

Tanja Zimmermann / Aleksandar Jakir (eds.)

EUROPE AND THE BALKANS

Decades of 'Europeanization'?



Königshausen & Neumann

Europe and the Balkans

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edited by

Tanja Zimmermann

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The Picture of the Balkans between Orientalism and Nationalism

One of the contemporary methodological approaches to the reading and interpretation of a work of art is the floating or migrating meaning of a picture.¹ One and the same image can obtain a new meaning in different contexts. Depending on the gaze of the observer and the interpreter's intellectual and ideological position, a picture can acquire a new meaning. An example of such a complex and 'floating' reading of a picture can be found in the images of the Balkans from the 19th century up to the year 1914. They show the multiple and transcultural character of the picture and its complex reception, which could have been interpreted differently in European or Balkan contexts.

Orientalist Discourse

Geographical maps, city vedute and literary illustrations were dominant in the European representation of the Balkans until the 19th century. During the 19th century, at the time of political instability and wars in Southeast Europe, there appeared works of art which implied solidarity with the people of the Balkans, as well as those created through the Orientalist discourse.²

What was basically presented and interpreted through the Orientalist discourse was the Ottoman Balkans. This was an area which, due to constant warfare, attracted the attention of the European cultural and political public during the 19th century. It was during this period that the area of Southeastern Europe was actually first referred to as the Balkans. In this way, this space was not only marked as a geographical territory, but it also gained a negative image, full of stereotypes about the people living in the southeast of Europe.³ The Ottoman Balkans was recognized as a region whose features were Islamic culture, brutal

¹ DERRIDA, J., *Dissemination*, London 1981; MIEKE, B., *Looking in the Art of Viewing*, London-New York 2004, 71-74.

² SCHICK, I.C., *Christian Maidens, Turkish Ravishers: The Sexualization of National Conflict in the Late Ottoman Empire*, in: BUTUROVIĆ, A./SCHICK, I.C. (ed), *Women in the Ottoman Balkans*, London-New York 2007, 273-305; BALEVA, M., *Bulgarien im Bild: Die Erfindung von Nationen auf dem Balkan in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Köln-Weimar-Wien 2012; LOVECKY, K., *Von Szolnok bis Brody*, in: HUSSLEIN-ACRO, A./GRABNER, S. (ed), *Orient & Okzident*, Kat. Ausst. Belvedere, Wien 2012, 138-142.

³ See: TODOROVA, M., *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford 2009; ZIMMERMANN, T., *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West: Mediale Bilder und kulturpolitische Prägungen*, Köln-Weimar-Wien 2014, 25-144.

warfare, poor position of the Christians, and exotic-ancient and primitive customs. The growth and development of the Orientalist discourse towards the Balkans lasted throughout the 19th century.

The strong interest of European societies in the political destiny and the wars on the Balkans began during the first decades of the 19th century, especially with the Greek War of Independence in 1821. During the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century numerous wars and uprisings on the Balkans attracted the attention of the European public (Uprising in Herzegovina 1875; Russo-Turkish war 1877-1878; Serbian-Ottoman wars 1876-1878; Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1908; Balkan wars 1912-1913). Orientalist representation of the Balkans lasted during the 19th century, and the number, subject matter and iconography of numerous paintings and news illustrations were closely connected to the political affairs of the time.

Intense picturing of the Balkans started at the time of the Greek War of Independence in 1821.⁴ It was precisely at this time that Orientalist painting flourished in France. The famous romantic artist and Orientalist painter Eugène Delacroix also painted some pictures dedicated to the suffering of the Greek people. One of his paintings, *The Massacre at Chios*, shows a brutal war scene with the suffering of civilians and the kidnapping of a woman with a very eroticised body. What is particularly important is that the central figure of the Greek whose suffering is emphasised in his body posture similar to the Pietà is painted as someone who does not belong to the white race.⁵ Not only did Delacroix visually orientalise the Greeks in this manner, but he also visually placed the space of the uprising in a non-European context. Delacroix's paintings were very important for later visual construction of the Balkans. He was a renowned painter and his representations of suffering Christians in the Balkans were possibly important models to look up to.

