

Danijel Dzino: “Imagining ‘Bosnia’: Review of C. Carmichael, *Concise History of Bosnia*”¹

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Cathie Carmichael, *Concise History of Bosnia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015; pp. 221, bibliography; 20 figs, 8 maps, pbk. US\$ 30, ISBN: 9781107602182

It is very difficult to write a cultural history of Bosnia and Herzegovina (B&H). The territory of modern-day B&H existed as a part of different imperial or quasi-imperial structures, and its formation and the present shape was affected by external rather than by internal developments. In antiquity there was neither Bosnia nor Herzegovina, but those areas belonged to the older imperial artefact of the Roman Dalmatian province.² This spatial artefact in medieval times transformed into the frontier-zone between the Carolingian, Byzantine and Bulgar empires and its by-products – the kingdoms of Croatia and Serbia. Later, medieval barons of Bosnia and Hum (*Chulmia, terra de Chelmo, Herzegovina/Hercegovina*) were networked with their peers on the Dalmatian coast, as a southern part of the proto-imperial commonwealth known as the Hungarian arch-kingdom (*Archiregnum Hungaricum*).³ The Ottoman piecemeal conquest in the 15th and early 16th century ultimately resulted with political, cultural and population discontinuities, triggering consecutive waves of migrations. New empire created new imperial artefact – the province (*eyalet, later pashaluk*) Bosna in 1580. *Reliquium reliquiaris* of this frontier province, close to the shape of the present country, formed only after the Christian (Habsburg and Venetian) *reconquista* in the Great Turkish War (1683-1699) and its

¹ The editors would like to thank to Cambridge University Press for providing review copy of this book.

² Dzino (2010): 58-73.

³ Ančić (2015a), recently challenges nationalist-driven historiographies and puts valid argument that justifies serious consideration of Bosnian kingdom as a part of this political network.

aftermaths in the 18th century. Administrative remodelling of the province throughout the 19th century ended when Bosnia and Herzegovina were occupied by another imperial force – the Habsburg Empire in 1878, becoming a colonial enterprise of this multi-national empire.⁴ A completely new context of existence lasted for four decades, after which Bosnia and Herzegovina, within the new political construct of the South Slav kingdom, disappeared in administrative reorganizations starting in 1923. Its current shape was a result of restoration (or reinvention) of B&H as a federal republic of Communist Yugoslavia in 1945.

Any scholar writing about *longue durée* cultural history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and must be aware of continuities and discontinuities these lands experienced through consecutive change of imperial contexts. This implies understanding the ways empires function and create new imperial spaces and cultures, how empires affect negotiation of local cultural templates with imperial ideologies and cause construction of new identities on their peripheries and frontiers.⁵ Presenting a balanced historical narrative for Herzegovina and Bosnia necessitates accepting at the same time both: narratives of sameness and difference in local population resulting with construction of three distinct national identities: Bosnian Muslims (from 1993 – the Bosniaks), Serbs and Croats and specific minority groups such as the Jews or Roma. The focus on narratives of difference is a major weakness in Croatian and Serbian historiographies that see Herzegovina and Bosnia as historically Croatian or Serb lands for obvious political reasons. Yet, unbalanced rejection of Croatian and Serbian national historiographies leads into the other extreme, where current Bosniak national historiography stands. That is the building of new scholarly and popular discourse which excludes narratives of difference in order to project the borders of the current state of Bosnia and Herzegovina back into the past. This discourse constructs historical, political and cultural continuity through all those tectonic political changes, providing an essentialist account of ‘Bosnia’s millennial existence’. Observing the current territory of B&H in isolation from wider imperial contexts only justifies the construction of Bosnian nationhood – as an inclusive and multireligious identity, yet a new social artefact – much in accordance with the Bosniak political aims in post-

⁴ Džaja (1999) for the Ottoman period, and Okey (2007) on colonial enterprise in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁵ E.g. Doyle (1986); Said (1993); Hardt & Negri (2000); Maier (2006); Colás (2007); Münkler (2007); Parsons (2010); Fibiger Bang & Kołodziejczyk (2012), etc.

