

Book Project, Harvard University
"REPRESENTATIONS OF THE 'OTHER/S' IN THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD AND
THEIR IMPACT ON THE REGION"

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THE MEDITERRANEAN CHRONOTOPOS
AND ITS DIFFERENTIA SPECIFICA

In the light of imagology and its interdisciplinary and comparative methodology, the examining of the Mediterranean chronotopos is one of the several perspectives in the interpretation of the Mediterranean past, present and future, as well as of the Mediterranean trans-historical matrix, of the possible metaphysics and primordial ontological existence of the term Mediterranean.¹ The imagological examination represents only a part of the Mediterraneology, which is a wider interdisciplinary area in formation, with a subject of interest in the Mediterranean historical, civilizational and cultural tradition.² We attempt to render the name of this complex comparison-oriented discipline without ignoring the already existent development of scientific and research projects, studies and acknowledged institutes of interpretation and actualization of the Mediterranean as 'space and history' (Fernand Braudel, *L'Espace et l'histoire*, 1985), as 'peoples and heritage' (Braudel, *La Méditerranée*, 1985), as a type of 'breviar' (Predrag Matvejevic, 1990), as a 'cultural sphere' (Blaze Koneski, 1980), as a geo-poetical cultural context and tradition (MASA Bulletin, 1999), as a narrative and metafiction in development, as myth and history, as factographic

¹ Imagology is defined as a sub-discipline, interdisciplinary culturological complex, especially convenient for defining literary images of the Other (man, people, culture, space, time), and in a wider range, for applying comparative methodology in different realms of science and culture.

² Rephrasing N.A. Miskin's term "Roman historical tradition" differentiated from Roman history, where the prior leans on immediate historical resources and artworks, while the later

material and construction of the imaginary, as a cultural memory in shape of oral and textual practice.

In such theoretical, imagological and hermeneutical context, it seems more appropriate to speak of a Mediterranean chronotopos (chronos-and-topos), than of a region, a geo-politically recognizable space or of a cultural and traditional complex. Applied in an essay which makes an overall attempt to be a hermeneutic contribution to the perception of the Mediterranean, the term of chronotopos unifies several aspects of the amorphous Mediterranean phenomenon. It simultaneously affirms a number of visions and methodological Mediterranean perspective': mythic-poetic, historiographic, comparative (inter-textual), rhetorical, semiotical, geneological and culturological, which accords the interdisciplinary character of the imagology. Chronotopos is a synthetic category applicable in interpretation of the historical modifications of a particular historical, mythic and literary phenomenon (genre), as well in its modelling and classification. Mikhail Bakhtin defines the chronotopos (time-space) as a category rendered from the domain of the exact sciences (physics), as 'an essential interconnection of temporal and spatial relations, artistically inbuilt in literature' (1989, 194), and thus makes it valid for examining poetical, aesthetical and literary-theoretical problems (artifacts, genres, characters, literary models and conventions). Nowadays the term of chronotopos can be applied also in the domain of culturology, its theory, methodology and interpretation (*Culturology*, 1997). The imagological syntax of the Mediterranean chronotopos, in whose epicenter lies the idea of the so-called Mare Nostrum,³ and all that which gravitates toward this topos (its geology, roads, merchantilism, ship building, sailing, adventurism, the flora and the fauna, the climate, the landscapes, the olives,

uses indirect sources as well.

³ For more on Mediterranean terminology see P. Matvejevic, 1990: *The Great Sea*, messogaios, talassa, pontos, Middle Earth Sea, Inner Sea, White Sea, Green Sea, Hind Sea, Great Water, Mare Magnum, "See of Neighbourhood"...