During the second half of the 19th century with numerous wars and uprisings on the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina and Bulgaria, the Balkans were again the focus of European attention. It was exactly at that time that the Czech painter Jaroslav Čermák came to the Balkans.⁶ He painted many scenes showing the slaves of Herzegovina and women's kidnappings. Čermák, like Delacroix, showed scenes which combined the beauty and eroticism of women with the brutality of the Ottoman masters.⁷

⁴ ATHANASSOGLU-KALLMYER, N., *French Images from the Greek War for Independence, 1821-1830. Art and Politics under Restoration*, Yale 1991.

⁵ GRISBY, D.G., *Whose color was not black nor white nor grey, but an extraneous mixture, which no pen can trace, although perhaps the pencil may*, in: *Art History* 22/5 (1999), 676-704.

⁶ On Čermák: ŠISTEK, F., *Naša braća na jugu. Češke predstave o Crnoj Gori i Crnogorcima 1830-2006*, Cetinje-Podgorica 2009, 43-57.

⁷ BALEVA, M., *Bulgarien im Bild: Die Erfindung von Nationen auf dem Balkan in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, Köln-Weimar-Wien 2012, 145-151.

The painter Paja Jovanović occupies a prominent place in the history of Orientalist representation of the Balkans.⁸ Jovanović most probably created the largest opus consisting of paintings with images of the Balkans. Paja Jovanović was an artist of Serbian origin, from Vršac in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. He received his art education in Vienna with the renowned Orientalist painter Leopold Carl Müller,⁹ and pursued his artistic career for the most part in Europe. Jovanović lived in Vienna and Munich and sold his paintings throughout Europe, the United States and Australia.¹⁰ Even though he created important historical and religious paintings both for the Serbian Orthodox Church and for the Kingdom of Serbia, Paja Jovanović was usually presented on the international art scene as an Austrian artist (Paul Joanowitch).

Jovanović left behind unpublished memoirs in which he spoke about his beginnings and the need to focus on the Balkans.¹¹ Leopold Carl Müller's Orientalism must have had a great influence on Jovanović, and he found archaic and interesting topics from 'Balkan life'. The scenes of war, extraordinary costumes, brutality, eroticism – all this represented 'a wild world' beyond the borders of civilised Europe. Jovanović traveled through the Balkans, but he also constructed the imaginary Balkans in his studio. In his memoirs he mentions that in Vienna he used models for creating the pictures of Balkan people and their exotic customs.¹² This shows that Jovanović was not really interested in the ethnographic reality. Indeed, Paja Jovanović's opus clearly shows variations of Orientalist topics in representations of the Balkans, and his Orientalism is also seen in the paintings devoted to Africa.

One of the classical Orientalist topoi is the representation of the harem and eroticised women.¹³ It is also present in Jovanović's paintings such as *Albanian dancer* (Arbanaska igračica).¹⁴ In a harsh, rocky environment he shows a woman dancing with swords. The moving dancer, with her emphasised torso, is surrounded by a gang of bandits. All elements of the erotic can be found here – loose hair, dance, half-naked and half-covered body.

⁸ ČUPIĆ, S., *The Politics of Representation as a Projection of Identity. The Female Body in its Oriental Construction in Serbian Art*, in: *The European Journal of Woman's Studies*, 10/3 (2003), 321-334; MAKULJEVIĆ, N., *Slika drugog u srpskoj vizuelnoj kulturi XIX veka*, in: MANOJLOVIĆ PINTAR, O. (ed), *Istorija i sećanje: studija istorijske svesti*, Beograd 2006, 148-149; SRETENIĆ, D., *Sve ove zemlje gotovo se i ne razlikuju u mojim očima*, in: *Između estetike i života, Predstava žene u slikarstvu Paje Jovanovića*, Galerija Matice srpske 2010, 181-201.

