

Bosnian Myths¹

By Professor Dubravko Lovrenović

The continuing disasters in human history are largely conditioned by man's excessive capacity and his urge to identify with the tribe, the nation, the church or a common goal, and to accept a certain credo uncritically and enthusiastically although the postulates of this credo are contrary to his ratio and his own interest, and may even endanger his existence (A. Koestler, "Janus", Erasmus 9, Zagreb, 1994).

The Bosnia and Herzegovina war (1992-1995) was preceded by a conflict which has been taking place on the "battlefield" of South Slavic historiography for longer than a century. The historiography war, along with the wider international circumstances, led to an armed conflict transforming this country into a Dayton assembly of ethnically homogenized entities and corridors – the region of a blurred and relative truth, instead of transforming it into a civil democratic country. The spirits should have been sharpened before knives. This historiographical "grinding wheel" for sharpening of nationalistic concepts has never stopped revolving, indicating that, according to Ina Merdjanova, "national ideology has remained the central part of the communism culture", or negating a frequently repeated opinion that the frenzy for nationalistic movements and activities in Eastern Europe is a result of repressed national feelings prevailing during the communist regime.

Even a rough "reconnaissance" of Bosnian historiography – along with its positive achievements especially after World War II – reveals a mythomaniac consciousness and sub-consciousness of numerous authors. The main ailment of these pseudo-historiography projections reflects primarily in the fact that they almost exclusively dealt with the history of their ethnos, treading close upon the time rhythm of national integrations and homogenization. Thus, historiographic myths sprang from a mental base of a foreign-rules-burdened society without democratic traditions, still not close to the horizon of modernity and entrance to the civil society. This is the spring from which the torrent of hegemonistic and genocidal programs, xenophobia and atavism was unleashed.

¹ This work was initially published in the journal *Erasmus* (Zagreb, 1996), and after that its extended version also appeared in the author's book *Bosanska kvadratura kruga [Squaring the Bosnian circle]* (Dobra knjiga, Sarajevo, 2012).

Taking into account the fact that their classification is not final, these historiography myths can still be divided into seven thematic units, each of which could be sectioned further on:

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Serbian land

Bosnia and Herzegovina – a historical part of the Croatian ethnic and national space (Croatia to the Drina River)

The myth of the coronation of Tvrtko I Kotromanić at the Serbian – Orthodox monastery Mileševo in 1377

The myth of Bogomilism

Bosnia silently fell in 1463

The myth of continuous one-thousand-year-old Bosnian statehood

The myth of an ideal Bosnian coexistence

Bosnia and Herzegovina – Serbian Land

It is no purpose to try to prove that Serbian historiography, medieval studies in particular, is a major historiography. This major should be understood in the context of the developmental curve of the South Slavic historiography which has long remained chained by a narrative-positivist discourse and is currently stepping forward in the field of other methodological procedures. The works of I. Ruvarac, S. Stanojević, V. Ćorović, M. Dinić, G. Ostrogorski, S. Ćirković, J. Kalić (Mijušković), M. Spremić, I. Đurić, D. Kovačević-Kojić are works of permanent scientific value and a solid base for further research. Shoulder to them, there is a young generation of Serbian medievalists, substantially and methodologically directed towards new research topics and methodological procedures.

Serbian historiography, however, used to be and is still followed today by a demon of Unitarianism, of which, taking account of all the nuances and differences in the interpretations of the respective authors, it has failed to free itself from. This has also been emphasized in relation to the Bosnian medievalism, with the proviso that Serbian historians, unlike the Croatian and Bosniak ones, have never been so adventurous to try to prove within one special study an exclusive ethno-cultural character of this country and this historical epoch. This tendency, however – particularly after creating Yugoslavia in 1918 – is present in the Serbian medieval studies. Some studies of a recent date have not resisted the ailment either, whose perfectly conducted research has been overshadowed by the efforts to equalize the

population of medieval Bosnia with the population of Serbia, in which the relapse of the earlier divergences is reflected.

One such position was elaborated in the early 20th century by Stanoje Stanojević, the author of a respectable work in the field of diplomacy. Using a joke on a conversation between the Romans and the Gauls in front of the gate of the *eternal city*, Stanojević replied in his overt letter to the lecture of Ferdo Šišić *Herzeg-Bosnia on the occasion of annexation – geographic-ethnographic-historical and constitutional considerations* (published in 1909, in German, too): *What is your right to Rome? Our right is placed on the top of our swords, a Gallic army leader replied. The very same answer will be given by the Serbs to the Croats when the day of a major battle for Bosnia and Herzegovina comes. The right of our national strength and the right of our bayonets will be more important and more powerful than your right, which can be weighed with a scale.*

Yet, Stanojević has not laid the foundations of the Serbian historiographic Unitarianism, as this thought, like a red thread, has been running through the Serbian literature and historiography since as early as Dositej Obradović (1742-1811). After him, Ilija Garašanin, wrote in *Načertanije* in 1844 that *a brief and general national history of Bosnia should be printed as a third degree* (of the political program) *in which no family patron's day and the names of some Mohammedan-faith-transformed Bosniaks should be omitted. It is assumed in itself that this history should be written in the spirit of Slavic ethnicity and all in the spirit of the national unity of the Serbs and the Bosniaks. By printing these and other patriotic works alike, as well as through other necessary actions, which should be reasonably chosen and adapted, Bosnia would be freed from the Austrian influence and turn more to Serbia.*

Garašanin's working motto is *the new renaissance of the Serbian empire based on the sacred historical right*. Placing emphasis on the language issue, Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787-1864) was guided by this idea in his study *The Serbs All and Everywhere*, written in 1836, and printed in Vienna in 1849. Referring to Constantine Porphyrogenitus, this is how Karadžić marks the border between the Croats and the Serbs after their settling in the Balkans: *by the sea southwards the Cetina River, towards Herzegovina Imoski (Imotski), towards Bosnia Lijevno (Livno), the Vrbas River and the Town of Jajce*. Somewhat retouched, this image secured its place in the Serbian medieval studies of the 20th century. Roughly simplified and

basically inaccurate, Karadžić projects this image into his time writing this: *In Dalmatia on the dry land [...] where the heart of the Croats was, today there is no people who would be in language distinct from the Serbs.* That is why he cannot comprehend how at least *these Serbs of the Roman law won't accept to be called the Serbs.* Jovan Cvijić (1865-1927), well-known for his antropogeographic research, did not fail to emphasize each single trace of the Serbian national name out of the original ethnic space, proving that the Serbs are the most widespread people in the Balkans. Being a scholar of European format, he would not evade some fundamental principles of his profession, so he would record (falling into contradiction): *As a general rule of thumb, ethnographic maps and ethnographic manuscripts are chauvinistic: those who designed or wrote them instantly claimed the transition territory for the nation they themselves belonged to. They are not trusted in the professional circles, but there are so many ignorant folks confused by them. What is more, chauvinists do not tend to take account of the assimilation process carried out in the transition territories, and going back to the past, they reconstruct, mainly at random, the old ethnographic states favourable to them and enter them on the maps as if they were valid today. They go a step further, referring to history, the former conquests and historical rights, not admitting the current ethnographic situation.*

How the reasoning of scientists could be blurred by an ideology was proved by the words of the same Cvijić in 1907, the year when the crisis about Bosnia and Herzegovina started erupting: *we are a nationally-politically dangerous country. The world must know and ascertain that Serbia can operate in a unit much larger than its territory. Some massive territorial transformations can be initiated by Serbia. We should not flinch from putting fear into the World, should it be useful for our national interests.* As if two men were struggling within him, Cvijić writes: *We should particularly be cautious about the chauvinist arrogance which looks down on the neighbouring peoples with contempt and humiliation, and which does not even hesitate to verbally dispossess the neighbouring peoples of their undeniable territories.*

Which of these two Cvijić's should be trusted today?

