

The Ottoman Tradition as the Model of the Culture of Power in the Balkans in the 19th-20th c.*

This article examines the impact of the Ottoman tradition in the Balkan states in the 19th and 20th c. The character of the political leadership and the centralized regimes established in the Balkan states was despotic, autocratic and authoritarian, as a result of the absence of democratic tradition and an underdeveloped political awareness and culture. A characteristic feature of the Turkish system was the position of the relatively free peasants, very different from the position of peasants in Europe. The features characteristic of the Ottoman tradition which survived in the Balkans the longest, until the end of the 20th century, were violence, corruption, nepotism as an intrinsic component of political life and power often changing hands, because of violence, assassinations, murders, etc.

Key words: Ottomans, Balkan states, political culture, political regime, violence, bureaucracy, corruption, social and economic order

It is not an easy task to ascertain the influence of the Ottoman tradition upon the culture and model of power in the Balkan states. The complexity of the problem and the fact that the Balkan nations, no longer Turkish dominance in the 19th century, tried to overthrow the formal Ottoman legacy as soon as possible and to negate, if not even annihilate, the informal one, makes drawing decisive conclusions risky. The birth of the independent Balkan nations coincided with attempted political reforms in Turkey. Moreover, there is an undeniable connection between the liberating of the Balkan nations from the Turkish dominance and the crisis of the Ottoman Empire and efforts to reform it. However, the Balkan states tried – with varying results – to implement modern European political systems. The position of great European powers was an important factor. Their support of the Balkan nations' irredentist aspirations and the fact that the small Balkan elites were foreign-educated made European powers obvious models of political systems worthy of implementing. Nevertheless, the mentality and especially the tradition of the Balkan nations and their leaders were imprinted with

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the Ottoman Empire's model and culture of power. This paper is concerned with the reception of the Ottoman legacy concerning the culture (and the model) of power in the independent Balkan states after the emerged, and taking into consideration the often blurred and ambiguous forms in which the Ottoman influence manifested itself, modified by the urge to break free of the 'legacy of enslavement'. The paper is a pioneering attempt at a comprehensive and complementary analysis of the reception of the Ottoman culture of power in the revived Balkan states in the 19th and 20th century. The Ottoman legacy in general has been a subject of study, but this paper undertakes a more specific and focused task of studying the influence of the Ottoman model of the culture of power from a comparative perspective comprising three nations: Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece¹.

What I mean here by the culture of power is the conglomerate of elements of the Ottoman civilization and culture making up the political model and practice throughout the Ottoman Empire but particularly in the Balkans². The power of Ottoman sultans possessed peculiar characteristics combining an efficient but parasitic political regime with a certain form of despotic rule, peculiar practices of recruiting state elites (from among slaves), and disdain towards the Empire's Christian population (*reaya*)³. The focus of this paper is more on the Ottoman influence upon the culture of power in the Balkan states than on particular systemic solutions which might have derived from the Ottoman tradition.

Maria Todorova is right to observe that differences between the Balkan nations contradict the existence of a singular Ottoman legacy, but there were certain nuclei of 'continuance' present already after the secession of the Balkan states⁴. Consequently, one should avoid generalizations and remember about inter-regional diversity. Questions arise concerning both the continued Ottoman legacy and its rejection after the emergence of the national states in the Balkans. Todorova points to the hybrid

- 1 The multifarious influence of the centuries of Turkish presence in the Balkans on the life of the Balkan people has been the subject of numerous publications, including: W. S. Vucinich, *The Ottoman Empire. Its Record and Legacy*, Princeton, New Jersey 1965; W.S. Vucinich, 'The Nature of Balkan Society under Ottoman Rule', *Slavic Review* 1963/4 Vol. XXI; *Imperial Legacy. The Ottoman Imprint on the Balkans and The Middle East*, C. Brown ed., New York 1996; M. Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford 1997; E. Boyar, *Ottomans, Turks and the Balkans: empire lost, relations altered*, London-New York 2007; See also: H. İnalcık, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Otoman Empire. Essays on Economy and Society*, Boolmington 1993; V. Freidman, *From Orientalism to Democracy and Back Again. Turkish in the Balkans and in Balkan Languages* (in:) *Developing Culture Identity in the Balkans. Convergence vs. Divergence*, R. Deterež, P. Plas ed., Brussels 2005; *The Ottomans and the Balkans. A Discussion of Historiography*, F. Adanir, S. Faroqhi ed., Leiden-Boston-Köln 2002. Other relevant references are quoted in the text.
- 2 See J.C. Goldfarb, *Reinventing Political Culture: The Power of Culture versus the Culture of Power*, Polity Press 2011, Part 2, *passim*.
- 3 The term was limited to non-Muslim subjects from the times of Sultan Murad IV (1623-1640). S.J. Shaw, *The Ottoman view of the Balkans*, (in:) *The Balkans in Transition. Essays on the Development of Balkan Life and Politics since the Eighteenth Century*, C. & B. Jelavich, Hamden ed. 1974, p. 66.
- 4 M. Todorova, *The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans* (in:) *Imperial Legacy*, p. 53.

model of the culture of power, the result of the fusion of the Ottoman and vernacular traditions⁵.

While addressing the problem of the Ottoman legacy regarding the model and culture of power and the political practice in the Balkan states, one should concentrate on these aspects which can be defined as a *continuum*, although of varying duration, and can reflect a lasting tradition transmitted across centuries by already existing systems. It must be emphasized that simple copying of the Ottoman system could have occurred within one or maximum two consecutive generations after the overthrow of the Ottoman rule. Over time, the images and situations fixed in generational memory have gradually faded, losing its relevance to younger generations. However, we must keep in mind that the memory of Ottoman rule was preserved and perpetuated for subsequent generations as part of the oral history.⁶ According to Wayne Vucinich 'the Ottoman legacy in the contemporary Balkans is many-sided and its roots are deep and ramified'⁷.

Thus, the social climate in the Balkans was likely to conserve a system of government and culture of power similar to the Ottoman model of which the majority of the Balkan population in respective states had no direct experience. The Ottoman legacy continued to affect the developments in the liberated Balkan states for some time, but these processes did not unfold concurrently in all the Balkan nations.

