

**THE AGE OF EMPIRES. ANTIQUITY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE WESTERN
BALKANS BETWEEN THE 19TH AND THE 20TH CENTURY.**

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The western Balkans were divided between two antagonist Empires, the Ottoman in the south and the Austro-Hungarian in the north. Both these political entities influenced, although in different ways, the identity building process of western Balkan nations and their relation to Antiquity and its material remains. This paper will focus mainly on the Illyrians and their role in western Balkan national identity building processes. It will explore the evolution and changes of the Illyrian concept through time and how it was used to build different – and often conflicting – identities in a geopolitical scenario characterized by the collapse of the Empires and the formation of new political entities.