The national connection with the Bosnian Middle Ages and its preparation for the purpose of the unitary state concept, used to be developed by the Serbian medievalists based on three constructs. The first refers to the ethnic image of Bosnia after the arrival of the Slavs, which V. Ćorović wrote about

and recorded it in *The History of Bosnia* in 1940: *The Serbian tribes grouped in the mountainous regions from the Sava and the Pliva rivers to the Lim and the West Morava and from the Cetina to the Bojana, which means mainly in the region of the present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. Referring to Porphyrogenitus, Ćorović considers that the Bosnia of the 10th century when Porphyrogenitus was writing his work [...] was in the system of Serbia. The Serbian tribes, undisturbed by anyone under the supreme power of the Serbian rulers, used to live in the central and eastern parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as in the inland counties all the way to the Neretva. Thus he could proclaim the Bosnian Queen Jelena (1395-1398) the first woman on the throne in the Serbian lands.*

How he would slip out into a contradiction from this artificially created position can be seen in the following paragraph: *The entire territory inherited and acquired by Tvrtko, except in the littoral towns, used to have only our national element. He was the first to start the activities on drawing the neighbouring regions to the Bosnian land, the time when both other tribal factors were prevented from working independently, like the Croats, or busy with other issues, like the Serbs. Insisting on our national element, Ćorović indirectly admitted the ethno-political individuality of medieval Bosnia.*

In his book, whose scientific value cannot be denied even today, but which is imbued with the political beliefs of a royalist diplomat, Ćorović's aberrations end up in assessing the causes of the fall of the Bosnian state, which again take him into contradiction with his thesis that this land represents a part of the Serbian political and ethnic space: *The Bosnian history has never yielded a single Marica battle, let alone the magnificent Kosovo! No Balkan state fell so soon, so light-mindedly, nor so shamefully. In a fierce state of religious quarrel; devoid of feelings of true national independence due to a too strong Hungarian pressure and religious Roman activity: in recent years even class-divided, with discontent peasants; long being the scene of civil wars, where people joined whoever they chose and where battles were conducted in the way they wished and the way they could; with a shattered family and any other moral; Bosnia fell almost as an exemplar of a state, which neither had any conscious historical missions nor clear governing ideas.* There is an open question why it escaped Ćorović's notice that it was the Serbian state that had fallen under Ottoman Rule four years before the Bosnian state, and many others even before it. And if Serbs

were those who had actually inhabited medieval Bosnia, how did such a *rapid, light-minded and shameful* downfall happen?

There are few Serbian historians dealing with the political history of the medieval Bosnia, who failed to emphasize, as Ćorović himself does, that Bosnia as a political entity separated from the Serbia of Prince Časlav Klonimirović in the first half of the 10th century: *The borders of Časlav's state have a very wide scope. The Serbia of that time comprised Bosnia to the Pliva, the Cetina and Lijevno in the West. Ever since, the Serbian national name has become a permanent mark for the tribes of the same origin and the same traits. The emperor of Constantinople groups the Serbs respectively as follows: the Bosnians, the Rascians (the Serbs of Rascia state), the Travunians, the Konavlians, the Diocleans, the Chlumians and the Neretvians, the tribes, which actually got their respective names after the geographic regions they lived in.* One example would show how some people from the Croatian side, only using a different national prefix, tried to Croatize medieval Bosnia in ethnic and political ways and thus answer the question: Whose is Bosnia?

Apart from having read non-existent content into Porphyrogenitus' work, Ćorović is one of the numerous Serbian historians who represented the thesis of the coronation of the Bosnian King Tvrtko I Kotromanić at the Serbian-Orthodox monastery Mileševa – meanwhile initially a disputed and then by means of scientific evidence rejected structure, which had nestled in historiography via the works of Mavro Orbini (1563-1614). Thus, excluding Ilarion Ruvarac, a “scientific” consensus was created with a view to stamping in an ethnic character to Bosnian medievalism and providing Serbs with a claim to be the most constituent people in Bosnia and Herzegovina. That the historiographical devil never sleeps here was proved by the wartime promotion of Bosniaks to the *fundamental* Bosnia-Herzegovina people.

Once the day has come in Serbian historiography and new *Ruvaracs* have appeared, when those like him have started reshaping the state of the Serbian historical consciousness, a revolution could happen here – no sign of him for the time being yet. The resolutions reached at the international conference held at the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences from 13 to 15 December 1994 (*Bosnia and Herzegovina from the Middle Ages to the Modern Age*) are favourable to such a conviction. The conference was also an occasion for the Serbian historians to discuss the topic: *Bosnia and Herzegovina and Other Serbian Lands*.

Bosnia and Herzegovina – a historical part of the Croatian ethnic and national space (Croatia to the Drina River)

This historiography myth started getting its outlines with the emergence of the Party-of-Rights ideology of Dr. Ante Starčević at the end of the 20th century, the time of the post-Illyrian process of the Croatian national integration. The historical circumstances of the time were favourable to the emergence of the integral Croatian political ideology, whose aim was a homogenous nation capable of creating a unified national state outside the framework of the Habsburg Monarchy. In order to mobilize the nation, the Party-of-Rights doctrine insisted on an image of an ideal nation in the past, which Starčević equalized with the ruling Croatian people in the early Middle Ages. This ideology of Starčević (he himself having the reputation of being a friend of the Turks) comprised within this context Bosnia and Herzegovina, proclaiming the Bosnian class of beys (begovat) as a flower of Croatian nobility.

Some historians in the 20th century developed the thesis of medieval Bosnia belonging to the Croatian state on the basis of their close medieval ecclesiastical-political ties, equating the proclaimed national unity of the 19th century with the similarity of the medieval cultures, thus ignoring the genesis – the essential element of historical flow. Like on the Serbian side, too, these vague understandings have tangled up into an obsessive search for evidence and proofs and sheer collecting data on the “geographic spread of this or that nation today (and their claiming this or that area).” At the same time, the analyses of the local and personal names of that time exclusively served to identify with the modern national communities and, in this spirit, to exercise their true, or more frequently, their fictional historical rights. The most important among the numerous oversights which have been feeding these narrow, passionate points of view, is actually equating the modern with medieval notions of nation and state. The notion of *a historical right, a political people* and *a political nation* have been mixed up and equated in this case. The modern historical science has made the notion of the *historical right* relative, and reduced the stereotypical images of the *political nation* to the notion of *nobility nationalism* as one kind of *proto-nationalism*. The Croatianism of the Catholics of Bosnia and Herzegovina, nothing less than Serbism and Bosniakism of the Orthodox and the Muslims, is an *ex post facto* product. Croatia to the Drina and the Croatian flags at mountain Romanija, which could be heard of on the eve of the recently ended war, are

the echo of a tune coming from the stale ideological wells of history. Meanwhile, the standard-bearers disappeared without trace, or are comfortably sitting in the shade of their own sinecures.