⁹ OEHRING, E., *Der Orient als Bildmotiv. Leopold Carl Müller und die österreichischen Orientalmalerei nach 1870*, in: HUSSLEIN-ACRO, A./GRABNER, S. (ed), *Orient & Okzident*, Kat. Ausst. Belvedere, Wien 2012, 34-46.

¹⁰ ANTIĆ, R., *Paja Jovanović*, Beograd 1970; TIMOTIJEVIĆ, M., *Paja Jovanović 1859-2009*, Beograd 2009; KUSOVAC, N., *Paja Jovanović*, Beograd 2010.

¹¹ *Memoari slikara Radovana (Paje Jovanovića)*, I Prepis, Arhiv SANU, br. 10.131.

¹² *Memoari slikara Radovana (Paje Jovanovića)*, I Prepis, Arhiv SANU, br. 10.131, 195-197.

¹³ ROBERTS, M., *Intimate Outsiders: The Harem in Ottoman and Orientalist Art and Travel Literature*, Durham-London 2007; ĆIROVIĆ, I., *Imagining the Forbidden: Representations of the Harem and Serbian Orientalism*, *El Prezente* 7 (2013), 247-264.

¹⁴ Picture "Arbanaska igračica" is published in: *Nova iskra* 1 (1904), 11.



Fig. 1: Paja Jovanović, Albanian dancer, from: *Nova iskra* 1 (1900), 11.

The given examples show to what extent Jovanović could successfully vary and adjust Orientalist mythology. Even though the harem was a typical place of male imagination, Jovanović moved the eroticism to the rocky territory of the Balkans. These paintings were also very important because they confirmed the presence of a typical Orientalist discourse in the images of the Balkans.

Another important segment of Jovanović's Orientalist oeuvre was based on the representation of the events connected to the wars of the Haiduks. His paintings *Return from the Battle*, *The Wounded Montenegrin*, *Blood Vengeance* (*Umir krvi*), *On guard* (*Arbanas*), *The Fencing Class* or *The Cockfight* intended to show some events from brutal and exotic Balkan life.¹⁵ In these compositions Jovanović combined different Balkan types and placed them in a common artistic context which did not reflect the historical reality.

In the composition *The Wounded Montenegrin*, we can see elements of Montenegrin, Albanian and Greek costumes and typified physiognomies of oriental Haiduks. The level of constructed reality is best seen in the figure holding the wounded man. It has a non-European physiognomy. As an educated academic painter, Jovanović clearly showed the wild and exotic Balkans by incorporating a non-European racial type in the picture.

A special characteristic of Jovanović's paintings was the representation of Albanians. Since the 19th century the European public was obsessed by the question of the ethnographic origin and Orientalist interpretation of Albanians.¹⁶ At that time there appeared a myth that Albanians were the descendants of centaurs and

¹⁵ Mentioned pictures are published in: TIMOTIJEVIĆ, M., *Paja Jovanović 1859-2009*, 97-107.

¹⁶ SCHMITT, O.J., *Die Albaner. Eine Geschichte zwischen Orient und Okzident*, München 2012, 14-15.



Fig. 2: Paja Jovanović, *Traitor*, 1925. (copy of the painting from 1884.) National museum Belgrade, from: Timotijević, M., *Paja Jovanović 1859-2009*, Galerija SANU: Beograd 2009, 102.

that they had tails.¹⁷ So Albanians stood for the authentic wild Balkan people, and they have been pictured as such since the 1820s.¹⁸ In Jovanović's oeuvre, the images of Albanians play a very important role. The images of Albanian guards and warriors were often included in his paintings. Some brutal customs, regarded as typical for the Albanian and Montenegrin territory, became the subject matter of his paintings, such as in the paintings *Umir krvi* (Blood Vengeance) or *The Avenger*. The image of the exotic and Oriental Balkans was also largely supported by the paintings such as *The Cockfight*, usually interpreted as a scene from Albanian life or from Montenegro.¹⁹ Although we don't know much about cockfights on the Balkans, Jovanović often used this motif to show the exotic Balkans to Europe.

