

# Turbofolk: Political (Un)conditionality

## What do Outlaw Bikers Have that 'Brand Communities' Lack?

Mgr. JOVANA ĐURIĆ

Ústav etnologie, Filozofická fakulta Univerzity Karlovy  
nám. Jana Palacha 2, 116 38 Praha 1; e-mail: jovanadjuric58@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT:

*This paper questions the linkages between turbofolk and politics in Serbia in the 1990s. turbofolk, as a music genre, is mostly understood as “the soundtrack” of Milošević’s regime, as a symbol of the Serbian side in the civil war in Yugoslavia and as a cultural product of the time. But, the views on how much turbofolk and Serbian politics came to be intertwined in the 90s differ. In order to study these different perceptions, I used interviews and participant observation as a research method. I interviewed two target groups. The first group was recruited from a generation born in the 50s and 60s, and the second from those born in the late 80s and 90s. Their respective understandings of turbofolk turned out to be very different; this in turn proved crucial for understanding the roots and dynamics of turbofolk. The older generation associated turbofolk predominantly with*

*the politics of the 90s and with nationalistic tendencies, whereas the younger generations have perceived it as an integral part of the country’s culture. Since the 90s, turbofolk has not disappeared but it was transformed, and it is still very popular in Serbia. I have conducted participant observation in clubs and bars where turbofolk is consumed today. These interviews and observations led to the conclusion that even though turbofolk was a great part of the culture in 90s and had a significant role in the propaganda of Milošević’s regime on several occasions, the genre itself has much older roots and represents a more general Yugoslavian cultural heritage where Serbian politics of the 90s play just minor role. The paper explores the way in which the memory of different generations of Serbs has shaped their perceptions of this genre.*

### KEYWORDS:

turbofolk, music, popular culture, nationalism, Serbia, Balkans

Since the beginning of the 1990s in Serbia a specific music genre – turbofolk became the most prominent feature of everyday culture and gained massive popularity. Turbofolk could be understood as “the soundtrack” of Milošević’s regime, as a symbol of the Serbian side in the civil war in Yugoslavia and as a cultural product of that time. It is often associated, by researchers and respondents, with the ideology of the fast and superficial life, with its aggressive sounds, politically incorrect texts, sexist images and nationalist-chauvinist tendencies (Cvoro 2016). The genre itself is a mixture of the then popular “eurodance” music, local folk melodies and oriental rhythms. Despite the many different controversial interpretations of this term and numerous speculations about its significance, it seems that the term persists and takes on new meanings in music, as well as academic and political discussions about where Serbian politics was, where it is now and where it is headed.

Rambo Amadeus (Antonije Pušić), a Montenegrin musician, first publicly used the term turbofolk on his first album in 1988. He used it sarcastically in order to point to the so-called invasion of the newly composed folk music on the Serbian music scene. “Folk is the people. Turbo is the system of injecting fuel under pressure to the motor’s inner combustion. Turbofolk is the combustion of the people. Turbofolk isn’t music. Turbofolk is the love of the masses. Activation of the lowest passions of the homo sapiens. Turbofolk is the system of injecting

*the people. I didn’t invent turbofolk I gave it its name.” (Pušić 2005) Even though in its original use, the term had negative connotations, it was widely accepted not only by the critics of this genre, but also by the “consumers” and everyone involved in this music industry.*

Today Rambo Amadeus defines turbofolk as the “uncritical use of technology”. Therefore, for him turbofolk represents not only a music genre but also the people, politics, and art. According to him, the music genre itself arose from the “Balkan mentality” of the people as he calls it: “The entire Balkans functions in its highly synchronized chaos. These chaotic transitions from one extreme to another in views and attitudes, this selective historical memory is characteristic for the entire area of the former SFRY. Because, the culture and customs of the people in the Balkans are mainly modulated by their occupiers who have lived here for centuries, and only here can we search for the causes of the distinction between ‘people and nationalities’ in the Balkans. Dominant cultural model of the Western Balkans is actually finding a national identity in all social aspects, something what Europe did 150 years ago.” (Pušić 2018) Stemming from this perspective, an intrinsic connection between turbofolk and similar styles in other countries (chalga, manele) can be detected, stretching all the way to Balkanism and Orientalism, whose presence is undeniable. The oriental features are, in fact, considered to be the basis for the similarity due to the common