The processes of ethno-genesis in the region of Bosnia and Herzegovina since the early Middle Ages to this date followed their own special course at the end of which, in the late 19th century, the Catholic substrate of Bosnia and Herzegovina transformed into the Croatian nation, which should imply the *identity community*, including the scale of values within which *individuals and groups are identified primarily on the basis of upbringing*. Thus, this Croatian example manifests the truth of the principle that nations *are more frequently a result of establishing a state rather than a basis on which a state is created*, and that we are *constantly at risk of assessing a people on the basis of the programs they have never followed and the exams they have never sat*.

Within this framework, knowing that the medieval notion of a nation largely differs from its modern meaning, it is necessary to observe the processes of ethno-genesis and political-genesis in the region of medieval Bosnia and establish how the initial Slavic name, probably including the Croatian one, too, transformed into Bosnian.

The Bosnian medieval ethno-genesis, like elsewhere in Europe, has comprised different ethnic groups whose mutual mixing throughout centuries brought about a *new people*, as it was called by R. Martins, who saw the light of day when the first form of stable political power appeared in the 10th and 11th century. At least four different ethnic groups participated in its creation: *Illyrian, Roman, Avar and Slavic*. It is understandable that the latter, Slavic, has the most prominent position – the language being the best evidence – however, the role of others, primarily Illyrian, is not negligible.

The Illyrian ethnic group had had an entire millennium and a half of a continuous life in this region before the Slavic started settling Bosnia and Hum (Herzegovina) in the 7th century. During this long time the Illyrians succeeded in forming a very strong tribal alliance which successfully resisted the Roman pacification attempts; they also managed to develop economics and their distinct culture, enriched with Greek and later Roman cultural achievements. During the four and a half centuries of Roman rule, the upper stratum of the Illyrian society was largely Romanised, but

simultaneously, the majority of the local population kept their own language and the established way of life.

On the arrival of the Slavs, this numerous, tough and warlike people could not have disappeared overnight. On the contrary, the results of ethno-genetic research of the Bosnian-Hum region, acquired by combining historical sources, archaeological finds, ethnology and linguistics, prove that the *merging process* of rather numerous indigenous, never Romanized and semi-Romanized Illyrian ethnoses with the Slavic newcomers, especially in some remote areas, was very intensive and that the *Illyrian native element played a significant role in forming of the cultural, somatic and mental traits of the Slavic population who still live in these areas today*. This is evident in the remains and surviving elements of the folk culture, architecture, urban planning, sepulchral practice, mythology, religious and magic beliefs, ornamental motifs, national costumes and footwear, jewellery, music, dance, language and socio-political organization. This was certainly induced by the fact that, either directly or indirectly, destruction mostly hit urban and a lot less remote areas, where the native population remained unaffected by the most severe consequences. It was this never-Romanized, but also Romanized Illyrian ethnoses that ensured the continuity in the development of culture in the Bosnian-Hum region by the late Middle Ages and beyond. The cultural influences and the role of Illyrians in the ethno-genesis of neighbouring countries are also not negligible. In all likelihood, they were crucial in Albania, while leaving visible traces in the region of medieval Croatia.

The fact that old authors give prefix *Illyrian* to the Bosnian medieval language and the population west of the Drina far in the Middle Ages, reliving the Illyrian name in the language, heraldry, the name for a political program in the period of awoken national movements in the 19th century, the Illyrian custom of tattooing, so-called tattoo, preserved by the Bosnian Croats-Catholics to the present day, surviving elements in folk art are some indications which emphasize the role of the Illyrians in the medieval Bosnian ethno-genesis. It is assumed that the very name of the Bosna River represents a Slavicized form of the Illyrian name *Bathinus (Basanius)*. This thesis has been arguably disputed recently by M. Vego and M. Hadžijahić, and new arguments have been stated to prove the connection between Bosnia, the country and the Slavic tribe of the same or similar name. A recently published Venetian document dated 12th April 1421 in Bosnia,

naming the Bosnia River by its ancient name: *Batan*, illustrates in words how inveterate the Illyrian-Slavic terminology in this region is.

The role of the Avars was not negligible either, especially in the process of establishing the first forms of a state-political organization in the initial migratory period, when, as we know, they gave leadership to a more numerous Slavic group. As early as the first half of the 10th century, Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus testified about the significant remains of the Avar ethnos in Croatia (*there are still Avar descendants in Croatia and by their physical appearance, you can tell they are Avars*). The ruler's title *ban* and the administrative-territorial title *župan* (*prefect*), very early rooted with the Slavs having arrived in the region where a Bosnian state developed later, are most likely of Avar origin.

Relatively well preserved pre-Roman and Roman toponomastics and language expressions permanently established in the vocabulary of the settled Slavic ethnos, among other things testify to the Roman-Slavic symbiosis. There were, of course, antagonisms, too, primarily on a religious basis, but with time, as Christianity spread, they were eventually overcome. The Romanized Illyrian stratum played a key role in this process.

What can be least likely spoken about is the role of the Celtic and German component. The Celtic ethnos was limited mostly to the northern and north-eastern parts of Bosnia and their role in the overall cultural creation in the pre-Slavic period is incomparable with the Illyrian. The Germanic (East-Gothic) authority in Bosnia and Hum lasted too short (about 40 years) to leave deeper traces behind, but it is not excluded that a part of this ethnic group, after the restoration of the Byzantine authority in the mid 6th century, permanently stayed in their old habitats and eventually merged with the natives and Slavic newcomers.

After some time, the domestic toponymy pushed back the Slavic names and remained in use, giving the group name to the peoples included in the ethno-genesis process, primarily in the region of the so called *Ban* (*central*) *Bosnia*. The population of medieval Bosnia appear in the source material of the domestic, eastern and western origin exclusively under the name of *Bošnjani* (*Bosnenses*), which became familiar even in the regions which relatively late (14th century) came out of the Serbian state and became a part of Bosnia. This, of course, was not a Bosnian specificity as the ethno-genesis in the wider part of the South-Slav territory, where the Croatian or Serbian name was not familiar after certain time shot off to the surface the local

toponyms, which 'baptized' the new Slavic tribes. The examples are the names of the inhabitants of Hum (Chlumians), Konavli (Konavlians), Travunia (Travunians), Carinthia (Carantians), Dioclea (Diocleans). Even more educative name is for the Rascians, which has been preserved for the Serbs up to the present day.

On top of this, the Slavs, just like other barbarians, who built new social structures on the ruins of the Roman empire, were not connected with an idea of the national unity, as they, like other peoples, in terms of ethno-genesis, mutually differed a lot (one Armenian source mentions *25 different peoples* being comprised under one common name the *Slavs*). Various tribes and peoples managed to impose themselves as masters upon other ethnic groups, who would after a shorter or a longer period also adopt a new name, becoming one with the new masters. Mixed marriages, especially between the members of the social elite, unravelled these minorities, but did not cause them to vanish into thin air.

