

The Geographical and Cultural Position of Serbia¹

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Abstract. Jovan Cvijić's text analyzes the historical, geographical, and cultural evolution of Serbia from its independence from the Ottoman Empire to the beginning of the 20th century. Initially a small peripheral territory, Serbia gradually expanded southward, consolidating its geographical and political position in the Balkans. This process was driven by a strong national consciousness and mission, based on the resilience, initiative, and organizational capacity of the Serbian people, as well as a tradition of struggle for freedom and justice. The fusion of different ethnic groups and internal migrations strengthened the national and democratic character, highlighting the importance of the peasantry and the absence of clearly defined social classes. The wars of 1912 and 1913 allowed Serbia to achieve a central position on the Balkan Peninsula, integrating new regions and populations. Culturally, Serbia absorbed European and Balkan influences, adapting them to its own national spirit, and faced the challenge of assimilating the cultural diversity of the south. The text highlights the vitality, pride, and adaptability of the Serbian people, as well as the challenges and opportunities arising from their new geographical and cultural position.

Keywords. Jovan Cvijić; Serbia; political geography; cultural geography; national identity.

ES La posición geográfica y cultural de Serbia

Resumen. El texto de Jovan Cvijić analiza la evolución histórica, geográfica y cultural de Serbia desde su independencia del Imperio Otomano hasta principios del siglo xx. Serbia, inicialmente un pequeño territorio periférico, logró expandirse gradualmente hacia el sur, consolidando su posición geográfica y política en los Balcanes. Este proceso estuvo impulsado por una fuerte conciencia y misión nacional, basada en la resistencia, la iniciativa y la capacidad organizativa del pueblo serbio, así como en una tradición de lucha por la libertad y la justicia. La fusión de diferentes grupos étnicos y migraciones internas fortaleció el carácter nacional y democrático, destacando la importancia del campesinado y la ausencia de clases sociales marcadas. Las guerras de 1912 y 1913 permitieron a Serbia alcanzar una posición central en la península balcánica, integrando nuevas regiones y poblaciones. Culturalmente, Serbia absorbió influencias europeas y balcánicas, adaptándolas a su propio espíritu nacional, y enfrentó el reto de asimilar la diversidad cultural del sur. El texto resalta la vitalidad, el orgullo y la capacidad de adaptación del pueblo serbio, así como los desafíos y oportunidades derivados de su nueva posición geográfica y cultural.

Palabras clave. Jovan Cvijić; Serbia; geografía política; geografía cultural; identidad nacional.

1. [Note of the redaction] This article has been translated by Mihajlo Kopanja and Nebojša Vuković from the original Serbian «Geografski i kulturni položaj Srbije», published in *Гласник Српског Географског Друштва* (Bulletin of the Serbian Geographical Society), 3(3-4), 1914, pp. 1-23. The integrity and structure of the original text have been respected at all times, with a brief summary added to adapt it to the style rules stipulated by *Geopolítica(s). Revista de estudios sobre espacio y poder*.

PT A posição geográfica e cultural da Sérvia

Resumo. O texto de Jovan Cvijić analisa a evolução histórica, geográfica e cultural da Sérvia desde a sua independência do Império Otomano até ao início do século xx. Inicialmente um pequeno território periférico, a Sérvia expandiu-se gradualmente para sul, consolidando a sua posição geográfica e política nos Balcãs. Este processo foi impulsionado por uma forte consciência e missão nacional, baseada na resiliência, iniciativa e capacidade organizacional do povo sérvio, bem como numa tradição de luta pela liberdade e justiça. A fusão de diferentes grupos étnicos e as migrações internas fortaleceram o carácter nacional e democrático, realçando a importância do campesinato e a ausência de classes sociais claramente definidas. As guerras de 1912 e 1913 permitiram à Sérvia alcançar uma posição central na Península Balcânica, integrando novas regiões e populações. Culturalmente, a Sérvia absorveu as influências europeias e balcânicas, adaptando-as ao seu próprio espírito nacional, e enfrentou o desafio de assimilar a diversidade cultural do sul. O texto destaca a vitalidade, o orgulho e a capacidade de adaptação do povo sérvio, bem como os desafios e as oportunidades decorrentes da sua nova posição geográfica e cultural.

Palavras-chave. Jovan Cvijić; Sérvia; geografia política; geografia cultural; identidade nacional.

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Beside small Montenegro, Serbia was the first state to have separated from European Turkey at the beginning of the 19th century and formed as an independent entity. It was essentially the Belgrade pashalik of the Turkish administrative division—the first Serbia—which from 1815 to 1833 encompassed only 24,440 km². Over the course of the last 80 to 100 years, it had been continually expanding, changing in the process its geographical-political position and ethnographic structure, particularly during the last two glorious years. The character of all its previous territorial changes can be described as a gradual expansion directed principally toward the South, the reclamation of regions belonging to our great past, and an ever stronger embrace of the South-Moravian and Vardar Serbs and their merging with the Dinaric Serbs of Karađorđe's Serbia.

This Serbia was a small Posavian and Danubian land, which did not extend far into the interior even along the Morava, *a northern peripheral land of the Balkan Peninsula, an appendage and addition to the Pannonian basin, without true geographical meaning or form*. Looking at it on a map, one had to wonder: either it will disappear, or it will expand further, especially toward the South. For even though all its valleys inclined toward the North and opened onto the North, and it appeared entirely dependent on Austria-Hungary, it nonetheless held the valley of the Great Morava, and through it one, admittedly small, section of the main Balkan longitudinal communications, the road to Constantinople and the road to Salonika. It held the *valley of the central position*, which under favorable circumstances could lead into the Central Area of the Balkan Peninsula and as far as Salonika.