Ottoman heritage of the Balkans. 'Orientalism' is deemed to be a 'elusive' concept, and so it 'Easternness' (or Balkanism); this makes them worth investigating further.

Since the oriental rhythms are an integral part of the turbofolk music genre, we cannot talk about it without taking into account Orientalism as it has manifested itself in the Balkans. Maria Todorova argued that the Balkans have a concrete historical existence mirrored in the millennium of Byzantine and half millennium of Ottoman rule. It is in the latter period that Balkan territory was detached from the rest of Europe. This led to speculative and deficient knowledge of the territory regarded today as the Balkans. Moreover, whereas the Orient is associated to the "East" in the East/West dichotomy, the Balkans have been stereotyped as a geographic entity that is neither East or West, but somewhere in-between. The Balkans are recognized geographically as a part of Europe, but not in terms of the civilizational values of shared history (Dakovic 2009). Todorova writes that; "this inbetweenness of the Balkans, their transitional character, could have made them an incomplete other; instead they are constructed not as an other but an incomplete self." (Todorova 2009: 18) It is this theory of Maria Todorova that can explain the very structure of turbofolk – a combination of oriental rhythms, local musical traditions, and *eurodance*, a musical genre popular in the 1990s.

In order to grasp the idea of turbofolk, one should first get familiarized with the rhythms, the videos, the images of the singer and other aspects of the genre. Turbofolk could be identified by the provocative image of the performers to the extent that this could be considered vulgar. This image was built by music in combination with the videos and the lyrics of the songs. Commercial brands and Western elements were introduced juxtaposed with the Eastern culture, Orientalist visions and an Orthodox society. Turbofolk marked a change in the sounds, the visual representation, fashion and lifestyle in the music industry.

Erotically provocative photographs of turbofolk female stars in magazines and on television established and celebrated the new style which was widely accepted and imitated by young people but also by representatives of the new 'business' class and political leaders (Kronja 2004).

The transformation can be seen in the editing and scenography of the music videos. Before, folk videos were recorded in the fields with sheep and agricultural elements in the background. This scenography was replaced by fast cars, glitter and glamour. There were kitsch, baroque elements in the videos, as well as excessive sound and visual effects. If there were 20 different effects on one tape that could be used for editing, all 20 would be applied in a single turbofolk video.

Rambo Amadeus explains that turbofolk developed from the highway rest stop restaurants, where *neofolk*<sup>1</sup> existed as a marginal music scene – an entertainment

for bus and truck drivers. When people appropriated this content and introduced it in the studios, overlaid it with numerous effects, hired stylists for the singers and added stage and sound system, or else, used the entire showbusiness technology on "trash" content, that is how turbofolk was created. Kronja further explains that authors of these turbofolk music videos gave folk a new visual identity and with them created a new Serbian mainstream popular culture (Kronja 2004).

There are a number of paradoxes that can be identified. To begin with, the Oriental rhythms popular in these songs were used in the turbofolk in times when the political elite was propagating a war against the Muslims in Bosnia. Elements of Turkish culture were present while a connection with Islam was vehemently denied. Moreover, in the turbofolk videos, Orthodox religious symbols (the cross) coexisted with emblems of the Western market (such as Versace signs). Kronja's interpretation of this paradox is colored by political oppression that the regime brought to the country: "*It had also encouraged the war-orientated, retrograde patriarchy and the prostitution and commodification of women, while accepting the iconography of Western mass culture, the values of the 'American dream,' 'body culture,' culture of leisure and consumption. All this, of course, had been available only to the new Serbian ruling class, which supported the rule of force and violence, nationalism and political oppression, while the majority of people lived in poverty and isolation.*" (Kronja 2004: 103)

While, however, turbofolk music was, and still is, appropriating Western musical and fashion trends, it is also perceived as a distinguishable product of the Balkans.

