

## **TOWARDS AGONISM: THE SERBIAN AND BOSNIAK (BOSNIAN MUSLIM) STRUGGLE FOR CHURCH AND EDUCATIONAL AUTONOMY 1897-1902**

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*Abstract.* The author explores complex discursive relations between the Serbian and Bosnian Muslim (Bosniak) community during their struggle for religious and educational autonomy *vis-à-vis* the Austro-Hungarian authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1897-1902. The starting hypothesis is that during their struggle against a common enemy over similar issues, an agonistic discursive relationship was formed between the two political elites. The Austro-Hungarian Empire sought to cut off Bosnian religious ties to Constantinople, both with the Ecumenical Patriarch and with the Caliph; and to force a state run school system on the population. This infringed on the traditional rights of ethnoreligious groups to communal autonomy regarding religious and educational matters, which resulted in the formation of the Movement for religious and educational autonomy and the Movement for Waqf-mearif autonomy, among Serbs and Muslims respectively. These movements aimed at restoring their respective autonomies and coordinated their efforts, which would result in the signing of the Draft of a contract of joint struggle for religious and educational autonomy in 1902. The author concludes that Austria-Hungary placed itself in an antagonistic position towards Serbs and Bosniaks through its policies. Consequently, it played a figure of a common enemy, around which an agonistic relationship between Serbs and Bosniaks could be formed.

*Keyword:* Bosnia and Herzegovina, agonism, antagonism, identity, political, politics, discourse.

### **INTRODUCTION**

History is a difficult subject of study. This work does not seek to uncover historical truth about a particular period. It merely seeks to analyse discursive encounters and identify agonistic discursive relations in a specific period. First of

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all, in a study of discursive encounters, “the study contrasts the discourse of the Self with the Other’s ‘counter-construction’ of Self and Other”. (Hansen, 2006, p. 68) In the case of this work, since it is dealing with the Bosnian Muslim community in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Serbian Orthodox community in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the first half of the 1900s, the study will focus on their discursive encounters. Discourse analysis necessitates a selection of relevant works to be analysed since it is difficult to cover the entirety of a particular national discourse. Hansen advises that these works should follow three criteria: “they are characterized by a clear articulation of identities and policies; they are widely read and attended, and they have the formal authority to define a political position.” (Ibid, p. 76). The subject of this paper is the two movements for religious and educational autonomy, which were in effect protest movements against formal authorities of the time, the local and imperial Austro-Hungarian authorities. However, they articulate identities and policies, they were widely read, and they did enjoy widespread public support. Because of said support, they had the authority to define political positions. The Serbian movement had procurations from 60 Serbian-Orthodox municipalities in B&H (B&H zbornik II, p. 39), while the Bosniak movement had 136 000 individual Bosnian Muslims procurations, according to the leaders of the movements. (B&H zbornik V, p. 4). Thus, the two movements had democratic authority within their communities and, over time, forced the Austro-Hungarian authorities to negotiate with them. Thus, the Bosnian-Herzegovinian almanacs are the primary sources, and their discourse is the object of this study. The secondary literature is selected based on the same three criteria. However, it serves as an aid to the primary sources which were written by the leaders of the two movements.

In order to better understand the complex web of socio-political and economic relations in Austro-Hungarian Bosnia and Herzegovina, it is paramount that we present a brief overview of the historical conditions which led to the emergence of the two movements for religious and educational autonomy<sup>2</sup>. I will try to steer away from presenting biased claims from secondary literature when presenting the historical context. It is particularly difficult when using works of national histories, whose communities today are in a discursive battle over history. For example, Imamović dismisses Serbian historiography on Islamization in Bosnia as “chauvinistic” (Imamović, 2006, p. 146), while Ekmečić claims that mythologisation of the past is a “disease” of Bosnian Muslim intellectuals (Ekmečić, 2017, p. 546). Hence, the reader should take the historical information that will be presented as a

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<sup>2</sup> The movements are called the Movements for educational-religious autonomy (Pokret za versko-prosvetnu autonomiju) or the Movements for church-school autonomy (Pokret za crkveno-školsku autonomiju). The two terms are synonymous. From this point onward for the sake of brevity the Movement for religious and educational autonomy and the Movement for waqf-mearif autonomy will be called simply the Movements or Serbian and Bosniak Movements, respectively.

product of the secondary literature that is used in this work. In other words, it is a product of discourse, a discourse with its own biases layered over historical facts. To the best of my abilities, I will try to present facts behind these layers, when speaking about the historical context during which this move towards agonism takes place. If I present some controversial statements by authors (such as those above), I will note that it is what said authors claim.

I will need to present a few disclaimers regarding the very sensitive nature of the topic. First of all, the source material used in this paper was overwhelmingly written in Serbian<sup>3</sup> and the material is over a century old, with a scarce official translation. Thus, all citations will be translated by the author of this paper, unless stated otherwise. This paper deals with discursive relations between Serbs and Bosniaks within Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period 1897-1902, or more specifically, relations between their local elites. I use the term Bosniak for the Bosnian Muslim community in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the sake of simplicity.

