

## Slavic Ethnogenesis and Great Power Diplomacy: Recurring Themes

Petar Milich  
Washington University, St. Louis

The past three decades of this century witnessed important paradigm shifts spanning a wide range of issues seminal to Byzantine studies. The urban continuity/discontinuity debate, for example, represents a prime example of ongoing reassessment in action. Although the continuity/discontinuity thesis continues to spark lively debate, it is instructive that the original framework of discussion, propounded decades ago, has undergone detailed nuancing.<sup>1</sup> Archaeology and numismatics clearly played an important role in changing the parameters of debate. Meanwhile, within *Slavistik* equally important paradigm shifts took place over the same timeframe. While it is true Byzantinists who double as Slavists are keenly aware of these trends,

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<sup>1</sup> A. Kazhdan and A. Cutler, "Continuity and Discontinuity in Byzantine History," *Byzantion* 52 (1982): 429–78. This work remains the standard overview of the cardinal positions on both sides of the intellectual divide, with the authors arguing for discontinuity. The exchange of broadsides over continuity/discontinuity actually began in the late 1950s and early 1960s, largely in response to G. Ostrogorsky's "Byzantine Cities in the Early Middle Ages," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 13 (1959): 47–66. Since the literature on this subject is vast, I will confine my remarks to a handful of recent contributions in English I regard as most germane. M. Rautman's "Archaeology and Byzantine Studies," *Byzantinische Forschungen* 15 (1990): 137–65, provides in-depth discussion of the intellectual currents suffusing Byzantine archaeology over the decades. C. Foss, "The Persians in Asia Minor and the End of Antiquity," *English Historical Review* 90 (1975): 721–47, took the debate to a new level with a broader evidential sampling. For a critique on the limitations of archaeological evidence, see J. C. Russell, "Transformations in Early Byzantine Urban Life: The Contribution and Limitations of Archaeological Evidence," in *The 17th International Byzantine Congress, Major Papers* (New Rochelle, 1986): 137–54.

J. F. Haldon's *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture* (Cambridge, 1990) posits the primacy of internal forces in the transformation of Late Antiquity. Most seminal is K. Randsborg's "Between Classical Antiquity and the Middle Ages: New Evidence of Economic Change," *Antiquity* 64 (1990): 122–27 (hereafter, Randsborg, "Antiquity"). The relevance of Randsborg's much-neglected arguments for *Byzantinistik* should not be underestimated. For a discussion of trends in the Balkans, see J.D. Howard-Johnson, "Urban Continuity in the Balkans in the Early Middle Ages," in *Ancient Bulgaria. Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Ancient History and Archaeology of Bulgaria, Part I*, ed. A. G. Poulter (Nottingham, 1981).

Byzantine scholarship outside this inner sanctum has yet to grasp its import and to assess its implications for a broad spectrum of topics, including the urban continuity/discontinuity thesis.<sup>2</sup>

Slavists have recently propounded fascinating theories that shed new light on seemingly insoluble problems including Slavic ethnogenesis or the equally vexing question over the nature and extent of the Slavic migrations and installations in the Balkans.<sup>3</sup> What are the implications of these paradigm shifts? For Byzantinists interested in acculturation mechanisms, the future looks bright indeed as new approaches to old problems are being elucidated. Yet there is one caveat. While researchers are poised to make the transition to a higher *niveaux*, the unfolding political drama in the Balkans tends to eclipse initiatives aimed at reconstructing the past based on those new methodologies, methodologies that do not lend themselves easily to partisan manipulation. The time has come for a serious discussion about the nature and extent of this phenomenon, for in an oblique way it is Byzantine studies as a whole that is under attack.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> H. Birnbaum, "The Slavic Settlements in the Balkans and the Eastern Alps," in *Byzantine Studies: Essays on the Slavic World and the Eleventh Century*, ed. Speros Vryonis, Jr. (New Rochelle, 1992) (hereafter cited as Birnbaum, "Settlements"). Birnbaum provides a detailed overview of recent linguistic scholarship on the Slavs. Much progress has been made in the reconstruction of Common Slavic. See, for example, H. Birnbaum and P. T. Merrill, *Recent Advances in the Reconstruction of Common Slavic* (Columbus, Ohio, 1985). See also P. Ivić, "Balkan Slavic Migrations in the Light of South Slavic Dialectology," in *Aspects of the Balkans: Continuity and Change*, ed. H. Birnbaum and S. Vryonis, Jr. (The Hague and Paris, 1972), 66–86 (hereafter cited as Ivić, "Migrations"). Cf. Birnbaum's earlier work, "The Original Homeland of the Slavs and the Problem of Early Slavic Linguistic Contacts," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 1 (1973): 407–21, written before the most recent paradigm shift occurred.

