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Brutality and Banditry: Towards the Orientalist Imagery of the Balkans During the 19th Century

Abstract: The Orientalistic image of the wild Balkans had developed since the early nineteenth century, and it reached its peak during the First Balkan War. Orientalism was not reserved solely for representing constructed images of women; it also included aspects of male behavior too. In the Orientalist representation of the Balkans, important spots were occupied by topoi such as brutality and banditry, which were visually represented by artists such as Eugène Delacroix, Jaroslav Čermak, Gottfried Sieben, and Paja Jovanović, as well as in numerous caricatures in German satirical magazines.

Keywords: Orientalism, Balkans, Balkan Wars, Paja Jovanović, Jaroslav Čermak

It was precisely during the nineteenth century – when numerous liberation movements, national conflicts, and inter-ethnic conflicts arose – that the geographical Balkan peninsula was designated and named "the Balkans" and became a territory occupied and encumbered with negative meaning in the eyes of European observers. Perception of the Balkans by European observers was complex and manifold. Maria Todorova pointed to the importance of Balkanism, as a special European view on the Balkans. However, in addition to Balkanism, European observers in the early modern

¹ Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009), 3–20.

era also regarded the Balkans and certain Balkan nations from different positions, such as those of exoticism, orientalism², or Christian solidarity³.



Jaroslav Čermak, The Return of Montenegrian Refugees, 1877.

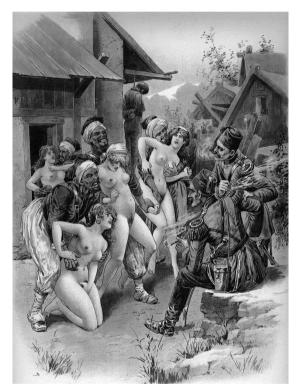
Orientalism is closely linked with cultural domination over the Other, political interests, and colonial conquests.⁴ Orientalistic perception represents one of the most powerful discourses on the Balkans as the Other. Finding and identifying the Other and Otherness is a characteristic of human societies from the earliest times. The image of the Other was created depending on different ideas, interests, aspirations, and policies. Different discourses attached different meanings to the Other and the Otherness and therefore, as the notion of the Other was created as a floating and migratory category, its meaning too is always in the process of constant transformation. The example of the Balkans and their Orientalistic reception corroborates that.

² Milica Bakić-Hayden, *Varijacije na temu "Balkan"*, (Beograd: Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju: "Filip Višnjić", 2006), 53–60; Tanja Zimmermann, *Der Balkan zwischen Ost und West: Mediale Bilder und kulturpolitischen Prägungen*, (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag 2014), 25–107.

³Irena Zarić, "U službi političkog argumenta: predstava balkanske žene u putopisu Adeline Poline Irbi i Džordžine Mjur Mekenzi", u: *Evropska slika balkanske žene*, uredio Đ. S. Kostić, Kragujevac 2009, 64–85.

⁴Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, (Vintage Books, 1979).

The Balkans were perceived as the Orient, the territory of the East and Islam within Europe, and interest for them grew during the nineteenth century. The history of pre-Orientalistic perception of the Balkans goes back as early as the 18th century, to the time of the Habsburg-Ottoman wars. The famous depiction of nations "Völkertafel", from Vienna's Österreichischen Museums für Volkskunde, certainly belongs there. It depicts the characters of different nations – but the type is shown together – for example, a Greek or a Turk, which demonstrates the characteristic stereotypification of the Balkan population, done through confusion and ignorance regarding different nations.⁵



Gottfried Sieben / Archibald Smith, "Balkangreul", 1909.

During the nineteenth century, when the era of wars begins, the image of the Balkans, the Orientalistic image of the Balkans, becomes stronger and stronger, and it has strong negative tones.⁶ The Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Her-

⁵ Stanzel K. Franz, *Europäer: Ein imagologischer Essay*, (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 1997).