A characteristic feature of the Ottoman system was the position of relatively free peasants, very different from the position of peasants in Western Europe. It may be identified as part of the Ottoman legacy as it had resulted from the policy of the Ottoman rulers implemented as early as the 14th century and continued over the following centuries. According to the Islamic law and practice, the conquered land taken from the 'unfaithful' remained the property of the state, better yet, of the sultan himself, thus secured for its peasant users⁸. In this way, the Ottoman Empire protected the peasants against the grandees⁹. Having conquered the Balkans, the Ottomans had retained the extant agrarian system and thus the actual situation of peasants changed little,¹⁰ since the time-honored tradition obliged the sultan to treat his subjects 'with kindness and justice.'¹¹ Likewise Prince Miloš Obrenović upheld the principle of the peasants' ownership of the land after he had ascended the throne.¹² So forth, the peas-

5 *Ibidem*, p. 56-57.

6 J. Strauss, *Ottoman Rule Experienced and Remembered: Remarks on Some Local Greek Chronicles of the Turkokratia* (in:) *The Ottomans and The Balkans*, p. 210-211.

7 W.S. Vucinich, *Some Aspects of the Ottoman Legacy* (in:) *The Balkans in Transition, Essays*, p. 85.

8 J. Haldon, *The Ottoman State and the Question of the Autonomy. Comparative perspectives* (in:) *New Approaches to State and Peasant in Ottoman History*, H. Berktay, S. Faroqi ed., London 1992, p. 57.

9 H. İnalcık, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire*, p. 144.

10 M. Marinković, *The Shaping of the Modern Serbian Nation and of Its State under the Ottoman Rule* (in:) *Disrupting and Reshaping Early Stage of Nation-Building in the Balkans*, M. Dogo, G. Franzinetti ed., Ravenna 2002, p. 38.

11 P. F. Sugar, *Southern Europe under Ottoman Rule 1354-1804*, Seattle-London 1977, p. 33.

12 М. Екмечић, *Стварание Југославије 1790-1918*, т. 1, Београд 1989, p. 222. G. G. Arnakis, *The Near East in modern times*. Vol. 1. *The Ottoman Empire nad the Balkan States to 1900*, Austin-New York

ants retained the important role they had had before the Ottoman rule. Ascertaining this may seem outrageous but the similarities are important, the key factor being the position of the ruler and the so-called ruling class. Some argue that the Ottomans had created an ideal absolute monarchy by annihilating the class of local landowners and creating and maintaining the court elite instead¹³. In the Ottoman state, the ruling elite was the product of the Islamic law and the sultans' policy. Two arguments often addressed in studies concerning the Ottoman system have to be considered: 1) the state did not protect and promote the stable, traditional Ottoman nobility and as a result there was no traditional ruling elite; 2) the absence of traditional land ownership combined with an elevated position of slaves in the state administration, many of whom were drafted through the *devşirme*¹⁴, meant that there existed no aristocracy to act as an intermediary between the peasants and the state personified by the sultan. Through its tax collectors, the state obtained the necessary agrarian products directly from the farmers: they were the producers, they fed the nation, they were important and indispensable and not the aristocratic landowners¹⁵. In its specific way, the Ottoman Empire was egalitarian as there was only the class of relatively free peasants and the state elite recruited from the traditional but politically insignificant nobility and slaves promoted by the sultan. The slaves played a very significant role in the Ottoman state. The only group situated between the peasants and the sultan were the so-called *askeri*, who were primarily military officers¹⁶. This specific egalitarianism of the Ottoman period became the foundation of social order in the Balkan states. In fact, the first ruler of the Principality of Serbia Prince Miloš in fact preserved and transmitted the Ottoman system. Despite Vuk Karadžić's persuasion, he did not consent to the creation of a new gentry and he protected small peasant farms¹⁷.

In the Balkan states, the peasants were the 'salt of the earth', they were the stakeholders of the state and political parties. Consequently, the public authority took from the sultan the principal attitude towards the largest social group¹⁸. In this respect, there was a fundamental difference between the Balkans and Western or Central Europe. To the political forces in Serbia and Bulgaria, the peasants became not only the target of political propaganda, but also the point of reference regarding the reforms which were supposed to be implemented. As required by the rules of democracy, the political

1969, p. 238.

13 H. İnalçık, *Meaning of Legacy: The Ottoman Case* (in:) *Imperial Legacy*, p. 20.

14 P. F. Sugar, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

15 His widely accepted view is questioned by some researchers, for example J. Haldon, *op. cit.*, p. 54.

16 Alongside the soldiers who constituted the largest group, the *askeri* category also comprised bureaucrats and clergy: all those who were exempt from taxation. *Ibidem*, p. 55.

17 М. Екмечић, *Стварание Југославије*, p. 220. С. Јовановић, *Друга влада Милоша и Михаила*, Београд 1933, p. 462

18 М. Перишић, 'Град и грађанин у Србији крајем 19. века', *Историјски записи* LXXI, 1998/3-4, p. 115. In the late 19th century, Serbian authorities did not allow for the consolidation of land ownership and protected small peasant farms.

authority had to adjust its policies to the peasants as the largest electorate but, ironically, the peasants' attitudes were formed by a deeply rooted hostility towards change – and change – which was the Ottoman legacy. For centuries, the Ottoman state had not changed, neither in Anatolia nor in the Balkans¹⁹. Its Balkan subjects had come to believe that this permanency is satisfactory and advantageous, something of a perfect equilibrium. In the Balkan states, the politicians tried to win the peasants' support arguing that their traditional values, by virtue of being traditional, were in no way inferior to modern systems and solutions in other European countries. One could remain traditional and deeply conservative without losing vitality or strength. Quite the contrary – they reasoned – remaining faithful to the conservative values made the people less 'sinful' than other nations, simply morally better²⁰. A specific set of mind developed which was formed by the fear of change. Aleksa Ratac, one of the leaders of the Radical Party, declared at a session of the Serbian Skupština (Diet) in 1903: "There are many among us who can read and write. While there were few literate people in the country, Christ walked on our land, but now that there are more of them, we have been cursed"²¹.

