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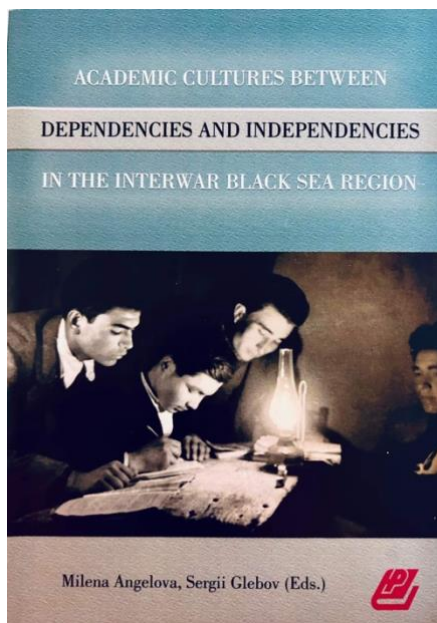
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### BOOK REVIEW: ACADEMIC CULTURES BETWEEN DEPENDENCIES AND INDEPENDENCIES IN THE INTERWAR BLACK SEA REGION

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*Academic Cultures Between Dependencies and Independencies in the Interwar Black Sea Region.* Edited by Milena Angelova and Sergii Glebov. University Publishing House Neofit Rilski. Blagoevgrad. 2022. 327 pp. ISBN 978-954-00-0303-0.

As a result of its immense geopolitical importance, the Black Sea has been a place of significant economic, sociocultural, and linguistic interactions for millennia. In casting its lens back to almost exactly a century ago, the edited collection reviewed here, *Academic Cultures Between Dependencies and Independencies in the Interwar Black Sea Region*, provides a series of in-depth analyses of the transfer of knowledge, culture, and ideas across the region during the eventful years of the 1920s and 1930s. Under the careful stewardship of editors Milena Angelova and Sergii Glebov, the present volume arose from the 2019 conference of the same name, itself part of a prestigious European Commission-funded Horizon 2020 international grant project which charted the historical development of the Black Sea region from the late eighteenth century until the present day and which has

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already yielded several publications (see Gutmeyr and Kaser, 2018; Michailidis and Antoniou, 2019; and Ristovska-Josifovska, 2021).

The Preface to the book is by co-editor Sergii Glebov, who anchors the volume both within the framework of the project as well as within its historical, sociocultural, and temporal milieu. The role of power and its importance to the dissemination of knowledge in the Black Sea context is highlighted, before he outlines and summarises the diverse contributions to the present book. Divided into thirteen chapters arranged in six thematic sections (predominantly of two contributions apiece), the fifteen scholars whose work is featured in the book are affiliated to institutions in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, North Macedonia, and Romania. With case studies which cover a range of countries in the interwar Black Sea region, it gives interdisciplinary historical perspectives through the prism of fields as varied as ethnology, museology, cinematography, and education studies.

‘From Ideology to Terror’ is the title of the first section of the book. Here, Kristina Popova provides a succinct overview of the ideological distinctions between Soviet and Western sciences, a theoretical division which proved fundamental in demarcating the transfer of knowledge not only in the interwar Black Sea region but also more widely. This is complemented by Irada Baghirova’s case study of the far-reaching purges which took place in newly-Soviet Azerbaijan. Culminating in the 1936-1938 ‘Great Terror’ under Joseph Stalin”, she profiles the numerous scientists, academicians, and other members of the intelligentsia who were imprisoned or executed for ideological reasons.

The three chapters in the second section, ‘From Knowledge to Patriotism’, foreground the development of intellectual history in the relevant national contexts. Stefanos Kordosis’s chapter highlights the role of the controversial Romanian historian and politician Nicolae Iorga in the rediscovery of *Persica*, an eighteenth-century manuscript by the Ottoman Greek merchant and traveller Vasileios Vatatzes, and which was notable for recording valuable information about Nader Shah, the first ruler of Afsharid Iran from 1736 to 1747. Moving to the Armenian context, Iliya Nedin draws attention to the creation and development of ethnography in interwar Armenia. This is done through profiling the three European-trained scholars who were responsible (Yervand Alexandrovich Lalaian, Khachik Stepanovich Samuelian, and Stepan Danilovich Lisitsian) and locating them in the complex political structures of that time. The third chapter of the second section concerns intellectuals who were adherents of the interwar iteration of the Macedonian Liberation Movement (IMRO). Informed by extensive archival research in the holdings of the British Foreign Office, Ilko Drenkov analyses reports sent to London regarding the activities of these revolutionaries from 1919 until 1941.