A separate group of Paja Jovanović's paintings includes scenes showing traditionalism in Balkan life. One of these compositions is *Decoration of the Bride*,²⁰ the bride's preparation for the wedding. The wedding ceremony is often used in European art. In the 19th century it could be found in Orientalist art, like the *Jewish Wedding in Morocco* by Delacroix.²¹

¹⁷ JEZERNIK, B., *Do Some People in the Balkans have Tails?*, in: ŠMITEK, Z./MURŠIĆ, R. (ed), *Mediterranean Ethnological Summer School*, Ljubljana 3 (1999), 209-217.

¹⁸ ATHANASSOGLU-KALLMYER, N., *Of Suliots, Arnauts, Albanians and Eugène Delacroix*, in: *The Burlington Magazine*, 125/965 (1983), 486-491.

¹⁹ "Slika (Cockfight) nam prikazuje jedan momenat iz arnautskog života ili sa južnih krajeva Crne Gore ...": S.A.V., "Boj petlova" slika Paje Jovanović, *Brankovo kolo* 51 (1907), 1590.

²⁰ Published in: TIMOTIJEVIĆ, M., *Paja Jovanović 1859-2009*, 103.

²¹ LEMAIRE, G.-G., *Orientalismus, Das Bild des Morgenlandes in der Malerei*, Königswinter 2010, 214.



Fig. 3: Paja Jovanović, *The Cockfight*, 1897. National museum Belgrade, from: Timotijević, M., *Paja Jovanović 1859-2009*, Galerija SANU: Beograd 2009, 97.



Fig. 4: Paja Jovanović, *Decoration of the Bride*, 1886. National museum Belgrade, from: Timotijević, M., *Paja Jovanović 1859-2009*, Galerija SANU: Beograd 2009, 103.

Jovanović placed the *Decoration of the Bride* in the interior of a Balkan house. It shows women adorned according to the Ottoman dress code, even though they were most probably Christians. In the middle of the painting there is the bride, dressed in white, and she is addressed by an elderly lady who is holding her by the hand. The bride is humbly looking down. The scene obviously suggests not only preparations for the wedding, but also the moment of transfer of 'female knowledge' from the older to the younger woman. In the background, on a bench, young women are giggling and talking to each other while working, which lends a joyful air to this picture. Even though the painting shows a traditional ceremony, the images of women have a covert erotic character, which is most clearly shown by their loose hair and the curves of their breasts beneath the shirts.

In the history of Balkan Orientalism, the period of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878-1918) has an important place.²² During this period, Bosnia and Herzegovina was culturally interpreted as a fully Oriental territory civilised by the Austro-Hungarian state. This is reflected in the construction of public buildings in Moorish style, as well as the oriental decoration of the pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Paris World Exhibition in 1900.²³

One of the most complex processes in the new cultural representation of Bosnia was the preparation of a book on this territory in the edition "Österreichische-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild".²⁴ Many artists, including Paja Jovanović, were hired to illustrate this book. The illustrations showed the ancient and medieval Bosnia, the Ottoman period, Islamic culture, Christian communities and new buildings built by the Austro-Hungarian government.

The illustrations in "Österreichische-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild", even the authentic drawings,²⁵ show that they were not based only on field observations, but also on the Orientalist discourse.²⁶ A good example is Paja Jovanović's drawing which shows blood vengeance in Bosnia and Herzegovina.²⁷ Jovanović presents the same pictorial solution which he employed in his paintings, and which primarily refers to the territory of Montenegro and Albania, not Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this manner, he transposed an exotic and Orientalist topic from Albanian territory onto the one of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the construction of the Orientalist identity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, postcards also played an important role. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, postcards were powerful media which conveyed both the

²² OKEY, R., *Taming Balkan Nationalism: The Habsburg 'Civilizing Mission' in Bosnia 1878-1914*, Oxford 2007.