In addition, the turbofolk songs are seen as reinforcing the heterosexual model of society by representing the male/female patriarchy dynamics both in lyrics and music videos. At the same time, however, the genre was implicitly allowing for homosexual motives and performers. Marija Grujic remarks on the gender aspect of turbofolk as follows: "*Despite the fact that the iconography of video spots incorporates many elements of world trends, playing with the idea of performing homosexuality, still the examples of this type of performance have not gone beyond mere provocation and offering voyeuristic pleasure for a (predominantly) male audience. Unlike some music stars from the global music stage, who have openly declared their homosexuality, no music star from the turbofolk scene has ever admitted to having homosexual preferences.*" (Grujic 2009: 60)

Turbofolk sparks numerous debates regarding the origin and beginning of the genre, its development and influence. Two streams are prominent in these debates – the views that turbofolk is a product of the war culture that reflected the ideology of Milošević's Serbia, and those that consider turbofolk as something that arose naturally from the entire heritage of the Balkans, independent of the political regime, as music that was naturally attractive to the local consumers. However, my research shows that a generation gap can partly explain

1 In Yugoslavia, in the 1960s, music producers, singers and authors started making arrangements for folk songs, producing them and labeling them as their own. The colloquialism that was used to describe this very popular practice, in which folk songs got the new arrangements and were sung by specific authors, is *neofolk*.

these differing views. The older generation perceives turbofolk as music largely intertwined with Milošević's politics. In contrast, the younger generation mostly sees turbofolk as strongly present in their daily life even today, and therefore, its members reject the assumption that this genre was exclusively connected to the regime of the 1990s.

#### THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN TURBOFOLK AND POLITICS

The historical proximity between the appearance of turbofolk music and the rise of nationalist populism in Yugoslavia is well known. Therefore, it is commonly assumed that one may be conditioned the other. Research that I conducted showed that people who were witnessing the rise of this phenomenon have perceived it as a product and a propaganda tool of the politics and regime in the 1990s in Serbia. For them, turbofolk marked the era of civil war, inflation and sanctions in Yugoslavia. Since the rural-urban dichotomy plays a great part in defining this cultural phenomenon, it is worth noting that I conducted the research in Belgrade. The city population, able to travel and follow the Western production (from jazz and Italian canons to Beatles), formed itself as part of the overall Western European cultural space and represented a significant segment of the consumers of these products (Đurković 2004). Marija Grujic states that *neofolk* music was associated with rural lifestyle "as a symbol of something backward, "low", "local", "primitive", "uneducated", "non-western" and often associated with a weak and submissive attitude towards the world" (Grujic 2009: 87). However, the singers of the so-called *neofolk* music had a far greater commercial success.

In Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia, unlike in any other socialist country of the time, the influence of Western culture was very strong. Uros Cvoro argued that the state, which controlled most of the cultural activities, promoted folk music even though it was national in form as long as it was socialist in content. It also promoted western culture as long as it suited the communist ideology (Cvoro 2016).

The division between the city and the village was a crucial element in defining cultural identity. Often, especially in the 1990s, rurality served as an exemplar of "Serbism". This partiality persisted in television, film, literature, and, of course, music. This phenomenon is not characteristic

just for Serbia. Tim Edensor remark on the city-village distinction in the context of defining identity: "*This geographical matrix (urban vs rural) is further associated with symbolic institutions, performances and practices, objects, people, times and other cultural elements of national identity. Imagined communities are solidified and naturalized by the density of such bonds. These chains of national signifiers frame identity and tend to delimit other ways of conceiving and feeling, and making connections between places.*" (Edensor 2002: 68)

Between those two identities, the new *neofolk* culture rises. In the 1980s, in the cities, the rock culture was still dominant, but it was at that time that *neofolk* music saw a rise. Even though turbofolk music was a marginal phenomenon in the cities, it was truly popular although hidden in the bars and restaurants all over the country.