⁶ Martina Baleva, *Bulgarien im Bild. Die Erfindung von Nationen auf dem Balkan in der Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts*, (Böhlau Verlag, 2012), 75–102.

zegovina in 1878 additionally contributed to a colonialistic and Orientalistic view of the Balkans.⁷ Certain political events, such as the assassination of King Aleksandar and Queen Draga Obrenović, also occupied an important place. The European public was scandalized by the act, which attracted considerable media attention, and as result the event was portrayed in numerous newspaper illustrations.⁸ The negative attitude towards the Balkans reached its peak at the time of the 1912–1913 Balkan Wars. That is when the extensive visual production which viewed events and nations in the Balkans from Orientalistic positions was created. This production was also part of extensive war propaganda.⁹



Der Balkankrieg in der Karikatur, Herausgeben von O. Kebler, Leipzig, 13.

The Orientalistic viewpoint on the Balkans was built via a series of topoi. These topoi were constructed not only as hegemonic forms of "knowledge" about the Other, but also as the opposites to perceptions of European bourgeois society, regarded as the ideal of modern civilization. The domination of certain topoi in the structure of the Orientalistic viewpoint significantly determined the character of the Other. The viewpoint on the Balkans used during the Balkan wars stressed out brutality and banditry most frequently. It is of great importance that the same topoi were used within

⁷Robin Okey. Taming Balkan Nationalism. The Habsburg 'Civilizing Mission' in Bosnia 1878–1914, (Oxford University Press 2007.)

⁸ Milan Ristović, *Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici. Balkan i Srbija u nemačkim satiričnim časopisima (1903–1918)*, (Beograd : Udruženje za društvenu istoriju, 2011), 18–19, 82–85.

⁹Ristović, Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici, 44–71.

the frameworks of national programs, in the processes of "nesting Orientalism"¹⁰, orientalization of others within the Balkans themselves, and sometimes also within the frameworks of self-Orientalism. Orientalistic perceptions of the Balkans occupied an important place within visual culture too. ¹¹ Orientalism was not reserved solely for representing constructed images of women; it also included aspects of male behavior too. ¹² Depictions of brutality and banditry in the Balkans are precisely also testimonies to the gender distribution of Orientalistic themes and the Orientalistic perception of the Balkans. Maria Todorova underlines that the Balkans are dominated by the male principle and that thus they are not perceived as the Orient, but as a particular European Otherness. ¹³ However, Orientalism is not reduced to constructs about women, as clearly demonstrated by numerous visual representations.

Brutality

The notion of brutality is closely linked with the European perception of the Balkans. In European societies, brutality has been recognized as inadequate and inhuman use of armed forces. As such, brutality is always associated with barbarity and primitivism. In European projections, brutality is one of the characteristics of Oriental societies, which is manifested not only in wars, but also the traditional processes of punishment. Although brutal acts were part of European history too, ¹⁴ the Orientalistic viewpoint overlooked that, and thus brutal physical punishment came to play an important part in the creation of the image of Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. ¹⁵

Brutality was also recognized as an integral part of Ottoman military operations, and there were also historical testimonies to its application in the Balkans. The Skull Tower, which was built by a Niš pasha from the severed heads of Serbian rebels in 1809, caught the attention of European travelers. French author Alphonse de Lamartine gives an account of the Skull Tower from 1833. He notes: "The skulls and visages of men, unfleshed and blanched by the rain and sun, and cemented with some sand

¹⁰ Bakić-Hayden, Varijacije na temu «Balkan», 53-71.

¹¹ Irena Ćirović, "Gender, War and Imagery of the Balkans", in: *Europe and the Balkans*. *Decades of 'Europeanization'?*, Zimmermann T. and Jakir A. (eds.), (Würzburg, 2015), 171–186; Nenad Makuljević, "Habsburg Orientalism: The Image of Bosnia and Herzegovina in the "Kronprinzenwerk"", *Zbornik za likovne umetnosti Matice Srpske*, 41, (2013), 71–84.

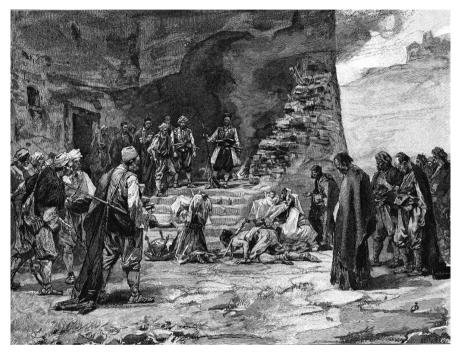
¹² Petra ten-Doesschate Chu, *Nineteenth-century European Art*, (third edition), (Prentice Hall, 2012), 234–235.