²³ KRZOVIĆ, I., *Arhitektura Bosne i Hercegovine 1878-1918*, Sarajevo 1986.

²⁴ *Österreichische-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild, Bosnien und Hercegovina*, Wien 1901.

²⁵ The drawings were exhibited in Österreichische Nationalbibliothek Wien at the Exhibition: *Alt Österreich, Menschen, Länder und Völker in der Habsburgermonarchie* (6.5.-30.10.2010). The catalogue of the exhibition was not printed.

²⁶ KLEE, A., *Dalmatien im Kronprinzenwerk – der nahe Orient*, in: HUSSLEIN-ARCO, A./GRABNER, S. (ed), *Orient & Okzident*, Ausstellungskatalog. Wien 2012, 129-137; MAKULJEVIĆ, N., *Habsburg Orientalism: The Image of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the "Kronenprinzenwerk"*, *Zbornik Matice srpske za likovne umetnosti* 41 (2013), 71-84.

²⁷ *Österreichische-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild, Bosnien und Hercegovina*, Wien 1901, 301.



Fig. 5: Paja Jovanović, Blood Feud (Blutfieden), from: *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild, Bosnien und Hercegovina*, Wien 1901, 301.

sender's message and the image of particular areas. A special group of postcards were those with representations of Sephardic Jews.²⁸ Sephardic Jews were a community which inhabited the territory of the Ottoman Empire after they had been expelled from Spain. The appearance of Sephardic Jews and their customs additionally supported the Orientalist image of the Balkans, and they were often shown on postcards as "features of Bosnia".

The final image of the Oriental Balkans was formed in the Central European, Austro-Hungarian and German caricature at the time of the First Balkan War in 1912. At that time all participants of the war – the Serbs, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Greeks and Turks were presented as villains, which was clearly used as a preparation for the impending World War I.²⁹

Nationalistic Interpretation

Along with the development of the Orientalist representation of the Balkans, there were national revolutions on the very territory of the Balkans. During the period from the First Serbian Uprising in 1804 until the Congress of Berlin

²⁸ MAKULJEVIĆ, N., *Sephardi Jews and the Visual Culture of the Ottoman Balkans*, *El Prezente*, 4 (2010), 202.

²⁹ RISTOVIĆ, M., *Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici : Balkan i Srbija u nemačkim satiričnim časopisima: (1903-1918)*, Beograd 2011.

in 1878 and the World War I in 1914, contemporary Balkan nations and states were in the process of formation. In this process, visual culture played an important role.³⁰ Visual culture created memory of historical and mythological events, celebrated the cult of heroes and contemporary rulers and served as political propaganda. Therefore, the pictorial representations of the Balkans became important in Balkan region. It was only then that Orientalist pictures were converted into national images. This process of transformation of the meaning of Oriental Balkan images mainly manifested itself in the new ways of reading and nationalistic interpretation. Works of art were interpreted and titled according to political needs, and some artists were glorified as the supporters and visual creators of the Balkan nations.

