

Preface

The area of *Balkan Studies* has been too long neglected in recent history. The dispersed microcommunities who have an interest in the topic coexist more than they collaborate. The main body of literature is made of works written in foreign *exotic* languages such as French, German, Greek, Bulgarian, Albanian, Macedonian, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, and Turkish. Edited books take usually precedence over journal papers. Although the author has drawn much from such a rich corpus of local knowledge, English is far from being the most preferred language of scholars who deal with the Balkans, especially in the area of geography. It would have been useless to mention a long list of references that are unintelligible to most people—and even unreadable (four different alphabets).

Three other corpus of documents widely used for preparing and building the GIS, remote sensing, and statistical databases will be provided with references only in specific cases (facsimile reproduction, sources of figures or tables). Details will not be included because of the obvious overload that it would entail:

- Topographic or historical maps (about 400 documents consulted and/or used);
- Statistical books edited by the many Balkan statistical offices over two centuries (dozens of references);
- The body of literature relevant to the scope of geodesy, advanced GIS studies, and remote sensing techniques does not appear either (numerous references, mostly journal articles).

Such choices are aimed at helping readers not to get lost within a broad range of documents that have no straightforward incidence on the analysis. Concentrating on the essential is a priority. The Balkan issue is fairly complicated and confusing. It makes no sense to add fuel to the fire.

Accordingly, the general principle may be that nonessential information should be curtailed. This is made all the more easy as geography has long been the poor relation of research initiatives in the Balkan area. Historical and geopolitical approaches are more popular, although deprived of any spatial dimension. Within this limited corpus, the border issue is even more randomly addressed. This together with the primary goal of producing an extensive body of original information has

led to limiting the conventional review of literature. I express my sincere regrets to all respected authors whose works are missing. After more than twenty years of applied research, this “background” bibliographic apparatus remains of the utmost importance.



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