Such nucleus of Serbia, of insignificant territorial expanse, of quite unstable geographical position, a barrier to Central Europe because it occupies the main gateway into the Balkan Peninsula (a gateway whose value would develop and be appreciated ever more with time) expanded and progressed. As in all similar cases, its development was influenced by various causes that historians have mentioned like: the weakening of Turkey, the peripheral position and distance of Karađorđe's Serbia from the Turkish political center, the statesmanship of Prince Miloš, favorable external circumstances, and above all the existence of great Slavic Russia, etc. But there is one more cause, which is connected to the goal of this article and will be especially highlighted here and further on, because it is undoubtedly the most important: the extraordinary strength and extraordinary national consciousness of the people of Karađorđe's Serbia, their *great national capabilities*. The initiative, endurance, and perseverance of this people is demonstrated unmistakably

by the fact that it resolved upon the great uprising for liberation and sustained nine well-known years of terrible struggle of the worst kind. Besides this, it showed considerable organizational capabilities: it created a state, and did so fairly quickly, not with foreign assistance or as an imitation and copy, but from within itself and on its own national foundations, accepting from outside only what and as much as accords with its national spirit. And very great spiritual capabilities, precisely those spiritual capacities shared by all Dinaric Serbs, were recognized or noticed immediately after the publication of Serbian folk poems, and after the appearance of the virtually self-taught Vuk [Karadžić] and his profoundly folk literary and educational reforms. From the very outset, Serbia thus demonstrated one trait that must be regarded as a first order trait for any further development: it creates a state and the beginnings of a culture on a popular [people's] basis—something new and different.

These internal forces and impulses were the principal ones that sustained and developed the origins of Serbia. Alongside them, from the very inception of Karađorđe's Serbia, there appeared a feeling of great intensity—almost endlessly powerful—that drove Serbia toward expansion, and manifests itself through the liberation campaigns of Karađorđe's era toward the West and South. That is the national mission of Serbia; it is a *land of a mission*. It is not the aspiration of a dynasty, rulers that exploit territory to extend their power and reinforce their might; it is not the aspiration of a military or tribal class seeking to gain prestige and higher titles through conquest; rather, it is an unconsciously powerful idea and the will of the entire nation. It is very ancient, primordial trait of the national spirit, older even than the Nemanjić era; its foundation lies in Serbian nerves and feelings, in the unique structure of the Serbian soul, gifted, feeling, deep, which is wholly seized and possessed by the longing to claim its rightful place in the world and to express itself to the full. This collective feeling resembles the aspiration and mission felt by extraordinarily powerful and creative individuals. Later, through historical development, this feeling had been formed, and the national spirit shaped aspirations and programs, which were sketched in the folk poems. It draws strength from as far back as the Nemanjićs, from their lands, cities, and endowments; from the Kosovo catastrophe, the poems and traditions associated with it—in which the fundamental trait of the Serbian national soul appears and is most fully expressed: national sensitivity and high national pride, which must not be offended and damned by those that give it offense, for the people have thought for centuries of how to demonstrate and avenge such an affront; from the countless martyrs and hajduks who suffered alongside the people for its rights and left it a sacred legacy; from the great heroes of Karađorđe's era and from the heroic endeavors of that time. These endless and constant efforts, torments, and sufferings caused the national soul—despite centuries of slavery—to be not the soul of a slave, but the soul of a revolutionary who demands equality, justice, «divine retribution». Because of these efforts and sufferings it received a more complex and deeper imprint: of deep feeling, of compassion, of warmth, of heartfelt sincerity. Further, it immensely strengthened us that we possess a long lineage of great Slavic rulers, heroes, and great martyrs. Our lineage is not personal and ancestral as among tribes, nor blood-related in the narrow sense; it is the long lineage of us all, our national lineage. Each of those martyrs and heroes is an ancestor of each one of us, and we all now participate, with deep national feeling, in their great deeds and sufferings. This binds us much more powerful and binds us more to a whole, and with same aspiration delights us, than if they had been the ancestors only of certain families, which thereby distinguish themselves and set themselves apart from the broader national mass. Finally, like a great personality, this collective soul has impressed its seal and its originality upon its received creations, and has thus fashioned a particular Orthodox church—entirely different from the Catholic and in many ways different from other Orthodox churches as well—the *Church of St. Sava*, the Serbian church, the church of the national soul, its great organ and its powerful protection in all kingdoms and under all circumstances. Thus, through its past, in the course of its historical life, the Serbian national spirit received and developed several deep feelings; the deepest, provoked by the Kosovo catastrophe, was the foundational one, lived by the entire nation from one end to the other for five centuries, and concentrated to an unparalleled degree of intensity and tension. This capacity to receive and develop deep feelings is the most reliable sign of a nation's giftedness. Through such feelings the Serbian soul acquired, among other things, that irresistible, indomitable, and untamable drive for independence and self-deter-

mination, against which all struggle is futile, for it is elementally powerful. To such a degree and of such quality, this is not found in any other Balkan people; but it is also rare in general.

This elemental force, characteristic of all Dinaric Serbs, only could have been consciously channeled into a Serbian mission within the emerging Serbian principality, mission that for a century already, through mind and blood work several regions. No individual has the right to abandon or alter that mission; not even an entire generation has that right. Cultivated and formed into an irresistible will, this mission was the principal impulse that drove the expansion of that nucleus which was Serbia.

The first expansion was carried out under Prince Miloš in 1833, when those regions that had been liberated under Karađorđe were joined to Serbia in accordance with the Treaty of Bucharest: principally the Timok basin, the Kruševac area, and several small districts in the southwest, particularly Jadar and Rađevina. Significantly strengthened, Serbia then had an area of 37,740 km². But this territorial expansion did not noticeably alter Serbia's geographical position, which remained unstable. Nor was the ethnographic structure of Serbia changed, since the Timok basin was, owing to Kosovar and Sjenica settlers, already was of strong national consciousness. In this Serbia, processes that had already begun earlier continued to develop—including internal clashes and internal struggles, which, continued for decades, were of great importance in shaping the character and spirit of present-day Serbia.