The question of Bosniak nationhood is a complex one and it needs to be addressed here, albeit briefly. The Bosniak national name had been promoted from the “Bosniak” newspaper in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, to “Bosanski pregled”, a political emigre newspaper in Switzerland owned and edited by Adil Zulfikarpašić and it has finally become the dominant name of the Bosnian Muslim community during the First Bosniak Convention (Sabor) in 1993. (Imamović, 2006). Bosniak, as a name for Bosnian Muslims, had been used by the Ottoman Turks to distinguish them both from the Turks and local Christian Serbs and Croats (Čelebi, 1996, Dževdet-paša, 2017). The name Bosniak will be used for the sake of simplicity and clarity, but I would like to stress that the “nationhood” of Bosniaks or lack thereof was by far a settled matter in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Members of the Bosniak elite would evade declaring themselves as either Croats or Serbs, others like Osman Nuri Hadžić and Osman Đikić would consistently advocate for the Croatian and Serbian national cause respectively. Others still would oscillate between the two. Musa Ćazim Ćatić, a famous Bosnian Muslim poet, would write Serbian patriotic poems for “Bosanska vila” early on in his career, while after 1908, he would declare himself as a Croat and write Croatian patriotic poems. This extended to Bosnian Muslim newspapers and organizations, where “Gajret” and “Behar” would initially be nationally agnostic. However, “Gajret” would move towards an articulation of Serbian national identity (Vervae, 2013, pp. 312-313, Dacić, 2015, p. 23) under of Osman Đikić during 1907-08, while “Behar” would move toward the Croatian national identity under Čaušević and Ćatić as editors (Vervae, 2013, p. 309). By 1911 “Gajret” reached 2,000 copies

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<sup>3</sup> The name of the language was a matter of contention at the time when the source material was written as well as today. I use the name Serbian for the language written and spoken in: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Croatia.

in circulation, while “Behar” would reach 800 (Ibid, p. 312). If circulation is any indication, it can be deduced that Serbian national identification was gaining ground within the Bosnian Muslim intelligentsia. It can be argued that Bosnian Muslim national identification was a question of political affiliations with the Serbian or Croat national movements. (Ibid, p. 310)

This national fluidity would continue in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes where the Yugoslav Muslim Party (YMO) would win 110 895 votes, while other Muslim parties would win a combined total of 1,877 votes. Of the 24 YMO members of parliament, 13 were Croats, 5 were Serbs, 4 were undeclared, 1 was a Yugoslav, and 1 was a Bosniak (Purivatra 1969, p. 181). What these individuals and organizations had in common was that they imagined a Bosnian Muslim community as a solid community moving down history (Anderson, 2016, p. 26) and as something distinct from Serbs and Croats, if not necessarily in its national name and nationality, but culturally and religiously. This paper will treat them as a distinct community and use the Bosniak name as a shorthand for said community.

With these controversies out of the way, we move on to a brief overview of the historical context. Bosnia and Herzegovina had been occupied by Austria-Hungary in 1878, under a mandate from the Berlin Congress. It was supposed to bring order to the two perpetually rebellious provinces of the Ottoman Empire. Although Austria-Hungary was supposed to be a custodian of Ottoman B&H<sup>4</sup> and Sandžak, to secure order and eventually cede control back to the Ottoman Empire, it had other plans for the provinces. Austria-Hungary would quickly start eroding Ottoman sovereignty in B&H. This erosion of sovereign control from Constantinople and accumulation by Vienna was gradual. The process ended in 1908 after B&H was officially annexed. The process that can be best described as the creeping de-Ottomanization of B&H took many forms. Especially relevant for this paper is the eroding of the religious authority of Constantinople in B&H.

The Ottoman Empire was a theocratic state, with the head of state being the religious leader of all Sunni Muslims. Additionally, minority ethnoreligious groups enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy under *the millet system* (Markovich, 2013, pp. 227-232). In practice, the Serbs of Bosnia and Herzegovina were members of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the so-called “Phanariotes”<sup>5</sup>, or Greek clergymen held the bishopric seats in B&H. Aside from these upper-level clergymen who were seen as foreign, lower level clergy came from the local communities and through

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<sup>4</sup> Bosnia and Herzegovina-B&H, for brevity the abbreviation will be used from this point onward

<sup>5</sup> Named after the district of “Phanar” in Constantinople. Phanariotes were rich Greek merchants and clergymen who sought to spread Greek influence across the Balkans, thereby provoking ire from local Slavic Christians.

Serbian church-school municipalities (Srpsko-pravoslavne crkveno školske opštine), the local clergy and laymen could exercise a great degree of control over communal matters. Likewise, the local Catholic community had a degree of autonomy centred around its Franciscan monasteries. The Bosniak community had a degree of economic autonomy through their *waqfs* or religious endowments, which were a sort of surrogate private property meant to circumvent the restrictive timar system (Lampe, 1989, Ch 6, pp. 182-183). Particularly through *odžakluk* timars, Council of *ayans* and capitaines Bosniaks had economic and political autonomy from Constantinople, which they sought to preserve and expand. Still, they wanted to expand their autonomy, to reach the level of Serbia at that time, resisted progressive Ottoman reforms which affected their feudal privileges, and the Ottoman Empire ceding 6 municipalities to Serbia (Imamović, 2006, pp. 333-35).

Ekmečić, on the other hand, states that Gradašćević's first priority was that Serbia should not become independent and that Muslim immigration from Serbia should cease (Ekmečić, 2017, p. 231). According to Ekmečić, Albanian rebels under Mehmed pasha Skopljak supported these demands. Whatever the case may be, the most famous rebellion of Bosnian Muslims against the Ottomans was laid by the said Husein Captain Gradašćević, the Dragon of Bosnia. He is held in high regard by Bosniaks today as their national forefather (Imamović, 2006, pp. 35-37, Filipović 2007, pp. 190-91), as he was in the 1900s (B&H zbornik V<sup>6</sup>, 205-206). The character of the rebellion is a matter of scholarly dispute today on whether it was: a proto-national Bosniak rebellion, a rebellion of the aristocracy who wanted to preserve their feudal privileges, or an Islamic rebellion against a sultan who has given in too much to Christian pressures, both within and without the empire. It should be noted that Bosniak religious autonomy had been a nonissue in Ottoman times. They were members of a unified and privileged religious group in a theocratic state (Ibid, pp. 91-92). In fact, the Bosniak struggle for religious autonomy was a direct consequence of the severing of relations with the Ottoman theocratic state.

