HABSBURG’S LITTLE ORIENT
A Post/Colonial Reading of Austrian and German Cultural Narratives on Bosnia-Herzegovina, 1878-1918*

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Bosnia-Herzegovina has been the epitome of a European periphery for a long time. This is a condition that arose from Bosnia’s time as a rebellious borderland of the Ottoman Empire (to which it belonged de facto until 1878 and formally until 1908) through to its subsequent incorporation into the territorial holdings of Austria-Hungary (1878-1918) and then into Yugoslavia. During this period not only served as the economic and cultural fringe for different political centres (Istanbul, Vienna/Budapest, Belgrade/Zagreb), but it also came to occupy a specific symbolic position within the hegemonic discourses of the ›West‹: to this day, Bosnia’s affiliation with the ›Balkans‹ has led to its stigmatization as a form of ›the Other within Europe‹, a status that has been further entrenched since the devastating Yugoslav wars of the 1990s.

After all, Bosnia-Herzegovina is the only territory of the Habsburg monarchy that can be approached through the paradigm of colonialism not only in a figurative sense; the reasons for this inhere primarily in the peculiar arrangement of the region’s cultural, social, economic and legal structures. My article shall elucidate some of these factors through a critical discussion of prevailing histori(ographi)cal narratives on Bosnia-Hercegovia; subsequently, it will expand on the cultural repercussions of that colonization by analyzing the collective imagery of the region in the hegemonic Austrian and German cultures at the time of Habsburg occupation and annexation (with a final side glance at the Bosnian author Ivo Andrić).

I. VorGeschichte(n): Bosnia-Herzegovina in the International Historiography of the 20th Century

Why Austria-Hungary precisely wanted to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878, and what agenda its ›Balkan peace mission‹ actually concealed, are questions not easily answered even 125 years later; one would do well to accept the age of Imperialism in Europe as a significant frame of reference. Indeed, in the accepted narrative of historiography the sequence of events does not deviate substantially from the formulations advocated by the well-known American Balkan-historian Barbara Jelavich and other researchers who contributed standard works on this subject matter:

In 1875 a revolt broke out in the European territory of the Ottoman Empire. Pitting dissatisfied Herzegovinian farmers against their Muslim landholders, it was ›one of the major guerrilla wars in modern European history‹, as Milorad Ekmečić writes in the History of Yugoslavia (1974). It produced a large number of casualties and refugees, for Serbia and Montenegro soon supported the uprising against Turkish rule, which by 1876 had also spread to encompass Bulgaria. While Ottoman government troops remained victorious in the ensuing battles, the war was nevertheless accompanied by a political crisis in the power centre of Istanbul, which led to a manifold change in leadership and even to coup d’etat.

Faced with the instability of the ›sick man of the Bosphorus‹ and with ambitious Russian plans, Austria-Hungary clearly no longer saw itself in the position of sticking to the double maxim of its Balkan policy, in place since Kaunitz and Metternich: ›(1) to keep Russian presence and influence to a minimum and (2) to maintain the status quo with the Ottoman administration‹. Likewise, there is evidence for the view that a new expansionist reorientation of Austria-Hungary’s Orientpolitik was not only the ambition of the Austrian court and military but also essentially bound up with Count Gyula (Julius) Andrássy, Joint Minister of the Exterior.

* The author would like to thank Brent Holland, Per A. Rudling and Claire Johnstone (Edmonton), Raymond Delrez and Stijn Vervaet (Gent), Diana Reynolds (San Diego), and Anna Müller-Funk (Vienna) for their assistance in linguistic and historical matters.


7 Even as late as the 1990’s one German-Croatian religious historian maintained that the mandate given Austria-Hungary by the Congress of

8 [...] die Worte Kolonie und Übersee hörte man an wie etwas noch gänzlich Unerprobtes und Fernes. (Robert Musil: Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften)
In 1877, during the Russo-Turkish War, which followed on the heels of the clashes of 1875/76, the Habsburg monarchy declared its readiness to adopt benevolent neutrality towards the Tsarist Empire. The Russians countered the move by offering up Bosnia-Herzegovina to the Austrians as an inducement. However, on March 3, 1878, this arrangement went by the board with the Treaty of San Stefano, but the resultant territorial reorganization of the Balkans (e.g., the emergence of a large new Bulgarian state) dissatisfied the other great European powers. In response, the Congress of Berlin was convened on June 13th of the same year, at which the drawing up of the borders was supposed to be discussed anew. One important outcome of this conference was the ceding of the administration of the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina to Austria-Hungary at the request of the British representative Lord Salisbury. The two provinces were occupied by imperial troops, «Germanically hyphenated», and thirty years later, in 1908, annexed to the Habsburg Empire.

