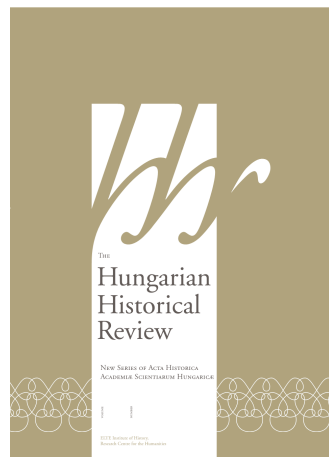


Zitierhinweis

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Whose Bosnia? Nationalism and Political Imagination in the Balkans, 1840–1914. By Edin Hajdarpašić. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2015. 271 pp.

Edin Hajdarpašić's book is about nineteenth-century nation-building, a critical phenomenon both in European and Bosnian history. Through rigorous study of a plethora of archival records and primary sources (including newspapers and works of literature and art), it examines the emergence of the narratives that were critical to nation-building processes and the rise of nationalist movements primarily in Serbia, Montenegro, and Croatia, countries or regions whose political intellectual elites aimed to influence the loyalties of the peoples of Bosnia and, in doing so, gain control over its territory.

The author provides a clear theoretical framework for his study, drawing for instance on the work of Miroslav Hroch and Eugen Weber, who stress the roles of elites as well as masses, armies, schools, and administration in the transformation of ordinary people into members of a nation. He extends this theory to the mobilization of youth, the importance of money, the demonization of the “other,” violence and killings in the promotion of national awareness and pride and, eventually, liberalization (pp.109–111, 129–134, 141–153).

Hajdarpašić devotes the first part of his book to the awakening of Serb and Croat identity and the notion of Serb and Croat unity in order to free the region from the Ottoman yoke. He presents various actors (students, academics, politicians, and teachers), who began to gain prominence in the 1830s. His focus is Vuk Karadžić, an acknowledged Serb philologist for whom language, poetry and folklore were of utmost importance. Karadžić drew attention to Bosnia and Herzegovina, where he claimed that the purest version of the language was spoken, a version that, in his view, should be used as the linguistic standard (p.23). While collecting folk tales from peasants, Karadžić gradually entered the political sphere, as he wrote about liberation from Ottoman oppression, joined the uprising, and published epics depicting the fight against the Turks as a political duty of Serb patriots. Still, the term “Turk” did not refer exclusively to the Ottomans. It was used as a term for all Muslims. Karadžić considered Bosnian Muslims as originally Serbs, because they spoke “his” language and not Turkish. He regarded them as people who would have to be converted “back” to the Orthodox Christian faith: “in due time, we will be joined by our brothers of the Turkish faith, our brothers by kin and by language—across Bosnia

and Herzegovina—then we will be united like the Germans of the Catholic, Lutheran, and Calvinist denominations” (p.33). Thus, Bosnia and Herzegovina gradually became the center of the greater-Serbia ideology and the heartland of the community of Southern Slavs, which would later be named Yugoslavia. The Serb national movement was linked to the Illyrian movement, as Croats named it, which became known among intellectual circles even outside the borders of the region. In the second chapter, Hajdarpašić discusses a wide range of activists and writers who contributed to the proliferation of nationalist projects, marked by images of suffering, awakening, and liberation. Throughout the book, he examines stereotypes about Islam, Muslims, and Turks, as well as the living conditions of Ottoman subjects. These images of violence, oppression, agony, darkness, evil, impoverishment, and slavery had a political significance “from diplomacy to poetry, from newspaper offices to painting exhibitions—that had a lasting transnational resonance” (p.55). Furthermore, as Hajdarpašić shows, these sources link Christians and Christianity to liberty, light, and morality (p.57). Serb and Croat nation-buildings were founded on these premises (pp.55-89), and I would add that this remains true of the self-images and national narratives of these two countries and cultures today. However, Hajdarpašić fails to stress that the Serb and Croat nation-states were not simply the result of discontent within the Ottoman and later Austro-Hungarian Empires. They were also products of the general post-Enlightenment Spring of Nations all over Europe.