One of these processes was the amalgamation of the sparse indigenous population with the numerous settlers, accompanied by friction and conflict in villages and municipalities, and perhaps in the state as well. For as is known, in Serbia there were only two layers of Serbs, somewhat different from each other. The sparse old population (among whom were many long-established settlers), somewhat varied by region, but without tribal organization or tribal disposition, with large *zadruga* households, with a pronounced domestic and rural patriarchal culture, relatively prosperous—since it had more land than it could till—and with extensive oak and beech forests in which the famous Šumadijan pigs were raised and sold with little effort. During the Great Migration of Serbs at the end of the 17th century and throughout the 18th century, and still more so during Karađorđe's uprising and in Miloš's time, Serbs from various regions settled throughout Serbia—most of them Dinaric Serbs from Sandžak, from areas now belonging to Montenegro, from Hercegovina and Bosnia, and to a lesser extent from Kosovo and from Metohija. These were mostly men of tribal stock, with a tribal spirit, often violent, accustomed to the harsh life of their original homeland, *herdsmen possessed of accumulated energy, of men nearly idle from herding, and with a furious desire for a better life*. Having descended from plateaus of 1,000 meters and more to the Šumadija, the Podrinje, and the Valjevo districts—to low, expansive, and fertile lands that they could freely settle—they changed their climate, their occupation, and were compelled to transform their tribal spirit. Most of all they were refined by contact with the old settlers, but through the amalgamation new traits also emerged. Of all these very interesting phenomena, the following are worth noting for the purposes of this article: the strengthening of temperance and good cheer among the entire population of Serbia, and with it the development of cheerfulness, wit, and humor; then, of hajduk tradition; and finally, the formation of a certain democratic spirit.

It is particularly interesting to follow, based on travel accounts (especially that of Otto Pirchan) and reports of that period, how, under the influence of freedom, of their own state, of free land-acquisition, and of general (admittedly relative) prosperity, this raw and powerful people of Serbia was transformed. Above all, it was then that this temperance and good cheer, which distinguishes Serbia from the other Serbian lands, was definitively consolidated and formed, and alongside it everything bubbled with good humor, merriment, wit, and banter. Further, in connection with this, these circumstances gave free rein to all the higher national traits: the promotion of common interests, mutual aid, and eagerness for knowledge and enlightenment. It seemed as though among the people of Serbia several of the highest human capacities would develop. But at the same time, numerous hajduks appeared, almost exclusively from certain settler families (particularly from Sandžak), continuing the old custom, driven by violence and loose sensitivity, and by a strong sense of justice which they often interpret in their own way in a tribal spirit, and finally because of injustices it is an explainable phenomenon. It is a fierce internal battle, lasting decades, that confuses Serbia and leaves many bad traces. But significantly more important is the democratic struggle, which later defined the type of state of Serbia. Democratic tendencies are natural in a

nation of homogeneous social structure, people of farms and cattle, in which there were no social classes, but slight differences in wealth. Likewise, nowhere in folk traditions one couldn't find any footground for any other tendencies except democratic ones, because since the old Serbian state people had retained in memory—and which gave to it as a whole importance—nothing class related. Both dynasties and generals of freed Serbia were new, young, from peasants, and frequently by the people chosen individuals. But this natural democracy had to form, get substance and ideas, that correlate to the state and culture which penetrates from all sides. It seems that this could only happen through internal clashes and crises. Many diverse, good and bad copies of European democratic ideas started entering Serbia. Besides that, the people that hadn't had a state in centuries had to create a new, modern state from within itself, without external help and with national dynasties had to get accustomed to state discipline, needs and demands. National spirit had it in itself not only to accept and get used to that, but to test, modify, expand, change and in a short time adapt it to its characteristics, and in doing so create its own *healthy democracy*. This process in Miloš's Serbia strongly started, continued for decades and undoubtedly prevented foreign action and tendency for expansion, which without sufficient strength and readiness appeared only in 1876.

But through the results of the wars of 1876 and 1878 and after the Congress of Berlin, an important turn in the geographic position and ethnographic structure of Serbia happened. *It is a turning point for the direction of Serbian expansion*, because at that time it significantly expanded towards the South, encapsulating almost the entire South Morava basin with Vranje, Niš and Pirot, gained a wedge shape. The area of Serbia was 48.300 km². It became a state of the river Morava, *Morava state*, with the addition of Drina and Valjevo areas, and the Timok basin. Serbs of southwestern, high and cattle breeding areas, which continue to come down and inhabit Serbia, do not call it Šumadija anymore, but Morava, and say that they are coming down to Morava. Serbia deeply extended to the South and towards the Central Area of the Balkan Peninsula, and towards the Balkan Core around Skopje and Ovče Pole,² and is no longer that peripheral Danubian state, an addition to the Pannonian basin, nor is it of such labile and insecure geographical position as before. *Her central position on the Peninsula significantly improves, geographical position and geographical picture of Serbia become more permanent and more precise*. Besides that, through this expansion Serbia entered into the Šop zone around Pirot and in the region of South Moravian Serbs, that are now encapsulated by the same national and democratic spirit as the people of Karadorđe's Serbia, and in that regard, there is no difference between Vranje, Pirot and Šumadija. This process proved the capability of Serbia for equalizing somewhat different population, and a good sign for similar processes that ought to happen in today's Serbia: raising South Slav population to its national, democratic and cultural level.

This significant expansion towards the South, entering into the area of southern population and raising this population to its level, had impact on further territorial desires of Serbia. Entering somewhat into the Central Area and approaching the aforementioned Balkan Core, where main longitudinal and transverse communications of the Balkan Peninsula intersect and where the shortest and most favorable exits to the Aegean and Adriatic Seas are, Serbia had to be tempted to go further out of geographical and economic reasons, even more because in the West only expansion that could be considered was in Sandžak. Besides that, the South Moravian Serbs consciously and even more so subconsciously were striving for the South, and towards that direction looked to the policy of Serbia; from these parts came solid and energetic national propagandists, and namely around them gathered similar others from all sides. Besides that, in the past few decades we knew in detail the southern lands, undoubtedly better than anybody else knew the true feelings of such people shaken by propaganda and unrest and had the courage to govern that. Finally, in the last decade it had entered into the general consciousness that Serbia, limited to northern communication and export directions must remain economically independent. The program, sketched in folk poems, as a longing for places and areas of our most glorious past, was refreshed and empowered by the utmost economic and livelihood need. But it is known that not

2. On the importance of these two areas see *Basis for Geography and Geology of Old Serbia and Macedonia* [Osnove za Geografiju i Geologiju Stare Srbije i Makedonije], knj. I, 1906, or «Književni Glasnik» for 1905: *Geographical Position and general characteristics of Old Serbia and Macedonia* [Geografski položaj i opšte osobine Stare Srbije i Makedonije].

only outside of Serbia, and outside the Serb people, doubts in the capability of Serbia for such expansionist policy, because internal crises and open and hidden animosities with which it is surrounded. Even the best experts of the people in Serbia, those who knew the living national forces, its self-consciousness and deep belief in the mission of Serbia, could not have predicted that vast force, those waves of new force, the rise and momentum that the people had showed in 1912 and 1913.