the fish, the sea fruits, the sea monsters, the 'divine' sea salt praised in Homer's *Iliad*, the veranda, the serenade, the birth of the civilization and its symptoms - writing and money, maps, the building of the City, democracy, the agoras, the fair or the carnival, the theatre, the conquest of the world, vanished and dead peoples and languages, the archetype of light and Sun, lunar 'pre-history' and its symbols, the nostalgia for 'sea exit' and for the 'view of the sea'), articulates and constitutes itself in the constellation of continuous re-semantization and conflictuous semiosis. The multi-layered, problematic and paradoxical construction of the Mediterranean world/universe looms through these models of constitution of the Mediterranean chronotopos, models which alone, in the end, generate different types of chronotopoi, either deployed through history, or set parallelly or antithetically in the same period, and thus create basis for historical and theoretical (logical, philosophical, aesthetical) typology of the Mediterranean chronotopos. Therefore, the Mediterranean chronotopos may be specified and interpreted partially in differentiated variants: a sea chronotopos, an island chronotopos, a light-house chronotopos, a chronotopos of a sail-boat/galley/ship, a chronotopos of sheepfold, a chronotopos of a town, a chronotopos of a library, a chronotopos of a Zigurath, a chronotopos of an agora. Perceived historically, the Mediterranean chronotopos is incoherent, its semiosis hypersensitive and fluid, its references dispersed over a wide and heterogeneous plane, which makes it difficult to decipher some eternal, suprahistorical identity of the Mediterranean defined via its constitutive differentia specifica.

The Mediterranean geographical term includes various ethnical, religious and cultural communities in various ages: therefore, the Mediterranean is not a civilizational entity with evident, easily separable and dominant specifics, stable and common archetypal structures, ontological and ahistorical principles, but also includes numerous internal differences and antinomies. The Mediterranean identity has a Proteic character; it is marked by historical

transformations and is full of disputable areas, tendencies toward isolation and self-alienation... The identity of the Mediterranean can be characterized rather as schismatic than coherent and self-conscious. The identity of the Mediterranean is in process of articulation and re-encoding, especially when major interventions of historical prominence take place. That which can be delimited as a *loccus communi* of the Mediterranean chronotopos includes a series of cultural and civilizational meta-theses and inversions, rather than some idealized and linear transfer of cultural traditions. The mere recollection of the diversity of names for the Mediterranean sea in different ages and languages signifies the polyglossy, multifocal and polyvalent image of the Mediterranean chronotopos, and through it - of the World.

The description and the interpretation of the Mediterranean leads to the realization that, historically, the projection of the Mediterranean does not evolve in direction of establishing a dominant, re-evaluating Mediterraneo-centrism, but in direction of emphasizing the structure and the role of the racial, religious, linguistic and cultural Mediterranean polycentrism. From historical perspective, the Mediterranean has always been composed of several significant and heterogeneous sub-regions and imperial constellations, which point out to the real differences and the tendency toward disintegration of the Mediterranean area, to the difficulties in constituting a coherent Mediterranean cultural system. Steady processes of integration, disintegration and reintegration of the great Empires (Antique, Medieval, Modern Ages) take place: - the fall of Antique Macedonia, which is a paradigm of integration of (a part of) the Mediterranean with the Near, Middle and Far East states, i.e. with the North African states; - the division of the Roman Empire in Eastern and Western (the Orthodox Byzant against the Latin Catholic Rome⁴); - the fall of the Ottoman Empire in the beginning of the 20 c.; the formation of the patriarchate in Constantinopolis and on the Island of Atos

⁴ In the year 395 the schism of the Great Roman Empire takes place, between the Western (Roman, Latin-European context) and the Eastern (Constantinopolis or Byzantion). After the fall of Byzant in 1453, the Ottoman Empire was founded (Istanbul, Stambol).

(Agios Oros), versus Vatican; the establishment of ascetism, (teosophy of) isihasm, and the underground cave-churches of the Orthodox tradition; - formation of new states upon national, religious, and linguistic principle; - revision of state borders; - shifts of centers of power; - barbaric, nomadic, Arab, Slavic and Turkish invasions, the Crussades; - administration of Christianity to heathens, administration of Islam to Christians, assimilation, exodus, diasporas; - dissolution of the image of the Mediterranean in two parts, This and The Other Mediterranean (Braudel); - Slavic, Balkan and Oriental fragmentalization, versus integration of Western Europe; - differentiation of letters (pictographic, hieroglyphic, wedge-shaped, linear A and B, syllabic, the alphabet); - ethical evaluation of the coastal people and the inlanders/Balkan people, with elements of discrimination.