Austria-Hungary would put pressure on local religious autonomy within just a few years of taking power. It would sign a Convention with the Pope in 1881 and with the Ecumenical Patriarch in 1880, which would give the Emperor right to

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<sup>6</sup> Босанско-херцеговачки зборници“ or “Bosnian-Herzegovinian almanacs” are a series of books chronicling the struggle for religious and educational autonomy in B&H. They were published by “Милетићева штампарија“ in Novi Sad in Cyrillic script. Its authors are not mentioned, although it can be deduced that they are the leaders of the Movements: Gligorije Jeftanović, Vojislav Šola, Emil Gavril, Šerif Arnautović, Ali-beg Firdus, and others. The books consisted of reprints of various memoranda, deputations, transcribed letters of negotiations between the parties, etc. For the sake of simplicity from this point onward, when citing and paraphrasing these Almanacs I will write “БиХ зборник I-VII”, depending on which book of the series I am citing.

appoint bishops, both Catholic and Orthodox, and gave the Austro-Hungarian state the obligation to pay for priestly salaries. After a decree from the sheik ul Islam<sup>7</sup> in 1882, total control over religious matters in B&H had been vested onto the mufti of Sarajevo and through him, the Austro-Hungarian authorities would introduce sweeping reforms in the Islamic religious system in B&H (Краљачић, 2017). Like with the Catholic and Orthodox clergy, the Muslim clergy would become dependent on Vienna. While the local Catholic-Croatian community and/or its leaders stood silent on the matter (except for some Franciscan monks), these reforms caused a blowback among the Serbian and Bosniak communities. This religious pressure, coupled with the introduction of compulsory military service, sparked a rebellion in Herzegovina in 1882, where both Bosnian Muslims and Serbs took part (Ekmečić, 2017, p. 311). The Serbian Movement was active from 1881, firstly as a passive boycott of church life and then it would turn into an active movement led by Gligorije Jeftanović, Vojislav Šola, and others. The Muslim Movement started in 1899 and the spark that produced it was the allegedly forced conversion of underaged Fata Omanović to Catholicism (Краљачић, 2017, p. 419). The two movements would then begin a campaign of concerted pressure on the Austro-Hungarian authorities to restore communal autonomy or at least to alter Austro-Hungarian reforms to make them more palatable to the Serbian and Bosniak communities.

### **THE POLITICAL AND POLITICS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

This paper approaches the issue of Serbo-Bosniak discursive relations from a constructivist perspective, drawing from the works of Chantal Mouffe and Carl Schmitt. It should be noted that Schmitt has never identified himself as a constructivist. However, he is used by constructivists, postmodernists, post-Marxists, poststructuralists, and the New Right, as their precursor. In regards to identity construction, I adhere to the dialogical perspective. Iver B. Neumann classifies Bakhtin, Kristeva, and Schmitt among others into this dialogical school of identity studies. Dialogism places itself in juxtaposition to dialectics. The Other, both for Neumann and for the dialogists, is an epistemological and ontological necessity and identities are constructed through discourse (Nojman, 2011, pp. 33-34). Unlike dialectics where a relation of thesis-antithesis is succeeded by synthesis, with dialogism there is no synthesis. To put it simply, “there is no inclusion without exclusion” (Ibid, p. 35) and for any kind of identity fusion or moulding to happen,

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<sup>7</sup> A sort of a steward of the religious function of the sultan. Sultan was still nominally the Caliph, however he would “outsource” the governing of the country’s religious affairs to the Sheikh ul Islam, while the Sultan was preoccupied with the matters of state.

there needs to be a greater, more alien, and more threatening Other. I base my ontological and epistemological approach largely on Mouffe and Laclau, and they in turn build off of Schmitt. For Schmitt, the enemy is “in a specifically intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that the extreme conflict with him is possible” (Ibid, 1154-60). Mouffe builds upon Schmitt’s ideas and tries to find a middle ground between an ever-present threat of war and total eradication of societal conflict, which is the liberal ideal. She makes two crucial interventions into Schmitt’s conceptual framework. Firstly, she distinguishes between the *political* and *politics*. The former is a dimension of antagonism that cannot be done away with, while the latter is a system of practices, discourses, and institutions whose goal is to establish order and human coexistence; a system of checks and balances of the political (Mouffe, 2013, 191-206)<sup>8</sup>. Secondly, for Mouffe, there are three types of relations within the political: that of competitors who struggle for power without questioning the wider political system, that of enemies who seek to destroy each other or at least expel them from the political and finally that of adversaries who seek to implement their hegemonic projects while respecting the democratic procedures and institutions (Mouffe, 2013, 274-290). Enemies have an antagonistic relationship, while adversaries have an agonistic one. This means, in Mouffe’s words that “We will fight against his ideas but we will not question his right to defend them” (Mouffe, 1993, p. 4). Mouffe, while criticizing liberal and more specifically deliberative democracy, presents her model of *agonistic pluralism*. This model posits that the task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions, but to “mobilize those passions towards the production of democratic designs” (Mouffe, 1999, p. 756).