<sup>3</sup> O. Pritsak, "The Slavs and the Avars," *Settimane di Studio del Centro Italiano sull' alto Medioevo* 30 (1983): 353–432 (hereafter cited as Pritsak). Pritsak's study remains one of the more controversial theses advanced to date. An equally provocative thesis is H. Kunstmann's *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Besiedlung Nord-und Mitteleuropas mit Balkanslaven* (Munich, 1987). Significantly, Kunstmann has received the cautious endorsement of senior Slavists.

<sup>4</sup> S. Vryonis, "Recent Scholarship on the Continuity and Discontinuity of Culture: Classical Greeks, Byzantines, Modern Greeks," in *The "Past" in Medieval and Modern Greek Culture*, ed. S. Vryonis (Malibou, 1978), 236–56 (hereafter cited as Vryonis, "Scholarship"). Vryonis wrote this piece at a time when détente was in full swing and U.S.-Soviet relations were enjoying a pre-Reagan thaw. Thus, the milieu was ripe for sober analysis of partisan motivations vis-à-vis *Byzantinistik* during the height of the Cold War by a certain clique of Western scholars. See also the companion piece by W. Goldschmidt, "The Cultural View of History and the Historical View of Culture," in Vryonis, *Past*, 227–35, and A. L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn, *Culture, A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions* (Cambridge, Mass., 1952).

There is no shortage of literature these days dealing with the so-called Wars of Yugoslav secession. The output staggers the imagination. There is, however, a subtle yet consistent theme running through much of this literature that should give Byzantinists pause for concern simply because it resurrects old and unsavory themes such as original settlers/historical rights. This particular thread lies at the core of a spate of recent books on Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo.<sup>5</sup>

In this regard it is interesting to note that striking parallels exist here too between recent scholarly output on the Balkans and nineteenth-century debate on the Slavic *Landnahme*. Today it is fashionable to dismiss the early debates over the origins of the Slavs as representing hieroglyphs masking nineteenth-century political and cultural issues.<sup>6</sup> Yet in view of recent developments it appears future historians will condemn us for being prisoners of our own *Zeitgeist*.

This paper will explore the nexus between nationalism in nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholarship on Byzantium and recently elaborated paradigms regarding Slavic ethnogenesis. It will focus on scholars whose published works once again engender controversy. Our discussion begins with a precis of Jacob P. Fallmerayer's *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters*, the first edition of which was published in Stuttgart between 1830–36.<sup>7</sup> Fallmerayer exercised a profound influence on subsequent scholarship regarding Slavic migrations and installations in Greece. His first edition postulated the virtual extirpation of Greeks in the Balkan Peninsula at the hands of the Slavs. The descendants of Pericles had perished in the Slavonic deluge that followed in the wake of Maurice's fateful deposition in A.D. 602. Not a single drop of Greek, or for that matter Nordic, blood coursed

