

Biljana SIKIMIĆ, Petko HRISTOV (eds), *Kurban in the Balkans*, Institute for Balkan Studies, Belgrade, 2007, 302 p.

The local identities retrieve in the Balkan rural areas through the cultural adaptation and mixing the traditions of the populations who are living here. The ritual of *Kurban* is an outcome of this lasting process. The ritual places in the core of the religious beliefs and practice of the Muslims. Nevertheless, the other ethnic and religious groups in the Balkans share it, being even an identity marker of the thorough area, as the volume's editors put it. The book collects the articles of 16 scholars from Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Russia, Serbia, and Hungary.

The kurban is a blood sacrifice ritual. Either a lamb or a ram are sacrificed and eaten in common in the frame of a domestic group, an extended family, or a neighborhood. The commensality gives the main feature of the ritual. It conveys a communal religiosity wide spread all over the Balkans. It has notice too, that the ritual is older than the Ottoman conquest of the Balkans.

The symbiosis of different traditions is a thesis examined by Andrey N. Sobolev in his article. There are recorded the various names of the sacrifice at the Saint George's day and outlined their different functions; while the ritual has at the Aroumanians and Greeks an economic function only, at the other peoples its performance is intended for commemoration and spiritual healing.

The next three articles focus on the kurban amongst the Muslim Roma populations in Eastern Thrace (Turkey), authors Elena Marushiakova and Veselyn Popov, in South Serbia, article by Sanja Zlatanović, and at the refugees in Serbia, by Svetlana Ćirković. In the first case, the modernization of the ritual has led, the authors argue, to the withering away of the religious commitment. It has been started simultaneously its contamination with secular features, including here the replacement of the former name of the ritual *Hidrellez*, with the new one, *Kakava*. In the other case, an opposite process unfolds; the kurban is enriched in order to strengthen the ethnic identity of the local population. The topic of fourth article is the kurban of the Roma refugees from Kosovo and Metohia. The author emphasizes the commemoration of the civil wars' victims as the core meaning of their kurban.

The following three articles end up the first part of the volume. The authors, Katalin Kovalcsik, Annemarie Sorescu-Marincović and Biljana Sikimić, approach the kurban's performance amongst the *Rudari/Koritari/Bayashi* groups in Romania (Oltenia area) and Serbia. The mid-way modernization of rural societies in these countries leads to the change of the kurban ritual. Kovalcsik pays attention to the impact of the Pentecostal churches' wide spreading, whereas Sorescu-Marincović shows that the kurban is performed even in the circumstances of the work migration (Bayash population in Paris).

In the second half of the volume two articles have as topics the functions of the kurban in Albania. Gerda Dalipaj analyses the links between social structure and kurban performance in the region of Shtati, in middle Albania. In the other article, Rigels Halili makes an overview of the various types of the kurban.

The next four articles approach the observing of the kurban in Bulgaria. There are analyzed some aspects of ritual renewal as well as its hybridization alongside similar feasts as *sabor* (in two articles authored by Petko Hristov, one of them together with Tsvetana Manova). Margarita Karamihova deals in her article with the kurban amongst Pomak population in Rodopi, while Rachko Popov tackles the matter of kurban performance in the days of the summer saints (Saint Elijah).

In the last two articles, the authors approach the kurban ritual in Macedonia (Vladimir Bocev) and a special type of blood sacrifice ritual, *dušno*, performed in the multicultural area of Omoljica, south Vojvodina (Smiljana Djordjević).

The volume Biljana Sikimić and Petko Hristov have been edited elucidates a topic unevenly touched so far. Although it refers to a single ritual, it covers a great geographical area, whereas the approach is multilayered. It is also important, that the volume is an outcome of the cooperation of the native researchers. This is a proof that academic cooperation in the Balkans begins to be fruitful and promising.