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# Representations of Place: Albania

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This paper attempts to examine ways in which Albania and its changing fortunes have been represented, largely from a UK perspective, through images derived from academic sources and popular media. It examines three sets of image components of the Balkans, and explores these as building blocks for representations of Albania. It is suggested that of these components – the Classical, the Oriental, and the elemental – it is largely the latter which has been the focus of Western media images of post-communist Albania. It is concluded that a dual emphasis of internal stability and European commitment is required to assist Albania in moving away from such images towards being viewed as a legitimate member of the common European home.

KEY WORDS: Albania, Balkans, image, construction, post-communism.

THIS PAPER ATTEMPTS TO examine ways in which Albania and its changing fortunes have been represented, largely from a UK perspective, through images derived from academic sources and popular media. It examines three sets of image components of the Balkans, and explores these as building blocks for representations of Albania. This is done within the context of Albania's persisting differentiating characteristics – its part-Islamic heritage, low level of economic development and half-century of isolation from much of the rest of Europe. It is in this sense of the 'Other', contrasted with developed, integrating, 'Christian' Europe, which has characterized the way Albania has been represented.

As a small enigmatic entity in south-eastern Europe, Albania has, in turn, engaged, perplexed and astounded its visitors (Table I). Straddling important trade routes and cultural fault lines, Albanian lands were incorporated into the western edge of the Islamic world through the conquests of the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century. The Strait of Otranto between Albania and Italy then became a cultural, political and technological divide for over 400 years (Ackerman, 1938).

In 1913, when the major powers drew blunt pencil lines over a map of the Balkans in the wake of Turkey's disintegration, they left as many Albanians outside the new country's borders as within them, bequeathing a Kosovo 'problem' to subsequent generations. For many in the West, however, Albania's size, language, location and politics have condemned the country to geographical and perceptual peripherality. The need to overcome a vacuum of understanding –

filled in recent years with essentially negative images – remains a major task in Albania's attempts to join the common European home.

## *The British and Albania*

Earlier images of Albania were at least partly informed in the UK by the 'colourful cast' of Britons which the country attracted. Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* was derived partly from the poet's experiences in southern Albanian lands. Edward Lear, on his travels later in the nineteenth century, produced some superb watercolour paintings of the area, and was 'inspired' from an experience on the waterfront at Vlora to write his pelican 'nonsense' poem (Lear, 1851; Hyman, 1988). Aubrey Herbert, the original for John Buchan's romantic hero in *Greenmantle*, was twice offered the Albanian throne in the second decade of this century, although Hilaire Belloc warned against acceptance (Fitzherbert, 1983). Edith Durham (1909) indomitably travelled into the country's uplands to seek, and later report on, obscure customs. In the 1930s, the botanist and ethnographer Margaret Hasluck, doubled as a British spy. The actor Anthony Quayle was flown into Albania as part of the wartime SOE operations which embraced Julian Amery (1948), David Smiley (1984, 1985), and Reginald Hibbert (1991, 1993). Indeed, continuing almost to this day (Glenny, 1997), British images of the country have been coloured by the not necessarily helpful differences of opinion held by key SOE figures involved in Albanian wartime operations (Davies, 1952).

In the opposite direction, King Zog and his family sought refuge in Britain after fleeing from the Italian

TABLE I

*Recorded perceptions of Albania*

'The banks were obstacles and the rivers very high'	Julius Caesar, 48BC
'Much like a great Zoological Gardens than any country I ever saw'	Edward Lear, 1849 (Hyman, 1988: 118)
'Land of the living past'	Durham, 1909, Chapter 1 title
'It is curious that it has needed a world drenched in blood to bring peace to these parts'	Herbert, 1918 (Fitzherbert, 1983: 211)
'As beautiful as fairyland ... as unknown as the heart of Africa'	Scriven, 1919: 75
'Nobody anywhere understands my wonderful Albanians!'	Lane, 1922: 12
'An extraordinary country'	Lyall, 1930: 167
'A living museum of everything medieval'	Ackerman, 1938: 262
'A peculiar coast, an interior mainly mountainous but traversed by large rivers some of which afford possible routes – these are the essential features of the country'	Newbigin, 1949: 378
'If only the coastal plain were more spacious'	Hasluck, 1954: 6
'A country steeped in the tribal memories of endless war .... a tough place in which to feel at home ... The food was almost indescribably terrible'	James Cameron, 1963 (Cameron, 1980: 255; 65)
'The deep-red land of Marxist mystery'	Gardiner, 1976: 9
'Stern and wild'	Newby, 1985: 108
'A collage of fantasies'	Glenny, 1990: 143
'The sort of place that makes surrealists weep for joy'	Barber, 1993
'Lawless'	Gumbel, 1997c

invasion of 1939. As a counterpoint, and indeed misleading mask, to contemporary and subsequent Albanian conditions, the deposed 'royal family' – Ahmet Zogu had declared himself King Zog I of the Albanians in 1928 – and their circle pursued a society lifestyle based around the suites of very fashionable London hotels. Being close to home, such images of 'Albania' became well known to British wartime and post-war generations and tended to infuse subsequent constructions of the country with an air of unreality.