The emergence of first ideas of modernization came about with the return of young elites from their studies abroad, the Serbian *prečani* educated in Vienna or Paris and Bulgarian alumni of Russian universities, but it did not significantly change public attitudes. Quite the contrary, it helped create a deep divide between the narrow educated elites and illiterate rural masses²². It hardly seems surprising since the rural societies in the Balkans regarded the conservative, patriarchal and collectivist egalitarianism as the fundamental social and political value. In 1910, Jovan B. Jovanović wrote in the *Nedelni pregled* weekly that „Serbia is a democratic nation free of any social, economic or religious conflicts"²³. This concept of social order was rooted in tradition and policies of the Ottoman authority which had guaranteed collective rights of the millets and had not been concerned with the rights of individuals. Hence, in the process of emergence and development of modern Balkan states, the focus was on the national community rather than on civil and individual rights²⁴.

19 The Ottomans did not know any other form of state and were convinced that even the smallest changes present a threat to the state and society. P. F. Sugar, *op. cit.*, p. 34.

20 Б. Станковић, *Сто говора Николе Пашића. Вештина говорништва државника*, књига 1, Београд 2007, p. 102-103.

21 О. Поповић-Обрадовић, *Каква или колика држава. Огледи о политичкој и друштвеној историји Србије XIX и XX века*, Београд 2008, p. 330.

22 D. Stojanović, *Receptija ideala slobode, jednakosti i bratsva*, (in:) *Srbija u modernizacijskim procesima 19. i 20 veka. 3. Uloga elita*, ed. L. Perović, Београд 2003, p. 91-92.

23 *Ibidem*, p. 84.

24 Б. Стевановић, *Политичка култура и културни идентитети у Србији и на Балкану*, Ниш 2008, p. 221. О. Поповић-Обрадовић, *op. cit.*, p. 324. D. Stojanović, *Receptija*, p. 77.

According to Maria Todorova, it can be argued that the existence of the free peasantry as an Ottoman legacy saved the Balkans from the so-called second serfdom²⁵. The Ottoman social legacy, that is the existence of the *de facto* free peasantry, the weakness of the bourgeoisie and absence of the aristocracy within a centralized state, had doubtlessly provided important components of the socio-political order of the independent Balkan states as they emerged.

One cannot ignore Kemal Karpat's views regarding the character of the Ottoman state. According to Karpat 'the Ottoman philosophy of government, society, and the individual was natured by way of Anatolia through the rich heritage of Islam which had produced a new civilization in the Middle East from a synthesis of its own teachings with ancient Greek rationalist philosophy, Roman administrative practices, and Sassanid theories of social and political organization'²⁶. However, the most prominent element of the *continuum* and the one most often addressed by scholars is the character of the centralized regimes established in the Balkan states defined as sultanism, autocracy, and authoritarianism. While the Ottoman culture of power was not the sole reason responsible for the development of such regimes, it is certain that such factors rooted in the Ottoman legacy, such as the lack of any tradition of representation, underdeveloped political culture and the absence of the press as an opinion-forming instrument of public control coincided with and contributed to their rise in the uneducated Balkan societies as a form of copying the Ottoman culture of power.

The peasantry, being the dominating social class in the Balkan states, it determined the actions of the public authority. Political leaders holding on to power had to consider their interests and use suitable (comprehensible) forms of propaganda. Obviously, the forms of propaganda and particular goals were diverse and reflected local conditions. To Serbia's first ruler Prince Miloš Obrenović, the peasants were both the stakeholders and victims of his policies. He did not know any system of government but the Ottoman and was ready to resort to any means to establish a similar system in Serbia²⁷. Serbia's political system evolved slowly but the power of Prince Miloš was modeled after 'Ottoman rule without the Turks'²⁸. One of his early Serbian biographers ascertains that Prince Miloš patterned his despotism after the 'Turks. Clerks in his chancellery had the title of 'servants to the prince' and he would not hesitate to have them flogged or even killed if they had failed him²⁹. Cruel and ruthless towards his subjects, he treated them in the Ottoman manner and rarely did his conduct depart from that of

25 M. Todorova, *The Ottoman Legacy*, p. 60.

26 K.H. Karpat, *Studies on Ottoman Social and Political History. Selected Articlens and Essays*, Lieden-Boston-Köln 2002, p. 387.

27 M. Marinković, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

28 M. Palairat, *Rural Serbia Reshaped and Retarded 1739-1914*, (in: *Disrupting and Reshaping*, p. 80.

29 В. Дворниковић, *Карактерологија Југословена*, Београд 1939, p. 861-862; Numerous examples of Prince Miloš's cruelty are given by Ј.М. Продановић, *Уставни развитак и уставне борбе у Србији*, Београд 1936, p. 36-37.

an 'Oriental despot' or 'little sultan'³⁰. Prince Miloš mimicked the sultan in dress and manners and he even had something of a harem³¹. On the one hand, he tried to picture himself as the defendant of peasants, and on the other he overtaxed them and followed in the footsteps of sultans by regarding the tax income as his personal income. His methods of procuring money were ruthless³². He had no scruples about confiscating anything of value, whether gold ducats or landstates, which had in time made him the biggest landowner in Serbia³³. His biggest political opponent, Toma Vučić Perisić, was not much different. He had an equally bad attitude, he was demagogue, hot-tempered intriguer, liar, bloodsucker, and robber so the overall picture of the political leadership of the early period of Serbian statehood was rather bleak³⁴. Prince Mihailo Obrenović, the son and successor of Prince Miloš, likewise concentrated power in his hands by creating the so-called 'bureaucratic despotism' and eradicating any independence of state officials left over from the preceding rule of the *ustavobranitelji* ('The Constitutionalists') and certain characteristic features of the system continued well into the 20th century³⁵. According to Slobodan Jovanović, Princes Miloš and Mihailo represented the same type of absolute ruler embodying the state in their persons³⁶.

Many regard the regime of the *ustavobranitelji* as equally authoritarian, oligarchic, and 'oriental', with power concentrated in the hands of a small exclusive group of officials who 'manage' the people but neither for the people nor in their name. Some regard their ingenuity in torturing their opponents as exceeding the Ottoman standards³⁷. Several decades later, King Milan Obrenović and his son Alexander I followed a similar path squandering the incomes of the Serbian treasury to cover their own expenses without any regard for public needs and the source of income. Contemporary observers were also critical of the long rule of King Nicolas I Petrović of Montenegro which likewise was not subject to any public control. British diplomat Henry Beaumont recalled with disdain the extensive expenditures related to the celebrations of King Nicolas I of Montenegro Fiftieth Jubilee (50th anniversary of his rule) in 1910. The beautification of Montenegro's capital Cetinje cost more than the state's yearly spending on education³⁸. In the attitude of Paris-educated King Nicolas I of Montenegro, formed by the fusion of atavism and modernism, Vladimir Dvorniković sees a man of two cultures.³⁹

30 С. Јовановић, *op. cit.*, p. 462-466.