<sup>5</sup> N. Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History* (New York, 1994); Idem, *Kosovo: A Short History* (New York, 1998); R. D. Kaplan, *Balkan Ghost: A Journey Through History* (New York, 1993); M. A. Sells, *The Bridge Betrayed: Religion and Genocide in Bosnia* (Berkeley, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> R. Roessler, "Über den zeitpunkt der slavischen Ansiedlung an der unteren Donau," *Sitzungsberichte d. Kais. d. Wissenschaften, Phil-Hist. Klasse 73* (1873): 77–126. Together with Fallmerayer, Roessler was the modern architect of the *Landnahme* thesis. His work was a detailed refutation of P. J. Šafárik's classic peaceful infiltration theory, titled *Les Antiquités slaves* (Prague, 1836–37). For an important nineteenth-century analysis cut in the Von Rankean mold of "objective historiography," see K. Jireček's excellent and indispensable *Geschichte der Serben*, vol. 1 (Gotha, 1911), vol. 2, part 1 (Gotha, 1918). See also, idem, *Die Heerstraße von Belgrad nach Constantinopel und die Balkanpässe* (Prague, 1877).

<sup>7</sup> J. Fallmerayer, *Geschichte der Halbinsel Morea während des Mittelalters* (1830–36; reprint, Hildesheim, 1965). Fallmerayer's work represents his belated *responsa* to the political action of the Philhellenes, who had made inroads into the then emerging public opinion on the Continent. For a modern analogue from the 1950s see T. Spencer, *Fair Greece! Sad Relic. Literary Philhellenism from Shakespeare to Byron* (London, 1954).

through the veins of these interlopers. According to Fallmerayer, the Slavs abandoned their putative *Urheimat*, localized by various nineteenth- and twentieth-century scholars in the Odra, Vistula, or Teterev river basins. They subsequently made their descent upon the Balkan Peninsula, where in post-Modern parlance they committed ethnic cleansing writ large.

These Slavs were superficially Hellenized. This circumstance was accomplished through the missionary efforts of the Emperors and bureaucrats resident in Constantinople. Thus Fallmerayer was an early proponent of racial and political discontinuity. Significantly, as descendants of the Slavs, the modern Greeks would somehow be favorably disposed toward their kinsmen in Russia. This posed a dilemma for the Great Powers of the West, particularly the English. Preventing the newly liberated Greek State, as it was then constituted, from becoming a Russian client was of paramount concern to the Foreign Office because of Greece's strategic position in the Eastern Mediterranean basin. The West could ill afford to dither about and let the Russians acquire all that waterfront property.

It has been well established that Fallmerayer's thesis had everything to do with the exigencies of great power politics in the 1830s. Specifically, it was aimed at undercutting Philhellene propaganda on behalf of the Greek cause—a case eloquently laid out by Byron on the basis of repaying cultural debts.

Critical inquiry over the nature and extent of the Slavic *Landnahme* was not the intended purpose of Fallmerayer's work. Again, by arguing that the Greeks were Hellenized Slavs, Fallmerayer was making the case for Western intervention in the Balkans not because of some Philhellenic drivel over cultural debts that had to be repaid, but as a means of thwarting Russian expansion and control over the Straits.

Fallmerayer's thesis has an explicit twentieth-century analogue in the works of the distinguished Byzantinist, Romily Jenkins.<sup>8</sup> As S. Vryonis, Jr. has aptly demonstrated, Jenkins' works are suffused with rather unsavory

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<sup>8</sup> R. Jenkins, *Byzantium and Byzantinism. Lectures in Memory of Louise Taft Semple* (Cincinnati, 1963) (hereafter cited as Jenkins, "Byzantinism,"); idem, *Byzantium, The Imperial Centuries A.D. 610–1071* (New York, 1966). The core of Jenkin's political views and Fallmerayer's revival are tucked discreetly between the pages of these two works. G. Arnakis was the first to respond to Jenkin's assertions, see "Byzantium and Greece. A Review Article *a propos* of Romily Jenkins, Byzantium and Byzantinism," *Balkan Studies* 4 (1963): 379–400. Jenkin's views elicited a belated riposte from G. Veloudis, "Jacob Philipp Fallmerayer und die Entstehung des neugriechischen Historismus," *Südost-Forschungen* 29 (1970): 43–90. Cyrill Mango joined the fray subsequently when he weighed in to defend Jenkins with his "Byzantinism and Romantic Hellenism," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 28 (1965): 29–43. See also his necrology of Jenkins, "Romily James Heald Jenkins (1907–69)," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 23–24 (1969–70).