Then there was Kim Philby (Philby, 1968; Bethell, 1984) who, as a Soviet agent, 'singlehandedly scuppered some probably futile attempts to overthrow the Albanian regime just after the Second World War' (Winniffrith, 1992: 10). UK-Albanian relations were severed, or at least were not restored, following the 1946 Corfu Straits incident whereby two British destroyers were mined off the Albanian coast with considerable loss of life (Gardiner, 1966). The International Court of Justice awarded £840 000 damages to Britain. Albania disclaimed responsibility – it was generally assumed that Yugoslavia, on Albania's behalf, placed the mines – and ignored the ruling. In response, Britain, along with other wartime Allies, refused to return Albanian gold looted by the Nazis which had been held for safe keeping in the Bank of England. Diplomatic relations with both the UK and the USA were not restored until 1991, and this vacuum encouraged the Cold War view of Albania as the most sinister and least-known 'Iron Curtain' country. This image was portrayed in the film version of *The Ipcress File* (1965) when Michael Caine, as Harry Palmer, finding himself in severely austere circumstances, was led to believe that he had been abducted to Albania (although no reference to the country appears in Len Deighton's [1962] original text).

*Not knowing Albania*

Irreversible ruptures in relations with its political and economic patrons – Yugoslavia in 1948, the Soviet Union in 1961, and China in 1978 – only reinforced Albania's enigmatic mien and unyielding position. The country's historic vulnerability to predatory neighbours nurtured a political leadership which encouraged a xenophobic fear of external aggression as a means of forging internal cohesion. In the vacuum of increasing isolation, economic and technological inertia from the mid- to late-1970s cemented Europe's least-developed country into a long-term spiral of social and financial impoverishment (Hall, 1994).

During much of the communist period, limited access to the country meant that received images, ideas and information were vulnerable to bias of presentation and interpretation, witting or otherwise, to a greater extent than was the case for most other East European societies. First-hand reports of the country derived from brief and manipulated visits were published in a wide range of outlets (e.g. Harrington, 1967; Abulafia, 1976; Hall and Howlett, 1976; Jenkins, 1976). Yet, while usually worthy in their intentions, these were often a poor and misleading substitute for measured analysis based upon intimate knowledge and reflective understanding.

From the 1970s, however, the English language literature on Albania began to expand, and several categories of text can be recognized through which images of the country were conveyed:

- 1 research monographs on specific aspects of Albanian development: the work of the geographer Örjan Sjöberg (e.g. 1991) is particularly important here;
- 2 scholarly appraisals of political and economic

- development within an historical perspective, often by Albanian-Americans, amongst whom the work of Stavro Skendi (e.g. 1956) and Peter Prifti (e.g. 1978) is notable;
- 3 edited volumes on the politics and economy of Eastern Europe – often underpinned by a Cold War convergence theory ethos – in which a chapter on Albania was usually, but not always, an element (e.g. Birch, 1972);
  - 4 appraisals of Albania's development path which appeared to rely wholly on official Albanian sources and interpretations (e.g. Ash, 1974);
  - 5 occasional, often witty, but usually derogatory extended reportage (e.g. Cameron, 1980); and
  - 6 tourist guide books, which tended to seek new ways of saying much the same thing because their authors' Albanian experiences had been subject to the same prescriptions and constraints (e.g. Dawson and Dawson, 1989; Emerson, 1990).

The explicitly geographical material published on Albania, as reflected in the pages of the discipline's major English-language journals, presents a far from fulsome picture, and is sufficiently short to be able to include here in reference form (Barnes, 1918; Woods, 1918; Scriven, 1919; Nowack, 1921; Giles, 1930; Almagia, 1932; Newman, 1936; Ackerman, 1938; Durham, 1941; Zavalani, 1944; Borchert, 1975; Hall, 1975, 1984, 1990, 1995, 1996; Biber, 1980; Carter, 1986; Sjöberg, 1992; Rugg, 1994). On matters of Albanian-inhabited lands, perhaps one should also include Wilkinson's (1955) work on Kosovo. Additionally, there is English-language material published in foreign language geography journals (e.g. Carter, 1973). The literature on Albania by European geographers in their own language is more extensive (e.g. Blanc, 1961, 1963; Sivignon, 1970, 1975, 1983, 1987). Of course geographers have also published in outlets other than geographical journals, but the poor representation of Albania in English-language journals suggests a neglect which has not been helpful for the UK's (or the USA's) contribution to assisting Albania's post-communist problems.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and BBC Summary of World Broadcasts monitoring service provided considerable political and economic information: from the former, interpreted in a way one might expect from an organization at one time funded by the CIA; and from the latter, raw broadcasts and news reports were transcribed verbatim without comment, even when they were patently nonsense. From the 1980s, Eastern Europe Newsletter also regularly reported on political and economic developments. Popular media interest was minimal, not least because:

- 1 most countries' correspondents were not permitted to enter the country, at least not as media representatives; and

- 2 Albanian news – via the Albania Telegraph Agency (ATA) bulletins, Radio Tirana or the party daily newspaper *Zëri i popullit* – lacked obvious appeal for Western audiences.