The Mediterranean chronotopos signifies, except a geographical, also a supranational and suprareligious phenomenon, a mobile, changeable assemblage of civilizational heterogeny, polyglossy, racial, multinational and religious identities, with (sometimes discrete, sometimes apparent) tendency toward intermittent multiple hybridizations: - the formation of the 'Asian' aesthetical model (Asianism, a Hellenistic type of manirism, as Gustav Rene Hock suggests!) of the Hellenistic culture and the Alexandrianism in the period of ascent of Antique Macedonia; - orientalization of the Spanish culture; - administration of the Islam to the Slavic population on the Balkan peninsula; - hybridization of the French nation with the ethnical implements of the ex-colonies Algeria and Tunisia; - administration of Slavic culture to non-Slavic tribes; - administration of Christianity to pagan and politheistic ethnicities; - administration of Islam to Slavic peoples in the borders of the Ottoman Empire; - administration of Hellenism in the borders of the Byzantine Empire; - administration of Latinism in Central and Western Europe in the Roman Empire; - the process of

'occidentalization' of the West European Mediterranean area as a part of the tendency toward formation of Europo-centric imagology and epistemology...⁵

The Mediterranean chronotopos is characterized by the 'superposing' (Fernand Braudel, 1995) and postposing of the new religious, political and cultural constellations upon the older and the inherited ones, which steadily creates an illusion of continuity and of existence of a system of Mediterranean culture and tradition. The following are only few illustrative examples of the establishment of the Mediterranean cultural continuum through cultural and civilizational super-positions and citations (some kind of eclecticism): - the Antique Civilizations establish themselves upon inherited autochthonous, primitive and so-called 'barbaric' civilizational aggregates; - Orthodox Christianity is built upon the structures of the Hellenic and pagan polytheism; - superposing of the Roman culture upon the Hellenic; - the Byzantine culture is set as a superposition over the Late Antique and Hellenistic culture; - the Early Byzantine literature is a part of a larger whole; - the Early Medieval culture from the Atlantic to Mesopotamy...

Ernst Robert Curtius shows that 'in its profane poetry, the Christian Hellenism of the Roman Orient retains the language, the form and the images of the old pagan world' (1956, 13). The same is evident in the example of superposition of the Greek alphabet upon the Hebrew (aleph/alpha, beth/beta, gimel/gamma, dalet/delta.). The fact that Constantinople was called "the second Rome," and that Moscow has been called new or "third" Rome, the fact that Moscow has been called "new Constantinopolis," and Constantinople was called for a period of time "new Jerusalem," and even in the contemporary situation the Macedonian city is Ohrid is popularly called "Slavic Jerusalem," this fact points out toward the effort to re-introduce via re-naming the 'ontological essence' (Uspenskij, 77), the sacredness and the theocracy of that, whose name is transferred in another form, and of the sustainment of the

⁵ Occidentalization is a "western style of dominance, restructuring and governing the Orient."

cosmological model of reading the text of history in the very historical practice. These are symptoms of transfer of the previous cultural models to the newly-created ones (the Antique culture makes a transit into the Roman, the Roman into the Byzantine, the Byzantine into the Slavic, etc.). Jerusalem (the Holy City), later on Constantinople, are posited against Rome, and signify 'two different perspectives - the Divine and the Human, - which correspond to the two comprehensions of the kingdom: as a Divine Kingdom (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit), and as an earthly kingdom (the Christian Empire)' (Uspenskij, 94). After the fall of Byzant, Moscow integrates these two antagonistic comprehensions of the city: Moscow is simultaneously a spiritual-religious and an earthly center/topos. It reflects both the Roman and the Constantinople (Byzantine) perspective.⁶ The modes of superposition of cultural systems, traditions and values, nowadays can be read as a continuum and cultural evolution based on the principle of mixture, inter-breeding and hybridization. From this perspective, the Mediterranean chronotopos is inclusive, quotational and dialogical. It can be examined both as trans-semiotical and/or civilizational intertext.

Still, the Mediterranean chronotopos shows features of exclusion, demonization, aversion toward the different, for the Other, for the neighbour, xenophobia, a syndrome of contra-posing, of antagonism and ambivalence. Within the framework of the Mediterranean cultural system, significant dissolution of the dominant religious, philosophical, political and cultural formations and systems appear, drastic differentiations, interruptions and scissions appear, which introduce discontinuous rhythm, i.e. they influence not only the palimpsest (hyper-textual), but also the schismatic character of the Mediterranean: - deletion

(Edward W. Said, *Orientalism*, New York, Pantheon, 1978, 3).