The group of respondents born in the 1950s and 1960s in Yugoslavia, either claimed that the people in the cities had an illusion that *neofolk* music was not dominant, or that it indeed was not until the late 1980s, beginning of the 1990s and start of the war that it came to dominate. However, they all agree that for them, *neofolk* music was insignificant during the years before the war. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that this is the perspective of the urban dwellers. One of the famous turbofolk singers made the following statement in an interview on the *neofolk* popularity in the 1980s: When you get out of Belgrade, every other radio station plays *neofolk* music." (Kupres 2004) *Neofolk* music even existed in the suburbs, but in the 1990s it finally arrived to the cities. At that moment, it received cultural legitimacy and became widely accepted as turbofolk.

At the same time, as a result of war, sanctions and inflation, the crime rate significantly increased. According to my respondents, a natural connection was made between turbofolk and criminals. Kronja also makes a connection between turbofolk and the rise of criminality in the 1990s. According to her, turbofolk music promoted a lifestyle of the new Serbian elite: regime politicians, criminal bosses that represented themselves as businessmen, war-profiteers and glamorous turbofolk stars. "*This system of values aimed to establish the cult of crime and violence, war-profiteering, national-chauvinism and provincialism, together with the abandonment of morals, education, legality, and other civic values.*" (Kronja 2004: 103) This is reflected not only in the lyrics of many

turbofolk songs, but also in the relationships between criminals and turbofolk stars. a simple equation could be applied here: the more famous the star, the bigger the criminal is. The rise of this new social elite was shown through media.

Media pluralism was equal to the political pluralism – none. There were three main television stations with national frequency. Pink television had no informative programs, it was playing exclusively turbofolk videos and for the older generation of respondents it represented an illusion of a happy life and a distraction from the war and low economic standards. Another television, Palma, had simple concept of content. Turbofolk music videos and Latin soap operas. And lastly, Radio Television of Serbia, or so called "Bastilja" with informative programs that were propagating nationalist rhetoric to justify the involvement of Serbia in the civil wars in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo (Kronja 2004). This domination of turbofolk in the media spread over the entire country and soon turbofolk was not only the dominant genre, but the one that was controlling the market. According to Kronja, turbofolk as a music genre and its media presentation proved to be one of the most powerful ideological weapons of Milošević's regime. "*They produced a massive, overwhelming spectacle which included intended ideological messages into style, iconography and visual presentation of turbo-folk music, as well as into its lyrics*" (Kronja 2004: 106) Soon, turbofolk could be heard in the buses, shops, kinder gardens and even in the hospital waiting rooms. It truly became the "soundtrack" of the regime. No alternative music was offered to the public through the mainstream media.

An example of the use of turbofolk in propaganda was the project Target. This was a project organized during the NATO bombing in 1999. The political establishment figured out that this was an opportunity to unite the opposition and the ruling parties, protestors and supporters of the regime. In order to create the narrative of victimization of the nation, during the bombing, biblical terms and Christian symbols were often used in the discourse of Serbian mass media. The goal of this propaganda politics was the representation of NATO as an aggressor, while determining the collective identity of a Christian victim for Serbian people. Project Target were actually so-called protest rallies that were held regularly during the bombing, in the city squares all over Serbia. Musical concerts, speeches and recitals in squares and

bridges were organized by the ruling regime of Slobodan Milošević. In these rallies, in the context of national joy, many turbofolk singers were invited to perform. When analyzing pictures and videos from these protests, we can see them in direct opposition to the picture of the Serbian patriarch, Pavle, addressing the public and calling for peace; there is a picture with the character of folk singer Svetlana Ceca Raznatovic, the wife of one of the leading criminals and war participants during the 1990s, who, on Easter, performs the song named “Jesus”. Not only did the appearance of a popular singer at a mass gathering satisfy the feeling of belonging to a group of privileged and supreme Orthodox peoples, thus causing religious-national exaltation, but through a certain form of erotic enthusiasm, they provided a collective, national catharsis (Mihaljinac 2016). Many pictures and videos show the “icons” of Serbian pop culture, turbofolk singers and in the background the raised hands of protesters holding crosses and other religious symbols.