Indeed, Radio Tirana may have been many people's only direct experience of matters Albanian as for several years the station's medium-wave broadcasts shared virtually the same frequency as, and tended to interfere with, evening transmissions on BBC Radio Four. The station's eight note call-sign is probably even now embedded deeply in the subconscious of many British (and other European) radio listeners.

While not similarly accessible to outside audiences, Albanian language source material has been extensive. The best Albanian geography, for example, appeared in the series *Studime Gjeografike*, published by the Academy of Sciences in Tirana from 1985, with short abstracts of each paper in French. Broadening the foreign appeal, in the mid-1970s, a range of publications began appearing in French translation, including a number of booklets on national heritage, such as Roman mosaics (Anamali and Adhami, 1974). Later, sometimes in English translation, 'coffee table' volumes appeared, featuring, for example, the museum cities of Berat (Strazimiri, 1987) (Plate I) and Gjirokastër (Riza, 1978). Other cultural publications, including archaeological journals (e.g. *Monumentet*) tended to be only in Albanian, with, at best, short abstracts in French. Albanian efforts at tourism information and promotion were not notable. A pocket-size tourist guide book was published in the late 1960s (Albturist, 1969), but was never updated. The familiar communist world foreign language magazines which could be received on subscription – one large format with many photographs (*New Albania*) and the other composed of longer articles of a more ideological nature (*Albania Today*) – extolled contemporary Albania in a predictable, if sometimes colourful way.

### *(Re-?) Constructing Albania*

The belief that our knowledge of the world ought to be looked at in terms of a process of construction was popularized by Berger and Luckmann (1967), although it dates back to at least Emile Durkheim. Said's (1978) contentious evaluation of the way in which 'The Orient' became constructed in Western perceptions emphasized the largely unconscious and unrecognized process by which Western European writers brought together an intricate blend of fact and prejudice, which was to be sustained by the political ambitions of Western statesmen (Allcock, 1991: 174). Said's study of the mutual construction of peoples, has a contextual pertinence for Albania in relation to the country's position on the western edge of the Islamic world, and as part of a (sub-?) region, the Balkans, which has been subject in recent history to largely pejorative constructions in the West.