Dayton B&H and with open support of some international factors.⁶

There have been several attempts to make sound historical narratives of Bosnia and Herzegovina outside local historiographies with varying success, mostly (but not exclusively) aligned with the directions of Bosniak national historiography.⁷ In this light we should see the current book: *A Concise History of Bosnia* by Cathie Carmichael, published by the prestigious publisher Cambridge University Press. The book is divided chronologically into chapters that acknowledge the existence of this territory within wider imperial units. ‘The introduction’ (p. 1-9) provides some general observations and covers historical narratives up to the Ottoman conquest. Chapter 2 ‘Bosnia, Hercegovina and the Ottoman Empire (1463-1912)’ (sic!) (p. 20-37) deals with the period when Bosnia and Herzegovina were parts of the Ottoman Empire. Chapter 3 ‘Rebellion, war and the Habsburgs (1875-1918)’, discusses the history of the period of the Habsburg colonial enterprise. In chapter 4 ‘Royalist Yugoslavia, Independent State of Croatia and the Second World War (1918-1945) we read about the period of the South Slav kingdom as well as the Second World War. Chapters 5-7: ‘Bosnia and the Communist Experiment’, ‘Bosnian independence, war and genocide’ and ‘Conclusion: “unmixing Bosnia and Hercegovina”’ introduce the reader to the most recent history. The main point of the author is to present evidence for the existence of a distinct Bosnian civilization which is in her opinion: “... *continuously revealed through language, culture and mentalities*” (p. 189-90). The distribution of the chapters is logical and an exemption of medieval history from the main narrative perhaps⁸ justified taking into account the discontinuity between the medieval Bosnian kingdom and Ottoman *eyalet* Bosna. Nevertheless, the title of chapter 2 which connects Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Ottoman Empire until 1912 instead to 1878, when they were occupied by Austria-Hungary or 1908 when annexed by this empire, will certainly raise some eyebrows, asking about the author’s actual ability to deal with the topic.

⁶ The Bosniak national historiography: Kværne (2003); national historiographies and myths in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Džaja (2005); construction of Bosnian nationhood: Robinson, Engelstoft & Pobric (2001); Helms (2012); open support of international workers in B&H for creation of Bosnian nation-state after 1995: Coles (2007), esp. 259-60.

⁷ Fine & Donia (1994); Malcolm (1996); Hoare (2007). While using similar undercurrent narratives as Carmichael, these authors are at least much better informed and knowledgeable about the topic. Curiously, like Carmichael did, those books apart from Fine & Donia also drop Herzegovina from their titles.

⁸ Perhaps, because the history of medieval Bosnia and Hum is an important element in imagining the past in all three major national narratives in modern Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Unfortunately, this will be just one of the minor problems with the present book. Taken as a whole, the book does not deliver a balanced approach of *longue durée* cultural history as one can expect from the title, which is problematic in itself as it drops out a historically and culturally distinct part of Herzegovina. In my opinion the book is strongly impacted by two strong undercurrents. The first is western Balkanistic discourse, and the second is a selective focus on the narratives of sameness, which project the author's essentialist perceptions of Bosnia (and Herzegovina) as historical reality. Combined with frequent serious factual, linguistic and even technical errors, the reader's hope to finally see a balanced and contemporary long-term view of this fascinating region is spoiled.

Balkanism, like wider narratives of Orientalism, is a repository of knowledge developing through a particular way in which 'foreign and exotic lands' were described in the 19th and early 20th century. A diverse range of stereotypes developed using the perceptions of western travellers, which 'explained' the history and politics of southeastern Europe through different positive and negative primordial patterns of violence and/or multiculturalism, culture and mentalities. This repository of knowledge provides a mirror that reflects inverted values of western civilization, helping its self-definition through constructing the 'Balkans' as the European 'Other'.⁹ C. embeds in her book the narratives of Balkanism directly and indirectly. Directly, it is done through frequent and uncritical citations of western travellers and visitors such as Heinrich Renner (p. 6, 10, 33-4, 48), Guillaume Capus (p. 6), Émile de Laveye (p. 7, 41-2), Maude Holbach (p. 9, 31, 43-4, 49), Arthur Evans (p. 4, 6, 9, 33, 35, 39), T. G. Jackson (p. 41), Moritz Hoernes (p. 1, 41), Georgina Mackenzie and Adeleine Irby (p. 31), etc.¹⁰ Accepting their accounts positivistically as reliable illustrative sources rather than perceptions embedded inside prevalent intellectual and inter-textual discourse brings C. one step towards construction of her own Balkanistic-rooted narrative. Analysed closer, we can see that this book in many ways produces its own 'knowledge' about Bosnia (and Herzegovina) not only through dipping selectively into the repositories of Balkanism, but also making its own contributions. The outcome is a picture of 'Bosnia' that reflects the author's Balkanizing

⁹ Todorova (1997). As in the case of the Orient, the Balkans has served as a repository of negative characteristics against which a positive and self-congratulatory image of the 'European' and the 'West' has been constructed - Todorova (1997): 188.

¹⁰ For Laveye see Todorova (1997): 81; Irby and Mackenzie - Todorova (1997): 97-8 and Drapac (2010): 25-6; for Evans and his intellectual circle - Drapac (2010): 27-36.

perceptions, rather than one coming from sound historical analysis. The only difference from the main narratives of Balkanistic discourse is an overly positive, almost patronizing attitude towards this area.