31 К.Н. Каграт, *op. cit.*, p. 462.

32 В. Стојанчевић, *Милош Обреновић и његово доба*, Београд 1966, p. 397; P. Pavlovich, *The Serbians: the Story of a People*, Toronto 1988, p. 126.

33 P. Pavlovich, *The Serbians*, p. 126.

34 В. Дворниковић, *Карактерологија Југословена*, p. 875-876.

35 С. Јовановић, *op. cit.*, p. 467-468.

36 *Ibidem*, p. 461.

37 L. Despotović, *Srpska politička moderna. Srbija u procesima političke modernizacije 19. veka*, Novi Sad 2008, p. 61.

38 E. Roberts, *Real of the Black Mountain. A History of Montenegro*, London 2007, p. 278.

39 В. Дворниковић, *Карактерологија Југословена*, p. 888-889. М. З. Зорић, *Кралј Никола Петровић Нjegoш. Младост и прве године владе*, Cetinje 1935, p. 4-5. Vojvoda Simo Perović, *Memoari*, Podgorica-

But, according to the commander of Montenegro's army, the king's very important trait was his unwavering optimism.⁴⁰ The first decades of independent Greece brought the authoritarian regimes, with President Ioannis Kapodistras (1927-1931) and King Othon I (1832-1862).

The question arises whether the Serbian, Bulgarian or Greek elites were at all capable of introducing new solutions for political systems they had been familiar with and a new culture of power to the people (peasants) who had only known the repressive Ottoman rule and the fragile equilibrium of everyday relations between the sultan's Christian subjects and representatives of the Ottoman administration. Without a doubt, the Balkan nations' perception of the state and authority had been burdened with the experience of the Ottoman rule. Firstly, to the societies living in a very traditional structure, the very concept of state was abstract as they only had an experience of the organized authority of Ottoman functionaries, usually tax collectors, enforced by the Ottoman gendarmerie. The trauma of excessive tax burden and frequent brutal repressions had become deeply embedded in the peasants' collective consciousness and injustice became associated with the very concept of authority: in the languages of southern Slavs the term for the state connotes power and force rather than some superior territorial structure. The peasant life in the Balkans was marked by the heroism of enslavement, pain, and dying⁴¹. Notably, the state of mind of the Balkan peoples conquered by the Ottomans had been formed by the centuries-long experience of haplessness. Vucinich points out that it was underlain by the central notion of *kismet* ('twist of fate'), and the lack of faith in any possibility of changing one's situation, reducing social attitudes to bare struggle for survival, especially in tumultuous times and so dangerous a place as the Balkans. The state of mind dominated by the instinct of self-preservation encouraged passivity among the locals whose attitudes towards the Ottoman authorities oscillated between subjection and cunning⁴². In the 1930s, Dvorniković, an authority on the sociology and anthropology of southern Slavs, wrote about the de-slavonization and cultural orientalizing of the masses in the Balkans as a legacy of the centuries-long captivity. He observed that the vital forces of the long-suffering Balkan peoples were rooted in their experience of poverty and deprivation⁴³. At the same time, Jovan Cvijić points to the emergence of the 'oriental moral type' formed under the influence of the centuries-long Turkish rule and manifested through numerous imitations of 'pashas' and 'beys' in public life.⁴⁴ This element of the culture of power may be found in the attitudes of many people active in politics in the subsequent decades of the 20th century.

Cetinje 1995, p. 508.

40 Vojvoda Gavriilo Vukotić, *Memoari*, Cetinje 1996, p. 703.

41 V. Dvorniković, *Psiha jugoslovenske melanholije*, Zagreb 1925, p. 34.

42 W.S. Vucinich, *The Ottoman Empire. Its Record and Legacy*, p. 120-121.

43 B. Дворниковић, *Карактерологија Југословена*, p. 310.

44 J. Cvijić, *Balkansko Poluostrvo i južnoslovenske zemlje. Osnove antropogeografije*, Beograd 2011, p. 122.

Thus, the peasants were poor, passive, disobedient, and suspicious towards the state, this hostility was fed by the permanent fear of the security of one's meager existence, with low productivity inspiring resistance to any public levies as threatening to deepen the inherited poverty. The memory of Ottoman abuses deeply imprinted in the mentality of the Balkan people prevented them from overcoming indifference towards their national state – Serbian, Bulgarian or Greek⁴⁵ – since they did not perceive it as fundamentally different from the Ottoman regime.

The character of Ottoman rule, its actions centered on collecting taxes and inventing still new levies which paralyzed the people's natural economic activity, became a heavy burden upon the economic development of the Balkan states. Observers of the Balkan reality pointed to passivity as a distinctive characteristic of local economies and emphasized the reluctance of local people to expand beyond familiar and repetitive labors performed to maintain the minimum level of subsistence. 'Work is somewhat alien to our man. He regards it as torture and pain, as humiliation (...), as the death of virility and heroism' – wrote Dvorniković⁴⁶. There was no reason to work more or work harder when any fruits of one's labor were taken away by the Ottoman authorities in any case.

The Ottoman state was parasitic and the principal manifestation of its economic activity was collecting taxes which kept increasing thus discouraging any entrepreneurship⁴⁷. The peasants' indifference towards modern farming technologies corresponded to their attitudes centered on preserving and petrifying the extant traditional way of life as ensuring an acceptable equilibrium between the necessity to make a living for oneself and one's family and the awareness that any surplus would be taken away by ruthless and dishonest tax collectors. There was no reason to strive to improve productivity⁴⁸, especially considering the progressive taxation aimed at the more affluent and presumably more productive individuals. Archibald Reiss observes that the peasants had gotten used to work as little as possible. Since the fruits of their labor would be taken away from them anyway, they had seen no reason to make their oppressors richer. This had led to the cult of simple life and tradition. . Even after the liberation from the Ottoman domination, the peasants of Serbia, Bulgaria or Greece would feel obliged by 'tradition' to reject modern rational farming improvements⁴⁹.