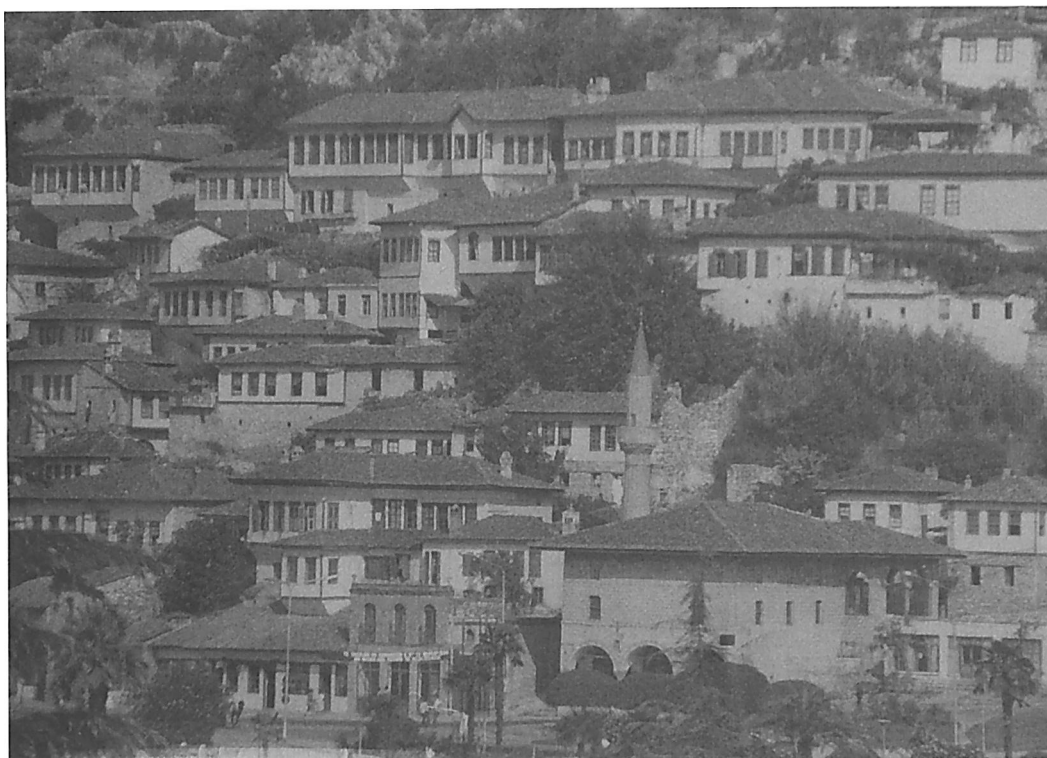


PLATE I *Eighteenth and nineteenth-century houses and a mosque at the foot of Berat citadel*

Dictionary definitions of 'balkanise' tend to emphasize the division of territory into small warring states. Diversity and conflict, fractionalization and opposition represent both how the peoples of the peninsula have come to be perceived, and indeed how many perceive themselves. Within this context, Allcock (1991) has identified three clusters of ideas as being central to the historical image of this south-eastern corner of Europe (see also Carter, 1977; Todorova, 1994; Carter *et al.*, 1995; Hall and Danta, 1996). These three clusters of ideas will be considered in turn and their contribution to the construction of Albania briefly examined.

*1 The Balkan peoples as heir to the ancient civilizations of the Classical World* Todorova (1994) suggests that when nineteenth-century Western writers travelled to the cradles of Western civilization they were disappointed to find that Balkan peoples were not upholding the 'classical' cultural traits which they had hoped to encounter. She suggests that this was a contributory factor to the pejorative connotation which 'Balkan' came to represent. Yet other writers have identified the persistence of material culture and ideas from Classical times, such that

The task of constructing the region to a western European readership was shouldered in large measure by historians of art and architecture.

Allcock, 1991: 182

Although a matter of some contemporary debate, in their reflections on the origins of the Albanians, the influential writers Edith Durham (1909) and Rose Wilder Lane (1922) supported the Albanians' self-perception of their antiquity as a people. Certainly, as a key area for trade, agriculture and minerals in Classical times, Albanian lands generated much material culture which is today represented in Greek, Roman and later Byzantine archaeological wealth. Excavated and researched by Italians and Austrians in the inter-war period, Albanian Classical heritage began to take its place as an element of national identity to be projected to the outside world in the 1970s (e.g. Anamali and Adhami, 1974). In the later 1980s, day visitors from Corfu, who soon made up half of all Albania's foreign tourists in numerical terms, were taken to the substantial Butrint (Buthrotum) site, which contains Greek, Roman, Byzantine, Venetian, Ottoman and (claimed) Illyrian elements. Declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in the 1990s, this very important complex, close to the Greek border (see Fig. 1), was