We can find an example showing how the images of the Balkans had become important and positively accepted in the work of Felix Kanitz. Kanitz illustrated the book *The Death of Smail-Aga Ćengić* in a typical Orientalist manner,³¹ and published many books on Serbia and Bulgaria.³² During his research, Kanitz came into close contact with the cultural and political elite in Serbia. One of his books is *Serbiens byzantinische Monumente* ('The Byzantine Monuments of Serbia').³³ This richly illustrated book was most probably the first representation of the Byzantine artistic heritage in the Balkans, and it showed the churches and monasteries on the territory of Serbia. This book was primarily addressed to the European academic public. In the second half of the 19th century, the Byzantine heritage wasn't well known in Europe and it was interpreted as Oriental art.³⁴ The book *Serbiens byzantinische Monumente* was received exceptionally well in Serbia. At the instigation of Prince Mihailo Obrenović the book was translated into Serbian and recognized as a work advocating Serbian national culture.³⁵

Jaroslav Čermák also played an important role in the history of Balkan representations. During his stay in the Balkans he became a widely appreciated and important figure. He followed the Montenegrins in wartime, and he was hired and honoured by the Prince of Montenegro, Nikola Petrović.³⁶ Čermák exhibited the painting *The Wounded Montenegrin* in Vienna, where it was bought by the bishop of Đakovo Josip Juraj Strossmayer, a patron of the arts and a renowned supporter of the Yugoslav idea.³⁷

Jaroslav Čermák's high reputation is also confirmed in the autobiography of Uroš Predić. Predić noted that Čermák had inspired his national and propa-

³⁰ MAKULJEVIĆ, N., *Umetnost i nacionalna ideja u XIX veku: sistem evropske i srpske vizuelne kulture u službi nacije*, Beograd 2006.

³¹ MAŽURANIĆ, I., *Smrt Smail-age Ćengića*, Zagreb 1876.

³² KANITZ, F., *Serbien*, Leipzig 1868; KANITZ, F., *Donau-Bulgarien und der Balkan: historisch-geographisch-ethnographische Reisetudien aus 1860-1876*, Leipzig 1876; KANITZ, F., *Das Königreich Serbien und das Serbenvolk von Römerzeit bis zur Gegenwart III*, Leipzig 1904.

³³ KANITZ, F., *Serbiens byzantinische Monumente*, Wien 1862.

³⁴ NELSON, R. S., *Living on the Byzantine Border of Western Art*, in: *Gesta*, 35/1 (1996), 6-7.

³⁵ KANIC, F., *Vizantijski spomenici po Srbiji*, Wien 1862.

³⁶ ŠISTEK, F., *Naša braća na jugu. Češke predstave o Crnoj Gori i Crnogorcima 1830-2006*, Cetinje-Podgorica 2009, 46.

³⁷ *Ibid.* 53.

gandistic painting *Herzegovinian Refugees*, underlining his painterly skill.³⁸ Čermák's painting *Herzegovinian Slaves* became one of the most important Serbian 'national icons'. The Serbian Zagreb publisher Petar Nikolić printed reproductions – oleographs of the most significant national paintings. He also reproduced Čermák's *Herzegovinian Slaves*, and in this way copies of this painting were distributed all over the Balkans.

Čermák's paintings were also published in illustrated magazines, which additionally boosted their popularity. For example, the magazine *Srpska Zora*, which was issued at the time of the eastern crisis and the Herzegovinian Uprising, included reproductions of the paintings *Wounded Montenegrin* and *The Herzegovinians in Burned-Out Ruins*.³⁹ Both of these paintings were interpreted in the newspapers as true representations of the horrors of war, and Čermák was celebrated as a friend of the enslaved Slavs in the Balkans.

What also shows the popularity of Čermák's painting is a bed exhibited in the Museum of Krajina in Negotin. It is a unique example of bringing nationalist visual imagination into the private sphere. On the sides of the bed there are reproductions of national icons, more specifically Čermák's *Herzegovinian Slaves* and Predić's *Herzegovinian Refugees*. This bed clearly shows how popular Čermák's works were.

The reception of Paja Jovanović's paintings in Serbia is a special phenomenon in itself. It was approximately in the 1880s that Serbia learned about his work and success. Jovanović was marked as the first Serbian artist who had great success in Europe. Therefore it was believed that his involvement would make a significant contribution to the national and political propaganda. Among other reasons, this is also why it was decided that he should receive important national commissions from the state.