Apart from an intermediary, somewhat safe narration of Porphyrogenitus, there is not a single modern historical source on the basis of which it would be possible to find out to which extent the Croatian tribes settled the region of the so-called Ban Bosnia. If the Croats did really settle the area, which is not excluded, they must have presented a distinct minority in the Slavic and Illyrian-Roman majority, which they eventually became assimilated into. After all, it is common knowledge that the process of developing the first forms of the political power with the Croats, situated in the immediate hinterland of the Byzantine towns at the Adriatic coast, happened faster than with the Serbs, but, according to previous knowledge, even in these circumstances, it was necessary to wait for the Croatian name to appear in documents until 825 AD, the year when it was recorded in the famous Trpimir's Deed of Gift that the Croatian name would definitely be affirmed at the Councils of Split (925 AD - 928 AD). The territory in question was a region relatively densely populated by Croats; the region where the nucleus of the Croatian early-medieval state was formed.

Assuming that the Croats really did settle in Bosnia, we should wonder, as I. Goldstein does, *whether there is a person today who would be able to identify in their family tree the Croats who settled here in the 7th century, after all the numerous emigrations and immigrations, christenings and re-christenings, Islamization and de-Islamization, which have occurred over*

the last few centuries on the ground of Bosnia and Herzegovina. As they write, it seems that some would.

The reliance of the modern national sentiment on the Middle Ages is not instructive in the first place because of the fact that in the understanding of the nation at that time, as evidenced by canonist Regino of Prüm in around 900 AD, the primacy over pure racial categories was given to the sociological ones (*customs, language and law*). To correctly understand this issue, it is important to know that until as late as the end of the 18th century the nation was not formed by so-called national unity, but by the dominant, representative political class; it is out of the question that we, until that time, could speak about a *national* but exclusively about so-called *noble nation*.

Following the division of H. Schulze into *state* and *cultural nations*, the BH Croats seem to find it more appropriate to use the *cultural nation* as a term of reference. Its present transformation into the concept of exclusively state-political nature, along with the scientifically improvable theory about so-called *state register* and *spare homeland*, shows all the malignancy of the utopia that it is possible to consciously influence the historical course which has its own deeply rooted heritage. Thus it becomes crystal clear that an artificial opposition between terms *Bosnian and Croatian* could have been created as one of the war products. Among other things, the euphoric converting the last Bosnian King, the ill-fated Stjepan Tomašević, to the king of the Croatian *name, language and origin* bears witness to this. The kind of self-oblivion and their own historical self-denial which is being produced by the CDU (Croatian Democratic Union) policy through a systematic destruction of the Bosnian domiciliation as an essential component of Croatianism today, threatens to completely extirpate the authentic Croatian (which means Bosnian) culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Since the formation of nations on the European continent has a thousand-year-old pre-history, each competent analysis of ethnic relationships in medieval Bosnia will have to take into account the spirit of that epoch and the actual state of facts. If either ethnos – the Croats or Serbs – participated in the process of ethno-genesis on the Bosnian ground, they were eventually assimilated by the people named Bosnians (Bošnjani) which, after all, was not an exception but rather the rule in the spirit of which similar processes took place all over Europe.

“For actually a very long time,” as noted by Ž. Ivanković, “in the course of the Bosnian history the national ethnic awareness is out of the question for, the only way to show complete awareness was through what was more dominant, which was developed in the *believer-unbeliever* opposition.” The same author, watching the modern nations being constituted within the entirety of the South Slavic space, observes an essential component of the BH Croatianism: giving a political meaning to it through the Franciscan phenomenon and Illyrism as a romantic, but a no-less-important form. The political concept of Bosnia and Herzegovina Croatianism was formulated in this first phase: “constituting the nation in the modern meaning of the term, the integration of the national space, bridging the class gap, the democratization of public life, economy, phrasing the national interests through an ideology, a political program, a cultural metamorphosis, etc, and all this on the basis of the obtained freedoms and the degree of the experience reached in the West.” Since then “we have been able to officially speak about the Croats in Bosnia or at least about the Bosnian specificity of Croatianism.” Transforming Bosnian Catholics into the national Croats – *transforming a people into a nation* – was a time-consuming and a long-term process, viscerally connected not only with the political and cultural affairs in Bosnia but also in neighbouring Croatia and wider, as shown by P. Korunić.

Profiling the Bosnian type of Croatianism has been summarized by I. Lovrenović:

An individual and collective, psychological and historical, cultural and political habits and profile are created over centuries of major negative impact of particular circumstances relating to the political boundaries between the worlds [...] Culturally (within an imagined entirety of the western culture), organizationally (within the entirety of the Franciscan Order and Catholic Church), nationally (within the Croatian national and cultural totality) – this profile gains the status of a variety. This variety, of course, corresponds with the entirety, but is significantly differentiated in regard to it. The features of this differentiation are not so striking to convert a variety into an entity, but are striking enough to be quickly and easily stopped from being a constant obstacle to a total correspondence, that is – to merge into a unique identity.

Reducing the process to its most reasonable dimension, to the language and culture, the phenomenon of Croatianism today can be properly

illuminated only in its *three-kind manifestation* [...] in *three striking cultural-civilizing subtypes: Mediterranean-Roman, Pannonian-Middle-European, Balkan-Oriental*.

It only shows that in such a complicated cultural manifestation, in this unique case in the European culture, whose destiny is to be “a participant and an heir to everything this circle has created and touched, his entire register of shapes and touches”, the concept of *metropolitan paradigm, the model of centre and periphery* cannot operate successfully. In its historical default polycentrism and polymorphism, the Bosnian-Croatian component cannot be observed superficially, like a “supplement of a lower rank”.

In the light of this *three-kind paradigm*, we can speak only about its *harmonious and productive dominance* but not in the manner which would do away with one component *for the sake of fictitious crippling purity*, but in the manner of its full affirmation which can only set the Croatian culture in the place which it objectively deserves: *in the planetary cultural unity*.

That the Bosnian Croatianism is impossible to reduce to an ethnic pendant of so-called *main history* is illustrated in probably the most controversial book of Bosnia-Herzegovina/Croatian historiography: *Etnička povijest Bosne i Hercegovine (Ethnic History of Bosnia and Herzegovina)* by Fra Dominik Mandić, published in Rome in 1967. This voluminous book with 554 pages, a result of extensive research which included references and sources in various languages, lived for a long time in a scientific “semi-hiding”, which additionally contributed to the creation of mythically-conspiratorial atmosphere around it and its author. Back to my student days, I remember that each lobby talk about Mandić and his book was as a rule carried out in a low voice. I also remember this book being one of the first “forbidden” books I encountered after having completed my studies and that reading it confronted me with my university knowledge. Mandić’s theses on the eminently Croatian character of the ethno-political history of Bosnia and Herzegovina (especially the Bosnian Middle Ages) used to feed the myth of *Croatia to the Drina River*, Mandić not being its creator though.