II

National strength cannot be measured solely by the great territorial results that have been achieved, or only partly achieved (northern Albania with Shkodër, poor southern and western borders). These results are not always proportional to the invested national strength and the national virtues displayed; they may be greater or smaller than what that strength and those virtues warrant, for they depend also on international circumstances, which, as is generally known, strongly influence the external action of states. But when considerable national strength has been invested, it will, even under unfavorable circumstances, as a rule save, sooner or later, the core of its action. During the events of 1912 and 1913, Serbia enjoyed favorable international circumstances, the most favorable since its founding, the most favorable that could have been expected, fortunate external conditions, among which one must include the well-known Bulgarian megalomania and recklessness. The external framework was therefore favorable for the full unleashing of national energy, which was by general acknowledgment colossal and accompanied by great virtues.

The foundations of all our national energy are those virtues described above: the primordial characteristics of the national spirit, and upon that foundation, shaped in the course of historical development, the national consciousness and the idea of a great national mission. Under their influences the state type was formed, and with it the particular state spirit of Serbia. In liberated and expanded Serbia, the people through *their* boundless efforts secured their state, in which they nurtured their capabilities, developed in their own spirit, and independently determined the direction of their own development. Spiritually and morally mobile, excitable, receptive of ideas and cultural advances easily, reshaping them, and jealously ensuring that they be grafted onto the national stock. Besides that, it lived through and luckily survived internal crises of a kind that no other Balkan people has endured, and through which the great Russian people has been passing for some time now. These are crises of ideas and principles, crises of institutions and governance, dynastic upheavals, crises of state survival, and bound up with all these, crises of consciousness: deep crises that shake the entire soul, purify it, refine it, and through which, among peoples as among individuals, a greater soul is forged. It is now beyond doubt that the Serbian people cannot tolerate bad conditions for long, weak and bad institutions, or corruption. To impatient spirits it seemed as though temporary and apparent indifference was a form of resignation, making peace with what is bad, but it always proved otherwise. Meanwhile, something new ferments and takes shape within the feelings and minds of many, and the reversal comes suddenly, almost revolutionary, and in a short time much is fundamentally improved. This last act appears to be triggered by some spiritual and moral spur that strikes and swiftly moves, and such a process is a characteristic psychological trait of all Dinaric Serbs, which for an example is by all accounts not present to the same degree in the Russian people. *Through such gradual yet almost revolutionary movements Serbia developed, and it seems this will remain the course, the manner of development and advancement of the Dinaric Serbs.* In connection with the purpose of this article, two consequences of such development deserve mention. Both because of the crises mentioned, and other well-known influences, Serbia was a state without prestige, and doubts had arisen even regarding the capabilities of the Serbian people. This was deeply felt, and many endeavored through deeds to win recognition for their country; far more energy was concentrated in that direction than appeared. *The period of humiliation and national pain was a time in which national tension accumulated with particular force and then suddenly turned in one conscious direction.* From the crises developed a fairly healthy democracy in Serbia, whose institutions and forms still appear not fully perfected, and whose state organization does not yet satisfy us, but

which is wholly imbued with national spirit and national aspirations. Each person feels that Serbia is a state for the Serbian people, in which everything ultimately serves the whole and the broadest population strata – the peasant, the workshop for development of his capabilities and his future; by some of its actions the state seems oriented «toward distant generations». In the depths of their souls this is believed even by those who constantly and bitterly complain. *That faith is the immeasurable strength of Serbia that was of great importance for actions such as those of 1912 and 1913.*

Moreover, the people and the army are one and the same and they have one, *their own* task. It is often forgotten that we are a genuinely martial and soldierly people, that we have always been so, and that valor and warriorhood have been practiced without interruption for several centuries—even in the worst of Turkish times; to such a degree this cannot be said of any other Christian Balkan people. Such a people must love the army and military profession; and even before the recent wars it was generally observed that the people of Serbia feel affection and respect toward the army, its commanders and its orders. What particularly won their loyalty was the equality and fairness within the army, which placed all occupations and positions on an equal footing. Serbian officers, arising mostly from the peasant class, retained as a rule the traits of the good and honorable Serbian peasant, they not only understand the soul of their soldier, with all his wishes and inclinations, but shared with him almost the same general organic feelings, the same sound and echo of life as the soldier; the community was thus complete in that respect, differing mainly in level of vocational training. From such officers, soldiers could learn more in the army than in school, and it surprised us all to discover, during this war, how much soldiers had learned in barracks about the Serbian people, their lands, and their history. This complete community and mutual love proved, during the recent wars, a force of inestimable value. Moreover, perhaps no other group in Serbia was so thoroughly imbued with the national mission and national pride as the officers. And some of them, particularly in recent years, exercised influence over all the preparations and undertakings by which the external action of the state is strengthened. The army contains within itself the best juices and all the finest national inspirations.

Furthermore, Serbia as a state in recent decades has *enriched itself to a certain degree and in many directions considerably matured*; the first progress was above all self-generated with time, and the maturing is undoubtedly connected also to the liberality of Serbia. It is furthermore the most densely populated land on the Balkan Peninsula, almost to the critical point from which the population begins to spill over its borders.³ It is therefore different not only from primitive Karadorđe's Serbia, but also from the poor and weak Serbia of 1876, which was, in reality, without tension. The great economic and cultural advances are well known; equally well known is not only the material and financial preparedness of the state, but also the diverse technical and other military expertise. The significant development of science and literature has not gone unnoticed, particularly in the national sciences; new and better-articulated ideas, carried by individuals and societies into the national mass; various movements for the enlightenment and strengthening of the nation up to the significant Yugoslav movement, which bound us more closely than before to the larger national community. Attentive observers noticed these spiritual and moral currents by which everything rapidly changed and strengthened: the mentality, the consciousness of belonging to a greater nation, a spirit that does not flinch from hardship, a drive toward action, toward deed. From a hundred years of accumulated state experience, state awareness and conscientiousness matured, so that even in the details of Serbia's external program there were in fact no significant differences between political parties: moreover, many well-known individuals of strong national instincts and intelligence worked independently of one another (and without any connection to the government) in the same direction, and approached it from all sides out of the same feeling; many matters were immediately resolved, upon which previously there had been only long and bitter dispute, without agreement. One consciousness and one intellectual will had consolidated itself. There was a disposition to view the southern national question soberly and truthfully, and to ground national tasks in truth, and this was embraced by all intellectuals with influence over state affairs. There was not a trace of national snobbery, megalomania, or chauvinistic excess. This was, in the intellectual sphere, the same as the drive for fairness and justice that imbues the