⁶ Uspenskij presents also exemptions to this cosmological model of the semantic projection of the ontological essence through history: the Bulgarian town of Trnovo was named 'new Constantinopolis' when Constantinopolis had been besieged by the Crusaders. This is a pattern of the historical model of interpretation and comprehension of the time cycles, and it corresponds to the concept known as *translatio imperii* (Uspenskij, 103).

of texts of the ancient civilizations; - replacement of the cult of orality and rhetorics with the cult of scripture, textuality and poetics; - transfer from oral to textual model of cultural memory and imagination (transfer from Socratism to Platonism, inauguration of parallel cultural and literary systems and traditions, oral/folklore/popular vs. written/erudite/elite); - differentiation of the civilized from the primitive world, of the civilized people from the barbaric, of the Christians from the heathens, of the monotheists from the polytheists; - oblivion and discard of scriptures of existent religions, and insertion of new, contrasted writings and texts upon the same Mediterranean parchment and 'pagina'; - natural apocalyptic disasters also influenced the existent constellations, and briskly and shockingly revised the Mediterranean chronotopos; - establishment of the Islamic religion; - differentiation of Judaism and the Hebrew religion; - the split of Christianity in Catholic and Orthodox; - division of the Byzantine Empire in Western and Eastern part; - introduction of the East-West discourse as a precondition to the europocentrism, and probably as a distant omen of the division of the world into a Western and Eastern part, which plays the role of a pretext to the contemporary 'globalization' taken as a new mode of domination, imperialization and hierarchization of universal span; - discrepancy between the cosmopolitanism (from the epoch of Hellenism and Alexandrianism) and the multiculturalism of the great empires (Antique Macedonia, Rome, Byzant, the Ottoman Empire), on one side, and on the other: - the ethnocentric philosophies, conceptualized and legalized mainly in 19. and 20. c.; - acceptance of the 'metaphysics of light,' or the aesthetics of luminosity and the philosophy of intelligible light in the Medieval Period, as 'an echo of the Late Antique Platonism, which was absorbed in the Christian culture'...⁷

The image of the Mediterranean can be observed from at least two perspectives: one is the perspective of continuity, the other of discontinuity. These perspectives of continuity and

⁷ After 13 c., the Christian West adopts the benefits of the Arabic optics; thus the basis of the

discontinuity, reflected in the concept of post-posing, hybridization and adoption from one side, and in the concept of conflictuous differentiations, fragmentations, secularizations, chronotopical inversions and antinomies, from another side, are the constitutive principle of the semiotics of the Mediterranean cultural system (the language of the culture, the Mediterranean inter-text). These are two sides of a single Object. The bipolar and antinomial image of the Mediterranean should be supplemented with some forms of transfer of mythologization and mystification, in shape of symbiosis of reality, legend and myth.⁸ We are going to introduce only one of the many such alternative perspectives of the Mediterranean chronotopos: the tale of the 'paradise island' Atlantis, whose literary tradition was followed by Plato in a critical manner (*Timeus, Critias*), although it was preceded by a long, though fragmented mythic and oral tradition ever since Egypt (600 BC). The literary myth of Atlantis (P. Brunel, 1988, 197-207) includes one of the overall planes of the imagology of the Mediterranean chronotopos, and that is the mystery, the conflict between memory and mnemotechnique, contra oblivion and lethargy (the principle of Mnemosine vis-a-vis the principle of Lethé), the travesty of the Mediterranean geo-space, the legendary apocalyptic disasters, disappearing of islands, peoples, civilizations and languages, and the hope that, sooner or later, their remnant/trace/sign/text will re-appear, as there were traces found of Sumer, Troy, Knosos, the Alexandrian light-house... The conflict in the relation reality-legend, i.e. history-myth, reflects on the epistemology of the Mediterranean chronotopos, where methodological opening and supplementary descriptive, and hermeneutic, historiographic-mythological, harmoniously interact (the cosmological cognitive principle - Uspenskij). The mythologized narratives of Sumer and Troy in the oral, epic and tragic

metaphysics of light was set on scientific foundations. (Rossario Asunto, 1975, 60)

⁸ The Mediterranean mythological assemblage includes literary myths of the Golden Age, the Apocalypse, Apolo and the mythical sun, Cain and Abel, Chronos, Saturn, Dedalus, Don Juan, the Eternal Return, the power of Helen The Beautiful of Troy, the Troian War, Toth,

literary tradition, shed light on a certain neurotic point of the Mediterranean chronotopos: the trauma ensuing a loss of cosmic dimensions, the experienced anxiety of the subconscious warning and threat to be deleted from the map or the book of the visible, the book of reality, and to be written in the 'book' of the invisible and unreal.