However, in the collective memory the recollection of oppression, violence and enslavement coexist with the appreciation of the stability of life under the Pax Ottomana.

45 In Greece, as late as the 1920s there were no legal rules obliging bureaucrats to follow instructions of state authorities. T. Veremis, *The Military in Greek Politics. From Independence to Democracy*, London 1977, p. 213-215.

46 B. Despot, *Filozofiranje Vladimira Dvornikovicia*, Zagreb 1975, p. 126.

47 S.J. Shaw, *The Ottoman view on the Balkans*, p. 60-61.

48 В. Дворниковић, *Карактерологија Југословена*, p. 326.

49 А. Рајс [Archibald Reiss], *Чујте Срби! Чувајте се себе*, Београд 2008, p. 17-20. Swiss Archibald Reiss was a professor of criminology, he arrived in Serbia before World War I and later trained Serbian police officers. He died in Belgrade in 1929.

The future showed the independent Balkan nations were reluctant to quickly change the way of life developed in the Ottoman times. Thus, the negative image of the Ottoman heritage might have been a myth developed later.⁵⁰ According to Sia Anagnostopoulou 'in Greek national historiography the Ottoman era has been regarded as a period of tyranny and slavery for Greek nation'⁵¹.

As compared to the rest of Europe, the effect of processes of 'long duration' upon the Balkan nations was exceptionally strong. It was a consequence of the centuries of stagnation and resultant conservatism of respective societies. Many attempts to implement new systemic political, economic or social solutions undertaken by state authorities encountered the peasants' resistance but the most typical attitude was that of watchful obstruction. It was characteristic of communities which had been powerless in the face of change and deprived of any influence upon the conduct and actions of the authority. Understandably, the kind of passivity that had for centuries determined social attitudes, imprinted not only by life under the hostile political regime but also reflecting the perceived permanence of social relations and living conditions. This passivity could not be quickly transformed into activity or at least some interest in what was happening around. Antoni Todorov points to the low level of politicization of Bulgarian society after 1878. The 'political slumber' inherited from the Ottoman times lasted until World War I⁵². Skepticism and watchful waiting seemed the most common attitudes towards the new state authorities reflecting the transmission of the people's perception and reception of the Ottoman state system into the new political reality of national states.

The new state systems in the Balkans emerged among convulsions amplified on the one hand by the desire to annihilate any external signs of the bygone Ottoman rule and to mark some 'new beginning' and on the other by the apparent inability to eradicate various manifestations of the Ottoman legacy. The establishing of new forms of political power was realized through the copying and adaptation of European models which were incongruent with the mentality of the political leaders of the early period still rooted in the traditional Ottoman culture of power. They treated their people not very differently from the Ottomans and the people, atavistically afraid of the authority and accustomed to being the object rather than the subject of the state's policies, allowed for this state of domination and alienation of power to continue and petrify. Peasant

50 S. Milošević, *Arrested development: mythical characteristics in the 'five hundred years of Turkish yoke'* (in:) *Images of Imperial Legacy. Modern discourses on the social and cultural impact of Ottoman and Habsburg rule in Southeast Europe*, ed. T. Sindbaek, M. Hartmuth, Berlin 2011, s. 73. The author analyzes Serbian textbooks published in the 20th century in which the image of the Ottoman period is unequivocally negative.

51 S. Anagnostopoulou, 'Tyranny' and 'Despotism' as National and Historical Terms in Greek Historiography (in:) *Clio in the Balkans. The Politics of History Education*, C. Koulouri ed., Thessaloniki 2002, p. 81.

52 A. Тодоров, *Граждани, партии, избори: България 1879-2009*, София 2010, p. 70.

revolts occurred but they were acts of despair rather than acts of faith in the possibility of revolutionary change.

The bureaucratic nature of the Ottoman culture of power was its most characteristic feature which found continuance in public life in Bulgaria, Greece and Serbia. The bureaucratic state elite in the Ottoman Empire was interested in maintaining the system which guaranteed them power and profits. Its primary task was to procure incomes for the treasury by collecting the existing taxes as well as inventing and imposing new levies. Located far away from the capital beyond the effective control of the central authority, Bosnia and Herzegovina was especially vulnerable to this fiscal practice, more than any other province of the Ottoman Empire. In the 1st half of the 19th century, local peasants were burdened with about 150 (sic!) various taxes, levies, and fees. This had led to blatant abuses and enforcing additional tributes, for example in order to cover the cost of collecting taxes⁵³. The bureaucracy of the Balkan states was based on the Ottoman experience which led to widespread corruption and sanctioned bribes (*baksheesh*) becoming a mere fact of life, an element of everyday reality⁵⁴. One's obligations towards the state and its bureaucracy became indistinguishable and were executed as one. Regarding the *baksheesh* as an element of normal exchange between themselves and the sultan's subjects, Ottoman bureaucrats had employed a degree of privatization of their official function typical of and specific to the Ottoman system. As a time-honored tradition, the custom of presenting and accepting 'gifts' for performing acts, which was in modernized states regarded as work routinely performed for the common good, had seemed natural. Some scholars argue that corruption is a direct heritage of the Ottoman occupation of Greece because the Greek word *rousfeti* derives from Turkish *rüşvet* (bribe).⁵⁵

Kemal Karpat is right to assess that in the 19th century in the minds of the Balkan people the image of the sultan as head of an oppressive bureaucratic regime became fixed⁵⁶ and the new political reality brought little change in this area. The bureaucracy had access to the tax money and continued the practice of 'privatizing' tax incomes. The first major corruption scandal in Serbia was related to the construction of the Beograd-Niš-Vranje railway in the 1880s⁵⁷. Archibald Reiss writes about the widespread practice of stealing tax money and abuses committed by Serbian bureaucrats and ministers during World War I (and later) pointing in this context to the Ottoman proclivity for corruption⁵⁸. Corruption became a serious problem also in the reinstated

53 Д. Берић, *Устаник у Херцеговини 1852-1862*, Београд 1994, p. 78-79.