statements about the racial superiority of Nordic man over *homo Byzantinus*. Jenkins, who certainly knew his Greek well, engaged in the willful mistranslation of primary sources, such as the infamous sly Slavic faces caper from *De Thematibus*, in order to underscore a massive Slavic presence in the Peloponnesus.<sup>9</sup>

Jenkins subscribed to Fallmerayer's views regarding the Slavic origins of the Modern Greek race in a biological sense. His elaborate arguments make much more sense when set against the backdrop of the Cold War. Jenkins advocated Western policy aimed at keeping the Soviet Union from gaining a toehold on the Mediterranean and Aegean seas. In this regard, the parallels between Jenkins and Fallmerayer are quite manifest as both opposed further extension of Russian influence in the Balkans into Greece.

We also know that Jenkins viewed Byzantine autocracy as the progenitor of Soviet totalitarianism. Of course the Soviet Union is no more, yet it is interesting to note how many policy studies analysts inside the Beltway have extended the logic to encompass post-Soviet Russia. Russia is incapable of effecting the transition from totalitarianism to democracy in the same way that Byzantium failed to make the transition to a fully-fledged, Western-style feudalism, and ultimately, to modernity. Russia must be kept isolated and prevented from regaining former territories in the so-called "Near Abroad," much less the Balkans, which the U.S. now clearly regards as being within its political sphere of influence. Hence, Toynbee's fossil thesis seems to resonate well with the likes of Zbigniew Brzezinski or Sandy Berger.<sup>10</sup>

Curiously, whether consciously or unconsciously, Jenkins' static conception of Byzantine culture appears to have found fertile ground in the imagination and works of Samuel P. Huntington, who holds that certain cultures (i.e., among them those derived from static and immutable Byzantium) are not

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<sup>9</sup> Constantine Porphyrogenitos, *De thematibus*, ed. I. Bekker (Bonn, 1840). Modern edition by A. Petrusi (Vatican, 1952), 91. Jenkins chose to render the passage in question, *garasdoeides opsis esthlabomene*, as "sly Slavic faces," a deliberate mistranslation of the text in order to bolster the impression that the Slavic presence in the Peloponnesos was greater than it actually was. This is hardly oversight from a scholar whose command of Classical and Medieval Greek was impressive to say the least.

<sup>10</sup> J. Heilbrunn and M. Lind, "The Third American Empire," *New York Times*, 2 January 1996, late edition, section A, p. 15. Most seminal in the elucidation of Washington's new grand strategic policy that views the Balkans as the Western terminus of a broad political sphere of influence whose core represents the Caucasus and the Muslim world. See also, Mortimer Zuckerman, "The Big Game Gets Bigger. Russia Will Gain Wealth and Influence If It Controls Caspian Sea Oil," *U.S. News and World Report*, 10 May 1999 (<http://www.usnews.com/usnews/issue/990510/10edit.htm>), and Michael T. Klare, "The Clinton Doctrine," *The Nation Magazine*, 19 April 1998. "West Dragged into Reluctant Colonialism in Bosnia," *Reuters*, 19 August 1998.

assimilable into the matrix of Western Civilization. Such proponents seem to forget that Eastern and Western Europe derived their formal cultures from a single matrix, the Christian Roman Empire.<sup>11</sup>

Huntington's thesis cannot simply be dismissed as an aberration for, as is well known, Alexander Solzhenitsyn and individual senior pundits at the *New York Times* have for some time exchanged intellectual broadsides over the validity and place of *homo byzantinus*, and by extension, *slavia orthodoxa* within the cultural-historical scheme of things.<sup>12</sup>

The scholarship of Fallmerayer and Jenkins is suffused with political and racial overtones. The reason for this is that Jenkins derived many of these ideas from Arthur de Gobineau.<sup>13</sup> Considerable ink has been spilled by others on the rejection of these ideas and why this should be the case. It is not my intention to vilify or to recuse Fallmerayer and Jenkins. I merely wish to point out the irony of our present circumstances, for we have indeed come full circle—Arnold Toynbee must be smiling. Meanwhile, the real issues of any consequence, namely Slavic ethnogenesis, Slavic migrations and installations

<sup>11</sup> S. P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Foreign Affairs* 72 (Summer 1993): 22–49 (cited hereafter as Huntington, "Clash"). Huntington is Albert J. Weatherhead III Professor at Harvard University and a contemporary proponent of Jenkensian culture theory. This particular article contains the kernel of his views vis-à-vis the inassimilable *homo byzantinus* which he of course subsequently reworked into his controversial book, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York, 1996).