Another indicator of how much people associated turbofolk with the regime is that in the 1990s during many demonstrations on the streets against the regime one of the slogans was “We don’t want turbofolk to win!”. Protesters clearly identified this music genre with the political regime. Due to the fact that turbofolk and populist nationalism arrived in the cities at the same time, defeating the regime would mean defeating turbofolk. However, this turned out not to be the case.

#### THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN TURBOFOLK AND POLITICS

Younger respondents perceive turbofolk as something that is separate from the politics of the 1990s in Serbia, mostly because it still exists and is part of their everyday life today. After the fall of the regime, in the 2000s, turbofolk changed and adjusted and it still is the dominant music genre in Serbia. Today, reggae took the place of eurodance and is intertwined with Oriental rhythms and local folk music. Most of the respondents perceive this genre to be turbofolk as well and do not separate it from the one in the 1990s. Some respondents, however, claimed that this new genre is influenced by American trap rap more than turbofolk. It is also worth noting that younger respondents separate the turbofolk music in the 1990s from the neofolk music and from Serbian dance music in the 1990s, while the older generation of informants place all of these genres under

the name of turbofolk. Neofolk for them is the older version of turbofolk, without eurodance elements in the matrix of the songs, and dance music has less oriental and Serbian folk sounds in the matrix. As far as the old turbofolk hits, they can still be heard in bars and restaurants not only in Belgrade, but also in the rest of the country. The old content got a new packaging and today it is as popular as it was in the 1990s. In support of that stands the fact that in 2013 more than 100 000 people came to the concert of the mentioned earlier singer Ceca Raznatovic (one of the most prominent turbofolk singers from the 1990s).

Ceca Raznatovic, the wife of Zeljko Raznatovic Arkan, who was the commander of a paramilitary unit that was operating in Bosnia during the war, and president of the political Party of Serbian Unity, that was active during the 1990s, is a turbofolk singer that is often perceived as the ultimate symbol of turbofolk’s connection with Serbian politics in 1990s. If we analyze the lyrics of her songs, it becomes clear that they are exclusively love songs, free of any political themes. After the war in Yugoslavia, her music is consumed not only in Serbia, but also in other ex-Yugoslavian countries, including Croatia and Bosnia. It is worth noting that authors of turbofolk did not really use any national (Serbian) themes, but rather Balkan themes in their lyrics. “*The very nature of turbofolk and comparable genres, a mix of styles borrowed from numerous Balkan and European sources, appears to celebrate the heterogeneous and hedonistic aspects of the Balkans. The Balkans is frequently affirmed with positive attributes reflected in song lyrics.*” (Archer 2009: 66)

In Croatia, despite a media blanket on turbofolk, live concerts by Serbian and Bosnian performers are extremely popular as are neofolk music clubs. During the Yugoslav era, this genre was mainly associated with Serbia and Bosnia. In the 1990s, however, in Croatian pop production, certain neofolk techniques appeared, which some professional critics and musicians saw as breaking the boundaries of the desirable Croatian music identity. The attitude towards the entertainment music infiltrated folk and the “eastern melos” show that the transnational phenomena of the turbofolk, that is, the subliminal-folk, are incorporated or rejected as an element of the Croatian cultural space (Mitrovic 2009). Parallel to the political changes in Croatia and Serbia, which followed the death of the Croatian

President Franjo Tuman in 1999 and the fall of the Serbian President Slobodan Milošević in 2000, the expansion of cultural contacts enabled music links between the two successor states to be re-established through legitimate recording and distribution of music, a significant difference from the underground practices of the 1990s. In June of 2018, the first radio station in Croatia, Extra FM, that plays exclusively turbofolk music, aired.