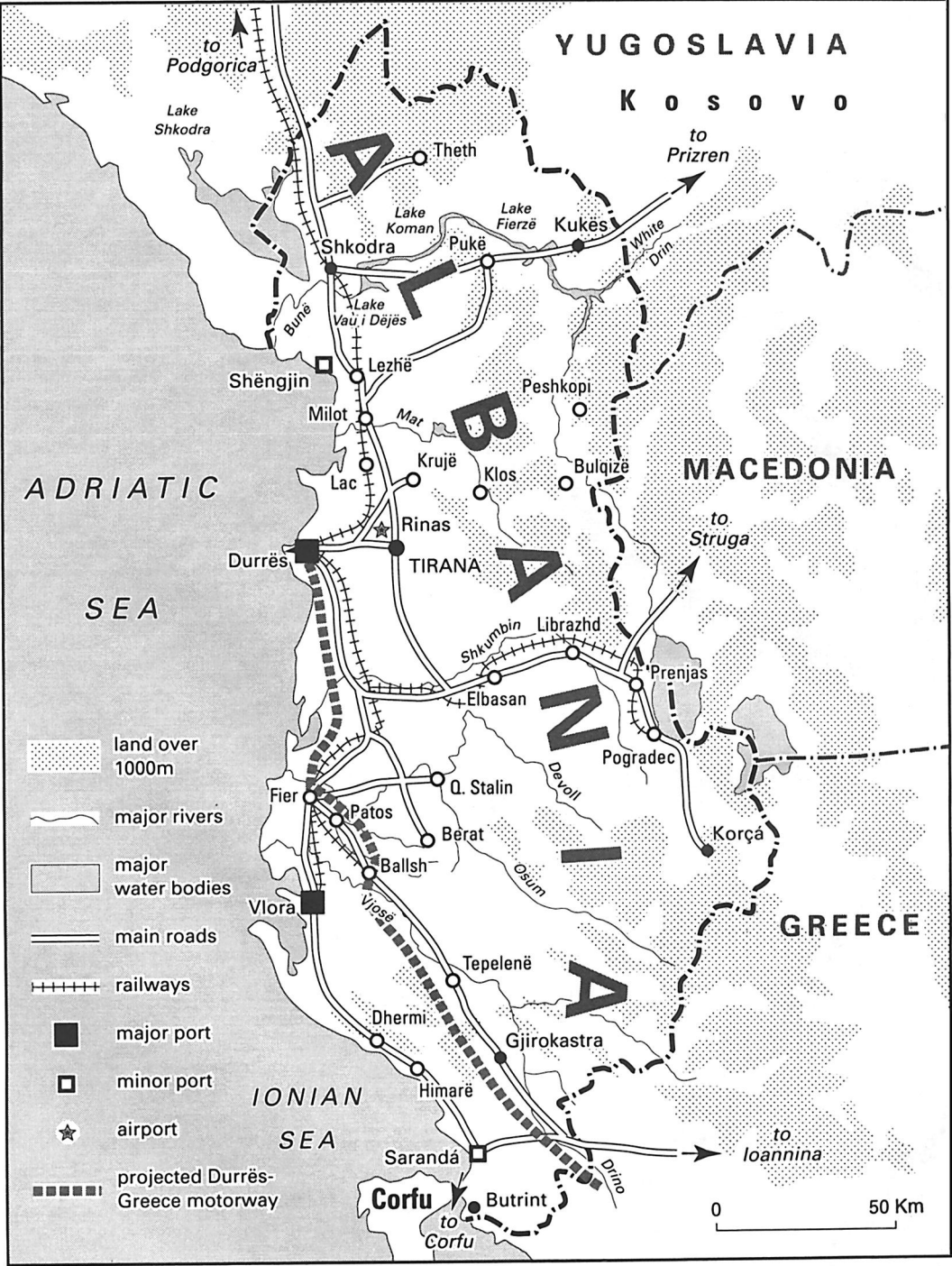


Fig.1. Location map

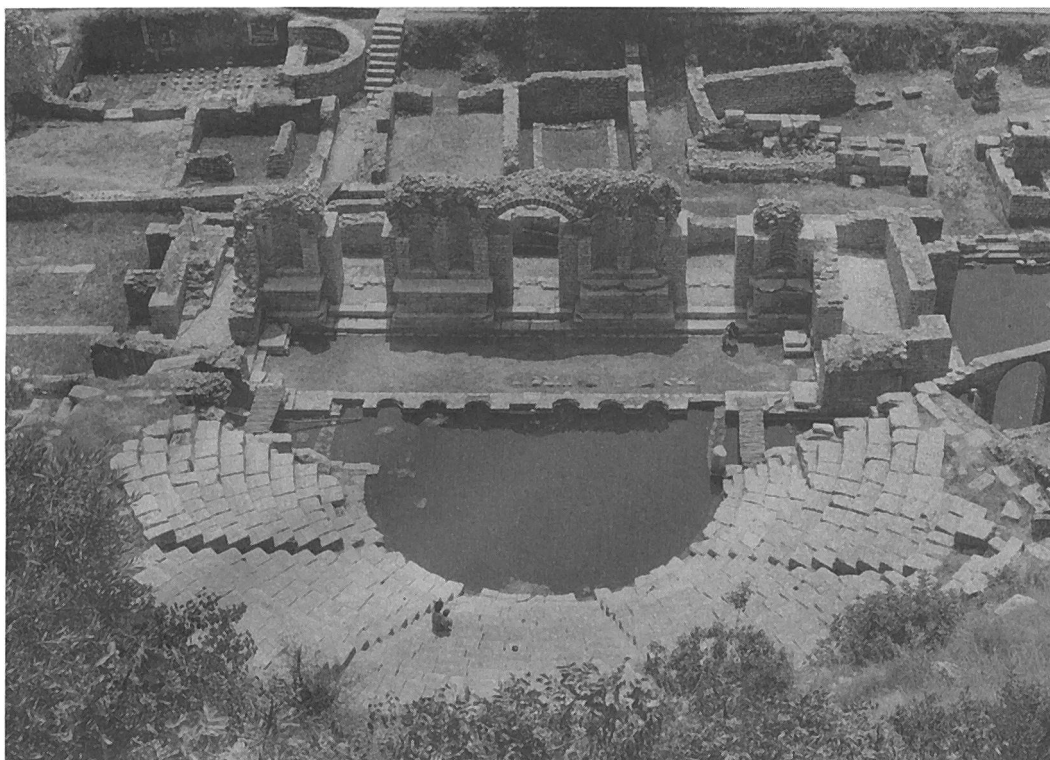


PLATE II *The amphitheatre at Butrint*

subjected to looting and vandalism in 1997. Although many of the best pieces had been taken to Tirana in 1991 for 'safe keeping', some archaeological material was stolen from the museum and pumps to reduce salt water levels in the amphitheatre (Plate II) were removed (Fairweather, 1997). Nonetheless, Albanian Classical heritage is again being projected as an integral component of the country's (re-)construction. For example, since 1995, the Butrint Foundation, a coalition of Lords Rothschild and Sainsbury, the British School at Rome and the Archaeological Institute in Tirana, has been examining ways of both overcoming decades of neglect and managing sustainable tourism at the site (Marshall, 1995).