When Bosnia was handed over to Austria-Hungary in 1878, “new interpretations tried to soften the tone of the earlier literature.” Bosnian Muslims were treated as “rediscovered brothers,” a shift that was influenced by the fact that Austria-Hungary had a rather friendly policy towards the indigenous Bosnian Muslims on the one hand, while the Serbs needed the Muslims to expel the Habsburgs from Bosnia on the other (p.80). Hajdarpašić examines this in detail in chapter three.

Neighboring Serbia provided strong support for efforts to build a nation and a state through subversive activities in Bosnia, such as the Young Bosnia organization, of which Gavrilo Princip, who later shot Archduke Franz Ferdinand, was a member (p.108). In the fourth chapter, Hajdarpašić examines the importance of a passionate, politically conscious, and educated youth to the attainment of nationalist goals. The fifth and last part of the book presents the narrative as it found expression in various newspapers in Bosnia, and Hajdarpašić analyzes the roles of these articles in fostering patriotic sentiments, language, and identity.

On the one hand, Hajdarpasić offers a thorough study of an impressive array of primary sources, and this makes the book a valuable piece of scholarship. On the other, he fails to consult (or at least fails to refer to) other relevant Bosnian authors, such as Safvet-beg Bašagić and Hamdija Kreševljaković, whose works would have given an additional perspective and complemented his narrative. Furthermore, the role of the Bosnian language and Bosniak identity is insufficiently elaborated in the Bosnian context. Hajdarpasić uses the term “Serbo-Croat” to refer to the common language of Bosnia. Interestingly, the Bosnian Franciscan Ivan Franjo Jukić, whom Hajdarpasić cites extensively, claims that Bosnia preserved its local Bosnian language (“bosanski”), despite the strong influence of Ottoman Turkish (*Zemljopis i povijestnica Bosne*, [1851], p.16). However, due to imported and growing Serbo-Croat nationalism, the Bosnian language gradually disappeared. Hajdarpasić shows that Bosniak (*Bošnjak*) at one point was an all-inclusive name for all of the inhabitants of the region, regardless of their religion. As the Ottoman millet system tended to identify its subjects on the basis of religious categories, Bosniak identity was not that relevant. Serb nationalists like Dositej Obradović and Ilija Garašanin, whose significance Hajdarpasić addresses from several perspectives, wrote about Catholic and Orthodox Bosniaks. However, as Hajdarpasić observes, in the time of the Serb and Croat nation-building movements, school teachers in particular were brought to Bosnia to teach future generations that they were not Orthodox or Catholic, but rather Serbs and Croats, respectively (p.111). Hence, the term Bosniak remained as a designation for the Bosnian Muslim population, for whom Islamic identity was more important than national identity. This made them seem like potential allies to all sides, as the author states: “both Habsburg officials and Serbian-Croatian nationalists came to perceive Bosnian Muslims as a pivotal political group whose yet-to-be-determined national allegiances could make or break their respective projects. Because Muslims appeared as (br)others in these competing national visions, struggles over their ambiguous patriotic potential were especially loaded in Bosnian politics” (p.178).

In the end, an answer to the question asked in the title, “whose Bosnia?” is given at the very beginning of the book: “It is important to remember that Serbian and Croatian movements were inseparably intertwined projects that developed shared repertoires, aims and practices, especially as they concerned Bosnia-Herzegovina. Leading South Slavic figures frequently depicted Bosnia as a space of Serbo-Croatian national convergence ... at the same time, however,

rival nationalist claims explicitly opposed each other, claiming Bosnia exclusively for one or the other side” (p.10).

This book introduces new perspectives to our understanding of nationalism in Bosnia, which was, as Hajdarpasić persuasively argues, imported from neighboring countries. Given the wealth of primary sources on which Hajdarpasić draws, his inquiry goes into an amazing level of detail and offers an immense range of information. It will be particularly useful to students and scholars of history, political science, cultural anthropology, sociology, and linguistics.

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