In the literary myth/legends of Atlantis, up until present marked by enigma and hypotheses, there lies imprinted the archetype of the split and the conflict of the world into Eastern and Western, whose connotations manifest conceptually and in terms of values throughout history, as the semiosis of the South and the North acquires a new semantic value, in a whole scale of gradatory qualities and references, also notable in the contemporary world (e.g. Balkanization vs. Europization). The modification of the value-connotations depends strongly on the observance point and the mode of perception and focalization (external or internal, centralized or multifocal), so that it comes to a radical turn of the systems of values, to parodizing and transvesty of the categories East and West (Orientalization vs. Occidentalization), or the division between the (poor) South and the (rich) North. The process of introducing new semantic content and revision of the values throughout history implies a principle of imbalanced binary pairs and oppositions.

The disturbed semantical balance in the image of the Mediterranean, of the Orient, the Occident, of the Balkans, Europe, America, leads, for example, to understanding of the new term of 'balkanization' as of a disquietude, to be terrified of 'apocalyptic devastation' (M. Todorova, 2001, 48); it brings to the West observing the Orient 'from distance and from height' (E. Said). With the aid of such an imagological stereotype, the conflict between the civilized, democratic world and the barbaric, non-democratic (Balkan) world is reintroduced, in order to actualize, in an easier manner and with a quasi-humanistic pretext, the plans for continuation also of reality in direction of fragmentalization and

Hermes and Mercury as divinities of the letters and the books, Ishtar, the Labyrinth, arcissus.

militarization of the Balkans, and of the discourse of the balkanized Balkan (Western Balkan vs. the Eastern!).

The representation of the Mediterranean in the Mediterranean states, peoples and literatures from one side, and outside this zone from the other, is not subdued to a process of degradation and deformation of connotations, as it is in the case of the imagology of the Balkans, where today the term of balkanization signifies 'a process of national fragmentation of ex-geographical and political units into new ones, and, regarding existence, problematic states,' unlike the processes of integration and re-integration, or 'globalization'. The term of balkanization, paradoxically, in the time of its emergence, toward the end of the First World War and during the two Balkan Wars, was not initiated by an actual shock of disintegration, because in this period, 'only one Balkan nation, Albania, was adjoined to the existent Balkan map' (M. Todorova), while this process has been initialized ever since 19 c. during the long dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. The actualization of the phenomenon 'balkanization' stimulates the tragic and bloody theatre of changes of borders, and sustains the dreams of 'Great' States on the Balkans (the idea of Great Serbia, Great Albania, and, if needed, hypothetical idea of Great Macedonia). Presently, the concept of Great Albania gains the most support, whose price is ethnic cleansing of non-Albanian population from Kosovo, of the Slavic Macedonian population from R Macedonia,⁹ especially from the western and northern part of the state, recycling the Macedonian exodus, creation of a Periphery to one of the 'centers' of Europe, and of the Mediterranean as well, and in its extreme - a brutal division of the world into (few) powerful, and (numerous) powerless states, into developed and undeveloped, rich and poor, dominance of a single hyper-power (the USA) and weakening of the European Union. Balkanization in the context of the Mediterranean discourse is in

⁹ More on the origin and gravitation of Macedonia toward the Mediterranean cultural sphere in my essay: "The Mediterranean Cultural Sphere As An Origin of the Macedonian literature", MASA: 1998, 237-258.

opposition to a potential mediterraneization, which would be able to re-establish the lost balance. The discourse of balkanization is an import from the highly developed world, and not an immanent feature of the Balkan states, which, as much as they belong to the Balkans, they belong more and gravitate toward the Mediterranean and toward the discourse of the dialogical and communicative peoples and cultures. In its chronotopos, the Mediterranean includes states and peoples with double and triple geo-political and cultural background (Mediterranean, Near East and Hebrew; Mediterranean, Balkan and Hellenistic; Mediterranean, Central European and Slavic; Mediterranean, Western Europe and frankophonic). Finally, the Mediterranean borders throughout history have been formally changed, and probably will change in (the) future, but essentially they circumscribe the area around the Mediterranean Sea and the seas which constitute this trough (Ionic, Aegeic, Adriatic, Black Sea...), which primarily follows the logos of modern nomadism, of intercultural dialogism, communicativeness, hybridization, the dionisian world view, and humanism. The Mediterranean, Oriental or Balkan stereotype not always stems, nor corresponds analogically to the historical praxis, the anthropological and civilizational semiosis. Frequently it has been imposed by a tendency or intention from exterior sources and their influential discourse of power and position. Here we are already entering the domain of the discourse of imagological strategy. In conditions of powerful production of constructed, conducted, controlled and instrumentalized 'authentic' stories and 'truths' (TV channels of the type of CNN, BBC, e.g. Internet, e-media), the contemporary globalizing concept of the world has an almost supernatural power to create value-charged images of events, peoples and sub-regions of the Mediterranean, to create its own profitable imagology of the Orient, the Balkans, or whichever part of the world.