For Mouffe, the *raison d’être* of democratic politics is precisely to democratically frame social antagonism and turn them into agonistic relations. In her own words “Modern democracy’s specificity lies in the recognition and legitimation of conflict and the refusal to suppress it by imposing an authoritarian order” (Ibid.). She claims that liberal democracies tend to fail at this when “agonistic dynamic is hindered by an apparent excess of consensus, which usually masks a disquieting apathy” (Mouffe, 1993, p. 6). This paper expands upon this idea by posing a question: what happens when an authoritarian order does seek to suppress conflict? I argue that ameliorating internal antagonism within the political is not merely the purview of democratic politics. Specifically, Austria-Hungary sought to create consensus in B&H, ameliorate antagonisms towards it and between the three communities, and to tie them all to Austria-Hungary. This was all supposed to be achieved by creating a specific Bosnian identity, a form of local patriotism tied, as Kallay put it, “to a great and powerful state idea” of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (Краљачић, 2017, pp. 82-83). Even before Kallay, the Ottoman tanzimat reformer in B&H Ahmed

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<sup>8</sup> For in-text references where there is no “p” or “pp” this means that the numbers are locations within an e-book file. This is a substitute for page numbers, when the pages of the e-book are not numbered.

Dževdet-paša sought to “revive the drive for preserving and protecting one’s own kin (rod) and then to stimulate attachment and love to their own country” (Dževdet-paša, 2017, p. 98). I argue that like the liberal-democratic system which Mouffe is criticizing, Austria-Hungary (which was not a liberal democracy) overreached, forced its ideas on the populace, implemented socially intrusive policies, thereby positioning itself as the enemy to local Serbs and Bosniaks. Their elites reacted by forming an agonistic relationship between one another and displacing Austria-Hungary to the role of the antagonistic enemy in the sense of “existentially something different and alien” (Schmitt 2007, 1154-60) that is “putting into question our identity and our existence” (Mouffe, 2013, 228-237). Common interests are necessary to form agonistic relations. However, a common enemy is a key to forming them. In their paper which analyses the contemporary discursive relations between the three national groups in B&H, Tepšić and Vukelić (2019) conclude that the Serbo-Croatian antagonistic relationship turned from antagonism to agonism “from the moment when two sides started perceiving the third as a risk to their constitutive socio-political identity” (p. 23). I argue that when Austria-Hungary started to infringe on Serbian and Bosniak religious and educational autonomy, the two communities started perceiving Austria-Hungary as the enemy, and by the extension the local Catholic population, both local Croats, as well as Germans and other colonists. Neumann claims that the Turks were the Other of Europe for centuries because they were: physically close, had a strong military, and had a strong (and alien) religious tradition (Neumann, 2011, p. 61). Austria-Hungary as the *de facto* and later *de jure* sovereign of B&H, was physically close, had a strong military, and was religiously alien to Muslim and Serbian Orthodox communities in B&H. This fact made it easier for the two communities to perceive Austria-Hungary as the Other. Moreover, Austro-Hungarian imposition of its political framework and oversight onto B&H, made it a prime target for othering and antagonization. In brief Austro-Hungarian *politics* failed to establish order, to “domesticate” the Bosnian *political* and “keep at bay the forces of destruction” (Mouffe, 1993, p. 141). Rather, these forces turned against it, turning it into the enemy while building an agonistic relationship between them. Crucially, I argue that since the two movements formed an agonistic alliance and they faced Austro-Hungarian authoritarian politics, they sought to, as Mouffe would put it, mobilize their passions to create democratic designs. In other words, the two Movements aimed to create *alternative democratic politics*.

## **THE STRUGGLE FOR RELIGIOUS AND EDUCATIONAL AUTONOMY IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

Bosnia and Herzegovina were war-ravaged provinces after the Berlin Congress. They endured years of uprisings against the Ottomans by the local Christians and subsequently a brief struggle against the Austro-Hungarian occupying forces.



Ekmečić (2017) estimates based on the archives that the Great Eastern Crisis produced 250 000 refugees from Bosnia and Herzegovina (p. 289), who poured into Austria-Hungary. In fact, count Andrasi raised the refugee issue as one of the key reasons why Austria-Hungary had been compelled to occupy B&H. During his address to the Berlin Congress, on 28 June 1878, he stated that the 200 000 refugees did not want to return to B&H unless the situation there was stabilized. According to Andrasi, B&H people are “fanatical in their antagonism” and they live “intermingled in the same counties, towns, and villages”; and these religious and social divisions, along with the problem of the Agrarian issue “can only be solved by a strong and neutral government” (B&H zbornik I, 1902, pp. 143-145). For Andrasi, naturally, this government was Austria-Hungary. We can see a clear intent of Austria-Hungary to pacify Bosnian antagonisms. It should be noted that this was his address to the Berlin Congress, and it should be seen as a discourse legitimizing Austro-Hungarian positions regarding B&H, rather than statements of fact.

The Agrarian issue had been a problem in B&H for some time before 1878 and had been one of the major driving factors behind Christian revolts in B&H. In brief, the local Muslim aristocracy owned the vast majority of arable land, while local Christians were employed as serfs and tenants, tilling the land and paying rent. This was a feudal relationship, but it was atypical for the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman aristocracy was essentially tenants of state land known as *timars*, which could be taken away by the Sultan at any moment. The local Christian peasants did work these timars, but they had some land of their own, had some legal protection, and could file complaints to the Ottoman legal system, which could (theoretically at least) result in the abusive lord losing their timar. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the local Bosnian Muslim aristocracy began a process of *ciflukisation* (*čitlučenje*) or transforming timar land into *cifluks*, *de facto* inheritable private land. This process incorporated also the appropriation of Christian (*raja*) peasant land and state land... New Christian peasants, usually migrating from upland villages into fertile valleys where *cifluks* were dominant, would have no other option than to work as serfs for the local Muslim lords. (Lampe, 1989, pp. 187-191) The Ottoman Empire would gradually legalize the *cifluk* system through various legal acts: the *Hatisherif* of Gulhana in 1839, the *Ramazan Law* of 1858, and the crucial *Saferic Order* of 1859. The Muslim lord officially became a property owner, while the Christian serf became a tenant, who works the lord's private property and pays the rent. The local serf did have pre-emption right, i.e., the lord had an obligation to offer to sell the land to the tenant first, and if he refuses, then he can sell the land to other customers. Austria-Hungary legalized *cifluks* as private property in 1878, and they remained so until 1918 (Imamović, 2006, 338-340). Considering that there were 85 000 households of serfs in 1879, out of whom 60 000 were Orthodox and 25 000 Catholic, while there were some 6-7000 aristocratic households and 77 000 free

peasant households, which were over 90% Muslim (Kraljačić, 2017, pp. 23-24) this naturally aggravated tensions between the communities. The situation did not improve much by 1910. Muslims made up 91.15% of aristocratic landlords and 56.65% of free peasants, while Orthodox Serbs made up 73.92% of the serf population, the rest being Catholic (Purivatra, 1969, p. 142).