The then-new technology of cinema is the subject of the two studies which feature in the volume’s third section, both of which focus on the Caucasus. The first chapter, by Manuchar Loria and Tamaz Putkaradze, analyses two early Georgian films from the period: *Jim Shavante*, a 1930 ethnographic film directed by Mikheil Kalatozishvili which

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profiles the rural Svan people, and a 1929 silent newsreel which focuses on the role of women in the historically Islamic region of Ajara. Accordingly, both works are analysed through the worker-oriented and anti-religious Soviet ideology of that time. The second contribution, by Marijana Piskova, zooms out to present a macro analysis of how Soviet cinematographic policies influenced the creation of so-called 'national' cinemas in the Armenian, Azeri, and Georgian contexts, noting how over the interwar period these regions were viewed increasingly as being more modern and less 'exotic'.

The two chapters in the fourth section both deal with women's education. In the first, Shamil Rahmanzade tracks interwar literacy policies in Azerbaijan, noting that at the beginning of the Soviet era less than 5% of women were literate there. Political and social efforts to increase access to and uptake of literacy among women are presented and discussed within the broader context of school and university education for women at that time. The chapter by Anastasiya Pashova and Petar Vodenicharov discusses women's access to education and culture through analyses of a Russian academic journal influenced by the New Education Fellowship, an international pedagogical movement originally founded on theosophical principles which eventually became interspersed with the then-new sciences of psychology, psychoanalysis, and sociology. Additionally, Bulgarian perspectives on the movement are offered.

The fifth part of the book is entitled 'From Knowledge to Institutions'. Biljana Ristovska-Josifovska's contribution charts attempts to develop and promulgate Macedonian academic and linguistic knowledge at that time, when no corresponding Macedonian geopolitical entity existed. This analysis of contemporary efforts to publish scholarly and linguistic works is viewed through the prism of the unique impact and influence that émigré Russians fleeing Soviet rule had on the nascent community of interwar Macedonian intellectuals. Turning to Romania, the creation of national museological institutions is the subject of Maria Mateoniu-Micu's study. Noting that initiatives to develop and build these museums accelerated during the interwar period, she profiles the development and construction of the country's major cultural and ethnographic institutions such as the National Art Museum in Bucharest, the Ethnographic Museum in Transylvania, and the Village Museum in Bucharest.

Noting the then rural and undeveloped nature of the Bulgarian countryside, the sixth and last section of the book centres on the domestic concept of the 'model village' in the interwar context. In her chapter, volume co-editor Milena Angelova contextualises and analyses the 'model village' scheme advocated by the Bulgarian government in the late 1930s, drawing attention to the context and academic underpinnings to the initiative as well as its ultimate end owing to the political and ideological shift after World War Two. The final contribution, by Markus Wien, complements this analysis by highlighting a parallel model village scheme active in Bulgaria which was originally based on German (later Nazi) ideologies. As such, he explores this initiative and contrasts it with the other schemes outlined in the previous chapter.

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To sum up, *Academic Cultures Between Dependencies and Independencies in the Interwar Black Sea Region* is distinctive for the breadth and depth of the contributions which provide new scholarly perspectives on this important and influential region, representing a strong contribution to deeper understanding of the culture and society of the Black Sea in the years between the two World Wars. In addition, as demonstrated by the wealth of archival sources consulted and the use of resources written in the region's languages, this volume is additionally commended for opening up these findings to English-speaking researchers – similarly to the other publications arising from the project, the book is available Open Access on Zenodo and also via the project website (see KEAC-BSR, 2023). In short, through demonstrating the historical and thematic interconnectedness of the Black Sea region, *Academic Cultures Between Dependencies and Independencies in the Interwar Black Sea Region* is a key volume which offers clearly-articulated perspectives on issues that are of great interest and value for international scholarship.

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