Calling a book about Bosnia and Herzegovina *History of Bosnia* is not only a part of the discourse that Ančić describes in more detail in this volume of *CSR*,¹¹ but also an attempt to impose an essentialist view of local identities by ‘describing’ identities in B&H as ‘Bosnians’. The author is quite clear about it:

“In the book I have used the terms: ‘Muslim’, ‘Catholic’, ‘Jewish’ and ‘Orthodox’, as well as ‘Roma’, ‘Vlach’, ‘Bosniak’, ‘Croat’ and ‘Serb’. I would prefer simply to call them Bosnians and do not intend to engage in essentialist discussion. In my view essentialist is a long term symptom of violence and a rejection of the very notion of overlapping identities and shared heritage.” (p. xiv).¹²

Her view is that Bosnia is a country with a unique national, linguistic, ethnic and political heritage delimited by its current borders.

“Several themes run through this discussion that are crucial to the evolution of modern Bosnia. The most important of these themes is its boundaries with neighbouring lands and peoples, which are linguistic, ethnic, geographical and political. Modern Bosnia has a unique national heritage, but it also shares a great deal with its immediate neighbours.” (p. 2)

C. defines this heritage as a distinct “*Bosnian civilization*” and “*mentality*” (p. 189-90). What we have here is a discursive textual colonisation and arbitrary taxonomisation of the ‘natives’ who might call themselves in this or that way, while in fact they should have called themselves Bosnians because they live inside the country which is called ‘Bosnia’.¹³ Similar

¹¹ Ančić (2015b).

¹² Yet, if we paraphrase this statement and for the sake of argument say that someone writes the sentence like this in hypothetical *Concise History of Britain*: “*In the book I have used the terms English, Scots, Welsh, Irish, Picts, Britons, Angles, Indians, Pakistanis or Saxons. I would prefer to simply to call them British and do not intend to engage in essentialist discussion ...*”, we are coming to very dangerous spaces.

¹³ To cite Coles (2007): 259 as the most appropriate comment on recent attempts to ‘delete’ national identities in B&H: “... *conscious avoidance of ethnic marking does not liberate Bosnian peoples from dangerously reductionist representations. Rather,*

attitudes could be recognized in relation with the local linguistic idiom(s), seen as Bosnian language – regardless of different labels speakers used to describe it in the past and the present. Language labels in southeastern Europe are not necessarily depicting sharp linguistic differences, but reflect regional and ethnic designations. For example, the Bosnian Franciscans who were networked with literary circles in Venetian Dalmatia, Italy and Dubrovnik-Ragusa rather than with Muslim or Orthodox elites in Bosnia during the Ottoman times, referred to the domestic linguistic idiom in identical ways as it has been called in Croatia-Slavonia and Dalmatia: Slavic, Illyrian and Bosnian. The label ‘Bosnian’ is in this context one of local (not linguistic) designations for the spoken idioms equivalent to ‘Dalmatian’ or ‘Slavonian’.¹⁴ The label C. arbitrarily imposes on local population becomes the very same essentialist construct that she wants to avoid by “*rejecting the very notion of overlapping identities and shared heritage*”. The use of current borders as a methodological starting point is very problematic knowing that those borders were defined recently and arbitrarily – not as a political wish of the locals, but as a decision made in imperial centres of power.¹⁵ Saying for example that the Croats in western Herzegovina and southwestern Bosnia have linguistic, ethnic and geographical differences with the Croats in Dalmatian Zagora and commonalities with the Bosniaks in Central Bosnia or the Bihać-Cazin area shows all the problems with such a statement.

The notion of ‘Bosnian civilization’ or ‘mentality’ is another methodological problem. Common cultural *habitus*, in the meaning defined by Bourdieu,¹⁶ cannot be simplistically defined as ‘civilization’, even less through abstract non-historical concepts of “*Bosnian mentality*” or “*Bosnian spirit*” (p. xiii).¹⁷ The use of the term ‘civilization’ is utterly inappropriate, knowing that this term depicts either imposition of cultural superiority - as

the conviction that Bosnia-Herzegovina should be a single nation-state may also further the solidification and maintenance of singular representations.”

¹⁴ Stolac (2014) for historical designations of the idioms that will become modern Croatian language. For the linguistic influences on the Franciscans from Franciscan province *Bosna Argentina* as a *melange* of local idioms, the Dalmatian, Latin, Italian and Turkish influences, as one of basis for codification of Croatian literary language in 19th century see Pranjković (2008).