*2 Marginal to 'the Orient'* The Turkish regional presence for over 400 years underlies this perception. A nineteenth-century view of the Balkans as being characterized by growing, yet potentially dangerous permeability, situated on the decaying fringes of the Orient, was superimposed upon perceptions of an enforced backwardness which precluded access to the agrarian and industrial revolutions of Western and Central Europe. Yet, a large number of Albanians benefited from being able to rise to positions within the Ottoman Empire which would have been unattainable within a

small state. As conversion to the religion of the Turkish rulers was a prerequisite for success within the Empire, many Catholic and Orthodox Albanians pragmatically embraced Islam, although increasingly, forced conversions were undertaken.

The subsequent image of Albania and Albanians as Islamic has been manipulated by less-friendly 'Christian' neighbours, as in Serb attempts to justify actions against 'fundamentalism' in Kosovo, although many Albanians there are in fact Roman Catholic. Religion was subordinated to interests of nationalism during the period of national revival in the late nineteenth century and in the subsequent establishment of an Albanian state. But the perception that religion symbolized foreign (Italian, Greek and Turkish) predation was used to justify the communists' stance of state atheism (1967–1991) (Plate III) in order to better develop a unifying 'Albanianness' (Trix, 1994; Liolin, 1997). Since 1991, Turkey and a number of Gulf states have provided development assistance. But this has raised questions both within and outside the country concerning the course of Albania's development path. Alongside EU, World Bank and other 'Western' support, loans have been secured from the Islamic Development Bank, and significant levels of Middle Eastern support, particularly in the cultural sphere,

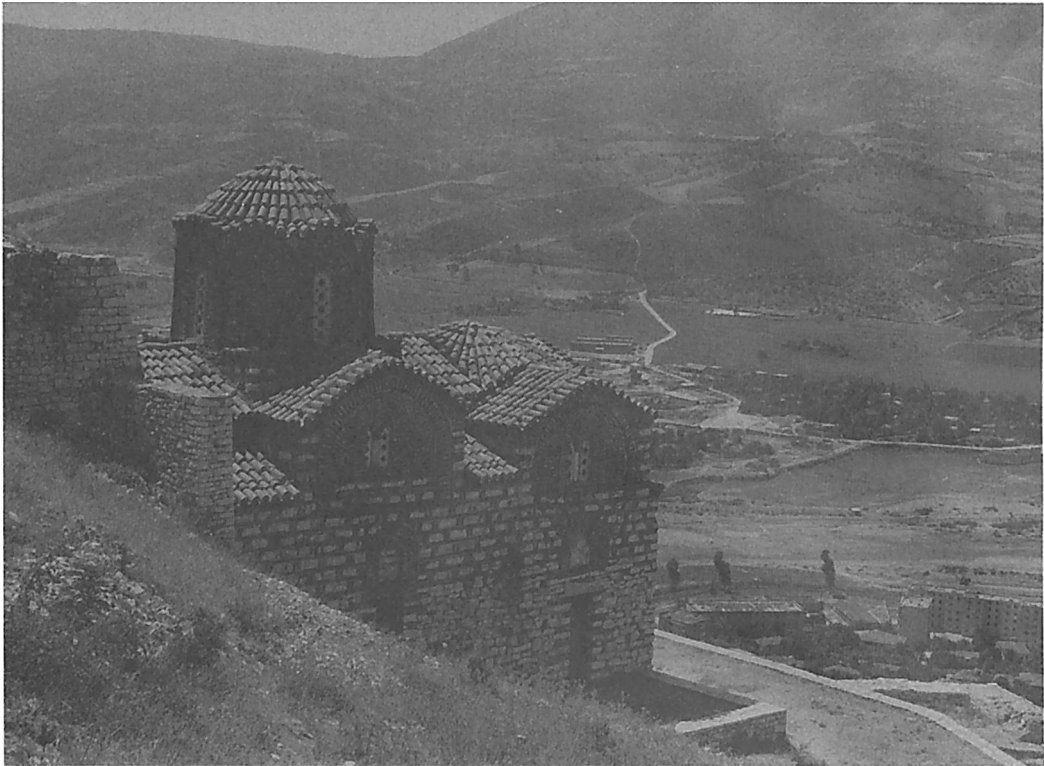


PLATE III *Orthodox church on the edge of Berat citadel: used as a warehouse since the 1960s*

have been viewed by some Albanians as a potential impediment to the country's acceptance by Western supranational institutions. Perhaps Albania can exploit receipt of both Western and Eastern sources of support by claiming to be a bridge between cultures. Or are the Oriental and Occidental incompatible in a country that wishes to see itself firmly embedded within European institutions and to be perceived as an acceptable member of the common European home?