In the characteristic style of the left-leaning British historian A.J.P. Taylor, the aporetic stance of the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister to the two Ottoman provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina reads as follows:

Russia had constantly pressed them on Austria-Hungary, to tempt her into setting the example of partition. For this reason Andrássy had tried to avoid the offer; on the other hand, he could still less afford their union with the Slav state of Serbia. At the Congress of Berlin he squared the circle. 

Barbara Jelavich, on the other hand, elects to focus on Andrássy’s return home from Berlin:

Despite these great gains Andrássy did not receive a triumphant welcome home. Francis Joseph among others did not like the terms of the occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He would have preferred a direct annexation. In contrast, the Magyar leaders were displeased with the acquisition of more Slavic peoples in the Empire.

The French historian Jean Bérenger also emphasizes the consequences of Andrássy’s success, which he declares a pyrrhic political victory:

[The occupation] provoked demonstrations in Hungary. Public opinion followed with suspicion the Russophile politics of Andrássy which was justified only by the maintenance of the status quo in the Balkans; the strengthening of the smaller Balkan states and the occupation of Bosnia broke this balance. It hurt the Turkophile feelings of the Hungarians, and above all, the occupation of Bosnia increased the number of Slavs living in the Habsburg monarchy. While the political left expressed its hostility towards a war of conquest, it cost numerous human lives. Equally the Austrian liberals expressed their disagreement with respect to a military operation regarded as potentially disastrous and unnecessary. This contributed to collapse of the liberal government of Alfred Auersperg, since the emperor Francis-Joseph did not like the idea that someone violated his stamping ground.

This is the way the historiographical account of Bosnia vacillates between personification (Andrássy as global player) and metonymy (the nations and political forces); but in its essential points, it is either identical amongst most of the consulted historians or at the very least compatible. Account about the particular motivations for this last – and fatal – territorial expansion of the Habsburg monarchy before the First World War is far more diverse and falls into three categories of historiographical argument, which are capable of being asserted or, at the very least, discussed:

1. Strategic grounds. The assumption here is that Austria-Hungary needed to safeguard its own area of rule and/or sphere of influence against Russia and suspected Serbian expansion plans through the military and infrastructural occupation of the Dalmatian hinterland, as Radetzky had already proposed. Admittedly, this explanation is weakened by a fact already foreseeable at the time, namely that the addition of more than a million South Slavs would in the process also potentially exacerbate all the ethnic tensions that were already extant in the Habsburg monarchy – a situation that could just as easily have prevented the empire from intervening, as had been the case earlier
2. **Economic grounds.** Bosnia-Herzegovina harboured large deposits of coal and various ores, so that the region could easily have been transformed into a ›Balkanic Ruhrgebiet‹, a potential that was only realized (albeit incipiently) under Tito. This potential wealth leads some historians, like Jean Bérenger, to impute certain economic interests to Austria-Hungary.23 Given the available historical evidence, however, it is difficult to say to what extent such natural resources – along with the prospect of a new market for Austrian goods – actually played a motivational role in the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Instead, it might well be the case that the Austro-Hungarian administration either did not recognize the full economic worth of its booty or, conversely, that it was simply not in a position to adequately exploit the area due to the limitations of its self-imposed administrative structure.24

Apart from increasing the South Slavic population within the monarchy, out of which plans for Croatian hegemony and for Trialism28 both arose side by side with Serbian nationalism, and increased expenditure, it should not be underestimated that with the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, for the first time in the history of the empire, a significant Muslim population became part of Christian Austro-Hungarian society and culture.29 This new population was by no means merely a matter of scattered converts, but also of regional elites consisting of property owners, Ottoman functionaries, clergymen and merchants.30 The later increasingly ethnicized religious differences in Bosnia-Herzegovina were interwoven with social hierarchy, especially since the majority of free peasants and dependent tenant farmers (kmetovi) were of the Christian faith, both Orthodox and Roman Catholic.31 Thus, all Austro-Hungarian administrative measures that led to an interference with the existing (and frankly not problematic) late-feudal system of cultural, religious and social difference were particularly delicate politically, even when they may have been adopted, in part, with well-meaning intent.32