¹⁵ Yet, Carmichael is aware that those borders were recent, when she asks why Muslim-majority Sandžak was left out of B&H in 1945 (p. 96-7).

¹⁶ Bourdieu (1977).

¹⁷ The term ‘Bosnian spirit’ can be traced back to the Bosniak nationalist Muhamed Filipović (1967), cf. Vucinich (1969): 276-77 for contemporary perspective on rise of Bosnian Muslim nationalism in the 1960s. The use of the term ‘Bosnian spirit’ within Bosniak nationalistic discourse is discussed in Ančić (2015b): 23-27.

civilisation is always opposed to 'barbarism' - or macro-political systems that share certain cultural commonalities and degree of social organization. The notion of civilization carries significant problems as it sees the object of analysis as a sealed-off entity and concentrates on similarities, excluding differences and plurality within those 'civilizational circles'.¹⁸ We can also claim, with strong arguments that distinct cultural traits in Bosnia and Herzegovina develop as the way different religious groups negotiated their differences and cohabit in different imperial contexts from the Ottoman conquest onwards. Such an alternative view challenges the notion of 'civilization' and interprets common culture in B&H as the remainder of the hybrid society developing in the much wider context of a triple frontier between the Ottomans, Habsburgs and Venice from 16th to 18th centuries.¹⁹ Yet, shared cultural *habitus* could not be seen as a substitute for common identity, because identity is constructed through differences, rather than cultural commonalities.²⁰ The Serbian, Croatian and Muslim-Bosniak nations in B&H are constructed in 19th century through politicization of differences, not similarities between those groups. These identities did not come out of nothing as we might think from C.'s book. They rather represented politicized continuity of the connections the Bosnian Orthodox social elite maintained with Serbia and Serbian medieval past, Catholic with Dalmatian communities, Croatian and Bosnian medieval past, as well as the construction of Bosnian Muslim identity between their own distinctiveness and allegiances to the Ottoman Empire.²¹

The errors and selective interpretation of the facts in this book are simply impossible to count – I will just give 'the best of'. On p. 3 the genetic research of Marjanović is cited as a proof that the current population has the strongest genetic links with the indigenous Palaeolithic population. True. However, the same research shows that there are genetic differences between the three most numerous nations, especially by sub-haplogroup I-P37, but we do not hear about this because such a fact is not fitting the direction of C.'s narrative.²² On p. 9 we learn that from 1718 Bosnia had a

¹⁸ E.g. Huntington (1996) and concerted criticism of his book e.g. Katzstein (2010).

¹⁹ *Triplex Confinium*: Roksandić (1998); Roksandić & Štefanec (2000); Roksandić (2003).

²⁰ The paradigm coming from the old postulates of Barth (1969).

²¹ See Adanir (2002) for formation of 'Muslim' nation in B&H.

²² Marjanović *et al.* (2005). I certainly do not regard genetics as the way to determine one's ethnic or national belonging, because those groups are socially constructed, rather than genetically determined. Marjanović's research is taken on small sample of modern population, which is not fully representative. If those differences are indeed projected on larger sample, they should be explained as consequence of

small coastal strip on the Adriatic coast, when the Neum area was taken over by the Ottomans. Yet, a careful reader will notice on map 3 later in the book (p. 24) a substantial chunk of the Adriatic coast that was indeed an essential part of the Ottoman province of Bosnia from early 16th century, until the outcomes of the Great Turkish war in 1699. The areas of Klek-Neum (and Sutorina) were preserved as a part of the Ottoman empire on insistence of the Republic of Ragusa representing a buffer zone with Venice in the peace of Karlowtzi in 1699, confirmed in the Passarowitz treaty of 1718. Talking about the maps – C. has a serious problem with orientation on the map. In her perception of Bosnia, the Dinaric ranges stretch along its western side (p. 6), and Serbia is located south of Bosnia (p. 50) – these facts are easily disputed by a brief look on the map. On p. 10-11 one can think that ancient Illyria “*which included modern Bosnia*” was made into the Roman province in 168 BC. The fact that there was no Roman province of **Illyricum** for another century and that the Illyrian kingdom defeated in 168 BC included only parts of southeastern Herzegovina does not bother C. too much.²³ On p. 11 it is possible to read that Christianity reached Bosnia in the 7th and 8th centuries thanks to the missionary work of Thessalonikan brothers Constantine and Methodius. A ‘small’ problem with this statement is that the hinterland of the Dalmatian province was fully Christianized before AD 600, which could be seen through numerous remains of early Christian churches.²⁴ In addition, it is worthy to point out that Constantine and Methodius were not even born in the 7th or 8th century, and that their Christianizing activities were limited to the Moravian principality in central Europe.