54 W.S. Vucinich, *Some Aspects of the Ottoman Legacy* (in:) *The Balkans in Transition*, p. 89.

55 G.A. Kourveratis, *Studies on Modern Greek Society and Politics*. East European Monographs No. DXXXIV, New York 1999, p. 253. C. Tsoucalas, *On the Problem of Political Clientelism in Greece in the Nineteenth Century*, „Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora”, vol. V, No. 1 Spring 1978, p. 8.

56 К.Н. Карпат, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

57 Н. Вучо, *Развој индустрије у Србији у XIX веку*, Београд 1981, p. 128.

58 A. Rajc, *op. cit.*, p. 37-41.

Bulgarian state⁵⁹. The Balkan societies' preference for statism, which prevented competition and income inequalities, was at the same time conducive to the demoralization of the bureaucracy as the class of people who privatized taxes and had uncontrolled access to the tax money⁶⁰.

The Ottoman culture of power also comprised a certain style and model of execution of power which, in sharp contrast to European nations, remained unchanged for centuries, suspended in some interval between the organization of the nomads who had settled in the Balkans after the conquest and the structures of modern, efficient state. Even in the 19th century, it seemed anachronistic.

Kemal Karpat points to the dichotomy between the state and society that had existed in the Islamic world from the beginning and over time developed into a rift dividing the two sides⁶¹. Does this also apply to the Balkan states? In Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, what kind of a relationship was developed between the ruling bureaucracies and respective societies, poor and uneducated as they were? Dubravka Stojanović identifies a model of development in her opinion characteristic of all Balkan states in which three spheres functioned separately, practically almost independently of one another: the sphere of power, the sphere of various forms of civic society, and the society itself⁶². This kind of situation unfolded in Bulgaria where social development was realized in opposition to the state authority. There, the attitude of hostility and passivity towards the state seemed so embedded that it let some Bulgarian political scientists formulate the thesis of the essentially 'apolitical' character of the Bulgarian people⁶³. This situation occasionally motivated Bulgarian leaders to resort to revolutionary means in order to overcome inertia and accelerate the processes of modernization (Stefan Stambolov) or, quite the opposite, to cultivate tradition (Nikola Pašić). The political elites of the Balkan nations faced an unwanted dilemma: to serve the people and govern in their name or to carry on operating and wait for them to embrace the idea of the connection between the people and the state.

The feature characteristic of the Ottoman culture of power which survived in the Balkans the longest, until the end of the 20th century, was violence as an intrinsic component of political life and power often changing hands as a result of violence, assassinations, murders, etc. Obviously, political murders happened elsewhere in Europe as well and were not exclusive to the post-Ottoman world but here they happened on a greater scale than elsewhere. The list of only the most notorious political murders

59 J. Bell, *Peasants in Power. Aleksandr Stambolijski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union 1899-1923*, Princeton 1997, p. 8.

60 Б. Стевановић, *op. cit.*, p. 220-221.

61 К.Н. Карпат, *op. cit.*, p. 494.

62 Д. Стојановић, *Уље на воду: Политика и друштво у модерној историји Србије* (in:) *Србија 1804-2004*, ed. Љ. Димић, Д. Стојановић, М. Јовановић, Београд 2005, p. 118.

63 D. Parusheva, 'They are all Rotters! Political Culture and Political Caricature in South-Eastern Europe Late 19th and Early 20th century', *Études balkaniques* XLIV, 2008, No 4, p. 40-41. Todorov is convinced about traditional 'apolitical' character of the Bulgarian society. А. Тодоров, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

reflected events unfolding in almost all Balkan states. Already Prince Miloš, striving to retain his leadership of the Serbs during the Takovo rising in 1815, ordered the killing of Kara Djordje, the initiator and hero of the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 who had in the meantime secretly arrived in the country. Djordje was captured and murdered and Prince Miloš sent his severed head to Sultan Mahmud II in Istanbul to gain his favor. This cruel act of degrading the victim was typical of the Balkans⁶⁴. Following the years of revolt and vehement opposition to his rule, Prince Miloš was in turn forced to abdicate and leave the country in 1839. Prince Aleksandar Karadjordjević ascended the throne in 1842 concurrently with the establishment of the regime of the *ustavobranitelji* but he was forced to abdicate in 1858. Prince Miloš returned to the throne but for a short period. In 1860, he was succeeded by his son Prince Mihailo who had inherited his father's absolutist approach and became a despotic ruler hated even more than his father had been. He was shot dead in Belgrade in 1868 during a carriage ride in the park. The assassins were never identified⁶⁵. His successor Prince and later King Milan, 'the worse among all despots' according to a British observer⁶⁶, was forced to abdicate and his son Prince Aleksandar Obrenović was murdered together with his wife Draga during the famous palace coup in May 1903. This murder resulted in a major political shift: the Karadjordjević dynasty came to power. They remained in power until the fall of the monarchy in Yugoslavia. King Aleksandar I Karadjordjević was murdered in 1934 by Croatian separatists during his visit to Marseilles⁶⁷. In August 1860, Prince Danilo I Petrović, the first lay ruler of Montenegro, was assassinated in Kotor, then in Austro-Hungary, by a political émigré and Montenegro tribesman motivated by Prince Danilo's increasingly despotic rule, arrogance, and brutality⁶⁸.

The most important political murder in Bulgaria was that of Stefan Stambolov, a politician who had played a seminal role in the forming of modern Bulgaria after it had attained independent statehood in 1878. His ruthless rule aimed at accelerating the processes of modernization won him many political enemies, most importantly Prince Ferdinand I of Bulgaria. Stambolov's spectacular death, after he had already stepped down as prime minister, had all marks of an act of insidious vengeance. He was viciously assaulted in a street in Sofia on a carriage ride: the attackers used sabers to cut off his hands and slash his head open. To many a contemporary observer, the murder looked like Prince Ferdinand's vendetta⁶⁹. Shortly before his death, Stambolov had pointed to Prince Ferdinand as 'his moral killer', responsible for destroying his

64 С. К. Павловић, *Србија. Историја иза имена*, Београд 2004, р. 45.

65 F. Singleton, *A Short History of the Yugoslav Peoples*, Cambridge 1999, р. 95-96.

66 V. Chirol sir, *Serbia and Serbs*, Oxford 1914, р. 7.

67 М. Екмечић, *Дуго кретање између клања и орања. Историја Срба у новом веку (1492-1992)*, Нови Сад 2011, р. 199-200.