3. There are parts with 100 people per 1 km², like in very populated industrial lands of Europe.

peasant strata of our people. In connection with this, as also in the spiritual and emotional life displayed during the wars, it became clear that we possess certain traits of the great Russian-Slavic soul, morally perhaps among the greatest, and undoubtedly the most sympathetic. By virtue of the sincerity, gentleness, and moderation of our national program, we were able to find points of contact in several quarters. In connection with this there was no exaggeration even during the wars, no inflating of successes, not even of individual achievements. Decency, measure, and that quiet gentleness that accomplishes everything within itself and satisfies its own inner need constantly prevailed. It is true that this apparently flowed from the fact that the main work was performed by the broad popular masses, and besides that their breath and their calm, deep consciousness was felt in all affairs. It became clear that exaggeration is not our national trait (as was often thought, and as many Serbs themselves believed), but the trait of many individuals upon whom a young process of intellectualization is at work – and of those who scatter into factions, parties, and cliques, and who therefore do not act as a national whole and for the whole.

But of greatest significance was the great physical strength of the Serbian peasant, who is now more numerous, as well as *the raw cultural state* of the people. It was as though they had stepped into a period of development that is most favorable for warfare with large national masses and for physical and moral endurance; a period that appears to reach its highest point somewhere in the middle between the high culture in which Western peoples now find themselves, and the primitiveness in which, for example, the Albanians still reside today. The peasant (and the other strata of Serbian society, which are less numerous than the peasant) is strong, accustomed to hardship, adversity, fatigue, and patience, possessed of steady nerves: «he accepts death as something that cannot be escaped and must be accepted» (Major Pribičević). Many foreigners have confirmed that the peasant is agile, flexible, intelligent, capable of individual initiative, and that he is particularly distinguished in this regard from the east-Bulgarian peasant. He was consistently cheerful, did not grumble, and was not disobedient even under the greatest hardships and dangers. What's more, many were swept away by the fighting and fell in love with it, and with valor: «beneath fresh branches... and new grafts... in the old root flows powerful nourishment, the inexhaustible vigor of the heroes of old» (Rakić).

Then came the first victories—particularly the famous Battle of Kumanovo, great and enormous, for through it Kosovo is avenged—and these first impressions and successes were of great influence upon a striking and spiritually mobile people as was ours. National strength was reinforced and took wing when the people touched the soil of their sacred past and heard that their army had reached the Adriatic Sea. Every important place, from Kosovo to Shkodër, and from Skopje to Thessaloniki, the peasants know from the folk poems, they recall verses about it, regard it as an old acquaintance and as their own; in the national consciousness the continuity of events and aspirations from the Nemanjić era to the recent wars is clear. These moral moments were of immeasurable influence. The deepest feelings trembled with excitement; an unconscious drive for sacrifice and self-abnegation prevailed; and many from various quarters desired that their blood too might flow for the future and the glory of their nation.

These high feelings were not extinguished even when the armed people, advancing toward the West through Metohija and toward Shkodër, saw that in those areas of its glorious past, the Serbian population constituted a minority or was on the verge of disappearing. The people felt more enthusiasm for the land that had historically been its own, for the traditions, and were little concerned with the people who currently inhabited it. Such regions they regard as their ancient inheritance upon which, through their misfortune, some foreign people had settled; this does not trouble them, and they believe they have the right to occupy the land. When it is a question of lands that held great importance in the national history, then the historical principle, in the national consciousness, outweighs the ethnographic one.

The high feelings described above, national pride, and concern for the future gave strength and resolve to the armed people in their territorial dispute with Bulgaria as well, and this spread gradually from the army and the officers to all circles. Throughout this, the characteristic national calm, patience, self-confidence, and patient waiting for what is right remained, even when many intellectuals became alarmed; the people do not give ground and do not abandon their deep instinctive feelings and thoughts under the pressure and influence of every event and every idea that is spoken or written. Furthermore, the Serbian people, social by nature, a people that had

loved the Balkan alliance and believed it had found in it the solution to Balkan questions, was insulted by the razing of the Balkan alliance and the Bulgarian threats. This turned into genuine national resentment and anger following the Bulgarian attack. These psychological motives, among others, contributed greatly to the fortunate outcome of the Serbian-Bulgarian war.

III

After the Treaty of Bucharest of 1913, Serbia acquired a consolidated geographical position and a defined geographical shape, excluding certain territorial details and unsecured or unfinished outlets to the sea. Only now, Serbia has attained a *fully central position on the Balkan Peninsula*, for it extends from the Danube to the outskirts of Salonika. It has encompassed, besides the Morava basin, the entire Vardar basin, and can geographically be called the *Moravian-Vardar state*. Just as previously the Morava valley centralized its influences upon all of Serbia, *so now the Moravian-Vardar valley will centralize its influences upon all of Serbia* and, as the main communication artery, gather to itself life and industry; Belgrade, Niš, Skopje, and Salonika⁴, economically and commercially far more significant for the Balkan Peninsula than Constantinople. Because of this centralizing influence, Serbia will become a unified whole, a land of one piece (with the exception of the Podrinje and Podrimlje districts and in part the Timok basin), unlike the other lands and states of the Peninsula, which lack such a centralizing valley. It can be divided into northern (Danubian) and southern Serbia, or better still into *Moravian Serbia* (Serbia up to 1912) and *Vardar Serbia*—and it is better to name them as such. The new territory of Serbia is 39,500 km², so that the total area of Serbia is approximately 87,800 km². The new territory of Montenegro amounts to approximately 6,000 km², and the total area of present-day Montenegro is approximately 15,300 km² (provisional data).