C. claims that the Bosnian king Tvrtko fought in person at the Kosovo battle in 1389 (p. 12), when in fact he sent there the duke Vlatko Vuković with a 20,000 strong force. The statement that Bosnia had a high degree of secularism in the Middle Ages (p. 13) is rather odd, taking into account that secularism arose only in the Early Modern Era, rather than in the medieval ‘age of faith’.²⁵ At the same page fleur-de-lis is seen as a “*symbol of Bosnian statehood*” often found on *stećci* (sing. *stećak*, also called *bilig*) - specific tombstones from Bosnia, Herzegovina and central Dalmatia from the High Middle Ages. Fleur-de-lis in medieval contexts is first a Christian symbol

separate life of those groups inside the Ottoman *millet* system and lack of more substantial intermarriages until the second part of 20th century, rather than their ‘genetic’ differences.

²³ Šašel Kos (2005): 288, 337-38

²⁴ Chevalier (1996).

²⁵ Carmichael cites here Ivan Lovrenović (2001), who is a respected writer, literature critic and essayist, but not trained historian.

used on Christian tombstones, and second a motive that was used by the clan of Kotromanić, who ruled the medieval Bosnian polity, as a symbol of affiliation with the house of Anjou, the rulers of the Hungarian commonwealth from the early 14th century. On p. 16-17 C. mentions the theory about the spread of the Slavic language of medievalist Florin Curta, but he is not referenced or cited anywhere. On p. 16 it is possible to learn a ‘new’ fact that the Slavs arrived in Bosnia in the 5th century, ‘just’ a century before they are mentioned in any known source. While not being too familiar with the ancient and medieval history of Herzegovina and Bosnia, C. is not exceeding in linguistics either. So, we can read that “... *linguistically Bosnia is one of the most unified regions in the Balkans, with the vast majority of people speaking or understanding the variant of Bosnian called neoštokavian ijekavski*”. The author is obviously not aware of the *ikavian* speakers of (mostly) Croatian language in western Herzegovina and southwestern Bosnia, whose language has much more in common with the speakers of native linguistic idioms in the Dalmatian hinterland and represents the survival of medieval idioms spoken throughout Bosnia and Hum.

In chapter 2 we can read that conversion to Islam, apart from political and economical gains, occurs because “*Islam must have offered a great deal of structure and consolation for believers*” (p. 22). Maybe that was true for some converts. Yet, there is nothing in this book about non-Muslims being second class imperial subjects, which was embedded in the Islamic legal concept of *dhimma* before the 19th century. This concept allowed non-Muslims state protection to practice their religion, but treated them essentially as second class citizens – not unlike the Muslims in the Crusader states in the Near East.²⁶ Yet, this is a ‘golden era’ for C. because in her opinion: “*before the creation of the South Slav states, peoples of the region – especially those who spoke the same language – genuinely admired the culture of their neighbours*” (p. 190). Putting aside that someone can read between the lines here a rather outrageous neo-colonialist claim that ‘natives’ were much better off under foreign rule, it does not take much to conclude that the relationship between neighbours always varies depending on the circumstances and character of those neighbours. The evidence from this ‘golden era’, however, does not always say the same. Local religious

²⁶ In general see Friedmann (2015). While the western scholars mostly maintain a romantic view of religious tolerance, see Ye’or (1980); Bosworth (1982); Durie (2010); Lewis (2010) on *dhimma*. The concept needs to be understood beyond extreme views, allowing for individual contexts in which *dhimma* was abused and/or respected by authorities in Islamic empires as something negotiated in a particular moment, cf. Barkey (2008): 114.

groups competed and collaborated in the Ottoman empire negotiating their position from day to day, while the state protection of non-Muslims was respected differently in different periods. Admiration has nothing to do with it.²⁷ On p. 26 we can find another odd statement that the name for the city of Sarajevo comes from the Italian word *seraglio*. Sarajevo was never ruled by Italian-speaking rulers, neither had a significant number of Italian speakers inhabiting it. The name of this city actually comes from the Turkish word *saray* (court), as this city was called in the Ottoman times Saray-Bosna, depicting the seat of the provincial governor. Alternatively, it might come from the Turkish *Saray Ovası* – ‘the court and the field around it’.