<sup>12</sup> A. I. Solzhenitsyn, "Solzhenitsyn Compares NATO, Hitler," *The Moscow Times*, 29 April 1999.

<sup>13</sup> A. de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. A. Collins, (New York, 1915). Vryonis is quite right when he states that the Comte de Gobineau's views on racial theory continue to exercise a profound influence on Western scholarship (Vryonis, "Scholarship," n. 38, p. 256). Little did he dream the cycle would repeat itself after the collapse of the U.S.S.R—proof positive that a resurgent Russia, not Communism (a Western intellectual construct after all) was in the end the principal threat to Western security. For instance, in "The Premature Partnership," *Foreign Affairs* 73 (March-April 1994): 72, Brzezinski states: "Russia can be either an empire or a democracy, but it cannot be both." Brzezinski then goes on to say that Russia is becoming another empire and its advance in the "near abroad" must be checked. In an article written three years later, Brzezinski minces no words as he advocates an American Drang nach Osten to the Caucasus whose goal is the isolation of Russia; see *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives* (New York, 1977). For iterations on the Brzezinski thesis see R. Holbrooke, "America, A European Power," *Foreign Affairs* 75, nos. 4–5 (March-April 1995): 38–51, and David Gompert, "How to Defeat Serbia," *Foreign Policy* 73 (July-August 1994): 30–42. Vryonis's identification of Jenkins's racial views with those of H. Guenther (*The Racial Elements of European History*; London, 1927) is most apt, only now we can add the names of S. Huntington, J. Kirkpatrick, and Z. Brzezinski, *inter alia*, to the list of rabid Byzantophobes. Cf. J. Barzun, *Race, A Study in Modern Superstition* (New York, 1937). See also C. Coon, *The Races of Europe* (New York, 1939) for incisive critiques of Gobineauian theory.

in the Balkans are in danger of being relegated to the background at a critical juncture. Detours of this sort will gain us no new insights.

Viewed from this perspective, Dimitri Obolensky's *Byzantine Commonwealth* and Robert Browning's *Byzantium and Bulgaria* represented important departures from the intellectual malaise implicit in past histories. Their approaches to culture broadened discussion by moving the methodological pegs beyond the confines of strictly political and biological issues. In so doing it was possible for Browning to argue for evolution in Byzantine culture, while Obolensky could press the case for a more holistic view of Byzantine culture.<sup>14</sup> Methodologically, Obolensky's emphasis on identifying acculturative mechanisms helped pave the way for subsequent studies by Vladislav Popović and Zhivka Vuzharova that pushed the envelop further.

Of course, the primary focus of Obolensky's study was the upper end of the settlement hierarchy, on institutions that translated Byzantine formal culture to the Slavs, meaning monastic scriptoria such as those in and around Preslav, on Mount Athos, or throughout Nemanjić Serbia.

Obolensky paid short shrift to the issue of cultural interaction during the Slavic migration period. He did so because he viewed these contacts as ephemeral.<sup>15</sup> It seems the depredations wrought by the Slavs between the sixth and seventh centuries were simply too extensive. The Balkans became a *tabula rasa*. His explanation was that Slavic social evolution produced autarkic and inchoate communities that simply did not possess the requisite political structures needed to maintain sustained interaction with a centralized state. In his view, during the Slavic migration period the Balkans were