Granted, Austria-Hungary did introduce loans for serfs seeking to buy land from their landlords, but their effects were underwhelming. The Agrarian issue was one of the major points of antagonism between Serbs and Bosniaks and, in some sense, it is today. The two Agrarian reforms of 1919 and 1946 transferred the land ownership to erstwhile serfs, who were overwhelmingly Serbs. This led some Bosniak intellectuals to claim that they were nothing more than a Serbian landgrab and plunder of Bosniak private property (Filipović, 2007, p. 79). In contrast to its activities on the Agrarian issue, where it preserved the status quo, Austria-Hungary was much more active in trying to reform local identities. Vienna's plans for transforming local identities were systematic and ambitious. They ranged from promoting state-run schools while putting pressure on church-run ones, censoring newspapers, banning books and newspapers, setting up pro-government newspapers, setting up the Land Museum (Zemaljski muzej) and exploring and writing Bosnian history, designing the Bosnian flag and coat of arms, promoting a unified Bosnian identity, constructing historical links between Bosnia (Rama in Medieval times) and Hungary, forbidding the usage of Serbian and Croatian national adjectives for societal organizations, colonizing the border region along the Drina River with Germans, trying to create autonomous religious centers in B&H like the Žitomislić monastery to limit cross-border pilgrimages to Ostrog, etc. (Краљачић, 2017). However, Vienna's infringement on religious autonomy was the straw that broke the camel's back and led to antagonistic mobilization *vis-à-vis* Austria-Hungary among the Serbian and Muslim communities.

I have presented a short overview of what caused the movements to arise. Through Concordats with the Vatican and the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the orders of Sheikh-ul-Islam, Austria-Hungary obtained the rights of appointment of the higher clergy and obligations of paying clergymen in B&H. Thus, as both movements claimed, higher religious organizations became alienated from its flock and lower clergy, while becoming totally dependent on a religiously alien (inoverna) government (B&H zbornik V, p. 120; B&H zbornik III, p. 187). The scale of Austro-Hungarian intrusion into local religious affairs was immense. For example, Article II of the Concordat of 1880 gave the emperor the right to appoint a new bishop if the seat is vacant and he merely had to notify the Synod<sup>9</sup>, while article III states that

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<sup>9</sup> The Saint Sinod is an executive and legislative body of a particular Orthodox Church. In some cases, there also exists a Saint Assembly or in Serbian "Sabor", which acts as a legislative body. In that case the Sinod and the Sabor are executive and legislative branch, respectively.

removing a bishop “is done in the same manner as his appointment” (B&H zbornik I, pp. 153-54). This article is deliberately vague, and it practically meant that Austria-Hungary had free reigns over appointing and dismissing bishops. It began by sacking the Greek bishop of Sarajevo Antim and appointing a Serb Savo Kosanović, who would later resign in protest against the government’s support of the Catholic archbishop of Sarajevo Štadler and his conversion and propaganda efforts (Краљачић, 2017, p. 345). Article VI obliges Austria-Hungary to take on Bosnia and Herzegovina’s tax duties to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, while Article VII obliges Austria-Hungary to pay salaries to Orthodox bishops and cancel the Bishop’s tax. The VI and VII articles were particularly problematic since they made the clergy independent of their flock and dependent on the government. This meant, according to the leaders of the Movement, that the Orthodox population of B&H had no sway on church matters in B&H and the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The extent of this dependence can be seen in a “Program” on how to resolve intra-Orthodox tension in Mostar, delivered from the government to the bishop of Mostar, which states that it should be the bishop’s top priority to separate Vojislav Šola, Vladimir Radović and other leaders of Serbian-Orthodox Municipality of Mostar from the Orthodox flock and to place said flock in the hands of someone more loyal, a certain Lazar Miličević. (B&H Zbornik I, pp. 157-158). The aforementioned Radović would be buried without a priest conducting funeral rites, as a form of protest against Austro-Hungarian religious policies and pro-Austrian clergy (B&H zbornik II, p. V). As we can see, the Emperor had the *de facto* possibility to appoint all religious authorities. When this is coupled with the fact that civilian and military authorities were all appointed from Vienna, this in effect meant that all avenues of democratic articulation of interests and identities for the local communities were closed. Just as with Mouffe’s criticism of liberal democracies, Austro-Hungarian politics in an effort to eliminate antagonism drastically reduced the space for the democratic articulation of identities and interests, which caused a blowback.