¹³ Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 13–14.

¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of Prison*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 3–69.

¹⁵Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of the Enlightenment*, (Stanford University Press, 1994), 57–58, 71–74.

and chalk, composed the triumphal arch which overshadowed me", characterizing the tower, as a "barbarian monument". The Skull Tower was a unique memorial of Ottoman brutality in the Balkans, which later prompted not only its descriptions, but also its visual representation, as was done by Felix Kanitz. ¹⁷



Paja Jovanović, Calming of blood (Umir krvi), Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild, Bosnien und Herzegovina, Wien 1901, 301.

The nineteenth century witnessed a series of uprisings and wars throughout the Balkan Peninsula. These events attracted public attention, but also the attention of illustrators and artists. The Greek uprising was strongly supported by the European public, and European artists reacted to the tragic events. Ottoman brutality became a painting subject, as in the painting by Delacroix *The Massacre at Chios*. ¹⁸ When a series of armed conflicts erupted in Bulgaria, Herzegovina, and Montenegro in the mid-nineteenth century, newspaper illustrators came to occupy an important place.

¹⁶ Alphonse de Lamartine, *Travels in the East including Journey in the Holy Land*, Vol. II, (Edinburgh, 1850), 159.

¹⁷Felix Kanitz, Serbien Das Königreich Serbien und das Serbenvolk, Band 2, (Leipzig, 1909), 181.

¹⁸ Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, French Images from the Greek War of Independence 1821–1830. Art and Politics under the Restoration, (New Haven and London, 1989), 15–37.

They reported to the European public scenes of villages being burned down and of atrocities against civilians.¹⁹



Paja Jovanović, Wounded Montenegrin, 1882.

During the second half of the 19th century, the Balkan events grabbed the attention of European painters. Brutal scenes were painted by Jaroslav Čermak, who was dedicated a lot of his painting time to events which took place on the territory of Herzegovina and Montenegro. What Čermak's paintings portrayed, with variations of Orientalistic depictions of slave women and eroticism²⁰, were scenes of war and suffering of civilians.²¹ Thus, in the painting *The Return of Montenegrin refugees* one can see a destroyed village, as well as several severed heads impaled on stakes.

The iconography of national painting programs in the Balkans also came to incorporate brutality. In Serbian painting, it is visible on the examples of Đura Jakšić, and Đorđe Krstić. Depicting a battle between Montenegrins and Turks, in the epic painting *The Uprising of Montenegrins*, Đura Jakšić includes a severed Turkish head, held by a woman, who is taking part in combat. ²² Krstić portrayed Ottoman brutality within the frameworks of national propaganda. His painting "Drowned woman", painted

¹⁹ Baleva, Bulgarien im Bild, 81–84.

²⁰ Ćirović, "Gender, War and Imagery of the Balkans", 171–186.

²¹ František Šistek, *Naša braća na jugu. Češke predstave o Crnoj Gori i Crnogorcima 1830–2006*, (Cetinje: Matica crnogorska, 2009), 43–58.

²² *Dura Jakšić*, priredili Nikola Kusovac, Miodrag Jovanović, Gradimir Petrović, (Beograd: Slovo ljubve, 1978), 158–159; Nenad Makuljević, *Umetnost i nacionalna ideja u XIX veku: sistem evropske i srpske vizuelne kulture u službi nacije*, (Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva, 2006), 232–233.

and exhibited in Munich in 1879,²³depicted the crimes in the Balkan region, and the suffering of a young woman with a child in flight from the Turks. Krstić depicted the brutality of the Ottoman army in the epic painting *The Fall of Stalać* as well.²⁴ Forming part of the war scene, a severed head of an Orthodox priest is included, carried by an Ottoman soldier. Ottoman brutality characterizes the Bulgarian national art as well. *The Batak Massacre*, painted by Antoni Piotrowski²⁵ brings a portrayal of a mass atrocity crime perpetrated against Bulgarian civilians by the Ottoman army.

