

Maria Baramova, Plamen Mitev,  
Ivan Parvev, Vania Racheva (Eds.)

# Power and Influence in South-Eastern Europe

16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> century



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edited by

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Ivan Parvev and Vania Racheva

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## Preface

### 1.

There is an advertisement for a car-manufacturing company which was broadcast recently on TV with the slogan, “Power is nothing without control”. If we paraphrase this smooth-sounding sentence and use it as a tool for understanding history, we could pose the rhetorical question: “Is there anything in history which cannot be connected, in one way or another, with power and influence?”. We are afraid there is not.

The history of South-Eastern Europe in the sixteenth – nineteenth centuries offers a good platform for the scrutiny of “power and influence” as driving forces behind many historical processes. This might be due to the fact that during this period the region was a “cross-point of histories”, where different layers of “powers” and “influences” could be studied by scholars. There is the “imperial level”, when we think about Habsburg-Ottoman, Russian-Ottoman, Habsburg-Russian relations and the clashes between these powers connected to the Balkans. There is, of course, the “regional level”, if look, for example, at the Danubian principalities and their contacts with their suzerain, the Sultan in Constantinople. Third comes the “local level”, if we prefer to examine the power relations and power influences exercised in a town or village. Last, but not least, there is the “personal level”, when we try to find out why some monarchs, grand viziers or diplomats were more successful as politicians than others.

All these different approaches to the history of South-Eastern Europe were seen as highly important when we discussed the concept of the international conference “Power and Influence in South-Eastern Europe, 16<sup>th</sup>–19<sup>th</sup> centuries”. As editors of the present volume we had these things in mind when we finally established the framework of this scholarly forum.

### 2.

The selection of participants for the Conference “Power and Influence”, held in Sofia in October 2010, was undertaken in various ways: we put out an Internet-wide call for papers and we invited some colleagues directly. Some of the participants were unable to come to Sofia, but submitted their papers in time; others were present, spoke on very intriguing topics during the conference, but for diverse reasons did not forward their papers for publishing. As editors we can only regret this.

Our intervention in the papers themselves was very limited. The texts were read and edited by Dr. Anne Simon, a well known philologist in the UK, but we agreed that she should make the papers understandable and not look as if they were written by a native speaker.

Our second intervention is connected with elementary errors, which could happen to every scholar. For example we have corrected a wrong date of a well known event, a misspelled name; we have changed inaccurate dates of a monarch's reign etc. We have done our best to do this job properly, but though we have read all the papers several times very carefully, we would not like to "put our hands in the fire" as a guarantee that nothing has been overlooked. We hope nothing has, of course.

After long and exhausting discussions we as editors decided to publish all the submitted papers and not to rule out those which differ from our own understanding of thorough scholarly work in terms of interpretation, use of sources, footnotes etc. Part of the logic behind this decision was as follows: if one would like to analyze Early Modern and nineteenth-century South-East European Studies as a historiographical reality, one should not use any filter, but look at all contributions as they stand – with all their pros and cons.

### 3.

The papers in the volume were arranged neither by the predetermined framework of the conference program, nor by the simple alphabetical order of author's names. We thought it better to divide contributions according to topic and the logic of their narratives, an approach which would allow the texts to be grouped in a more appropriate manner. What follows is a short description of the seven sections:

In the section "Formal and informal power in South-Eastern Europe" there are five papers, all dedicated to the relations between Empires in the region as seen in a broader historical and geographical context. The main topic is connected with Habsburg-Ottoman contacts, but Russia has also been included as an aspect.

The section "Power and influence in social context" consists of eight papers, which deal with the Balkans themselves. The majority of the contributions are dedicated to the time of Ottoman rule in the South-East, with its purely Ottoman or National (Bulgarian, Greek, or Jewish) aspects.

The topic "Autonomous lands and self-ruling communities" attracted the attention of three authors. The papers are dedicated to the Danubian principalities and to Morea in the field of tension between autonomy and the power influence exercised by the Empires in the region.

Six papers are included in the section "Men of power and influence". The topics range from Busbecq as an important author of the sixteenth century to the role played by Venizelos in Greek policy at the end of the nineteenth century. In between are local politicians, ambitious rulers and renegades who, willingly or not, connected their personal fate with the history of South-Eastern Europe.

The section "Power and influence in times of war" consists of three papers which view the history of the region through the prisms of ideology, acquiring spaces and populating areas generated by, or needed for, military conflicts in the region.

Eight papers are dedicated to the problem of “Diplomats and consuls as instruments of influence on power”. Thematically they look at Habsburg, English, French, Spanish and Russian involvement in Balkan affairs exercised at different levels – that of foreign ministries, diplomats resident in Constantinople and consuls in the Levant. Some of the papers examine diplomatic traditions in the post-Ottoman world in the Balkans.

The final section “Creeds, hidden power and Espionage in South-Eastern Europe” consists of four papers. They cover a huge geographical area in a period of more than four centuries, which clearly shows that the region between the Straits and the city of Fiume have historically more in common than usually assumed.

#### 4.

What can be formulated as a short conclusion, after reading the papers of the volume, if one would like to value the texts through a historiographer’s eyes? If we look at present-day Early Modern and nineteenth-century South-East European Studies, we can clearly see that a gap between Central Europe and South-Eastern Europe still exists in terms of topics, theoretical approaches etc. This gap is, however, shrinking and this is surely something positive for historians in the South-East.

However, something remains specific to the scholarly traditions in the region: namely, that in the South-East the “Rankean tradition” of concentrating deeply on a (single) archival source is still very much alive. This is not necessarily a negative nuance, since considerable archival work remains to be done by local historians in order to reach the level of source-linked studies which has characterized historiography connected to the past of Central and Western Europe since the nineteenth century.

There are still scholars in South-Eastern Europe who regard the “waving of the National flag” as the historian’s main duty, an attitude which more closely resembles the enthusiastic Nationalism of the nineteenth century or, even worse, the aggressive and intolerant stand of the extreme Chauvinism of the twentieth century. This is quite surprising since the greater part of the South-East belongs either to states of the EU or to countries with a clear EU perspective. The good thing, however, is the circumstance that these colleagues represent only a small minority within the guild of historians in South-Eastern Europe.

#### 5.

Finally, we would like to present our gratitude to the following people and institutions, which contributed to the publication of the present volume. Our main thanks go to the Centre of Excellence in the Humanities “Alma Mater” at the University of Sofia “St. Kliment Ohridski”, which financed the conference and the publication of the papers. In the President of the Center of Excellence, Professor Ilchev, and in its Scientific Director, Associated Professor Grozev, we had benevolent colleagues who

supported the idea of organizing the conference and making its results available to the academic community. Our special thanks go to Dr. Anne Simon, who edited the manuscript linguistically. She did her job in a short time and if we bear in mind that some of the papers were in a very rough state in terms of their English, our admiration is more than justified. We would like to thank Mrs. Aneliya Stoyanova for the final proofreading of the manuscript.

Sofia, October 2012

The Editors