C. ‘discovers’ that the borders between the Ottoman Bosnia and Serbia were “*quite porous*” before 19th century (p. 28), which is a quite spectacular discovery taking into account that both Serbia and Bosnia belonged to the same (Ottoman) empire at times. The statement that American-style rap music is “*readily adopted in Bosnia*”, because of linguistic structures that remind of the epics made by popular early modern and modern bards playing the instrument of *gusle* (p. 30) does not even deserve a comment. C. claims that Muslim and Catholic women in Bosnia tattooed themselves with *henna* (p. 31), presenting it as a common cultural trait that linked those two groups. This is good example how the present book arbitrarily transforms narratives of difference into the narratives of sameness. First, *henna* (or *menhdi*) is actually drawn on the skin with paste made of herbal dyes. It is not tattooed because tattooing is prohibited by Islam and Hinduism. Catholic women and men in central Bosnia were tattooed in the real meaning of the word during the Ottoman and Habsburg times to mark themselves out as Christians.²⁸ A tradition of tattooing women continued even longer, so there are still living Croatian women in Central Bosnia with those tattoos. Therefore, tattooing of women in Bosnia represents a narrative of difference not sameness. I am not aware of Muslim women traditionally have been tattooed in Bosnia or Herzegovina in the past, probably because this activity **is forbidden** to them. The ritual of *pobratimstvo* (ritual blood brotherhood) is described as occurring amongst the Serbs and Muslims in Herzegovina “*uniting them in deep friendship and*

²⁷ “*The emphasis on the language of sharing and religious blending as well as on the ‘inclusive’, ‘tolerant’, and ‘pragmatic’ Ottoman state obscures the ways in which competing groups in Ottoman society negotiated their differences and erases the complicated matrix of power relations attendant upon the process of early Ottoman state building*”, Krstić (2011): 17, cf. Krstić (2011) and Zhelyazkova (1994) on conversion to Islam. More realistic accounts for the Ottoman Herzegovina and Bosnia could be found in Džaja (1999) and in English: Malcolm (1996): 43-118.

²⁸ Glück (1894); Truhelka (1896).

pacts of obligation” (p. 34-5). This custom had nothing to do with the multicultural dreams of C., but develops as a rather practical ‘pact’ between the local regular and irregular soldiers from the Ottoman and Venetian side to help each other if captured by the other side. It was rooted in their common reliance on values such as honour.²⁹ A cherry on the top for this chapter comes at its very end when we learn that Ali-paša Rizvanbegović, the governor of the short lived Ottoman *pashaluk* of Herzegovina (1833-1851), “ruled Bosnia” (p. 37) although the essence of his policy was to administratively separate Herzegovina from Bosnia.

In chapter 3, C. continues with the litany of errors. Croatian writer Pavao Ritter Vitezović (1652-1713) is dated in late 16th century – more than 50 years before he was born (p. 50). Franz Ferdinand’s car “*sped onto the National Library*” (Vijećnica) in 1914. Vijećnica was actually the Sarajevo townhall at that time, and it only became the National (and University) Library in 1949 (p. 53). To give some credit to C. – she was aware that Vijećnica was originally a townhall a few pages earlier (p. 45). When talking about Vijećnica – it was not a “*hybrid monument to Habsburg-Muslim mutual understanding*” (p. 53), but rather an example (quite successful though) of pseudo-Moorish (or Moorish revival) style in European architecture that developed in the 19th century, first adopted by the European Jews and later extending throughout Europe as another example of European orientalist fantasies. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, pseudo-Moorish and later Bosnian style created authentic colonial architectural expression that properly served the Habsburg political aims – to create a new Bosnian nation as an imperial artefact.³⁰ Finally, in this chapter one can read that South Slavs living in the South Slav kingdom (1918-1941) used a “*unified language*” (p. 59), which obliterates the distinctiveness of the Slovenians and Macedonians, who speak distinct South Slavic languages - even if we accept for the sake of argument that Croatian and Serbian are the same language. Finally, there is an oversimplified statement that the *Ustaša* extremism in Bosnia was caused by the “*combination of angry defeat and lost hegemony in Bosnia*” (p. 59, 71) after the First World War. C. does not take into account the Serb domination and unitarization in the South Slav kingdom as a reason for Croatian dissatisfaction and grievances, which significantly contributed to initial support for the Independent State of Croatia and inexcusable crimes committed by the regime that led this short-lived state.

We can also read that the king of the South Slav kingdom Alexander I Karađorđević, otherwise known by policies of forced unitarization and

²⁹ Bracewell (2000).