Brutality in the Balkans, accompanied by rape, is also the topic of a famous series of twelve lithographic representations "Balkangreul", executed by Austrian artist Gottfried Sieben, under the pseudonym of Archibald Smith in 1909.²⁶ They depict scenes of rape perpetrated by the Ottoman army, Albanian warriors, and most probably komitadjis. Female bodies have been portrayed naked, with pronounced erotic construction, while the physiognomies of the rapists have pronounced evil characteristics.

One of the most brutal scenes is set in a church, where several girls are being raped in front of an Orthodox priest who is tied. The text of the prayer "Our Father", written in Slavic, is on the wall of the church. However, the text on the lithograph does not entirely correspond to the text of the prayer, which is clearly indicative of the artist's aspiration toward simulation and construction of the ambience of the Orthodox church. This series was created in the atmosphere of the Macedonian uprising, in 1902–1903, when news of crimes and rapes in the Balkans were being spread throughout European territory. The preface to the lithographs was authored by Herbert Stone, who underlined the fact that all Balkan nations – Serbs, Bulgarians, Turks, Albanians, and Greeks were ethnically mixed together, and that their common color was that of blood. Brutality and bloodlust of the Balkan nations and the inhabitans of the Balkan lands were highlighted in this way, while Turks were not singled out as the only rapists and villains, although they were portrayed most often in the lithographic series.²⁷ This series was reprinted in 1916 when it was used to depict Turkish crimes against the Armenians²⁸ which clearly demonstrates the possibilities of transposition of identical Orientalistic and stereotypical images to different contexts, since authenticity is not really of great significance there.

With the outbreak of the Balkan wars of 1912 and 1913, the European public was once again attracted by the events. The Balkan wars were characterized by their

²³ Nikola Kusovac, *Dorđe Krstić 1851–1907*. (Beograd: Narodni muzej 2001), 24.

²⁴ Makuljević, *Umetnost i nacionalna ideja u XIX veku*, 234.

²⁵ Baleva, Bulgarien im Bild, 171–174.

²⁶ İrvin Cemil Schick, "Christian Maidens, Turkish Ravishers: The Sexualization of National Conflict in the Late Ottoman Period", in *Women in the Ottoman Balkans: Gender, Culture and History*, Buturović A. and Schick I. Cemil (eds.), (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 291–293.

²⁷ Schick, "Christian Maidens, Turkish Ravishers", 293.

²⁸ Schick, "Christian Maidens, Turkish Ravishers", 293.

disregard for military rules, by massacres, and by maltreatment of the civilian population. That was also stressed out in the famous report of the Carnegie Endowment committee²⁹, whose degree of objectivity still causes controversy.

At the time of the Balkan wars, brutality was depicted as a constant element, especially in caricatures, but with an important difference compared to the earlier nineteenth century practice. Brutality, earlier deemed as being inherently Ottoman was now ascribed to the Balkan nations, as evidenced by caricatures published in Austrian and German magazines.³⁰



Paja Jovanović, The Cockfight, 1897.

The caricature published in "Der Balkankrieg in Karikatur" portrays an Orthodox priest with a cross and a censer, performing either the act of consecration or benediction, who is leading a group of armed warriors, two of which are carrying severed heads. Three of them are wearing Albanian-Greek folk costumes, with one of the caps being reminiscent of the Serbian šajkača hat. The fourth soldier is wearing a Bulgarian uniform. This caricature is designated "The Entrance of victorious Slavic bearers of culture into Turkey". Although the Balkan warriors have been dominantly

²⁹ Report of the International Commission to Inquire into the Causes and Conduct of the Balkan wars, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, (Washington D.C, 1914), 71–108.