68 E. Roberts, *op. cit.*, р. 229; G.G. Arnakis, *op. cit.*, р. 254.

69 Д. Иванов, *Лидерът Стамболов*, София 2014, р. 109.

reputation in the eyes of the Bulgarian elite⁷⁰. Aleksandyr Stamboliyski was another Bulgarian prime minister to meet a violent and degrading death. He was appointed prime minister in 1919 and his Agrarian Union won a majority in the national election. Stamboliyski's ruthless rule, by many regarded as dictatorial, and the draconian methods he resorted to trying to overcome the deep crisis following Bulgaria's defeat in World War I antagonized the military and the middle class. His regime was referred to as 'orange bolshevism' from the emblematic color of the peasant party⁷¹. He was ousted in a military coup in 1923 and then brutally murdered⁷². His persecutors from the military tracked him down in his native village and had him dig out his own grave before killing him. His severed head was sent to Sofia in a box of biscuits⁷³. This mode of decapitation – severing the head (mind) from the body – was a refined way of not only killing the enemy but also of degrading him and it was doubtlessly rooted in the Ottoman tradition⁷⁴. In 1831, Ioannis Kapodistrias was murdered by the Mavromichalis in retaliation for the arrest of Petrobey Mavromichalisa, the bey of the Mani Peninsula, who had been appointed by the Ottoman authorities.⁷⁵ King George I of Greece was assassinated by an anarchist in Thessalonica in 1913. In 1928, Stjepan Radić, the leader of the Croatian People's Peasant Party and a vehement opponent to the first Yugoslavia, was shot in the parliament by a radical Serbian politician. Radić later succumbed to his wound. In this context, the much more recent assassination of Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić has to be mentioned. He was murdered by a confederacy of policemen and criminals in 2003⁷⁶. These are but selected examples of individual terror which was commonly and often with excessive cruelty waged against authorities in the Balkans.

Another important phenomenon was the so-called contracted violence, the term referring in this context to various irregular detachments operating in the Balkans which were commissioned to achieve certain political goals of their patrons. From the 15th century, the Ottomans paid gangs of outlaws to substitute for Ottoman regular troops in the task of controlling the local population and other armed groups. The *hajduks*, a class of people whose origin and social background have been the stuff of legend and subject to many interpretations, were initially hired to extinguish local rebellions. In the 17th century, the growing brigandage in the Balkans persuaded the

70 Д. Петков, *Страници из спомениите ми за Стамболова* (in:) *Стефан Стамболов како револуционер, общественик и државник*, Софија 1921, p. 125.

71 P. S. Tzvetkov, *A History of the Balkans. A regional overview from a Bulgarian Perspective*, San Francisco 1993, p. 102.

72 R. Daskalov, *Debating the Past Modern Bulgarian History: From Stambolov to Živkov*, New York-Budapest 2011, p. 123.

73 R. J. Crampton, *Aleksnadür Stambolijski*, London 2009, p. 113.

74 T. Stojanović, *Balkanski svetovi. Prva i poslednja Evropa*, Beograd 1997, p. 82.

75 L.S. Stavrianos, *The Balkans since 1453*, London 2002, p. 291.

76 D. Pavićević, 'Memory, Trust and Fear in Post-Conflict Societas', *Southeastern Europe*, 37 (2013), p. 182.

Ottoman authorities to commission the *hajduks* as mercenaries to provide a level of security to enable administrative and economic activity⁷⁷. The historic role of the *hajduks* as Ottoman hirelings was soon forgotten and, from the 18th century, in the Balkan folkloric tradition, a *hajduk* became a romanticized heroic figure defying unjust laws and fighting against the Ottoman (and Habsburg) authorities for the people's political and religious freedom⁷⁸. In Balkan mythology, he became a guerilla, a paragon of courage and a symbol of relentless fight against the Ottomans⁷⁹. However, Vuk Karadžić, an acute observer of Serbian life, points to the criminal character of the *hajduks'* activity: robbing merchants, kidnappings for ransom⁸⁰.

The *armatoloi* were the Greek and Greek-Wallachian irregular soldiers commissioned by the Ottomans to control areas in Greece which were difficult to govern because of their remoteness, inaccessible terrain or high levels of brigandage⁸¹. To the *armatoloi* violence became a way of life and a hereditary profession⁸². The most famous among irregular troops commissioned by the Ottomans were the *bashi-bazouks*, usually Circassians soldiers which were often dispatched as the avant-garde of Ottoman regular units in charge of putting off rebellions and insurgencies in the Balkans. The name Circassians was then used generally, in reference to all the Islamic peoples of the North Caucasus (the Cherkess, Abkhazians, Dagestani, and Chechens) expelled after the Russian conquest in the 1850s and 1860s. Altogether, about 400 thousand Circassians were resettled to the Balkans⁸³. They were commissioned to quench rebellions of the Christian population of the Balkans and often became common brigands.

The practice of resorting to hired violence continued in the Balkans as a part of the Ottoman legacy and became quite common in the Balkan states. Mercenary units were commissioned by Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia fighting for territories in Macedonia in the late 19th and early 20th century. The Greek *andarts*, Bulgarian *komits* and Serbian *Chetniks*⁸⁴ fought the Turkish army and gendarmerie and turned against one another to gain control over local populations and territories as a preliminary step before their prospective incorporation into respective nations. The practice of delegating the execution of law to local armed groups exercising control by violent means became a

77 J. Gledhill, C. King, *Institutions Violence and Captive States in Balkan History* (in:) *Ottomans into Europeans. State and Institution Building in South-East Europe*, ed. A. Mungi-Pippidi, W. van Meurs, London 2010, p. 251-252.

78 W.S. Vucinich, *The First Serbian Uprising 1804-1813*, New York 1982, p. 365-367.

79 K. Barkey, *Bandits and Bureaucrats. The Ottoman Route to State Centralization*, London 1997, p. 178.

80 В. Караџић, *Етнографски списи*, Београд 1972, p. 337-338.

81 Odysseus [C. Eliot], *Turkey in Europe*, London 1900, p. 77. Т. Стојановић, *Balkanski svetovi*, p. 382-383. Т. Stoianovich, *A Study in Balkan Civilization*, New York 1967, p. 142-143.