Furthermore, in Serbia lies almost the entire *central Balkan Area*, from Niš to Veles, and *the Balkan core* around Skopje and Ovče Polje, where the main longitudinal and transverse communications of the Peninsula intersect. Among the longitudinal routes, besides the most important Moravian-Vardar one, the Nišava-Maritza route is significant, leading from Niš through Sofia to Constantinople; then there is the Kosovo-Raška route, from Skopje through Mitrovica and Novi Pazar to the Bosnian border. From the central Balkan area, from Kosovo, there stretches a vast undulating Drin valley, a broad hollow between the Šara and Prokletije mountain groups, leading toward Shkodër and Medua, the easiest and shortest access from the central parts of the Peninsula to the Adriatic Sea, and the most important route for the Adriatic railway that would depart from Serbia.⁵ Of similar importance for the southwestern districts of Vardar Serbia is the route of the Roman road Via Egnatia, from Durrës through Ohrid, Resen, Bitola, toward Veles and Salonika. The greater part of these finest Adriatic or transverse communications lies on Serbian soil.

With the new expansion of Serbia, the political land-isthmus that separated Serbia from Montenegro, known as the Sanjak of Novi Pazar – in which the main the seat of our ancient state of Raška, a region that in recent decades had stood as a symbol of Balkan political insecurity—disappeared. Its significance with respect to Bosnia has been discussed elsewhere.⁶ Through it there can now be built, across the territory of the Serbian people, our own continuous railway line to Bar, albeit still incomplete and costly; of all the projects, the shortest and cheapest would run from Kosovo to Dečani, then along the Dečanska Bistrica, below Bogičevica to Plav and Gusinje, and from there through Grančar to the Cem River, if Montenegro could obtain the Cem with the Kelmendi.

With the latest, nearly complete liquidation of European Turkey, all the other Balkan states also consolidated themselves, and their geographical positions were changed in many respects—which affects Serbia's own position and its external connections. Greece took possession of the largest and best portion of the Aegean coast of the Peninsula, with all its main harbors—Salonika,

4. About this further in previously mentioned discussion.

5. See more in: Serbia's exit to the Adriatic Sea [Izlazak Srbije na Jadransko more] *Glasnik Srp. Geograf. Društva knj. II, 1913*.

6. Anthropogeographic Problems of the Balk. Peninsula [Antropogeografski Problemi Balk. Poluostrva]. *Naselja Srp. Zemalja, Knj. I 1902*, issued by Akademija Nauka. Belgrade

the Gulf of Orphanos, and Kavala—and became in the full sense an *Aegean state and an Aegean power*, of significance for the European equilibrium⁷ in the Mediterranean as well. Having acquired the vast fertile basins of southern Macedonia, the Drama-Kavala, Serres, Salonika with Meglen (where two and three harvests succeed one after another if distributed right), and Kastoria basins, it transformed from an agriculturally meager state into an *agriculturally powerful land*, and acquired its internal foundation for developing an even stronger merchant fleet. Bulgaria gained the least, both territorially and in terms of population. But it is *geographically compact*, a good coherent whole of defined outline, for it occupies almost the entire eastern portion of the Peninsula—the state of the *Bulgarian-Thracian landmass*. With Lagos and Dedeagach, a harbor of considerable future, it *gained access to the Aegean Sea*. Dedeagach or Lagos will likely become the main harbor and export point for Bulgaria, since Burgas and Varna lie on the enclosed Black Sea. Romania, having acquired a significant and fertile part of the Dobruja with the towns of Silistra, Tutrakan, Dobrich, Balchik, and Kavarna, remains the *largest Balkan state* both in territory and population; it became a *true state of the lower Danube*; and by crossing to the right bank of the Danube it became a *more Balkan state than before*, as though its territorial aspirations with respect to Bulgaria were not yet satisfied.

IV

Receiving influences and impulses from the more cultured of Europe, Serbia reshapes them, incorporates its own content, and tends unceasingly to create a type of state befitting the national spirit. The same natural tendency is felt in the cultural sphere as well. True, there is a great deal of material culture and science that remains the same and unify the world. But almost all other cultural content is being changed according to the national spirit and its existing creations and views of the world and of life. Further, the manner in which things and ideas are grasped, understood, executed are different and the spirit of the Serbian has its own original way with all of this. In the end, it is my conviction that Serbian people are despite everything considerably gifted, with warm inspirations, varied customs, often profound meaning, a rich ornamentation, and especially the Dinaric Serbs are often bold and winged in fantasy and capable of giving new and memorable, primarily spiritual creations. With all of that the general culture enriches itself; new ways and new creations enter in it. But in order to do so, it must receive the best and most perfect influences of European culture and the deep impulses of the East, therefore from the East as well, whose spirit which is frequently more original and deeper; for this reason Yugoslav cultural community must be nurtured, a larger environment, because small environments, no matter how gifted, today cannot give new and original culture; finally one must carefully watch and filter out harmful cultural influences upon the national spirit from outside. *All of this is closely connected with the geographical-cultural position of Serbia*, which has been changed in several respects by recent events.

As before, Serbia has a long and open boundary toward the cultural European trunk, toward central and western Europe, while it is a river boundary, but without mountains, unlike for example Spain, Italy. Further, through Serbia passes the shortest communication that connects Central Europe with the Balkan Peninsula, the Aegean Sea, and the Near East. In this respect it differs significantly from peripherally situated Bulgaria, which is cut off from the cultural European trunk by Serbia and Romania, and must receive those influences either through its neighbors or directly, but more linearly and to a lesser degree; and it will be directed to more intimate cultural connections and contacts with Russia and Near East. While true that Romania has a long border with Austro-Hungary, it is fenced by the Carpathians, which did not prevent it to keep cultural connections with Central and Western Europe through train lines. Greece has on account of its maritime position the most diverse connections, besides Asian and African ones, particularly with Italy and France; its overland connections with the cultural European trunk can only run through Serbia. Due to its central geographical position and the broadest connections with the cultural European trunk, Serbia can for Bulgaria and Greece acquire the status of significant country for diverse cultural functions.