The struggle for religious autonomy was conducted on two fronts, by both movements. Firstly, they would approach Benjamin Kallay for negotiations and if need be, approach the parliaments in Vienna and Budapest or petition the emperor. The Imperial memoranda were the chief tool of their communication with Austria-Hungary (B&H zbornik I). On the other hand, both movements would regularly travel to Constantinople to negotiate with their respective religious authorities. The Serbian movement addressed their concerns to the Ecumenical Patriarchate via Constantinopolitan Memorials (Carigradske spomenice). Through these documents, they suggested reforms, criticized the Austro-Hungarian policy as well as Constantinople’s policy, but they also pleaded for support with Constantinople. One of the greatest issues was the question of representation. As stated before, both movements were being suppressed by authoritarian politics and they responded by trying to create democratic politics. In the words of the leaders of the Serbian

movement, they hoped that people “would participate in the whole government of their fatherland, so that they could be the *masters of their own destinies*” (B&H zbornik I, p. 85). As the leaders of the movement claimed, before the Austro-Hungarian intrusion into local religious matters, B&H Orthodox Christians were not only autonomous on a local, municipal level; they had a say in choosing the Patriarch, which had been stated in the Constitution of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. In fact, Gavro Vučković, a Serbian layman, was a representative of the B&H Orthodox community when the Constitution of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was drafted in the 1860s (B&H zbornik II, p. 10, p. 125). According to Petar Kočić, the Serbian population in B&H paid a special tax called “gavrija” to pay for Vučković’s expenses in Constantinople (Васин&Микавица, 2018, p. 45). The leaders of the Serbian Movement claimed that since the people had no say in crafting canonical documents since Vučković, particularly in the case of the Concordat of 1880, these new reforms “cannot have legal power” (B&H zbornik II, pp. 127-28). Since the leaders of the Serbian movement had written procurations that they represent the majority of Orthodox believers in B&H (at least according to them), then any reforms must be created with their participation. As the new Vučkovićs, i.e., new representatives of the people, they presented a series of propositions for religious reform in order to construct a semblance of democratic politics.

Practically identical arguments are presented both in the Constantinopolitan memorials and in the Imperial memoranda. “B&H zbornik III” presents in great detail the reforms which the Serbian movement sought to achieve. Since Austro-Hungarian authorities directed them to find common ground with the bishops and present a joint proposal for church reform, the members of the Serbian movement negotiated for years with the three and later for bishops of B&H, chief among them being bishop Nikola Mandić of Sarajevo. The key proposals of the Serbian movement were: annulling the Concordat of 1880, church bodies (Consistory, Higher Spiritual Court, Parochial Municipalities) were to be chosen and paid by parishes, forming a legislative body at the level of B&H consisted of 1/3 priests and 2/3 laymen (BiH Zbornik III, pp. 57-8). Mandić presented a compromise that the clergy members of these bodies should be appointed by the bishops, while the laymen should be approved by the bishops after elections, which meant that imperially appointed bishops would have veto power in all institutions (Ibid, pp. 102-03). This was, of course, unacceptable for Jeftanović, Šola, and other leaders of the movement, so an agreement could not be reached. The Bosniak movement had similar, yet distinct proposals for Islamic church reform. They proposed the formation of Waqf-Mearif Assembly, made up of hajis<sup>10</sup> who would elect 5 candidates, out of whom the Land government of B&H<sup>11</sup> would choose one to

<sup>10</sup> People who completed the Haj to Mecca

<sup>11</sup> Zemaljska vlada or in German Landesregierung

become the Reis<sup>12</sup> of B&H. A religious Council of 6 muftis and 24 hojas would elect members to the Waqf-Mearif Assembly (B&H zbornik V, pp. 55-56). The government wanted to have vetting powers over candidates for the Assembly, which was unacceptable to Ali-Fehmi Džabić, Ali-beg Firdus, Skender Kulenović, and other leaders of the movement because it meant that foreign religionists had the right to judge Islamic clerics on their theological competences (Ibid, pp. 62-63). According to Muslim leaders, such oversight by a foreign religion was canonically illegal and unprecedented. These proposals for religious reform were so similar to the Serbian ones for Kallay that he claimed that “they come from a Serbian source” (Ibid, p. 170). As with the Serbian movement, the Bosniak movement reforms and petitions fell on deaf ears both in Constantinople and Vienna. They did, however, garner some sympathies with the opposition in the Hungarian Delegation, particularly with Stevan Rakovski who compared Kallay’s policies in B&H with the repressive policies of Bach in Hungary. (Ibid, p. 150). To summarize, the reforms suggested were meant to democratize B&H politics and give local people representation. However, rather than asking for a parliament to be granted to them by Vienna, the movements saw their traditional institutions as something that can be reestablished and *democratically (re)designed*.

### **AGONISTIC ALLIANCE, COMMON ENEMY AND THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY**

Both movements has had considerable democratic legitimacy if their claims are to be believed. They claimed that 45 out of 58 urban Orthodox-Serbian municipalities and 15 out of 42 rural ones gave procurations (punomoćja) to the Serbian movement, authorizing them to speak on their behalf (B&H zbornik II, p. 39). Concurrently, the Bosniak movement obtained 136 000 procurations from individual Bosnian Muslims (B&H zbornik V, p. 4). The Serbian movement’s leaders do not state how many individuals are behind these municipal procurations. For these reasons, the Kallay government found them to be a threat and would persecute the leaders of both movements. Džabić, Kulenović, and Bičakčić would be declared illegal emigres, while Arnautović would be put under house arrest in 1901 (Ibid, p. 3). Nikola Kašiković would be arrested, as well as Pero Drljača (BiH zbornik I, p.76, p. 25), while Jeftanović would face fines of up to 6,000 florins (Краљачић, 2017, p. 390). These were just some of the steps Austria-Hungary took to place itself on an antagonistic footing with Serbs and Bosniaks. More importantly, it would place local Croats in an antagonistic position since they were seen as Vienna’s proteges in B&H. In other words, for Serbs and Bosniaks, Austria-Hungary and Croats were seen as threats to “their constitutive socio-political identity”

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<sup>12</sup> Supreme Islamic religious authority in the land, roughly equivalent to the catholic archbishop.

