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Corruptive Patterns of Patronage in South East Europe

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Preface

This book is the author's response to the initial wave of democracy euphoria in South-East Europe, and the obvious regress of it after the "last catch" accession of Bulgaria and Romania (2007) into the European Union family. A core deficit in this respect is the lack of *sustainable patronage*, relevant to modern societal existence. The bitter fruits of some "dilemma of simultaneity"¹ (Elster 1990), which might have failed to precisely predict the impossibility of transformation in Eastern Europe, has hit the target, as related to the breeds of "impatient capitalisms" that devour the region. Rising institutional asymmetries, the neglected "rule of law", the lack of procurement procedures and public control over governmental expenditures as well as illegal schemes of privatisation, tax collecting and the unfair allocation of public funds have shaped mimics of reforms in crucial spheres of social life. Corruptive patterns of patronages have very much spoiled the outputs of a most protracted and teasing transition. This undermines significant societal progress. System abuse of civic rights, conflict of interests, nepotisms, political partisanship, interweaving of institutions with organized criminality threaten to deviate the region from the general aims of democratic existence and modern societal advance.

"Corrupt me please" – might be the desperate outcry of this self-destructive culture that has driven its new "clients" into ventures of systematic misuse of public resources, or the perplexity of the weakened states, as an alternative to rapid economic enrichment. However, what occurred (and still occurs) in South-East Europe – illegal privatisation, embargo trade, traffic of people, drug abuse etc. – is less to be discussed here in terms of "case studies". We are more interested in the typical patterns of corruptive patronages on behavioural and cognitive levels. It is the social nature of these quasi-patron-client relations that have grass-rooted in the niches of some late modernity reluctantly imposed (less even accepted) on the Balkans which engages us. In other words, it is the system-bound abuse of the "*sovereignty of the spirit*" (Hegel) swapped daily for "personal gains" that bothers us most. As we believe, patronages of a new quality have to be promoted in the shaping new global context of South-East Europe, based on what some scholars call "domestication" of new elites

¹ See: Merkel, W., Plausible Theory, Unexpected Result: The Rapid Democratic Consolidation in Central and Eastern Europe, in *International Politics and Society*, Nr. 2/2008, p. 11–12 .

(Asch, 2004). A key word to enforce this process, as it seems to us, is *Enkulturation*, to be propelled both politically and intellectually. This can occur only through rationally balanced reciprocal exchange, moreover clearly defined new social responsibilities of both patrons and clients. This seems the only realistic path to a new European integrity to which modern social science still has to contribute.

I would like to thank beyond the usual courtesy Prof. Dr. Ronald G. Asch, Speaker of the DFG Research Group 1288 “Patronage, Friends and Clients”, at the Historical Seminar; Prof. Wolfgang Essbach from the Institute of Sociology, Freiburg University; and Prof. David Konstan, Brown University, USA. I am obliged to Frau Helga Hilmes (Secretariat) for her precise timing in terms of traditional German academic patronage. I especially thank the team of young researchers of the DFG Research Group 1288 for their intellectual friendship. As an older “European trotter”, who has bridged the Balkan “periphery” with its European core, mostly Germany, for decades I would like to leave them as a sign of good remembrance a piece of the legacy of St. Ivan Rilski – Patron of the Bulgarian nation: *“Never take from a King or the hand of a man. God gives us usually enough of what we need ...”* I hope that this simple moral, which has upheld my nation for more than 1300 years of “stumbles and falls”, shall keep their spirit in a world that they can still shape better. And even make it less corrupt. One way to achieve this is to ignore most of its lavish temptations.

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