Consumerism is very often a motif in turbofolk songs. It is very clearly sublimated in a song “Nikom nije lepse nego nama” with lyrics: “Coca Cola, Marlboro, Suzuki, discotheques, guitars and bouzouki”. Materialism is an important and dominant element in turbofolk. Apart from the lyrics, emblems of Western brands appear in the music videos and fashion style of the singers. Fast cars, glamorous villas with baroque motives and a lots of gold and diamonds as accessories represent the aesthetics of turbofolk. Irena Šentevska writes about the aesthetics of this “turbofolk culture”: “*Their glamorous villas (featuring arbitrarily combined elements of remote origins in ancient Rome and Ottoman Anatolia) are seen as the most visible manifestations of both the arrogance and self-perception of the political war profiteering and show business ‘elites’. Guarded by cast concrete lions, those fairy-tale castles are also perceived as “arias of the Serbian architectural soap opera”. As it happens, the dogmatic monuments of this architectural style are the family house of Ceca and Zeljko Raznatovic (Arkan) and headquarters of the Pink TV network (major media promoter of turbo-folk) in the posh Belgrade neighborhood of Dedinje.*” (Šentevska 2015: 162)

According to some authors and respondents from the first group this new aesthetics promoted the criminal and immoral values of the regime, making them a legitimate part of the entertainment and was also used to cover the misery of the war, sanctions and inflation. However, the second group of respondents did not really comment much on this materialistic side of turbofolk. It is still very dominant in both old and new turbofolk songs and videos, but it is clear that this is not only characteristic for turbofolk, but for other music genres as well.

Since 2000, after the fall of the regime in Serbia, the media blanket was over. New TV and radio stations started working and playing all kind of music and video, not only turbofolk. Many world-famous singers and bands were now coming to Serbia and

giving concerts. The greatest achievement in this regard was the EXIT festival that began in 2000 as a student protest against the government. During its existence, EXIT has been visited by over two and a half million people from more than 60 countries. CNN, The New York Times, and many others have on numerous occasions proclaimed EXIT amongst the Top Ten world festivals. Therefore, for a younger generation of respondents it is clear that glorifying materialism is something that many other music scenes practice. For instance, on the American Hip Hop scene, the idea that one is worth as much as his material property is constantly demonstrated through lyrics and videos. Fast cars, trendy clothing and expensive jewelry are often seen in these videos. Irina Boga writes about consumerism in music, in a capitalist society: "Following the American example, smaller societies expressing capitalistic views and finding themselves in a so-called economic ascension will pervert their integrity and spiritual values one by one, yielding in front of materialism and discontinuity." (Boga 2016: 41)

As already mentioned, Yugoslavia, like no other socialist country, was very much influenced by Western culture. After the Tito-Stalin split, Yugoslavian communists were open toward the West. Since they acquired great financial help and even weaponry from the West, in return Tito had to introduce many elements of liberalization in politics, but also in economics. These new conditions of fast industrialization and urbanization and the rising of economic standards created new conditions for popular and consumerist culture (Đurković 2004). These changes brought new music industry into the cities, that was very similar in production and presentation to Western popular music – at the time, rock'n'roll music. On the other hand, new neofolk culture rises in the villages. New working class and lower middle class found themselves in the lyrics of neofolk songs, about the countryside, lost loves and melancholy for the hometown. Liberalization of the market allowed consumers of both genres to enjoy the music, but it also showed what is truly popular. Srdjan Gojkovic, the drummer of the rock band Elektricni Orgazam says in an interview: "We started our careers in the same time, Belgrade alternative scene (rock musicians) and Lepa Brena (neofolk singer). People in the cities during the 80s had an illusion that the Belgrade rock scene was the dominant culture, but neofolk was always dominant." (Kupres 2004) While rock bands

were selling around 20 000 records in the 1980s, neofolk singers were selling over 600 000 records.