(Tepšić&Vukelić, 2019, p.23). This can be seen in the many grievances that both movements present.

For example, the Bosniak movement claims that both the government-led secular schools and archbishop Štadler are mere proponents of greater Croatian ideology and propaganda, which is assaulting Muslims in B&H (B&H Zbornik V, p.7, p. 95, p. 98). Likewise, the Serbian movement claims that the government has been forcing Latin script and “hrvatštinu”<sup>13</sup> (B&H Zbornik I, p. 9) on them, that textbooks are full of “Croatian chauvinism” (Ibid p. 69), that Rome-Papal propaganda has been a constant aggressor on B&H for centuries (B&H Zbornik II, p. 33, p. 63.), and that catholic propaganda is not only the enemy of Orthodoxy and education but “an enemy of *national consciousness*” (B&H Zbornik VII, p. 24, highlighted in original). For both movements, the enemy was especially pernicious since it sought to disturb the reproduction of their identities. In other words, both movements wanted to control their own narratives and be autonomous in socializing their young and controlling their past. Both movements stress that Croat and Catholic propaganda in state-run schools is corrupting their youth and women (B&H zbornik II, p. 88; B&H zbornik I, p. 13, B&H Zbornik V, pp. 92-95). Both movements are colloquially called “Movements for church-school autonomy”. The educational part is critical since it was seen, especially in the era of Enlightenment, as a method of raising and maintaining national consciousness. The following citation is the best example of the value of educational autonomy for B&H communities.

The leaders of the Serbian movement, when arguing for an autonomous Serbian school for teachers, stressed that such schools “must nurture first and foremost *our holy faith* and its church blagoljepije<sup>14</sup>, *Serbian nationhood* and *its past*.” (B&H zbronic I, p. 65). The Muslim movement had the exact same goals, to retain and reproduce its particular identity. This is precisely why both movements criticize state-run schools, since they had alienated the youth from their “natural” identities. Muslim leaders, when speaking about Bosnian Muslim youth claim that they “have found it bereft of Islamic religious consciousness and pride, mere prey of catholic propaganda” (B&H Zbornik, V, p. 93). This is why Muslims need religious and educational autonomy, as weapons for “a battle against the fiercest onslaught of religious propaganda in all the centuries, nations (in the ethnic sense) and countries (zemalja)” (Ibid, p. 95). For Serbs, Austro-Hungarian influence in B&H is equally life-threatening. Inside these secular schools “into the souls of future mothers of our fatherland is instilled the teaching of Rome-papism” (B&H Zbornik II, p. 88),

<sup>13</sup> Derisive expression for something Croatian

<sup>14</sup> A neologism of Serbian words mild (blago) and beautiful (lijepo). The word is archaic and difficult to translate, so it was left in original.

while these schools simultaneously exclude “everything that is tied to the Serbian language, name and consciousness and children are denationalized (stripped of their ethnic origin) there” (B&H Zbornik I, p. 13). In other words, Austria-Hungary was the existentially alien and threatening other, which endangered the reproduction of Muslim and Serbian identities. Austro-Hungarian institutions, Austria-Hungary and Croats were being othered and perceived as an existential danger. Thus, an agonistic alliance against them was possible. This can clearly be seen in a Muslim submission (podneska) to Benjamin Kallay, in which they state that the Islamic and Orthodox elements “unanimously (jednodušno) declare that their religious existence is in danger under the occupation government” (B&H zbornik V, p. 126). The two movements as we can see are allies in the fight for the preservation of their identities, but they still maintain a boundary between one another. This boundary is agonistic, in the sense that the movements may disagree with one another, but they are fighting together against a more threatening antagonistic Austro-Hungarian other to preserve their own separate identities.

The desire to preserve their identities under assault from Austro-Hungarian national policies, fermented an agonistic relationship between the two movements. This does not mean that there were no points of contention between the two groups. On the contrary, the Agrarian issue remained the great watershed between Bosniaks and Serbs. Serbs resisted the imposition of the Bosnian language in the country (B&H Zbornik I, p. 9), while Bosniaks were nostalgic for the theocratic Ottoman past and their won socio-political dominance (B&H Zbornik V, p. 91-92). If we would move on to newspapers, there we would find many more instances of conflict, but that is a problem for some other paper.<sup>15</sup> Discursive relations in B&H were and still are changing. “Yesterday’s non-issue can become today’s political and the other way around, as much as today’s enemies were yesterday’s adversaries.” (Tepšić&Vukelić, 2019, p. 13). The issue of religious and educational autonomy became the issue that defined the political in the last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 1900s. The Agrarian issue would come back again in the late 1900s, particularly with Petar Kočić (Васин&Микавица, 2018).

As for the period that this paper covers, relations were still agonistic. In 1902, a Draft of a Contract of political cooperation was drawn up, consisting of 25 articles. It called for autonomy within the Ottoman Empire, with a governor appointed by the Porte, a rotating position, where Serb governors would succeed Muslim ones and vice versa. According to Imamović (2006), the Draft was not signed because of the conflicts over the Agrarian issue and articles 11-13, which defined the official language in B&H as Serbian and mandated the exclusive usage of Cyrillic script in schools, official correspondence, and state institutions (p. 395).

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<sup>15</sup> “Bošnjak”, “Behar”, “Bosanska vila”, “Osvit”, “Sarajevski list” and “Bosanslki istočnik” are especially insightful for this topic.

He does add that this alliance stood until 1910 when B&H got its first parliament. Antić and Kecmanović (2017), on the other hand, claim that the Draft was signed by both parties (p. 127). Whatever the case may be, the alliance lasted during and after 1902. This is attested by B&H zbornik V, which had been published in 1903 and specifically, by the writings of Šerif Arnautović.