The thesis on the Croatian ethnic root of the BH Muslims (Bosniaks) used to be developed by Franjo Tuđman, who, in as early as 1965 wrote the following: *As it has been considered in Croatia that Bosnia and Herzegovina have been Croatian lands since time immemorial on the basis of the historical and ethnic right, for they were mainly the part of the old Croatian state, for the Muslim population in the great majority was of the*

*Croatian origin, which used to be proved by their ikavian dialect, it was this issue that caused most fierce confrontations of the two nationalisms {Serbian and Croatian}. In his book *Nacionalno pitanje u suvremenoj Europi* (National Issue in Modern Europe) printed in Zagreb in 1990, Tuđman further developed this idea: When objectively considering the numerical composition of the Bosnia and Herzegovina population, we must not ignore the fact that the Muslim population in their vast majority, by their ethnic composition and their speech, undoubtedly has Croatian descent, and that, in spite of historically created cultural-religious particularities, always, whenever they had a chance, they voted by the vast majority as an integral part of the Croatian nation. Starting from these facts, there is a Croatian majority in the population of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and their economic connection with other Croatian parts is of such a nature that neither Croatia within the present borders, nor separated Bosnia and Herzegovina have conditions for individual, normal development. Founded on the mythical images of Muslims as Croats, the counterpart to Greater-Serbian arrogation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tuđman's political program, along with other factors, pushed the BH Croats in the recent war into an abyss measurable with Bleiburg's.*

How Tuđman's conclusions correspond with Mandić's is clearly explained in the final consideration in *Ethnic History of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Etnička povijest BiH)*: *The native Croatian population in Bosnia and Herzegovina changed their state rules and their religion, but it was always the total number of Croat Catholics, Bogomils and Muslims that made the majority in the state. Therefore, despite all the historical hardships and changes, Bosnia and Herzegovina ethnically remained permanently Croatian lands. During the Turkish occupation in 1463, Bosnia and Herzegovina had: Croat Catholics about 83%, Croat Bogomils about 10%, the Croats converted to Orthodox creed about 2%, non-Slavic Vlachs, mostly Catholic, about 2%, and genuine ethnic Serbs about 3%. So, in 1463, there were about 95% of Croats in present-day Bosnia and Herzegovina. These impossible to prove conclusions, especially when it comes to percentages, were possible to reach by Mandić only in the course of systematic inputting of non-existent data into historic sources.*

In the year of publishing his *Ethnic History (Etnička povijest)*, and criticizing some views of Nada Klaić, whose work he rated as inaccurate and harmful for the Croatian people, Mandić wrote in *Hrvatska revija* (Croatian Review): *The national history, treated truthfully and faithfully, in its entire*

breadth, is one of the most powerful means for supporting the national awareness, strengthening the people's power and making people capable of sacrifices and efforts for cultural, social and national achievements. He elaborated on it saying that it was his scientific and patriotic duty to warn the Croatian public both at home and abroad against the faulty views and harmful effects of the stated pieces of writing to raising the young Croatian historians and for the Croatian people in general.

In the *Preface Ethnic History (Etnička povijest)*, Mandić elaborated on it more explicitly: *The fundamental question in the history of Herzeg-Bosnia and in reality today is the question of people. A special attention has been given to studying religious development in these lands, for nowhere else did faith change so much and affect the people's affiliation than in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In the span of less than a thousand years, the ancestors of most natives living in Bosnia and Herzegovina today have radically changed their religious affiliation five times, which left consequences in the people.* What we are talking about here is a correct observation, however, not followed by correct conclusions.

The Mandić's statements comprise the paradox of ethno-confessional nationalism: Throughout history the world has thoroughly changed several times – if the dead stood up, they would wonder where they were – but the fictions in people's minds resist all the changes by building a world of imaginary images. As evidence to this stands the statement of a recently arrested General of the Croatian Army Ivan Andabak: *We have been betrayed by the {Bosniaks}. I had the highest opinion about them, we cooperated in emigration, there were many of them in my formation, but then they betrayed us, stabbed a knife in our back. They turned away from Croatianism, having given up their roots.*

Such views are a relapse of so-called *national renaissance* rooted in the 19th century, which S.M.Džaja, evaluated as a *re-conquest of the entire national history, both cultural and political, the Middle Ages being the orientation epoch, the language and South Slavic ethnic relations having been accepted as the criteria.*

It is the works of younger generation of the Croatian medievalists I. Goldstein and N. Budak who, together with the book by S. M. Džaja (*Nationalism and Denominationalism of Bosnia and Herzegovina*) do show that none of these pruned history images have stood serious scientific

criticism. In his book *Croatian Medievalism* (Zagreb, 1995) – one of the best syntheses of the Croatian medieval studies – eminent Zagreb professor Tomislav Raukar places medieval Bosnia where it really belongs: *in the peripheral area of Croatian history*. It is also in this book of Braudel-like inspiration that he emphasized *that the social individuality of medieval Bosnia was shaped at the junction of eastern and western actions, and that the social and state individualization were also the basis upon which its ethno-culture was established*. Raukar's inventive observations emerged on the trace of the modern historical science free of ideological foreign elements. Last but not least: he held the same sources in his hands as Mandić. Along with this purified scientific approach live with the younger generations of the Croatian historians the old pseudo-scientific *viruses* about medieval Bosnia being a *territory*.

Once the history of the Bosnia and Herzegovina historiography has been written *sine ira et studio*, it will be of utmost importance to establish how the political views of authors affected their scientific conclusions. Dominik Mandić with his *Ethnic History of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, as a meritorious historian will take his prominent place in this history. For the time being, this book can be understood as evidence of one unfortunate controversy: Mandić, a respected historian, erudite, paleographer, philologist, and theologian facing the Mandić who allowed ideological contamination to lead him astray.

In one of his recent works (The Drina Border – Meaning and Development of the Mythologem, in: *Historical Myths in the Balkans*, Collection of Works, The History Institute in Sarajevo, Sarajevo, 2003), using strong scientific argumentation, Ivo Goldstein buried *The Croatia to the Drina myth*. Sooner or later, the authentically Croatian understanding of Bosnia and Herzegovina will have to take this path. This will primarily require a deep transformation as viewed by the Catholic Church hierarchy in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which, back in the communist regime, was a synonym of the political opposition, but in the new circumstances, (even if with kid gloves) adhering to ethno-nationalism, has often become a bearer of the sub-culture of the political religion with the sacral notions of nation and state. The statement uttered by Khristofor Sabev immediately after 1989, referring to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church is applicable to this hierarchy today. On that occasion, he said: “The church has been used for political ends so far but it will be used for ecclesiastical ends from now on.”

The myth of the coronation of Tvrtko I Kotromanić at the Serbian – Orthodox monastery Mileševo in 1377

The scientifically-impossible-to-prove thesis on the Serbian origin of the Bosnian crown as a classic historiographical myth has nestled in historical science through the work of an author from Dubrovnik, an ideologist and historian Mavro Orbini, published under title *Il Regno degli Slavi (The Kingdom of the Slavs)* in 1601 in Pesaro. Several generations of national and foreign historians carried this myth over, until in the seventies and the eighties of the 20th century, Đ. Basler, P. Anđelić and S. M. Džaja came up with counter-arguments which made it scientifically irrelevant. This is not the right place to retell this interesting detail from Bosnian medieval history; it is enough to draw attention to some facts which offer a solution to the entire issue:

Orbini himself, who in his compendium on the South Slav history identified the locality *Mili* from Central Bosnia as *Mileševo* (which did not mean equating it with the Serbian Mileševa at all), pointed out that ban Stjepan II Kotromanić “*in Mileševo in Bosnia* erected during his life [...] and was buried there, the church of Friars Minor of St Nicholas”. Judging by this crystal clear fact alone, no controversy about the coronation venue of the first Bosnian king was possible, especially because the Serbian kings used to be crowned at *Peter's Church, or in Žiža or Peć*, which excludes the Serbian-Orthodox Mileševa from all the combinations. In addition, the metropolitan of Mileševa, authenticated only in the later time of Stjepan Vukčić Kosača (1434-1466), besides the archbishop, or patriarch after 1346, was not *empowered to conduct a royal coronation*.

