Cleavage in Macedonian Domestic Groups" (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1971); Nahoma Sachs, "Music and Meaning in a Macedonian Village" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 1975); John C. Grossmith, "Marginality and Reproductive Behavior among the Albanian Minority in Yugoslav Macedonia" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 1977); Christopher Marshall, "The Aesthetics of Music in Village Macedonia" (PhD diss., Cornell, 1977); George H. Ford, "Networks, Ritual, and 'Vrski': A Study of Urban Adjustment in Macedonia" (PhD diss., Arizona State, 1982).

⁸ The arguments here can be fruitfully compared to Rogers Brubaker's *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge, MA, 2004). Although "groupness" is a part of the dynamics of the relations Dimova analyzes,

Graan's article mainly as a political actor, Dimova's article involves the consequences of economic change on Macedonian and Albanian lifestyles, and as a result on Albanian-Macedonian interpersonal relations. It is arguable here that postsocialism is a fundamental concept, but only as a background to current developments. The transition from socialist Yugoslav socio-economic practice to post-independence free-market competition and the resulting shift in the public/private distinction in the Yugoslav economy and loss of privileges for those in the public sector, primarily Macedonians, has resulted in transformations of ethnic tensions.⁹ For some Macedonians (as for some ex-Yugoslavs of many other ethnicities—including some Albanians), socialism is still experienced in everyday life as a memory of better times. In this it can be argued that Dimova's article also contributes to a better understanding of the politics of memory and the politics of postsocialism in addition to the main thrust of her article, which is the politics of commodities and social status.

Finally, Neofotistos' article examines an ethnic Albanian perspective on Macedonian-Albanian relations using the transition of valences of *Shiptar* (from the Albanian *Shqiptár* meaning "Albanian," but now derogatory in Macedonian much as terms like *Polak* and *Yid* are derogatory in English but not in their languages of origin) as a lens through which to view not only interethnic relations but also intraethnic cleavages and solidarities within the Albanian community. As in Dimova's article, postsocialism or postindependence has historical relevance, although the manner in which it relates to the present is different. In the cases examined by Neofotistos, we see the result of a Yugoslav attempt at social engineering that was originally intended to create an identity for the Albanian-speakers of Yugoslavia as something distinct from the Albanian-speakers of Albania. It is a combination of the failure of this attempt with both an internalized, orientaling concept of modernization and with anxieties that span the decades before and after Macedonia's independence that enable this case study to question the kinds of periodization that Rogers suggests we can move beyond.

There is, of course, much more that Macedonia can offer larger questions of scholarship, and work by others who attended or were invited to the conference attest to this. Thus, for example, Tchavdar Marinov has shown how the specific situation of Macedonia's socialist past plays into the current competition with Greece over Alexander of Macedon.¹⁰ We can also mention here Marcin Lubaś on Macedonian-speaking Muslims, Goran Janev on Macedonian multiculturalism, Ljupčo Risteski on the Macedonian Orthodox Church, Ilka Thiessen on Macedonian and European identity, Miladina Monova on language and politics, and Burcu Akan Ellis on the latest wave of

her argument that shifts the focus of "groupness" from ethnicity to class and consumption resonates with Brubaker's Hungarian-Romanian examples.

⁹ On the private/public distinction in the Yugoslav economy and its consequences, see Susan L. Woodward's groundbreaking study *Socialist Unemployment: The Political Economy of Yugoslavia 1945-1990* (Princeton, 1995).

¹⁰ Tchavdar Marinov "Anticommunist, but Macedonian: Politics of Memory in Post-Yugoslav Macedonia" *Tokovi istorije* 17, no. 1-2 (2009): 65-83; available at www.inisbgd.co.rs/celo/2009_1.pdf (last accessed 30 June 2010). See also Petar Ilievski, "Two Opposite Approaches Towards Interpreting Ancient texts with Anthroponymic Contents," *Prilozi MANU: Oddelenie za lingvistika i literaturna nauka* 31, no. 1 (2008): 35-48.; available at www.manu.edu.mk/Prilozi_MANU_OLLN_XXXI_1.pdf (last accessed 30 June 2010). Ilievski's text is actually a broad, solidly linguistic discussion of the whole Ancient Greek-Ancient Macedonian-Modern Macedonian dispute.

Macedonian diaspora.¹¹ But the four articles here make it clear that the Republic of Macedonia, despite all the contestations surrounding it (to some extent, literally), provides a variety of new perspectives on many themes crossing the boundaries of various disciplines. The study of Macedonia also points the way for moving beyond postsocialism, and even post-independence and post-conflict without losing sight of the usefulness of those concepts. We can argue, however, that the next direction in a truly globalized world might be post-Eurocentrism.

¹¹ Another example is Macedonia's Romani population, which has shown the need for nuancing in political science modeling; see Eben Friedman, "Explaining the Political Integration of Minorities: Roms as a Hard Case" (PhD diss., University of California, San Diego, 2002).