82 K. Young, *The Greek Passion. A Study in People and Politics*, London 1969, p. 129.

83 M. Pinson, 'Ottoman Colonization of the Circassians in Rumeli after the Crimean War', *Études balkaniques* 1972, No. 3, p. 75. И. Хаджийски, *Моралната карта на България*, София 2008, p. 172.

84 The *Chetnik* movement was supervised by the Serbian Foreign Ministry. *Документи о спољној политици Краљевине Србије 1903-1914*, Кнј. II, *Организација Српска одбрана 1906. године. Из фонда Архива Србије*, Љ. Алексић-Пејковић, Ж. Анић ed. Beograd 2007, p. 11-12.

post-Ottoman legacy⁸⁵. The never-ending fighting of guerilla units with the Ottomans and among themselves resulted in a war of all against all. The respective governments became directly or indirectly involved in supporting the Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek hirelings fighting in Macedonia as a way of attaining nationalistic goals⁸⁶. Researchers studying the problem of contracted violence generally agree that resorting to it in the process of nation building was part of the Ottoman tradition adopted in the Balkan states⁸⁷.

The centuries of Ottoman rule in the Balkans created the specific model of the culture of power strongly affecting the elites, political leaders and societies of the Balkan states in the 19th and 20th century. Except for the somewhat grotesque case of Prince Miloš, it did not happen through the straightforward copying of the Ottoman model. The forming of the independent Balkan states: Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece, was assisted by the great European powers whose non-discriminatory political systems and culture of power, resulting from a different legacy and civilizational background as well as the process of political modernization, provided attractive alternative models. Absorbed to a varying degree by the individual Balkan states, the Ottoman tradition comprised both a positive and a negative legacy. The free status of the peasantry, which under the Ottomans had been spared the second serfdom or other form of feudal or neo-feudal subservience and later retained its position, was certainly a positive legacy. The peasants became the core of the Balkan societies whose structure was quite uniform rather than diverse. On one hand, the new state elites were generally disdainful towards the peasantry, except for Serbia where the Radical Party of Nikola Pašić hailed them and the 'proper' nation. On the other hand, the peasants treated their respective national states as hostile and alien. The most prominent aspect of the Ottoman legacy as a culture of power was the sequence of authoritarian regimes in all respective states, from Prince Miloš to King Milan in Serbia, from Stefan Stambolov to Tsar Boris in Bulgaria, King Nicolas I Petrović's long reign in Montenegro, and authoritarian regimes of Ioannis Kapodistrias, King Othon I and the dictatorships in Greece.

The political life of the Balkan states was poisoned with the tradition of violence often marked with excessive cruelty, a legacy which became a part of the local reality and continued to haunt the Balkans through the end of the 20th century. Another Ottoman tradition concerned with the position of bureaucracy and its destructive influence continued in the Balkan states. It was manifested in the adoption and reinforcement of the system of bribes that paralyzed any constructive initiative in public life.

85 J. Gledhill, C. King, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

86 I. Stawowy-Kawka, *Macedonia w polityce państw bałkańskich w XX wieku*, Kraków 1993, *passim*.

87 *Ottomans into Europeans. State and Institution Building in South-East Europe*, ed. A. Mungi-Pippidi, W. van Meurs (introduction), p. XII. T. Veremis, *The Military in Greek Politics. From Independent to Democracy*, London 1997, p. 28.

The question is whether the Ottomans had destroyed the 'prosperous' Balkan states or such 'prosperous' Balkan states had not existed. This question is doubtlessly relevant in the context of the development of the new Balkan states: to what degree did the Ottoman heritage influence the character of power in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece and how important was the local culture component? This question is particularly difficult with regard to Bulgaria. Najden Shejtanov emphasizes that the Bulgarians had not had their own state for seven hundred years and thus the influence of the Ottoman heritage upon their model of power was presumably especially significant⁸⁸.

At the same time, it must be taken into account that the Ottoman Empire itself evolved over the centuries and consequently also with regard to the culture of power it did not provide an unchanging, uniform model⁸⁹. Turkish scholars question the negative image of the Ottoman state first presented by Leopold von Ranke to whom the Ottomans were 'nothing more than a destructive force outside the bounds of civilization'⁹⁰. Halil İnalçık argues that for centuries the Ottoman Empire exerted an influence upon many areas of Europe, Asia and Northern Africa but 'in regions such the Balkans and the Middle East the impact was direct and decisive'. At the same time, he wonders: 'can the historians maintain that a political system which lasted so long as did the Ottoman Empire was based on dysfunctional institutions?'⁹¹.

In the Balkans, the Ottoman tradition as the model of the culture of power comprised various forms and actions of central and local government whose power over the people was based on the authority of the state which, albeit national, was often perceived as no less oppressive than the Ottoman Empire, still imprinted in the collective memory, had been. In the minds of the peoples in the Balkans, the inadequacies of the culture of power in their respective national states made them perceive themselves not as Europeans but as a cultural hybrid between Europe and the Orient.

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88 Н. Шейтанов, *Балкано-българският титанизъм*, София 2006, p. 96.

89 К. Н. Карпат, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

90 Е. Boyar, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

91 H. İnalçık, *Meaning of Legacy: The Ottoman Case* (in:) *Imperial Legacy*, p. 18.

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SAŽETAK

Osmanska tradicija kao model kulture moći na Balkanu u 19. i 20. stoljeću

Ovaj članak govori o utjecaju osmanske tradicije na balkanske države u 19. i 20. stoljeću. Političko vodstvo i centraliziranu vlast na Balkanu karakterizirali su despotizam, autokracija i autoritarizam. Do takvog je stanja došlo zbog nedostatka demokratske tradicije te zbog premalo razvijene političke svijesti i kulture. Turski se sustav od europskog bitno razlikovao po položaju seljaka, koji su u Osmanskom Carstvu bili gotovo slobodni. Na Balkanu su se dugo, sve do kraja 20. stoljeća, održala neka obilježja osmanske tradicije, kao što su nasilje, korupcija i nepotizam kao neizbježne sastojnice političkog života i moći koja je često prelazila iz ruke u ruku upravo kao posljedica nasilja, ubojstava itd.

Ključne riječi: Osmanlije, balkanske države, politička kultura, politički režim, nasilje, birokracija, korupcija, društveni i gospodarski poredak