... sinking under a deluge of savagery and extermination... No Clovis or Theoderic arose among the Slavs during the first two centuries of their sojourn in the Balkans to mold their scattered communities into a nation or state and to enable their barbarian culture to achieve a peaceful and profitable symbiosis with the Greco-Roman civilization of Byzantium.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>14</sup> R. Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria* (London, 1975). D. Obolensky, *Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500–1453* (London, 1971). It is interesting to note that Obolensky's *Commonwealth* has gone out of print, in addition to Thomas Emmert's *Serbian Golgotha: Kosovo, 1389, and Monumenta Serbo-Croatica*. If the attrition rate continues at this pace, university instructors will have little of substance in English to offer their students. For the moment, John V.A. Fine's two-volume survey of Medieval Balkan History is available as Marvin Kantor's *Medieval Slavic Lives*; again, for the moment.

<sup>15</sup> Obolensky, *Commonwealth*, 47 ff.

<sup>16</sup> *Idem*, 57.

Obolensky went on, of course, to posit the existence of a Byzantine Commonwealth, a concept no doubt inspired by the model of the British Commonwealth of nations. Obolensky's use of an explicitly modern political construct to describe a pre-modern phenomenon has rightly engendered some criticism. However, the principal objection lies in the issue of *mimesis*. To what degree was Symeon's Bulgaria or Stefan Dušan's Serbia a carbon-copy of Byzantium? Are we not dealing with two fundamentally disparate cultures, with a veneer of Byzantinization? Here Obolensky and Robert Browning part company even though on the question of the Slavic invasions and migrations there is consensus, for both invoke the *tabula-rasa* scenario.<sup>17</sup>

Many Slavists have recently questioned the validity of referring to sixth-century Slavs as socially aware of themselves as a distinct sociolinguistic community. One such approach is often dubbed the Altaic school. The doyen of this evolving approach is Omeljan Pritsak, who holds that the term *Slav* means "trained slave."<sup>18</sup> Thus the term *Slav* is not an ethnonym but a *terminus technicus* that Jordanes and Procopius clearly understood in their day and used with this explicit sense in mind. Its original meaning became garbled over the course of the next few centuries when the self-ascription Slav eventually assumed the meaning of an ethnonym, sometime between the final destruction of the Avar Khaganate by the Franks, and the dispatch of the Cyrillo-Methodian missions. According to Pritsak, the Slavs were the amphibious assault troops of their day, who with their single-straker *monoxyla* specialized in riverine operations and in guerilla warfare. These warriors underwent rigorous training in special camps run by Avars, and other groups belonging to the confederation. When viewed from Pritsak's perspective, Jordanes's enigmatic references to *vagina nationum* or *officina gentium* assume an explicit meaning.

All of the constructs just discussed represent iterations on the theme of elite dominance. Under an elite dominance regime, a small group of warrior horsemen, in this case Avars from the steppes, asserts political mastery over sedentary folk because they are highly stratified vis-à-vis their more egalitarian subjects. Moreover, they possess superior military technology, including some degree of *poliorketic* skills, and they use trained slaves as the shock troops of their day to complement their cavalry operations. During Bayan's campaigns of the 580s for instance, Avar cavalry operated chiefly in the

<sup>17</sup> R. Browning, *Byzantium and Bulgaria*. An eloquent proponent of evolution in Byzantine culture, Browning nonetheless postulates discontinuity (*tabula rasa*, his phrase) for the barbarian successor states of the Balkans. See *Medieval and Modern Greek* (London, 1969).

<sup>18</sup> Pritsak, "Slavs and Avars," 383 ff.

Danubian plain, while the Slavs under their authority exploited their military-ecological niche.

According to Pritsak, Slavic self-awareness was induced from above, by the more highly stratified Avars. Through Avar interventions, many segments of the Romanized and non-Romanized substratum of the Balkan Peninsula acquired social and linguistic cohesion in the military training camps. Interestingly, this approach accords rather well with recent findings on the linguistic origins of Common Slavic. The crystallization of Common Slavic did not occur until the sixth century after Christ. Moreover, the first cultural complexes attributable to the Slavs correspond to the fifth and sixth centuries. Clearly the late fifth and sixth centuries represent an important phase in the sociolinguistic development of the future Slavs.<sup>19</sup> However, this does not mean that the bearers of Korchak or Prague-like pottery, whose language and material culture had recently coalesced, viewed themselves as a broad sociolinguistic community that used the macro-ethnonym *Slav*.