Arnautović was one of the key advocates of the Serbian-Bosniak alliance, even though he had been close to the Croatian national movement, giving a speech in honour of Ante Starčević in Mostar 1899 (Краљачић, 2017, p. 313). However, B&H zbornik V largely covers the events of 1901 and 1902 when this Serbo-Bosniak alliance was strong, and Arnautović was vocal in his support of it. He states unequivocally that time of being fearful of Serbs is gone; that “a common misfortune has forced us to be inseparable friends”; that regarding prior conflicts “we have brought them more misery” and, that “they should forget old wounds and forgive us” (B&H Zbornik V, pp. 205-06). Arnautović goes even a step further equating the Serbian struggle against Ottomans with the Bosnian uprising against the Ottomans led by Husein Gradašćević. This agonistic alliance was not merely presented in open statements to the public, such as this one by Arnautović. Rather, it extended to official communication, like the Petition to Kallay from 19 December 1900. Here it is stated that “the Islamic and orthodox elements...unanimously<sup>16</sup> declare that their existence is under threat under occupational government” and that its tutelage has led “to a total subjugation of the vast majority of Islamic and orthodox elements to a small<sup>17</sup> minority of Catholic elements.” (Ibid. p. 127). This is a clear-cut expression of the agonistic alliance formation vis-à-vis the threatening antagonistic other.

## CONCLUSION

In its attempt to domesticate the political, Austria-Hungary had pushed Serbs and Bosniak into an agonistic alliance. More importantly, the two respective movements would produce new generations of intellectuals set on preserving their identities and struggling against Vienna. The last years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the first years of the 20<sup>th</sup> show a trend towards agonism between Serbs and Bosniaks. Without a common enemy and one that could be legitimately presented as threatening one's own identity, such an agonistic alliance would never have been possible. However, agonistic relations are not permanent. Just as both communities had reasons to cooperate in regards to their religious autonomy and in preserving their identities, points of conflict remained. During the first half of the 1900s, as

<sup>16</sup> Jednodušno- a somewhat archaic and poetic expression, roughly equal to “of one heart and mind”.

<sup>17</sup> Neznatna-which can also be translated as slight or insignificant.



the two movements moved towards agonism, other members of Bosniak and Serbian elites engaged in antagonistic intertextual communication on the pages of “Behar”, “Biser”, “Bosanska vila”, “Srpski vjesnik” and others. The Agrarian issue remained unresolved and waited to be articulated as a key political issue. We can draw a couple of conclusions from the Serbian and Bosniak struggle for political autonomy. Antagonism as a dimension of the political cannot be done away with. Identities once formed seek to preserve themselves and that means that they seek control over their own narratives. Trying to superimpose narratives on them creates a push-back, one that can produce a great sense of enmity lasting for decades. This was especially true for the Serbian community in B&H *vis-à-vis* Austria-Hungary. Agonistic relations in the political will seek to construct democratic politics if such politics are nonexistent or are lacking in certain areas. Trying to suppress these democratic designs can lead to antagonism and ultimately to open conflict. This paper can also be instructive for exploring other ethnoreligious complex societies, particularly those under international tutelage. As we can see, when a foreign power intrudes on a discursive dynamic it, inadvertently or not, turns one side into a protégé, thereby dislocating agonistic pluralism. In the case of B&H, the relatively agonistic Orthodox-Catholic relationship during Ottoman times, shifted into antagonism when Austria-Hungary took over and had been perceived as protecting Croats. In current-day B&H, it can be argued that an agonistic relationship has been formed between Serbs and Croats, due to both perceiving Bosniaks as proteges of the International Community in B&H. Of course, discursive encounters are never homogenous. Ultimately, foreign powers should be extremely wary of infringing upon national narratives since that can lead to blowback. Identities once formed seek to reproduce and see those who seek to prevent this reproduction as existential threats.

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**KA AGONIZMU: SRPSKA I BOŠNJAČKA  
(BOSANSKO MUSLIMANSKA) BORBA ZA CRKVENO ŠKOLSKU  
AUTONOMIJU 1897-1902**

*Apstrakt:* Autor istražuje kompleksne sociopolitičke odnose između srpske i bosansko muslimanske (bošnjačke) zajednice tokom njihove borbe za crkveno i školsku autonomiju protiv austrougarske vlasti u Bosni i Hercegovini između 1897-1902. Početna hipoteza je ta da je tokom njihove borbe protiv zajedničkog neprijatelja oko sličnih pitanja, stvoren jedan agonistički odnos između dve političke elite. Austrougarsko carstvo nastojalo je da ukine bosanske verske veze sa Carigradom, kako a Vaseljenskim patrijarhom, tako i sa halifom; i da nametne državni sistem škola stanovništvu. Ovo je nanosilo štetu tradicionalnim pravima etno-religijskih grupa na komunitarnu autonomiju u pogledu verskih i prosvetnih pitanja, što je dovelo do formiranja Pokreta za versku i prosvetnu autonomiju i Pokreta za vakufsko-mearifsku autonomiju, među Srbima, odnosno među Bošnjacima. Ovi pokreti nastojali su da obnove autonomije svojih zajednica, koordinisali su svoje napore koji će dovesti do potpisivanja Nacrta ugovora o zajedničkoj borbi za versku i prosvetnu autonomiju 1902. Autor zaključuje da je Austrougarska sama sebe postavila na antagonističku poziciju prema Srbima i Bošnjacima, svojim politikama. Posledično, igrala je ulogu neprijatelja, oko kojeg je bilo moguće formirati agonistički odnos između Srba i Bošnjaka.

*Ključne reči:* Bosna i Hercegovina, agonizam, antagonizam, identitet, političko, politika, diskurs.

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