During the last decade of the 19th and the first decade of the 20th century, Jovanović was assigned many of the most important state projects in visual culture. For the purpose of representing the Serbian Church in the Millennial Exhibition in Budapest in 1896, he painted the monumental composition *Seoba Srba*.⁴⁰ For the state of Serbia and the World Exhibition in Paris he painted the *Crowning of Tzar Dušan*.⁴¹ Jovanović was also engaged in ecclesiastical painting, as well as in painting dynastic portraits.

For the history of reception of Paja Jovanović, the interpretation of his Orientalist paintings with scenes from the life of Albanians is also of some interest. In Belgrade they were exhibited in the 1893. On that occasion, professor Dragutin Milutinović, a member of the Serbian Royal Academy, wrote a comment⁴² in

³⁸ Uroš Predić, *Autobiografija*, in: JOVANOVIĆ, M., *Uroš Predić (1857-1953)*, Sombor-Novı Sad 2008, 250; SIMIĆ, N., *Slikarevo pero. Pismo Uroša Predića*, Beograd 2007, 56.

³⁹ ŽENARJU, I., *Heroji, politika, svakodnevnica: ilustrovani svet Srpske zore (1876-1881)*, Beograd 2012, 23-24.

⁴⁰ SIMIĆ, N., *Kako je nastala slika Seoba Srba od Paje Jovanović*, in: *Glasnik Srpske pravoslavne crkve* 6 (1956), 109-113.

⁴¹ TOŠIĆ, D., *Izvori o imenu i poreklu jedne slike Paje Jovanovića*, in: *Godišnjak grada Beograda* 42 (1995), 103-122.

⁴² MILUTINOVIĆ, D. S., *Slike Paje Jovanovića (preštampano iz Videla)*, Beograd 1893.



Fig. 6: Paja Jovanović, *Crowning of Tzar Dušan*. Around 1900, National museum Belgrade, from: Timotijević, M., *Paja Jovanović 1859-2009*, Galerija SANU: Beograd 2009, 146.

which he deviated notably from Orientalist interpretations of Jovanović's paintings. He converted the orientalist vision of Albanians into the scenes of Balkan life. Even though at that time there was an intense conflict between Serbs and Albanians, Milutinović also interpreted the scenes of life of the Albanian people as the life of "our people". At the same time, Jovanović was interpreted as a true Serbian national painter – a national genius and the "embodiment of the national spirit".

Serbian art historiography was heavily marked by nationalistic interpretation of Paja Jovanović. In the last two books, printed to celebrate his 150th anniversary, Orientalist paintings of Jovanović were interpreted as idealistic and realistic scenes from Serbian and Balkan folk life.⁴³ In this manner, the myth of Paja Jovanović as a national painter was continued.

The above examples of Orientalist representations of the Balkans, which gained a new meaning in the nationalistic context, show the power of paintings. Paintings can manipulate and they did manipulate the European and Balkan public. They had a distinctive gender character and they visually confirmed the imaginary roles of Oriental men and women. In this way, the images of women's kidnappings, harem beauties and Balkan women suffering in captivity were interpreted in the European context with covert or pronounced elements of eroticism. They fully complied with the trends of European Orientalist painting. At the same time, these paintings by Jaroslav Čermák or Paja Jovanović were accepted in the Balkans as authentic testimony of the life and suffering of women.

⁴³ KUSOVAC, N., *Paja Jovanović*, 113-128; TIMOTIJEVIĆ, M., *Paja Jovanović 1859-2009*, 79.

The images of armed men, warfare and brutal and wild customs showed Balkan barbarities, and yet they have often been interpreted, even to this day, as images of the heroic and masculine Balkans.

The history of the appearance and reception of the paintings of the Balkans also show the points of understanding and misunderstanding between the European and Balkan public. The same images were interpreted differently, for the purpose of forming two disparate views on the Balkans.