³⁰ Ristović, Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici.

depicted in Greek-Albanian costumes, the stereotypization and orientalization of the Balkans had to do with anti-Slavic propaganda.³¹ An even more extreme depiction of brutality in caricature has been put out by the caricaturist Brandt in the caricature from the magazine Kladerdatsch published on April 13, 1913. An Orthodox priest is portrayed there, sitting on a machine gun, on whose barrel there is a cross; he is shooting a group of people. The accompanying text states that that is a scene from the Serbian-Montenegrin "Heilsarmee" – The Salvation Army.³²

Banditry

The Balkan wars and rebellions were depicted as acts of banditry. Banditry represented one of the Orientalistic topics, which pointed to non-existence of civilized laws, and a rule of gangs and bandits. Although the domain of crime and banditry knows no state or ethnic boundaries whatsoever, it was often associated with non-European territories. It was often believed that entire communities had banditlike and criminal aspirations, not only individuals, belonging to them. Banditry, closely linked with activities of hajduks, also passed into legend or some sort of mythical interpretation of space, such as the Balkans.

One of the most characteristic painters of banditry and robbery in the Balkans was Paja Jovanović. Paja Jovanović, painter of Serbian origin from the Habsburg Monarchy, was precisely an artist whose oeuvre had a dual nature. Jovanović received his education at the Viennese Academy, and under the influence of Professor – Orientalist – Carl Leopold Müller he began to paint the Oriental Balkans. His paintings were primarily intended for the European public, and they enjoyed economic success during the second half of the nineteenth century. Jovanović's paintings represent a visual testament to the Oriental Balkans, but, at the same time, they reached the status of national icons in Serbia. Jovanović was also engaged in an important Austro-Hungarian project *Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild* – "Kronprinzenwerk," initiated by Crown Prince Rudolf, within which he executed a series of Orientalist depictions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. 4

One of the most important topics in Paja Jovanović's oeuvre depictions of bandits, robbers or hajduks. In these paintings, Jovanović constructs a community of the Balkan types – Albanians, Greeks, Montenegrins, and their mythical life as outlaws. Special attention was devoted to depictions of Albanians. For the European

³¹ Ristović, Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici, 46–47.

³² Ristović, Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici, 46.

³³ Nenad Makuljević, "The Picture of the Balkans between Orientalism and Nationalism", in: *Europe and the Balkans. Decades of 'Europeanization'?*, Zimmermann T. and Jakir A. (eds.), (Würzburg, 2015), 109–117.

³⁴ Makuljević, "Habsburg Orientalism", 71–84.

population, Albanians represented an intriguing ethnic population in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Their costume, attitude, and overall appearance attracted the attention of their European contemporaries. Lord Byron had his portrait done wearing Albanian dress, and artists, such as Delacroix, portrayed them in visual art.³⁵



Paja Jovanović, Elopement, Die österreichisch-ungarische Monarchie in Wort und Bild, Bosnien und Herzegovina, Wien 1901, 357.

Jovanović developed a thematic repertoire from banditlike/hajduklike life in the Balkans, which included combat operations, entertainment in mountain hideouts, and illegal behavior. He painted a number of paintings which depicted Albanian figures as terrifying warriors in various situations, such as keeping watch, on a mountain with arms. In the painting *Calming of blood* (Umir krvi) Jovanović featured one of

³⁵Nina Maria Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, "Of Suliots, Arnauts, Albanians and Eugène Delacroix", *The Burlington Magazine*, vol. 125, no. 965 (1983), 486–491.

the most characteristic customs – vendetta (/blood feuds).³⁶ Several versions of this composition depict the act of reconciliation of the warring tribes. A woman holding a baby is depicted on one side, while an armed warrior is standing opposite her. The scene unfolds in a mountainous atmosphere, which a great number of Jovanović's paintings have in common. Although the custom of vendetta is characteristic of a part of the nineteenth-century Montenegrin and Albanian population, Jovanović included it in his Orientalistic construction of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well.³⁷

Jovanović painted the Orientalistic construction of hajduk life in the scene *Wounded Montenegrin*, too. It depicts a moment when the father of a gravely wounded young man arrives to see him. In the group of hajduks who are present one can recognize figures in different Balkan costumes (Montenegrin, Albanian-Greek, Balkan-cattle breeder). The figure that the wounded man is holding on to has a non-European physiognomy.