One explanation for this is that linguistic groups are not always synonymous with social groups. The crystallization of Common Slavic and the subsequent cultural development of the Slavs may well be the result of convergence, not cultural isolation. Common Slavic developed over an extensive and fluid area that included various linguistic groups and overlapping, permeable cultural complexes much like a palimpsest. Its development took place after groups had settled, and not while they were on the move, for migrations tend to smooth out linguistic differences. Thus, the assumptions of a unitary Slavic homeland, a unitary Common Slavic idiom, an ethnogenesis that occurred millennia ago, and large-scale, long distance migration do not sustain scrutiny.

The recent rejection of nineteenth-century norms on the linguistic unity of Common Slavic represented an important step in establishing a new reconstruction. We now know that dialectal diversity among the speakers of Common Slavic was greater than previously thought. The error is attributable to nineteenth-century Slavists who supposed that Common Slavic developed along the same lines as the Romance languages, which in turn supposedly derived from a unified Latin, a view long since rejected by Latin scholars.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> H. Birnbaum, "Slavic Settlements." O.N. Trubachev, "Linguistics and Ethnogenesis of the Slavs: The Ancient Slavs as Evidenced by Etymology and Onomastics," *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 13, nos. 1–2 (1982–85): 203–56. H.G. Lunt, "Slavs, Common Slavic, and Old Church Slavonic," in *Litterae Slavicae Mediae Aevi* (Festschrift F.V. Mareš), ed., J. Reinhart (Munich, 1985), 185–204. Janković's latest.

<sup>20</sup> C. Renfrew, *Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins* (Cambridge, 1990), 67 ff.

Each of the elite dominance paradigms presupposes a substantial degree of population displacement. Even Obolensky, apropos Fallmerayer, invokes emotive language when he speaks of savagery and extermination. The sheer persistence of this outlook is attributable to the disproportionate weight historians once assigned to the extant literary sources. These sources certainly paint a bleak picture of devastation and human suffering. Nevertheless, while recognizing the importance of invasions, it is a mistake to make sweeping generalizations about wholesale population displacement in the Balkans that are based on the selective marshaling of those sources, for they were prone to exaggerate the scope of the Slavic depredations, sometimes for literary effect.

It should be remembered that those selfsame sources are fraught with concrete references to peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, they attest to the existence of many Slav communities that were independent of Avar control. For the Slavs to have effected a *Landnahme* in the Fallmerayerian sense, one must adduce evidence that they possessed the requisite level of social stratification.<sup>21</sup> Yet even a cursory glance at the funerary evidence published by Zhivka Vuzharova simply does not show this to be the case. The fact is that the funerary inventory from Bulgaria, Sarata Monteoru, and Devinska Nova Ves points to communities that were too egalitarian to have effected a Balkanwide *Landnahme* through elite dominance/constrained population displacement.<sup>22</sup> Only in Pannonia is there evidence of well-endowed burials that demonstrate social ranking of any consequence. And since most of these examples are inhumation burials, their identification as Slavic remains highly problematic.<sup>23</sup>

The Slavization of the Balkans was a much more complex process than the rapid conquest and the subsequent extirpation of indigenous peoples once asserted by many scholars. While the Sklavanoi of the written sources were a formidable fighting machine when they operated within their niche, and while they constrained and displaced local populations in some places, they could not have pulled off what Fallmerayer, Jenkins, and even Obolensky ascribed to them. Hence, some other heretofore unidentified dynamic must have played an important role in the Slavization of the Balkans in addition to these

<sup>21</sup> Priskos of Panion attests to the presence of Romans living freely among the Huns. R. C. Blockley, *The Fragmentary Classicising Historians of the Later Roman Empire* (Liverpool, 1981–83), 1:48–70, 113–23; 2:222–4000; *Fragmenta*, ed. F. Bornmann (Florence, 1979).