*3 As the home of folk cultures: the (noble?) savage* The preoccupation with primitiveness appeared frequently in Edith Durham's Albanian writing. This included the role of bird symbolism: eagle associations with Albania being considerable. 'Savagery' is seen as one component of a more generally 'elemental' quality of human life, and certainly, this 'folk'/'savage' element has tended to be the focus of images of Albania transmitted by Western media in their portrayal of post-communist events.

The combination of lowest living standards and levels of economic development in Europe, and a rugged natural environment, has provided the perfect backdrop within which to emphasize Albania's 'elemental' rural population (Plate IV). Communist measures contained the rural population in order to minimize

unplanned rural to urban migration (Sjöberg, 1994) (Plate V). As a consequence, at the end of the socialist period, Albania's population geography was unique in Europe, in that:

- 1 two-thirds of the total population lived in rural areas;
- 2 the rural population was still growing in absolute terms; and
- 3 most urban growth was derived from natural increase rather than from in-migration.

But, rural infrastructure was poor (Republic of Albania, 1996): water quality posed problems for a number of rural areas (Grazhdani *et al.*, 1996), many villages were only accessible by foot or mule, and provision of rural telephone lines was just seven per thousand population (EIU, 1996: 66). Add to these infrastructural questions a prolonged and anarchic land redistribution process, and the recipe for substantial rural to urban, and upland to lowland migration (Hall, 1996) was in place. Thus, when the apparatus of state socialism began to be dismantled in 1991 one major and immediate impact of exposure to global processes was Albanians' realization of the impoverishment and inadequacies of their country in compari-



PLATE IV *An elemental image from the central plains*

son to its neighbours. This in its turn acted as the stimulus for many to attempt to leave the country. Between 1990 and 1993 some 400 000 people – about ten per cent of Albania's total population, and 15 per cent of the country's labour force – succeeded in doing just that (IMF, 1994). Some Albanians at least acted the 'savage' in commandeering ships or destroying state property in a frenzy of violent reaction to half a century of repression. Western media images of hundreds of 'ant-like' people clinging to every conceivable piece of superstructure of a refugee ship limping into Italian waters are enduring, and close-up shots of desperate, wild-eyed Albanians conveyed across the world's media a sense of the elemental savage.

The Western media's construction of the 'new' Albania reinforced the elemental image whereby the country is portrayed as the antithesis of Europeaness as conceptualized through the European Union: anarchic, brutal, Islamic and a source of illegal economic migrants. From a position of being able to broadcast virtually nothing about Albania until 1990, Western television first tapped into Albanian broadcasts to watch the toppling of Enver Hoxha's statues, and then began to send production teams to penetrate the country's interior 'wildernesses'. Of the first two pro-

grammes to be broadcast in Britain as a result of this, *Prisoners of Burrell*, transmitted in BBC 1's Everyman series (19 May 1991), proclaimed itself to be 'the first full length film from Albania for 40 years'. It dwelt on the fate of the communists' political prisoners, including priests, who had been held in one of the regime's most notorious incarceration centres, and thereby emphasized the 'savagery' of the previous political regime. ITV's *The Albanians of Rrogam*, first broadcast in the Disappearing World series (31 July 1991), raised more interesting questions by focusing on the apparent confusion of post-communist rural land distribution processes and rural emigration pressures at a very local level, in a remote hamlet in the mountainous north-east of the country. It drew out several layers of tension and potential conflict, not least that between the film crew and local leaders. The interpreter and consultant for the programme, Berit Backer (1991), was a Norwegian social anthropologist who had been researching Albanians' rural social life both in Kosovo and Albania since the early 1970s. A beautifully reflexive moment in the programme arises when, attempting to pursue their everyday lives under already difficult circumstances, one villager turns to another and shouts 'they're filming tribes of the world



PLATE V *Collective hitch-hiking in rural areas has been an essential ingredient of rural mobility. This is a lorry drivers' rest area near Gjirokastër*

– Peter act in a cultured way'. Berit Backer was later murdered in northern Albania.