One of the popular Jovanović's subjects is also the depiction of *The Traitor*. He portrays the terrible moment when a traitor is discovered and accused. Regarding this particular topic, Jovanović executed a number of its versions,³⁸ but the central part comprises the act in which the person who is most probably the leader of the group is pointing a finger at the traitor. The event heralds a harsh punishment, and the attitudes of the participants and the whole ambience contribute to a feeling of tension.

The Albanian dancer is a composition which depicts a hajduk party at the centre of which is a dancing woman who is carrying a sword.³⁹The female figure with pronounced erotic elements – hair let down, pronounced curves – is dancing surrounded by a group of hajduks in some kind of a mountainous setting. The painting thus brings together a rustic setting, banditlike types, and an eroticized depiction of a woman.

One of the Jovanović's themes which portrayed illegal behavio, was abductions of women. It was precisely what Jovanović painted for "Kronprinzenwerk," as another custom from Bosnia and Herzegovina. 40 One can also group compositions such as *The Cockfight*, which is set in some tavern, with the orientalist topics which depict hajduklike-banditlike life. 41 Various Balkan types feature in the scene, including the figure of a female innkeeper – a prominent womanly figure with loose red hair.

The banditlike character of the Balkan nations was particularly stressed at the time of the First Balkan War. The battle with the Ottoman Empire – of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece, and Montenegro, was depicted as an act of banditry, and rulers Petar, Nikola, Ferdinand I, and George I as bandits. In *Wahre Jacob*, Serbian, Montenegrian

³⁶ Makuljević, "The Picture of the Balkans between Orientalism and Nationalism", 111.

³⁷ Makuljević, "Habsburg Orientalism", 79–80.

³⁸ Petar Petrović, *Paja Jovanović: sistemski katalog dela*, (Beograd: Narodni muzej, 2012), 17–18.

³⁹ Makuljević, "The Picture of the Balkans between Orientalism and Nationalism", 109.

⁴⁰ Makuljević, "Habsburg Orientalism", 80.

⁴¹ Makuljević, "The Picture of the Balkans between Orientalism and Nationalism", 111–112.

and Bulgarian rulers are depicted standing in front of the gates of Constantinople, getting ready for looting and bloodshed.⁴²

The Balkan robber (Balkanrauber) got his personified look too. A caricature from Kladerdatsch, published on June 28, 1914, the day of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, portrays a Balkan robber mugging a German. Numerous stereotypes about the appearance of the Balkan people are combined in the figure of the robber. A man of a large frame is depicted, with a thick moustache, armed, and wearing a certain combination of the Balkan costumes.⁴³

The Orientalistic image of the wild Balkans had developed since the early nine-teenth century, and it reached its peak during the First Balkan War. In its construction, important spots were occupied by topoi such as brutality and banditry, which were visually represented by artists such as Eugène Delacroix, Jaroslav Čermak, Gottfried Sieben, and Paja Jovanović, as well as in numerous caricatures in German satirical magazines.

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⁴² Ristović, Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici, 58.

⁴³ Ristović, Crni Petar i balkanski razbojnici, 80.

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Резиме

Др Ненад Макуљевић

Бруталност и разбојништво: креирање оријенталистичке слике Балкана у 19. веку

Током новог века креирана је оријенталистичка слика Балкана. Она је била изграђивана не само на основу реалних сазнања о овом простору, већ и на основу коришћења одређених топоса о Балкану као оријенталном Другом. У том процесу, бруталност и разбојништво постали су топоси који су дефинисали дивљи Балкан. Истовремено ови топоси постали су битан садржај визуелне продукције о Балкану.

Оријенталистичко приказивање Балкана може да се прати од 18. века, али је у периоду устанака и ратова против Османске империје дошло до његовог интензивирања и развоја. Догађаји на балканском простору инспирисали су бројне уметнике, попут Е. Делакрое, Ј. Чермака и П. Јовановића. Они су приказивали Балкан као простор на коме владају сурови обичаји и разбојништва. Слика бруталног и разбојничког Балкана доживела је свој врхунац у време Балканских ратова 1912–1913, када она постаје доминантни визуелни наратив у аустро-угарским и немачким илустрованим часописима.

Кључне речи: Оријентализам, Балкан, балкански ратови, Паја Јовановић, Јарослав Чермак.