7. [Translators Note] It could also be interpreted as balance of power.

The mentioned connection of Serbia is further strengthened by the fact that it is ethnically and geographically bound to the cultural European trunk, for the Serbo-Croatian people extends far to the northwest and to the Adriatic Sea, and through the latter Serbia has indirect connection with Italian culture as well. Similarly to Romania (which also ethnically extends beyond its borders), but more than it, *Serbia is with cultural Europe culturally, economically, and through multitude of other interests bounded more strongly than any other Balkan state*. All such culturally and in other ways significant positions bring with them more hardships and risks, but also a greater destiny and a more vibrant cultural development.

The influence of cultural boundaries is very large, but is not omnipotent, and what's more it appears to be that with strong national will they can be overcome for certain needs, and in others can cultural ties and contacts be found, and not necessarily with bordering environment. This is the case for Bulgaria and Greece toward Serbia, and also for Serbia itself. From the standpoint of cultural influence, it is interesting to examine Serbia's northern border.

Directly on that border begins the Pannonian basin, partially steppe-like, the area of the Hungarian lowlands. In its center lives a compact Hungarian people, an ethnographically foreign oasis in this part of Europe, whose language no one on the Balkan Peninsula understands or learns. And this is one of the main reasons why Serbia had no deep and strong cultural ties with its first northern border environment, despite communities in medieval history and despite some sympathetic traits of the Hungarian national character. Further, closed in upon themselves, with a language that none of the surrounding peoples understands, they have created (at least in influential circles) a particular mentality, known in Europe as the Hungarian mentality, characterized by certain inaccurate and even more megalomaniacal and tense ideas, a brief a mentality of influential circles that acts repulsively to the surrounding peoples and states. Finally, despite all their admirable achievements, their culture, as far as I know it, is largely imitative of others. I am not concerned here the causes of such a state, which might be different based upon the mentioned national characteristics of Hungarians. And what small cultural influences Serbia received from Hungary, it namely received long ago (when that repulsive way hadn't developed), an even then through intermediary Hungarian Serbs, which settled within Serbia, especially in Belgrade; but even there, there was mostly Austro-Germanic culture. Now it does not receive it at all, not even through Hungarian Serbs, because they are no longer seen as culturally and intellectually more advanced than the higher echelons of Serbia.⁸ Serbians,⁹ by rule, just pass through the Pannonian basin in a train and move on. Because of the known, especially economic relations, in recent years cattle merchants have not stopped either. Pannonian basin with Hungarians, as an immediate borderland of Serbia, does not have any prominent cultural influence on it. It is for us *some sort of medium for passing by, moving on and running through*. It is not a good cultural conductor either, though which we would receive more distant, original European culture; what's more it is almost an isolator, which passes through the culture of the European trunk only through two rail lines: Rijeka-Zagreb-Belgrade and Vienna-Belgrade, and even that not always. An important and interesting fact: *basin, plain, culturally and ethnographically foreign and repellent, isolates and prevents cultural penetration from the North even more than high mountains that separate states and peoples*.

Because of that one might say that the real cultural boundary of Serbia in the North during the last couple of decades is Austria, especially lower Austria with Vienna and Czechia (Češka) with Prague, from whom we received much and which were really useful, especially in material culture. There were significant scientific and artistic influences also, which we coming to us from Austria. Especially cute was the impact of courteous and marry the population of Vienna, its highly refined taste in music, to some its theatrical artistry, then the taste in things of everyday life, but in the sense of politics and ideas, the population was not considered serious and in that regard we have not received much from it. However, in recent years all Austrian cultural influences have weakened due to well-known circumstances, but also due to the function of the Pannonian basin, which has formed ever more as an isolator; and finally many of us think, rightly or wrongly, that the Viennese

8. We are not concerned here, therefore, for a more detailed elaboration of the influence of Serbs living outside of Serbia on the culture of Serbia.

9. [Translators Note] The word Serbians is used to designate Serbs living in Serbia—a citizenship designation and not an ethnic one (Serbs).

population has become less sympathetic and even hostile toward Serbia in recent years. Further, as soon as it was created, Serbia sought cultural contacts outside Austria as well, for some directions only outside Austria, in Western Europe and Germany; besides medicine, «state cadets», young people that went for studies were almost exclusively sent. Political and social ideas have almost exclusively been received from the West, and not from Austria, whose social and political structure is completely different and foreign to Serbia. Movements, with which Serbia consolidated as a democratic country, came primarily from the West. For the last two decades there is a tendency, supported by economic connections, for Serbia to completely tie itself culturally to Western Europe and Germany, biggest cultural factories, from which Austria also mainly receives [influences].

Until the great expansion of 1913 Serbia, greatly Europeized but of raw cultural condition, had therefore the aforementioned cultural contacts, which might be temporarily changed during recent events. But through that expansion, especially because it expanded far South, Serbia went into the area of *old Balkan culture*, namely Byzantine, that was altered by Turkish-Oriental influences and centuries long Turkish regime. Vardar Serbia is therefore of different cultural structure than Moravian Serbia, in the latter sense Europeized Serbia; true, old Balkan culture is not foreign to us, because until recently there were traces of it in small towns of the Morava valley and they can still be found in small towns of South Morava¹⁰, but now we have gained a larger area in which old Balkan culture is even more prominent. Further, we went into an area of different climate, greatly Mediterranean or with Mediterranean influences, where new plants thrive that cannot be found in Moravian Serbia; in relation to that are different or new occupations, which also give different cultural look to Vardar Serbia. Finally, *from the southern borders Serbia is receiving new cultural influences which are significantly different than the northern ones*. The most distinctive traits of the old Balkan culture of Vardar Serbia are:¹¹

There is relatively much of relatively large towns, in which there are interesting Bazaars and Bazaar spirit, that are significantly different than in Moravian Serbia. In Bazaars wooden construction prevails, whether there were Bedesten or made solely from narrow and winding streets and dead ends, whose stores had wooden framed doors and windows that when open show its entire content, namely European defective products. In the Bazaar one trades but lives mainly outside Bazaars in mahalas. More than any other towns, the characteristic of these Bazaars is a laid-back way of working and trading. What strikes attention are the slow and the lazy, especially Turks; during the summer they sit with their legs crossed or lay at doors and windows, and especially under the trees in deep shade, barefoot, they stretch and settle flipping from one side to the other, and when they get up the walk like they are broken and cripple. Both in Bazaars and Mahalas there is plenty of beautiful things of its kind. Houses are very different than in northern towns, more original, with artistic ornaments and positions, not rarely weirdly and picturesquely grouped, and laid leaning one next to another. There are tendencies for better and more fancy life, especially among rich Greeks, Aromanians and Turks; and although they are cultured in their own place, this is very different than in the European cultural belt.