<sup>22</sup> I. Nestor, “La necropole slave d’époque ancienne de Sarata Monteorou,” *Dacia*, N.S. 1 (1957), 1–5; J. Eisner, *Devínska Nová Ves* (Bratislava, 1952); Zh. Vuzharova, *Slaviani i prabulgari po dannii na nekropolite ot 6-11 v. na teritoriata na Bulgariia* (Sophia, 1976).

<sup>23</sup> G. László, *Études archeologiques sur l’histoire de la société des Avars* (Budapest, 1955), 57–82.

elite dominance scenarios. For the first time, it is possible to identify the actual mechanisms underlying this cultural transformation. The elucidation of this issue, however, lies beyond the scope of this particular discussion. Suffice it to say that Slavization can take place virtually *in situ* in ways that obliquely cohere with P. Šarfarik's peaceful settlement hypothesis.<sup>24</sup>

If we view the distinction between Slavs and autochthonous populations as an artificial one, as Vladislav Popović is wont to do, then we are confronted with the tantalizing prospect that the zenith of Byzantine-Slavic cultural interaction may well stand at the beginning.<sup>25</sup> For the subsequent periods of Medieval Balkan history it is well known that Byzantine culture exerted a profound influence at the level of high or formal culture. Political elites and ecclesiastics harnessed this culture in order to project their power in Byzantine terms. Political theory gave them the means to combat centrifugal forces within their realms. The net effect of this diffusion on the Slavic peasantry was in all likelihood negligible. By contrast, during the Slavic migration phase, ordinary households were the principal foci of acculturation. Households may have played an important role in determining which elements of Byzantine material culture would be appropriated.<sup>26</sup> There must have been other foci above the level of the household—but these nodes have yet to be fully identified. Arguably, after the conversion of the Bulgarians and Serbs to Christianity in the ninth century, monastic scriptoria supplanted the household as filters of Byzantine culture.

The matrix of Slavic culture consisted of diverse socio-linguistic groups that had to meld over time. A new chapter in Slavic history was ushered into existence when these groups saw themselves as a distinct social community. This is what German and Russian Slavists mean when they use the term *Selbstbewusstsein, etnicheskoe samosoznanie*.<sup>27</sup>

Few Western Medievalists today would assert that the invasions of the Angles, Saxons, and Jutes resulted in the extirpation of the indigenous populations of Britain. Even the dreaded Vikings are getting good press these days

<sup>24</sup> J. Henning, *Südosteuropa zwischen Antike und Mittelalter: Archäologische Beiträge zur Landwirtschaft des 1. Jahrtausends u. Z* (Berlin, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> V. Popović, "Aux origines de la slavisation des premières sklavines Macédoiennes vers la fin du VI<sup>e</sup> siècle," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres* (1980), 230–57.

<sup>26</sup> M. Constantinu, "Elemente Romano-Byzantine in Muntentia in sec. VI–VII E.N.," *Studii si Cercetari de istorie veche* 17 (1966): 665–78; A. Petre, "Quelques données archéologiques concernant la continuité de la culture Romano-byzantine dans la Scythie Minuere aux VI<sup>e</sup> et VII<sup>e</sup> siècles de notre ère," *Dacia*, N.S. (1963): 317–57.

<sup>27</sup> A.S. Gerd and G.S. Lebed, *Slaviane. Etnogenez i etnicheskaia istoriia. Mezhuvozkii sbornik* (Leningrad, 1989), 175.

as archaeologists in England now speak of settlements where peaceful symbiosis was the norm. This in turn has produced a nativistic reaction among scholars who wish to restore the Vikings to their rightful place in history. In view of these changes in Western Medieval scholarship, it makes little sense for us to uphold paradigms about the Slavs that are rooted in nineteenth century norms of ethnicity, culture, and language. Equally important: if we are not more circumspect about the intrusion of on-going political questions into our research, we may well find ourselves at the dawn of the twenty-first century back to square one by recasting Fallmerayer in a new guise. A return to the original settlers/historic rights approach is an intellectual dead end. Its proponents will never get beyond the *déjà connu*.