It is very important to acknowledge the popularity of neofolk in the 1980s when it was not promoted by the regime, in order to clarify that even though turbofolk was a great part of the culture in the 1990s and had a role to play in the propaganda of Milošević's regime on several occasions, the genre itself has much older roots and represents a more general Yugoslavian or even Balkan cultural heritage. In that sense, one should draw attention to one of the few theoretically based articles in Serbia that affirm turbo folk, by the author Dusan Maljkovic, who, in his variations on this subject, is both debating with the old platonic and the new models of state-culture relations, which undoubtedly refers to popular culture and its media derivatives: "*Last, but not least, the role of the state, as a regulator in the sphere of (popular) culture, is perceived as negative, solely because of the nature of the regime itself, but not as universally undesirable. Nationalists and citizens dream of a State that would carry out a repressive policy according to what, from their perspective, represents a decadence, while stimulating a superior cultural model. There is no place here for the will of the illiterate people (which was called democracy in ancient Greece).*" (Maljkovic 2007)

#### TURBOFOLK AS HERITAGE OF THE BALKANS

During its entire history, Serbia was a territory where many different cultures, religions and civilizations were meeting and interacting. That left a mark on the identity of the people who live in this country. This is not only applicable to Serbia, but rather to the entire Balkan territory. As Maria Todorova argued: "*...millennium of Byzantium with its profound political, institutional, legal, religious, and cultural impact... half millennium of Ottoman rule that gave the peninsula its name and established the longest period of political unity it had experienced. Not only did part of southeastern Europe acquire a new name—Balkans—during the Ottoman period, it has been chiefly the Ottoman elements or the ones perceived as such that have mostly invoked the current stereotypes. Aside from the need for a sophisticated theoretical and empirical approach to the problems of the Ottoman legacy, it seems that the conclusion that the Balkans are the Ottoman legacy is not an overstatement.*" (Todorova 2009: 12)

In the 19th century, after the liberation of the Balkans from Ottoman rule, the

Ottomans arguably left a significant heritage in the form of cuisine, ornaments in clothing, decorations and music. At the same time, for the political elite, the liberation meant a definitive break with the Ottomans. In the years succeeding these events, in the process of building the new states, they sought guidance from what they saw as the enlightened West, from the writers, composers, scholars, and other intellectuals. In the decades to follow, the Ottoman legacy would inevitably mix with the influences of the European values to form the specificity of the Balkan culture.

Even though some might argue that the new Balkan states were completely unrelated to the Ottoman past, the Oriental heritage turned out to be far more durable. Today, we still see it present in the everyday life and popular culture, part of which is also turbofolk. Due to the fact that we can hear this kind of music not just in Serbia but in Bulgaria as chalga, in Romania as manele, and in Greece as lajka, it could be assumed that this kind of music with oriental, folk and modern rhythms does not belong only to Milošević Serbia but to the entire heritage of the Balkans. Regardless of any political shifts, exchanges of this kind of music between different Balkan countries continue. This kind of music was not widely acknowledged by publicity or scholarly discussions before the 1990s and it could be claimed that market liberalization in the Balkans allowed this music to spread and grow into a dominant genre. These economic transformations brought about the means to produce more actively turbofolk. Misa Đurković claims that in the conversation with one of the directors of turbofolk videos in the 1990s, he got the confirmation that the state never intervened nor made instructions on what should and what should not be included in the lyrics or videos. Basically, it was all about the laws of the market and not state regulation (Đurković 2002). Even though to a certain extent turbofolk was used as a propaganda tool by the regime of the 1990s, when we discuss turbofolk we should consider a wider context because in a different form, or in a different "package", this phenomenon existed long before Milošević and is present until today.

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