Equating *Mili and Mileševa* can be found in Franciscan *Martirologij (Martyrology)* from 1369, as well as with national chroniclers of the 17th and 18th century, among others with Pavle Ritter Vitezović and Fra Bernardin Nagnanović.

In his solemn charter issued on 10th April, 1378 addressing the inhabitants of Dubrovnik, Tvrtko himself says that he *went to the Serbian land and that having gone there he was crowned*.

By the end of 1408, Hungarian king Sigismund of Luxemburg (1387 – 1437) imposed on the Bosnian nobility an obligation to be *adorned with the crown of the said Bosnian kingdom, as solemnly and honorably as late king*

Tvrtko ruled. He was obviously well versed in the details of the coronation of Tvrtko I, who, not being Orthodox could not be crowned at a Serbian-Orthodox monastery.

The Bosnian crown is of an endogenous origin, and the person who, in the spirit of the bishopric competences prevailing all over Europe, crowned the first Bosnian king could only be the djed ('grandfather') of the Bosnian Church – its *real bishop*, as he used to title himself in the beginning of 1404. Both *practically and theoretically*, this event defined the content of the Hungarian-Bosnian relations until 1463, and later, when by appointing the puppet kings in Bosnia until 1477, the Ottomans and Hungarians continued the age-old conflict in this area.²

The Myth of Bogomilism

The so-called Bogomils had their place in historiography reserved in the second part of the 19th century by no one else but one such scientific authority as in his time was (and still is) Franjo Rački. In its basis, as claimed by A. Vaillant, *Bogomilism of the Bosnian Church is the deed of Franjo Rački and Croatian Romanticism*. This is, he notes, *the beautiful national heresy, which the Croats used to be proud of, and which competed with the Czech Hussitism*.

The focus of the Bogomil myth is in the statement that medieval Bosnia was the centre of a neo-manichean-dualistic doctrine that stood in opposition to the official teachings of the Catholic and Orthodox Church. Moreover, it also stood in the thesis that the elitist doctrine in Bosnia had mass supporters.

In the last 50 years there have been a number of critical studies which shed light on the ecclesiastical circumstances in medieval Bosnia in a new way. Their research, with some of my own observations, I would summarize in the following conclusions:

Safvet-bey-Bašagić-Redžepašić (1870-1934), the author and orientalist, first introduced in 1892 the Bogomil ideology and the idea of an uninterrupted continuity between medieval and Ottoman Bosnia in all

² I should mention that in the first version of this paper published in 1996, I supported the thesis – which, later turned out to be wrong – that the first Bosnian king was crowned by the Vicar of the Bosnian Franciscan vicarage.

relevant biological and governmental segments, as indicated by S. M. Džaja, into the Muslim-Bosniak historical consciousness, and then, in his historic compendium *Kratka uputa u prošlost Bosne i Hercegovine od 1463 do 1850* (*Brief Instructions on the Past of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1463 to 1850*), Sarajevo, 1900. Through the project of integral Bosniakism, the Austro-Hungarian governor in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Benjamin Kálay (1882-1903), confronting it with Serbian and Croatian pretensions to Bosnia and Herzegovina, supported this national concept for political reasons.

By the time the first accusations on account of heresy occurred at the turn of the 12th to the 13th century, medieval Bosnia had already had a half-millennium-long tradition of Catholic Slavic-Glagolitic ritual practice, which is visible in documents and archeological artifacts. Compared to Hungary, where Catholicism spread in its Latin variety, medieval Bosnia had had a much longer Christian tradition by the time the first accusations occurred.

The first denunciations which brought Bosnia in connection with heresy were started by Vukan, the Grand Prince of Dioclea (Duklja), who, having seen that he was losing the political battle for power, in this way tried to get closer to Pope Innocent III (1198-1216) and ensure the promotion of the Bar diocese to the rank of metropolitan. At the same time, we should not lose sight of the fact that the first Serbian King Stefan the First-Crowned was crowned with the papal crown in 1217, in the era of redefining the relations between the Eastern and Western Church in South-East Europe after the collapse of Byzantium in the Fourth Crusade in 1204. Later, this mechanical, ideological and clichéd vocabulary was taken over by the Hungarian rulers who, in the service of the universal program of papacy from the 13th century tried to Latinize the Bosnian Slavic diocese and spread the influence of the Hungarian ecclesiastical structures. It is indicative that the Hungarian rulers in their subsequent relations with Bosnia activated the accusation vocabulary only when it was necessary to achieve their political goals. On the contrary, in the era of the steady relations with Bosnian rulers, the majority of whom were included in the Hungarian feudal system, there is no trace of such accusations.

The Bosnian Church, which appears in domestic sources for the first time in 1326/29, for the entire duration of its activity until 1459, was neither numerically strong nor was it ever focused on working in masses (it was not without reason that Guest Radin and a group of his followers, who sought

asylum at their region in 1466, were called a *sect* by the Venetians) due to the absence of a territorial-pastoral network, on which the Catholic Church based its actions with the people. Due to its rather rigorous rules, with the Spartan classification of sins in which each deviation from the regulations was treated as a mortal (unpardonable) sin, from the very start, the Church could not be attractive to an ordinary man of conformist nature. The Bosnian Church started losing this original ascetic feature from the early 15th century, if not even earlier, laicizing itself and acquiring the living code of the noble feudal environment. On the other side, the Catholic Church of the mid 14th century through Franciscans, but also through the secular clergy, developed diversified pastoral activities which comprised within its scope a substantial part of the Bosnian population; its pastoral achievements in the years before the fall of the Bosnian state in 1463 were evidenced by the Patriarch of Constantinople Genadius Scholarius.

The doctrine of the Bosnian Church was not primarily focused on the negation of the Christological principles, but on the criticism of the universal Church.

Medieval Bosnia did not know internal religious tensions on a larger scale, which were recorded in France in the early 13th century and in Bohemia of the first half of the 15th century. Franciscan monasteries and the *hiže* (houses) of the Bosnian Church, concentrated in the area of central Bosnia, *in the king's land*, all the time coexisting quietly and without disputing.

As a rule, the historical sources written in the Latin language speak about the “heresy” of the Bosnian Church, whereas, conversely, historiography has proved that the appearance of the Bosnian Church cannot be associated with the tradition and the background of the Western-European mystical-dualistic movements from the latter half of the 12th and early 13th century. The illuminated liturgical books (Biblical manuscripts), which arose from the lap of the Bosnian Church, were written in the spirit of the Christian doctrine and loyalty to the traditional Slavic-Cyril-Methodius linguistic standards. A paleographic-artistic analysis of the Biblical texts of the Bosnian Church speaks about their reliance on the older Dalmatian-Croatian Glagolitic models and the eminently European dimension being reflected in the presence of the both prevailing Western-European artistic styles, first Romanesque and then Gothic. Both the Western-European “modernism” and the Bosnian “traditionalism” have been imbued in the Biblical manuscripts

in the most artistically authentic manner, Hval's Miscellany (Codex) and Hrvoje's Missal, liturgical books especially made for Herzeg Hrvoje Vukčić Hrvatinić in the early 15th century. A fruitful cooperation of the national scribes and foreign (Dalmatian-Italian) illuminators resulted in artistic creations recognizable by their Western-European gothic style, but also by the regional Bosnian "handwriting". Symbolically stated: Bosnia brought into this relationship a patron (Maecenas), a scribe and the national scripts (Glagolitic and Cyrillic), and Western Europe "donated" the artistic style and illuminators. This model actually illustrates the mechanism on which the international culture of the medieval Europe rested, marked by global art trends and local varieties.