In this context, it is symptomatic to notice that in the theoretical discourse of the Mediterranean, the direct opposite of the Mediterraneism has not been found, and the term of

mediterraneization has not been formed. There appears an epistemological scepticism about the possibility to mediterrize something which is genuinely something Different, non-Mediterranean, that the Mediterraneism is an inherent and exclusive, unseparable feature of the Mediterranean topos. Is it possible to mediterrize Northern Europe, America or the Far East? Is it possible to initiate a process of de-mediterrization? What is the meaning of actualizing the term Mediterranean. Is there an imagological strategy which re-semantizes the Mediterranean semiosis in the new europizing and globalizing discourses?

The absence of the qualificative attribution 'mediterrization' implicates an absence of its imagined antipode: neither does it oppose some older or inherited phenomenon, which would oppose 'mediterrization,' nor does some new phenomenon produce its direct binary semantic opposite. The Orientalism and the Balkanism stem from and compose the image of the Mediterranean chronotopos, and not its direct negation or reproduction. There is a difference between Orientalism and Balkanism. Each one of them developed upon specific sociological and cultural models, and is largely independent from the hypotext of the imaginary Mediterraneism. The Mediterranean chronotopos signifies above all a particular geographical, supranational and suprareligious phenomenon, fluctuating, changeable, complex assemblage of civilizational heterogeny, polyglossy, racial, multinational and religious identities, with sometimes discrete, sometimes apparent tendency toward periodical multiple hybridization and assimilation. The term Mediterranean has mainly a value-free connotation, and is resistant to negative connotations and ideologisms, and thus neither acquires exclusive value-positive connotation, nor does it lose it. Unlike the global Mediterranean chronotopos, separate regional aggregates of the Mediterranean, which were fragmented in the geo-political, and were distinguished in racial, cultural and linguistic terms (the Near East, the Balkans, Magreb, the Mediterranean Western Europe - Italy, France, Spain, Portugal) from the perspective of values have been differentiated differently in

different times. The contemporary negative connotation of the Orient, contrary to the European West, for example, is an inversion of the value system of the archaic ages.

To support this viewpoint, we are going to present only a few examples from various ages and regions (particular chronotopoi): - creation of the 'Asian' model of aesthetics, of the Hellenistic culture and the Alexandrianism in the age of the rise of Antique Macedonia; - orientalizing of the Spanish culture; - administration of the Islam to the Slavic population on the Balkan peninsula; - hybridization of the French nation by incorporating ethnicities from the former colonies Algeria and Tunisia; - administration of Slavic culture to non-Slavic tribes; - process of administration of Christianity to pagan and polytheistic ethnicities; - process of administration of Islam to the Slavic peoples in the borders of the Ottoman Empire; - process of administration of Hellenic culture in the borders of the Byzantine Empire; - process of administration of Latin culture to population of Central and Western Europe in the Western Roman Empire; - process of 'occidentalization' of the Mediterranean West European area as a part of the tendency to form an europocentric imagology and epistemology. In that context, Macedonian culture enter into several civilizational systems: archaic Balkan civilizations (ancient Macedonian, ancient Hellenic and post-Hellenic/Alexandrian civilizations); Western Latin and Eastern Byzantine Empires; the culture of the Ottoman Empire; the system of Slavic and South Slavic cultures; the contemporary Macedonian multicultural paradigm.

History presupposes semiotical attribution of sense and semantization of the past, transformation of the non-sign into a sign (semiosis, process of semantization), of the events into a story and discourse; it is a kind of reflected time (Uspenskij, 1996, 21). History needs deciphering and reconstruction where 'the evolution of the language of history would take place. History is a game of the present and the past' (Uspenskij, 19). From the perspective of cultural semiosis, the text of the historical events (*res gestae*) alters in the 'process of

communication between the socius and the individual,' the reading and the perception from one to another socio-cultural context, individual and collective reader, and in that process creates the story or the narrative text about the events in the past (*historia rerum gestarum*).

