

LEGATIS

Identities and Memory in the Long 19th Century

NARODNI
MUZEJ
SLOVENIJE



This exhibition tells the story of the constitution and evolution of modern nations in South-East Europe. It has been produced with the belief that nations and their history need not be just a matter of division.

The political, social and cultural practices and ideas accompanying these processes are illustrated through visuals and artifacts that demonstrate the gradual transformation of traditional societies functioning within imperial regimes into modern societies with a focus upon nationality as the foremost marker of identity.

Within the region, neighbours have often been described in terms of dichotomies, and past or ongoing disputes. This exhibition is structured around a different principle. The complexities of historical change in South-East Europe during the “long 19th century” are explained through a presentation of shared key processes and experiences, common features and historical interactions, including with the rest of Europe, rather than on the lines of exclusive and contrasting parallel national histories and narratives.

Named after Maria Todorova’s book, “Imagining the Balkans”, it seeks to renew our vision of social, political, economic and cultural changes in South-East Europe. For the first time, history museums from all over the region, and beyond, have overcome their borders, have worked together and combined their collections in order to show that each unique national destiny is inextricably linked and interrelated with a common regional, and a broader universal, destiny. This exhibition is a collective project of national history museums, under the coordination of UNESCO, seeking to foster intercultural dialogue and reflection upon shared identities and memories.

COFFEE SHOP

The development of a “coffee culture” amongst the ruling elites and its subsequent spread into the rising middle classes during the 19th century was an important indicator of social change, whether under Ottoman or Austro-



COFFEE BREAK IN
THE DAILY LIFE OF
A TRADITIONAL
MONTENEGRIN MAN
Photograph by Rudolf
Mosinger, 1904, National
Museum of Montenegro,
Cetinje



COFFEE SET
Brass, late 19th, early 20th
century, Skopje, National
Museum of Macedonia,
Skopje

Hungarian influence: enhancement of public spaces, democratization of personal time and space, and new models of sociability and conviviality. This exhibition opens with a coffee shop, so as to unite collective memories and personal stories.

LIVING IN THE OLD WORLD

YATAGAN OF GIORGAKIS OLYMBIOS
Western Balkans, early 19th century, National Historical Museum, Athens



TRAVELLING, COMMUNICATING

South-East Europe, with the advent of enlightenment ideas, the spread of national ideologies and industrial technology from the late 18th century onwards, went through tremendous changes. Yet the remains of this “old world”, while gradually eroding and vanishing, continued to show many commonalities in the ways of life among the diverse peoples and groups coexisting in the region.

The development of trade, technologies and modern transport and communication systems brought the traditional segments of this evolving modern society in closer contact with one another, exposing them to the conditions



FIRMAN FOR THE CREATION OF A TEXTILE FACTORY IN SLIVEN, 1836
National Library St. Cyril and Methodius, Sofia



THE FIRST CAR IN BANJA LUKA
Photograph, 1908, Museum of the Republic of Srpska, Banja Luka

existing outside of the region. The flow of new ideas and practices, as in the rest of Europe, was considerably enhanced.

A NEW SOCIAL ORDER AND THE RISE OF THE MIDDLE CLASSES

SELF-PORTRAIT OF PHOTOGRAPHER AND LITHOGRAPHER ANASTAS JOVANOVIĆ
Photograph with Petzval portrait lens, after 1865, Belgrade City Museum, Serbia



The progressive enrichment of those parts of society which were able to grasp the immerging developments in international economy led to the formation of a vibrant “middle class”. New divisions appeared in society, together with the new values they embraced. A certain amount of democratization enabled this civil society to participate in the running of the state.

**CREATING AND
DISSEMINATING
KNOWLEDGE**

During this period, the pursuit of learning and the diffusion of knowledge were much enhanced. Modernity required



PUPILS AND TEACHERS
OF THE NICOSIA GIRLS
SCHOOL
Photograph, 1894, The
Leventis Municipal
Museum of Nicosia,
Cyprus

practical knowledge to meet its needs. Also, the search for identity naturally led to a quest for one's roots into the past, and both secular and religious traditions were correspondingly questioned or updated.

MAPPING

During the 19th century, discovering, defining and delineating one's territory on maps became a very important goal.



HUMOROUS MAP OF
EUROPE IN THE YEAR 1870
German Historical
Museum, Berlin

Studying the natural and man-made characteristics of one's land was not just a way to delineate it, but was also part of an effort to understand, control and exploit one's own resources.

**USING HISTORY,
MAKING HEROES**



PRINCE ALEXANDRU
IOAN CUZA
Lithograph after Carol
Pop de Szathmari, about
1864, National History
Museum of Romania,
Bucharest

History has played a crucial role in defining national identity, mobilizing people, shaping their destinies and conforming objectives common to a whole nation irrespective of social, economic, cultural or other considerations. History became a channel through which national memories were fixed and transmitted, and used for their legitimizing potential.

**PUBLIC
CELEBRATIONS**



SOKOL JACKET AND CAP
National Museum of
Slovenia, Ljubljana

Public celebrations have always been a means of strengthening the cohesion of a group and to provide some visible

structuring of its form and of its aims. The new society that emerged during the 19th century created, as in the rest of Europe, a number of events that served as rallying points for national consciousness and exchange of information.

IMAGE OF THE NATION

National groups relate to specific iconic images and symbols, which were disseminated at every possible



CROATIAN NATIONAL REVIVAL
Painted by Vlaho Bukovac in 1895, oleography published by Petar Nikolić in Zagreb in 1905, Croatian History Museum, Zagreb

occasion and became so familiar as to be considered essential for the group's identity. Every citizen sharing the new bonds of society was also a vector of its specific image, thought of as unique and exclusive.



ISMAIL QEMALI AND ALBANIAN PERSONALITIES ON THE BOAT
Photograph by Kel Marubi, 1912, National phototeques "Marubi", Shkoder / National History Museum, Tirana

WHOSE IS THIS SONG?

Having followed a path of national restructuring of their societies, the people of South-East Europe may find themselves still separated by all sorts of real or imagined borders. This exhibition has tried to illustrate to what extent and in which spheres the countries from the region have evolved in parallel ways. When we look into such parallel historical processes, South-East Europe appears in its true dimensions: a place of interactions and of historic change.



Whose is this Song?
[Multimedia]
Documentary film, 2003,
by Adela Peeva

IMAGINING THE BALKANS
Identities and Memory in the Long 19th Century

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The exhibition is open every day
from 10 a.m. to 6. p.m. except 1st May.