In harmony with their public views but frequently, also with actual political interests, the established Churches of that time used to decide whether a kind of teaching was heretical or not. How rigid observance of this principle in its essence proves to be unsustainable is illustrated by the following case of St Methodius, who was proclaimed a heretic by the German prelates, which provided the reason for sending him to the dungeon. It would be more instructive to speak about the *types of piety*, as done by J. Huizinga, rather than about heresy. J. Burckhardt noted *how intensively religious old heretics had been compared to the present-day Christians*.

Being a *state church* (J. Šidak), the Bosnian Church filled the gap in the social tissue of the medieval Bosnian state which had been caused by dislocating the seat of the Catholic Diocese in Đakovo in the mid 13th century. In the ecclesiastical vacuum which lasted until the establishment of the Franciscan Vicariate in 1339/1340, a special Christian denomination developed being precisely defined by the well-informed people of Dubrovnik who marked it as the *Bosnian faith*. The same people of Dubrovnik used term the *Roman faith* as its antipode. Based on this division between the Bosnian and Roman faith – in whose background there were political motives – there developed with the Bosnian landed gentry a special denominational sensibility, which, as in the case of Hrvoje Vukčić, found its exact expression in adherence to one and (or) the other church organization.

An accompanying part of the myth of Bogomilism represents the Myth of the Bogomil character of the medieval tombstones, *stećak* tombstones, which spread out over the last decades of the 19th century. After an entire century of dealing with this phenomenon, historical science abandoned this position and is today approaching it from a different point of view. The

historical path of this demythologization I outline in my monograph on stećak tombstones.

Bosnia silently fell in 1463

The myth of the rapid fall of the medieval Bosnian state was created under the impression of events from the spring and summer of 1463, when the Turkish sultan Mehmed II the Conqueror trampled over Bosnia. This myth seasoned with so-called Bogomil treason, was fabricated from the pen of the then papal legate in Bosnia, Bishop Nikola of Modruš and created as an attempt to justify their own wrong policy (cancelling the usual tribute to the sultan and the concessions made for the Hungarian king Mathias Corvinus, suggested to Stjepan Tomašević from Rome) which accelerated this already inevitable collapse.

All other sources only mention the sudden breakthrough of the Ottoman troops to Bosnia, battles at Bobovac and other Bosnian towns, defenders' resistance, destruction and mass exodus of the population, widespread panic and chaotic fleeing towards the Adriatic Sea and islands.

The fall of the Bosnian state under the rule of the Ottoman Empire is a result of a number of mutually conditioned factors, both internal and external. The 1463 collapse was just the finale of the process commenced long ago, the time when the Bosnian and Turkish armies first clashed at Bileća at the end of the 14th century. Simple calculation itself says that Bosnia "was falling" under Ottoman rule for almost 80 years.

The myth of continuous Bosnian statehood

This myth has a wartime date and is related to the act of the international recognition of Bosnia and Herzegovina on 6 April, 1992 and is intended to be presented as a crucial piece of evidence for the recognition of this statehood. Treading close upon are the ideas such as proclaiming year 1387 the year of the establishment of the alleged Bosnian University as well as the idea of erecting a mausoleum in the centre of Sarajevo where the bones of the members of the Kotromanić dynasty would be laid. They are harmonized with the claim, stated for the first time, that Bosnian Queen Katarina (Catherine) herself took her children Sigismund and Katarina (Catherine) in 1463 and gave them over to the conqueror of Bosnia, sultan Mehmed II.

The medieval Bosnian state as a historical fact can be traced in continuity in the sources since the 10/11th century until the Turkish invasion in 1463. This state organization (it would be more appropriate to call it *a form of political power*) went through different development stages from the initial establishment of the early feudal forms of the political power in so-called Banate of Bosnia, over the zenith during the reign of Tvrtko I Kotromanić in the latter part of the 14th century to its collapse in 1463. According to its feudal-legal nomenclature the Bosnian state belonged to the type of a medieval monarchy developed in east-central Europe.

Notched by the internal frictions, undermined by destructive demeanor of the Hungarian rulers who, keeping the Bosnian Bishop in the sphere of their own influence, interfered with its political stabilization and permanent Turkish military and economic ruination, finally insufficiently unsupported by the Catholic West, Bosnia succumbed to the indisputably stronger Ottomans. The last Bosnian King Stjepan Tomašević, as the bearer of state-dynasty legitimacy, was captured and beheaded following the orders of Sultan Fatih in Jajce in the summer of 1463.

According to the feudal-legitimist understanding, it was only Matija, the son of the former anti-king Radivoj, otherwise the brother of King Stjepan Tomaš (Tomash), who at that time could have claimed right on the Bosnian crown. The Turkish Sultan himself was aware of this, so, in his further invasion of Bosnia – after the Hungarian counter-attack in the fall of 1463 – he appointed him the Bosnian king in 1465 wanting to create the illusion of the royal power continuity. The Hungarian King Mathias Corvinus decided to take a similar step including in this game a Slavonian noble Nikola Iločki, who bore the title of the King of Bosnia for a period (1471-1477). These deceptive attempts of restoring the kingdom of Bosnia are the best illustration of how conquerors themselves had to take account of the state and adapt their plans to it. It was only for political reasons that the Turkish sultan ignored the requests of Queen Katarina (Catherine) Kosača to free her children Sigismund and Katarina (Catherine), who had been captured by the Turks in the days of the Bosnian catastrophe, which is understandable regarding the fact they were legitimate successors to the Bosnian crown. Thus, King Tomaš's widow, alongside Queen Mara, wife of Stjepan Tomašević, became the last legitimate successor to the Bosnian crown.

Five days before her death, in her will composed on 20 October 1478 in Rome, where she took shelter in 1464, Queen Katarina (Catherine) Kosača

left the claim on the Bosnian crown and the Kingdom – should her children, who had been converted to Islam, not return to the Christian faith – to the Holy See and the Roman Curia.

The subsequent course of the events did not make it possible to implement the will of the penultimate Bosnian Queen. The area of the former Bosnian kingdom was fully incorporated within the Bosnian Pashaluk by the Ottoman Empire after the fall of the Hungarian Banate of Jajce in 1527.

Hence, using scientific vocabulary we cannot speak about a thousand-year continuity of the Bosnian statehood today, since there is no legal continuity between the Bosnian Kingdom and the Bosnian Pashaluk. However, it is possible to speak about one kind of continuity, namely the continuity of tradition which was preserved within the Province of the Franciscan Order of Bosna Srebrena (Bosnia Argentina) as well as in the emigrant circles of the Bosnian Catholic population and clergy in West Europe of that time.

Insisting on this myth today serves only daily political interests of establishing ownership rights over the state of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its further destruction.