Questions of restituting private land and property confiscated by the communists posed problems for all of the former socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe in the early 1990s (Kozminski, 1997), but rarely have such processes been accompanied by the level of both migration and destruction that was experienced in Albania (Tarifa, 1995). The pent-up frustrations resulting from decades of repressive restrictions on mobility saw 350 000 spontaneous migrants, particularly from the country's remote north-eastern districts, moving south in search of better land and/or access to major urban areas in just three or four years: more than 3000 homes were erected illegally on the outskirts of Tirana alone, and spontaneous movement to fertile areas further hampered the redistribution of agrarian land and compromised tourism development with almost 3000 spontaneous dwellings put up at Durrës Beach, hitherto the country's major tourism centre (Anon, 1996). Coupled to Europe's still fastest growing population (Schmidt, 1995: 12), unemployment and other social problems have been exacerbated by spontaneous settlement development in lowland areas, including a

cholera outbreak in 1994 and incidence of polio two years later (Anon, 1997).

The images of Albanians as hapless, if colourful, 'folk' were perpetuated with the country's second round of post-communist crises in 1996–8. Much domestic investment had been channelled into nine pyramid 'investment' schemes which collapsed at the end of 1996 and during the first months of 1997 (Done, 1997; EIU, 1997). The very existence of, and popular support for, these schemes, and their aftermath, well encapsulate and symbolize the fragility of Albania's 'folk' civil society. An estimated 70 per cent of all Albanian families had been willing to submit their savings to such schemes for returns of up to 50 per cent per month. Such savings had come from several sources:

- many families received their flats or houses virtually for free following the privatization of state housing in 1992. This distortion of the perceived value of housing led many to sell their easily-gained homes in order to acquire investment cash for the pyramid schemes. The pyramid failures rendered many homeless, placing greater strains on welfare provision and exacerbating the growth

of apparently rootless sub-cultures within the country;

- émigré remittances, which had become a vital source of income and consumer goods for many Albanian families during the 1990s;
- money accumulated in the south of the country, from both legal means and from such activities as smuggling and money laundering, which was rarely committed to formal banks. This was well positioned to be absorbed by the pyramids, and its loss stimulated cash-deprived criminal elements to resort to further, heightened criminality.

The subsequent renewed social, economic and political instability revealed a vacuum in the processes and framework for sustaining civil society: the role of organized crime was strengthened and partly as a result, alternative social networks, including the resurgence of clan-based loyalties in the north of the country, emerged (Jolis, 1996; Konviser, 1997). As a consequence, formal financial aid programmes to the country were suspended, and a vicious circle of instability, lack of investment and a lack of confidence in the future was perpetuated. The way this was conveyed by the Western media suggested that a more elemental language was employed by correspondents when

reporting on Albania than elsewhere, as reflected, for example, in *The Independent* newspaper's headlines for Andrew Gumbel's reportage (Table II). The imagery of 'uncivilised, un-European' behaviour, just as in 1991, was reinforced with dramatic photographic imagery: in this case of gun-toting teenagers, young children smoking cigarettes and bemused, gnarled old men. The meaning and context of Albanian 'savagery' may have changed over time, but its representation continues, albeit tempered by a sympathetic view taken of the plight of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo.

### *Conclusions*

This paper has attempted to examine the way in which Albania and its changing fortunes have been represented, largely from a UK perspective, through constructions derived from academic papers and books, travelogues and popular media images. It has suggested that within a Balkan framework, three sets of building blocks of image formation can be identified: a Classical heritage, which, although in the Albania case is contested, is nonetheless represented within the country by important material resources which have high scientific and touristic potential; the Oriental heritage, and the legacy of Islam which has posed questions for Albania's role within Europe and



PLATE VI 1980s socialist construction in central Tirana with the National History Museum depicting the then official representation of Albanianess

TABLE II

*Albania Gumbelled: headlines from pieces on Albania by Andrew Gumbel appearing in The Independent newspaper during 1997*

Date	Title	Gumbel reference
14 February	'The gangster regime we fund'	1997e
11 March	'Young guns fan the flames of revolt'	1997g
15 May	'Berisha tries to pull a fast one over poll'	1997d
31 May	'Albania heads back to chaos'	1997a
28 June	'Albania simmers on brink of poll violence'	1997b
2 December	'Albania's export boom in vice and drugs'	1997c

which has been exploited by the country's less friendly 'Christian' neighbours; and an elemental 'folk' dimension which, while tending to change over time, has been in the forefront of the post-communist images of the country conveyed by the world's media, acting as an essentially negative portrayal of Albania and Albanians.

To begin to move away from the imposition of such pejorative representation, the integration of Albania within a relatively stable and diversified pan-European framework would appear vital. However, a necessary pre-requisite for accepting Albania as a member of the common European home is the establishment of

conditions for domestic stability and the democratic rule of law. While the Albanian authorities need to address the fundamental questions of establishing a civil society that can be embraced within the common European home, we in the West can assist that process, not only through technical assistance, training programmes and further injections of appropriately targeted capital, but also in sustaining more positive conceptions of Albania and the Albanian people. However, falling into the trap of perpetuating a condescending 'folk' image of happy 'natural' farmers and peasants (Plate IV) will benefit neither Albania nor the rest of Europe.

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