In Bazaars there is not a predominant and strong sense of duty, responsibility and reciprocity; frequently petty moral that only looks after oneself prevails: profit is the main and all other means that lead to that are allowed; during work and trade they frequently use trickery, and there predominantly isn't enough loyalty, so that a man can rarely rely on others. But they are all pious, firstly the Greeks and Aromanians, and there are many of the pious those that have virtually none of the aforementioned traits; especially the latter are governed by some ancient rules of wisdom in labor and life, and those give an impression like they originate from some Byzantine-Greek literature. All inhabitants of the Bazaar look after their honor and pride, and within that the personal and the questions guild, class, very old and deeply entrenched, is mixed. Besides that among the Slavs as well there exhibits some particular type of vanity, dry vanity, everything directed to the exterior, to the effect and external significance, of Byzantine-Greek origins. Because of these characteristics their life is often confined, decaying and petrified.

10. More on this in: Antropogeografski Problemi Balk. Poluostrva. *Naselja Srp. Zemalja*, knj. 1, Izd. Akad. Nauka 1902 Belgrade.

11. Same publication.

Not wishing to go deeper into detail this can be determined: in the small towns of Vardar Serbia virtually everything is of its kind and different then in lands of much younger, modern European culture, beginning with the Bazaar, the house, furniture, kitchen, suit, horse equipment, and going even further to the worldview and life.

Although old Balkan culture of Vardar Serbia is mainly the culture of small towns, because of its longevity it had its influences on village population, more and more as one goes further south towards Gevgelia. Opposed to this, especially west from Vardar, there are vast lands of patriarchal life which is similar to that old type of life in the areas of Moravian Serbia; those areas are for example Drmikul and Sateska next to Ohrid, Lower Prespa which has in part went to Greece, Morihovo, Poreč, Rekalia area, etc.

Old Balkan culture has, frequently in connection with religion, impacted the population, especially Christian, approaching, merging and forming many joint psychological traits, almost one *Balkan spirit*; Turkish pressure contributed to that as well, as it forced them into a community and towards joint resistance. There were many intersections so there are rare pure families, but they are mainly the outcome of the most diverse merger of Slavs, Greeks, Aromanians and Albanians,¹² similarly to the fact that in Turks there is blood of all former nationalities. This formation of a single Balkan soul somewhat stopped the national-religious clashes in recent decades. Besides old Balkan culture there were other influences and ethnic processes as well, which established similar or the same psychological traits in all Balkan peoples, but we cannot deal with them here.

According to presented traits of the old Balkan culture it is clear that there exists a duality, especially of the Bazaar culture, among Moravian and Vardar Serbia which will be felt for a very long time. However, it is known that the old Balkan culture is maintained only in the lands of Turkish governance and that it quickly fades away in free Balkan states. Old Balkan culture will therefore disappear from Vardar Serbia, but it will still make some impact and it will somewhat infiltrate into the population of Moravian Serbia.

Through great width and numerous connections, we are entering into contact with *the Greeks and contemporary Greek culture*, with which we haven't shared borders or direct cultural contact until now. We come into contact with a gifted people, agile, elastic, of very large trade capabilities, whose state, as an Aegean power, will develop and undoubtedly become richer. We are entering into connections with the people of highest national pride, which descends from different sources (classical and Byzantine) and is of different type than Serbian national pride; Because of that trait Greeks could have looked ridiculous before, but during recent events it had been shown that it is a vast strength of this small nation. Furthermore, in questions in which their interests are present, Greeks, individuals and state, show almost unparalleled toughness and perseverance, and as a gifted nation much sharp mindedness and political skill. Finally, when it comes to their deepest nature, they do not consider as a bad trait that they are frequently disloyal and very cunning. Based upon these influences we will receive from Greece are seen, *more influence of Greek national spirit than some particular culture*; but we will come in proximity of great Hellenic artistic creations, which are still plentiful in Greece.

Besides contact with the Greeks, we will also receive other more diverse and perhaps *stronger cultura influences* from the South, which in general can be labeled as Thessalonikian, the influences of a great maritime town, in which the most diverse cultural elements and interests gather. From them the most interesting will be the Eastern influences, those deep and deeply original influences, from which many spiritual and artistic novelties may arise. Much stronger will be the impact of the Mediterranean-Levant culture, a mixture of Eastern, Mediterranean and European cultural influences, and lastly most prevailing South Italian influences, which are, as it is well known, lesser than North Italian ones; and that is actually the culture of Thessaloniki. Rarely will purely Western European culture come from this port, and even if it does come it will firstly be filtered through Greek and especially Thessaloniki environment and according to them changed.

12. Such intersections were plentiful in older towns of Moravian Serbia, and many old town families are of Serb-Aromanian, Serb-Greek, more rarely Serb-Albanian origin, especially in Belgrade, Kragujevac, Niš, etc. For long these families had large influence on public life; national intelligence only came to power in last decades. Similar thing (but in lesser extent because of Moravian Serbia) will happen now in Vardar Serbia.

There are two more borders left, Bulgarian and Albanian, which will for some time behave similarly, *be unfriendly and uncultured borders*, and negatively impact the cultural development especially of the bordering regions of Serbia. But the Bulgarian border will by all accounts quickly become *culturally neutral*, and the Albanian will for a long time remain *culturally harmful*.

It is clear which of the cultural influences mentioned should be received. Internal old Balkan culture and those received influences should be changed and assimilated according to the national spirit of Serbia. It is great and difficult cultural task, not without its dangers for the vitality and originality of the Serbian national spirit.