³⁰ Gunzburger Makaš (2010): 250-52; Wimmen (2007): 34.

support of Serbian hegemony over other South Slavic nations in this period, “*sincerely tried to represent cultures and traditions of all the peoples*” (p. 61, 85). The traces of the same Western depository of knowledge from 1920s and 1930s could also be seen in use of the term “*gallant little Serbia*” (p. 86).³¹ Sometimes C. is aware that the discourse on ‘Dinaric people’ and ‘mountaneers’ is part of discursive external but also internal (or nesting) orientalism³² (p. 65-8), but in other places she accepts dichotomy plains-mountains, city-countryside as reality talking simplistically about “*ancient civilization of Dinaric mountains*” (p. 43, 180) or “*largely urban Muslim culture and the Christian rural population*” (p. 180). Yugoslav Partisan atrocities at the end of Second World War on one place “*can be understood in the context of fury, grief and elation at victory*” (p. 82), and on the other we read that “*the Communists dealt with their enemies with characteristical brutality*” (p. 101). Another ambiguity, that can only confuse a reader, arises when C. states that the Partisans grew into a mass movement “*with only distant links to the old Leninist party*” (p. 87), and later claims that in their ranks “*Leninist discipline was underscored by the secret police department OZNA*” (p. 89), or that Yugoslav communists were highly influenced by Stalin (p. 95). The whitewashing of British policies in Second World War is also noticeable – there is no word of the Bleiburg incident (return of thousands of mainly Croat POW who surrendered to the British in Austria to a certain death or persecution in the hands of Partizans) or British initial support for the Serb royalists of Draža Mihajlović (p. 90-92).

We also learn that the Serbs in B&H after 1945 wore *titovka* (the cap which the Partisans wore) and Muslims black berets to distinguish themselves (p. 101). While the Muslim males indeed replaced fez, banned by new Communist authorities, with black beret, *titovka* was worn as a part of official uniform by Yugoslav People’s Army – not in civilian contexts. Predictably, the period of the Socialist Republic of B&H is in the book celebrated as the time of ‘brotherhood and unity’, incited by ‘soft power’ – industrialization and other benefits. Thus, it is the appearance of a multiparty system that breaks this idyllic society out of nowhere in the late 1980s. While the narratives of ‘brotherhood and unity’ were certainly an unavoidable part of that period and were genuinely accepted by a part of B&H population, C. again does not bother to look into political repression used to reinforce this ideology and undercurrents of nationalist division rising already in the 1980s, way before the appearance of nationalist parties. By attributing the conflict in the 1990s to the ‘nationalists’, C. later admits the existing divisions between three dominant nations in B&H (p. 160).

³¹ Drapac (2010): 96-148 for Western perceptions of this period.

³² ‘Nesting orientalism’ as a concept of Bakić Hayden (1995).

Yugoslav Communists are regarded as “*the most liberal*” and she even cites sublime scholarly authority in the shape of *Rough guide to Yugoslavia* from the 1980s stating that the Yugoslav police are generally easy going and helpful (p. 130). Perhaps that should have been told to the Kosovo demonstrators in 1981 after the brutal crackdown of Yugoslav authorities leaving dozens of dead and thousands arrested, or under-aged Croatian teenagers who were arrested in Herzegovina in the 1980s by ‘easy going police’ and sentenced to jail terms for ‘crimes’ such as singing Croatian patriotic songs, or drawing Croatian national symbols.³³

In the parallel reality that this book creates on occasions, in 1991 “*most people called their language Bosnian*” (p. 139), the fact again is easily disputed with a brief look into the outcomes of 1991 B&H official census. Furthermore C. explicitly states that the Bosniak-majority Sarajevo government in the 1990s conflict was “*democratically elected*” (p. 143) but does not bother to explain that the leadership of the Croats and Serbs was democratically elected too in the 1990s’ B&H elections. War crimes accused leader of the Serbs in B&H Radovan Karadžić in this parallel universe was “*coaching football team*” (p. 144), while he actually worked as psychologist of FC Sarajevo. The famous war-time Sarajevo Tunnel in Butmir “*... was constructed that lead Sarajevans to the airport, beneath Serb-held territory*” (p. 145). In reality the tunnel was dug below the UN held Sarajevo airport by the Bosniak-dominated Army of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Croatian Defence Council (HVO) appears for the first time in the book only in the context of the infamous Mostar Old bridge destruction (p. 151), and for the second time in the context of the Ahmići massacre and prisoner camps for the Bosniaks (p. 166), without stating that HVO was recognized as a part of B&H Armed Forces by B&H Presidency in Sarajevo.³⁴ It is ironic in this context that C. does not even know that the village in Ahmići, where HVO forces massacred between 74 and 102 Bosniak civilians in 1993, is not in Herzegovina but in Central Bosnia. Unawareness of HVO goes so far that the assassination of Blaž Kraljević, commander of the rival Croat Defence Forces - HOS (otherwise done by HVO) is attributed to “*unknown rival Croat paramilitary group*” (p. 105). C. also states that the “*absolute numerical majority of Bosnians ignored wartime radicalization*” (p. 158). While a number of B&H citizens indeed

³³ Lučić (2013), showing from contemporary documents strong nationalist undercurrents in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 1980s. The incidents with persecution of the minors are described on 108-13.