The imagological conceptualization of the Mediterranean chronotopos consequently needs actualization of two opposite, yet complementary heremeneutic viewpoints, identified as historical and cosmological method of interpretation. The historical method means temporality, chronology, sequence, empiricism, human and scientific discourse, while the cosmological method leans on the mythic, sacred, religious, structural-semiotic and abstract principle of worldview. The historical and the cosmological (mythic) images of the Mediterranean chronotopos follow at the least two lines, one of the Church, the other of the Empire, one religious, the other profane and political, lines which are not mutually exclusive, but influence each other semiotically, actualize and revise each other. In this context, at least two hermeneutic epistemes/paradigms of examining and interpreting the Mediterranean cultural tradition can be held: in one case, the totality and the genealogy of historical events would be followed, and in the second, the primordeale ontological Mediterranean text, the Mediterranean myth, the eternal Mediterranean chronos and topos (the proto-text) would be projected and re-actualized.

The Mediterranean chronotopos can be a subject to multiple interpretation, which generates a plural and polyvalent image of the Mediterranean: historical and mythic, earthly and sacred, as a unity and as fragments, postponing and antipode, inclusive and exclusive, semiotic and culturological. This imagological approach does not discard nor deny the idea of existence of *differentia specifica* of the Mediterranean chronotopos, and it relativizes it without making an absolute, while regarding the socio-historical and cultural constellations and transfigurations in this important region, not without a reason related to the notion of the

Center or the Navel of the world. History shows that exactly this Center moves, slides, and alters its immanent semiosis and cultural semantics subsequently.

From different reasons, and still continually, the Mediterranean has been resistant to the establishment of hierarchized and mono-centric, mediterraneo-centric civilizational system. The semantics of the term Mediterranean expands and is supplemented with new signifieds and references, with new, modified inter-relations together with their referent-points, with the communicational assemblages and socio-cultural practice. The centrifugal image of the Mediterranean persists through history, and stores a particular encoded semiotical minimum of ontological immanence, despite the numerous geo-political and formational transfigurations, despite the many fragmentations and revisions. That minimal semiotical storage seems to filter the temporal and impermanent historical changes, and retains the archetypal, mythic or cosmological semiosis of the Mediterranean, reflected in the permanence of the need to sacralize and ontologize the Mediterranean chronotopos. And thus it happens that the discourse of the past, the present and the future (the text of the Seen) and the discourse of the a-temporal and a-topical (the not-Seen) succeed each other either subsequently (chronologically), or in opposite order (logical analogies), and to form a single complex epistemology of the Mediterranean chronotopos.

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Summary

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The Image of the Mediterranean Chronos/Topos and its 'differentia specifica'

The Mediterranean "world" is an open corpus of different cultures and identities of the past and today. A particular multifocalization of the interpretative axis is necessary to understand the complexity of the Mediterranean cultural continuum through civilizational and textual superpositions (some kind of dialogism and eclecticism). Two hermeneutic paradigms of interpreting the Mediterranean cultural tradition can be held: in one case, the totality and the historical events would be followed, and in the second, the mythical and ontological Mediterranean text, would be re-actualized. The image of the Mediterranean chronotopos can be observed from two perspectives: one is the perspective of continuity, the other of discontinuity. These perspectives of continuity and discontinuity, reflected in the concept of postponing, and adoption from one side, and in the concept of conflictuous differentiation, fragmentation and secularisation, from another side, are the constitutive principle of the semiotics of the Mediterranean cultural system (the Mediterranean inter-text). The Mediterranean chronotopos is, at the same time, inclusive and exclusive, dialogical and monological. But, the interchange of the systems is one of the dominant characteristic features of the Mediterranean chronotopos. This specific principle of the Mediterranean chronotopos is the central subject of this essay: juxtaposition of the complementary (inclusive) and opposite (exclusive) images of the Other in this multicultural area (model: Everybody is an Other and the Other is Me). The Mediterranean has been resistant to the establishment of mediterraneo-centric civilizational system. The semantics of the term Mediterranean expands and is supplemented with new references. The image of the Mediterranean chronotopos stores a particular encoded semiotic minimum of ontological/cosmological immanence, despite the numerous geo-political and formational transfigurations, despite the many historical revisions.