The myth of the ideal Bosnian coexistence

Simultaneously with the pseudo-scientific thesis on the continuous Bosnian statehood from the Muslim-Bosniak side, the myth of ideal Bosnian coexistence is being placed. How harmful and dangerous these theses are is, among other things, illustrated by a recent statement of one municipal leader from Vareš, who in a dispute with the local friars emphasized the alleged mercy of Sultan Mehmed El-Fatih in treating the Bosnian Catholics in 1463, to which, well, their descendants today return ingratitude. The real picture of Bosnian coexistence as a historical category created in the centuries-long contact of different cultural-civilizing and religious values is far from ideal and cannot be used as a model for solving of its current problems which arose after the collapse of the communist system, the war destruction and post war brokering.

The phenomenon of Bosnian coexistence was formed during the four-century-long Ottoman occupation in Bosnia and Herzegovina, when denominational circumstances in this area became more complicated and exacerbated. It was then that Bosnia and Herzegovina became a meeting

point and crossroads of four civilizations: Western-European-Catholic, Byzantine-Orthodox, Oriental-Islamic and Jewish, and all this in the state-political framework of the Ottoman-theocratic Empire. The four denominational groups remained mostly within their ossified psychosocial frameworks, in a kind of latent antagonism which grew parallel with the crisis of the Ottoman administrative and economic system. This phenomenon can be located primarily in the world of so-called “high culture”, which Ivo Andrić wrote about in his both glorified and disputed *Letter from 1920*:

But there have always been a lot of false bourgeois courtesy in the Bosnian civil circles, wisely deceiving themselves and others using sound words and an empty ceremonial. This somehow hides the hatred, but does not do away with it and does not stop it from growing. I fear that even under the cover of all the contemporary maxims, the old instincts and Cainitic plans may be napping in these circles, and that they will live on until the bases of the material and spiritual life in Bosnia have been changed.

On the other hand, in the domain of the so-called *folk culture*, there are processes of coalescing and mutual grafting of cultural events – creating a whole new cultural quality. In fact, “just coming down into the world of everyday life and folk culture, we can observe a complementary dimension of the isolated life of the three high cultures, and assemble a complete picture of life in Bosnia.” It is best evident in the folk art (craft), vocabulary, diet, clothing, housing and dwelling, which means, in all vital manifestations of life. This is the ambivalence in which the life and co-life of the denominational groups in Bosnia and Herzegovina went on with their heavy mental burden resulting from their reliance on out-of-Bosnia cultural and political centers respectively – the habit which even today makes them “extrapolated peoples” (S. M. Džaja).

The state of the Bosnian spirit between a *latent hatred and a true idyll* was defined by the author of book *Labirint i pamćenje (Maze and Memory)* (later titled *Unutarnja zemlja/Internal Land*) in his interview to Zagreb’s *Erasmus* in the spring of 1993:

The spiritual state in Bosnia could be at the same time defined as the state of both latent hatred and a true idyll, being completely right in both

cases [...]. The shape this ambivalent state would take at one moment depended solely on the specific political constellation. It is evident that the state we are witnessing today is a result of a dreadfully negative political constellation. It has just unearthed and taken advantage of the existing hatred-shaped substratum of the Bosnian living. In other words, the way Bosnia would take in history depended solely on a political life input, and if it is so, and I am certain it is, then it, unfortunately means that Bosnia had not had a chance to build its own sustainable political subjectivity, which essentially is its historical tragedy.

What it is all about, according to S. M. Džaja, is the fact that the three culture systems and three mutually distinct societies [...] occurred during Ottoman Empire, which have been increasingly mutually interwoven by modern history since the Austro-Hungarian invasion, however, neither having touched their distinctions nor having succeeded in taking them into a contemporary authentic political consensus. The way out of this state the same author finds in the following:

The key to the future of Bosnia is not, actually in the restitution of its model, which, according to some fantasists, had been completed in as early as 1609 and which could serve as an organization pattern of modern Europe, rather than in an accurate diagnosis of all its cultural values; in search of a new model in the spirit of a growing mutual respect and recognition, in practicing a free political discourse [...]. What the true future of Bosnia will be will not depend only on the activities of international political factors, but perhaps even more in true readiness of the political elite for an authentic consensus or, again, on their further insistence on reconquista, strife and anarchy.

Continuation of a historiographical war

Intoxication with history and unconditioned tendency to always present arguments for anything relating to history, among all other reasons, has paved the way for the most recent tragedy of Bosnia and Herzegovina. And what is actually history? Is it possible to comprise it in its entirety or does it just entrust us with what it wants itself? On the pages of the preface to Löwith's book, *World History and Occurrence of Salvation*, the Goethe's reply to this question has been written down:

Even if you could illuminate and study all the sources: what would you

find? Nothing but one big long-known truth whose confirmation does not require going far away: namely, the truth that everything was miserable at all times and in all states. People have always feared and suffered; tortured and abused one another; made this short life of other people miserable, not being able to appreciate nor enjoy the beauty of the world and the sweetness of existence, given to them by this wonderful world. Just few merrily enjoyed it. After experiencing life throughout a certain period of time, the majority most probably wanted to abandon it, rather than to start from scratch. What used to make them or what still makes them attached to life was and still is the fear of dying. This is what it is, this is what it was; this is what it will probably be. This is a man's destiny. Do we really need further evidence?

In exactly so far as we are today from the mere possibility to reach a just and lasting peace, after the Dayton peace improvisation, we are as far from a scientific consensus on the contentious issues of the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is indicative how the solving of these issues is conditioned by one another and how closely they have been connected with each other.

If it is not out of place to predict, then it will be necessary to say that there is little hope, better to say, there is not a single reason for being optimistic for these issues to be positively resolved in the foreseeable future. Another option is more likely, i.e. that a violent division of Bosnia and Herzegovina on an ethnic basis will follow the continuation of a long-initiated and never declared historiographical war, now also intensified by mutually committed crimes. The indications of this process have already been present in history and historiography textbooks, in which, as if by command, the old myths have been reached out for. So, each people, along with a part of the territory won, will also have the sad privilege of their own historiography colored with legends and myths. They themselves will do their best never to allow these hatreds and atavisms to be extinguished; naturally, new ones will blaze up, too.

What will remain for those who do not succumb to this "messianic" call, is a painstaking but an appreciated way of dealing with the ossified stereotypes of positivistic-romantic-autistic reflection of history. One of the possible approaches is offered by the history of culture; having ample materials, they could write the survival history in the past of Bosnia and Herzegovina starting from proto-Illyrian time to present day, catch an artist or craftsman's movement, tattoos and wood carving, vocabulary and

clothing, sepulchral architecture and folk embroidery, diet and housing and dwelling. They could recognize life in all of its numerous and magnificent forms.

This turning-point in historiography should be founded on the premise that history here has never happened but just reflected, guided by the Löwith's thought:

Although intending to modernize the opinion of other periods and other people, historical awareness must start from itself alone. The generations living today should acquire, reflect and study history all over again. We may or may not understand the old authors in light of our contemporary prejudices, as we read the book of history backwards starting from the last to the first page.

Adhering to these principles, a Bosnian historian would have this tremendous privilege to present to his fellow countrymen this sensitive speech of different cultures and civilizations which, independent of their ideological barriers, have been conducting this substantial dialogue on this ground for centuries. In this way, it would become crystal clear that a civilization is at the same time both an existence and a movement, and that civilizations or cultures in all their abundant manifestation of *oceans of customs, forcing situations, consents, decisions, confirmations, which are all sheer realities to all of us appearing to be personal and spontaneous in spite of frequently coming from afar* (F. Braudel).

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