³⁴ Recording of the meetings of B&H presidency in Sarajevo does not leave any doubt that HVO was considered legal part of B&H (ie. Bosniak and Croat) Armed Forces for good part of 1992, Šimić (2006): 296-98 (the meeting of 18/7/1992).

ignored radicalization, it is justified to ask the question: who was then fighting this war that took 100,000 lives? The Serb crimes against the Bosniaks in the 1990s are with reason discussed at length, the Bosniak crimes against the Serbs are barely mentioned and ascribed in openly apologist fashion only to foreign *jihadi* fighters (p. 166-7), while nothing has been said about the Bosniak crimes against Croats such as those committed in the valley of Lašva. C. also cited Haris Silajdžić, former foreign minister of the Sarajevo government known by exaggerations, that 17,000 children were killed in the 1990s (p. 170), while the number, as horrible as it might be, is today estimated at 3,372.³⁵

In this parallel universe the Bosnian convertible mark replaced the Bosnian mark (actually Bosnian **dinar**, Croatian kuna and Yugoslav new dinar), and was pegged to the euro from 2002 (p. 175) – while in fact it was first pegged to the Deutchmark in 1998, and to the euro in 2002. C. attributes to Croatian pop-singer Marko Perković Thompson authorship of the song *Evo zore, evo dana* (*Here comes the dawn, here comes the day*), written in the 1940s *Ustaša* milieu, well before he was even born.³⁶ She is also not aware that the ‘Drina martyrs’ (*Drinske mučenice* – in feminine gender), referenced in the recent song of this singer, do not reflect Croatian aspirations to the river Drina (p. 184-85) but reference the rape and massacre of five Catholic nuns (two Croatian, two Slovenian and one Austrian) by the Serb royalists in 1941, who were recently beatified by the Vatican.

Spelling and linguistic errors also pop up in the book. Ancient Delminium becomes Daelminium (p. 11), the syntagm *Bosna ponosna* (Bosnia the proud) surprisingly translates as “*lofty peaks of Bosnia*” (p. 41), the phrase “*trbuhom za kruhom*” becomes “*s trebuhom za kruhom*” (p. 64), “*smrt fašizmu, svoboda (sloboda) narodu*” (p. 86). The Croatian expression “*pozor mine*” is presented as ‘Bosnian’, instead of “*pažnja mine*”, used in modern Bosnian and Serbian languages. Occasionally, names are given in the genitive instead of nominative, e.g. Vrbanje (Vrbanja) bridge (p. 139), Nemanje (Nemanja) Kusturica (p. 187), etc.

As shown throughout this review, Carmichael confirms much that Maria Todorova wrote almost two decades ago about the Yugoslav disintegration, seeing Bosnia as Todorova’s ‘*Volksmuseum* of multiculturalism’, defined by ‘primordial Balkan cultural patterns’:

³⁵ The most complete list of victims from the 1990s war in Bosnia and Herzegovina as far is published in Tokača (2012).

³⁶ It would be too much to expect from Carmichael to observe that this song has identical melody as the Partizan song *Na Kordunu grob do groba* (There is grave next to a grave on Kordun), which is made in the same period, or even earlier.

“It would do much better if the Yugoslav, not Balkan, crisis ceased to be explained in terms of Balkan ghosts, ancient Balkan enmities, primordial Balkan cultural patterns and proverbial Balkan turmoil, and instead was approached with the same rational criteria that the West reserves for itself: issues of self-determination versus inviolable status quo, citizenship and minority rights, problems of ethnic and religious autonomy, the prospects and limits of secession, the balance between big and small nations and states, the role of international institutions ... It is, of course, a sublime irony to observe leaders of the cleansed societies of Western Europe fifty years after their ugliest performance raise their hands in horror and bombard (in words and in deed, and safely hidden behind American leadership) the former Yugoslavs in preserving “ethnic diversity” for the sake of securing a Volksmuseum of multiculturalism in a corner of Europe, after having given green light to precisely the opposite process.”³⁷

As said at the beginning, it is impossible to understand Bosnia (and Herzegovina) without looking into larger contexts in which they and their population existed. However, the latest attempts to see Bosnia as a separate unit of historical analysis instead of distancing from Serbian and Croatian national historiographies brings another problem – it constructs a ‘national biography’ for the Bosnian/Bosniak nation using the very same methodology: selective interpretation of the sources and invocation of abstract categories of mentality, civilization or culture. The history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and its identities is only possible as a transnational history, history of larger imperial and frontier contexts, or history of distinct regions such as Bosnia, or Herzegovina. What the present book brings to the table is useful for the research of the history of contemporary western perceptions, but not the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

³⁷ Todorova (1997): 186.

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