At the beginning, however, Austria-Hungary’s possession of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1878 was anything but a peaceful Einmarsch as is sometimes suggested, but rather the gory military intervention of a major power.33 By the end of the campaign, the Austro-Hungarian occupying forces under the command of the Croatian general Joseph Filipović (Josip Filipović) von Philipsberg were roughly a quarter million men34. Still, this army required almost three months (from the beginning of August until the end of October 1878) to subdue the territory. Almost everywhere the invaders met with bitter resistance from native forces which contained the remnants of Turkish troops and hastily recruited regional militias, who felt abandoned by the Ottomans.35 Thus the military peace mission of Austria-Hungary ended up claiming thousands of victims36 on both sides and leading to a mass exodus of civilians.37 The operation itself can be considered the first and only large military victory of the Austro-Hungarian army between the German-Danish conflict of 1864 and the First World War.38 Accordingly, a significant percentage of surviving Austrian texts on Bosnia are narrative depictions of those ›heroic deeds‹, military memoirs, etc.

It is here that a propagandistic colonial tone first becomes perceptible, when, for example, a Czech soldier describes the heads of Austrian soldiers skewered by ›insurgents‹ (the official term already in use at the time)39 after the capture of Vranduk on August 18, 1878. Now, the old Balkan cliché about barbaric bands and cutthroats rises again and positively
cries out for new administration:

We stood in full battle dress against the ignoble cannibal enemy and it is no exaggeration to say that the Zulus, Bagurus, Niam-Niams, Bechuans, Hottentots and similar South African bands behaved more chivalrously towards European travellers than the Bosnian Turks did towards us. I always recollect with dismay the peoples of the Balkans, where the foot of the civilised European has not trod for decades, how the Turks, «native lords», probably rule down there.40

In 1881/82, new uprisings subjected the Austro-Hungarian occupational forces to a further test of their military strength.41 Afterwards the phase of Habsburg civil administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina began, the evaluation of which still seems to remain a problematic case for international historiography.

II. NachBereitungen: Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Light of Critical Discourses on Colonialism

The thesis put before us, namely that the administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina represented trends of colonialism, is highly problematic. We must first ask whether the concept of colonialism, commonly understood as the rule of European powers over native colored people on other continents, can be transferred to a master-subject relation within Europe, pointing to a system of colonial administration and exploitation of whites by whites.42

It was in the capacity of an apologist that in 1976 the prominent Austrian-American historian Robert A. Kamm43 weighed in on the running debate concerning internal European colonization. At the time, Austria-Hungary was also viewed, next to Great Britain and the Soviet Union, as a potential field of inquiry.44 For Kamm, however, colonialism constitutes «the unholy trinity of imperialism, capitalist exploitation, and oppression on racial grounds, all of them imposed by force»;45 on this basis, he rejects the application of the term to Bosnia-Herzegovina, albeit with arguments that are scarcely convincing. In the more recent formulation of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, which proceeds from the protean nature of the phenomenon, the accusation of colonialism levelled at Austria-Hungary would, on the other hand, seem plausible:

>Colonizer« and «colonized» can be fairly elastic if you define scrupulously. When an alien nation-state establishes itself as a ruler, impressing its own laws and system of education, and re-arranging the mode of production for its own economic benefit, one can use these terms, I think.46

An examination of contemporary interpretations of the occupation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, however, reveals that Austro-Hungarian sources liked to speak of the dual province in terms of a «cultural» or «civilizing mission» that must inevitably follow the decline of the Ottoman regime and the bloody chaos of war in the period between 1876 and 1878.47 It is this rhetoric that places the Austro-Hungarian endeavours within the general framework of European colonial and imperialist discourse. A statement made by the Austro-Hungarian Joint Finance Minister Benjamin von Kállay, who from 1882-1903 was responsible for the administration48 of the «occupied zone», is one of many textual instances that are symptomatic of this attitude. In an interview with London’s Daily Chronicle he commented: «Austria is a great Occidental Empire [...] charged with the mission of carrying civilization to Oriental peoples»; «rational bureaucracy» would be «the key to Bosnia’s future [...] to retain the ancient traditions of the land vilified and purified by modern ideas.»49

It appears as if before and after the conquest, Austro-Hungarian sources «rewrote» the history of Bosnia-Herzegovina which one can surely view as the decline of a regime (i.e. the Ottoman Empire), but also just as positively as a gradual process of modernization.50 (And as Mark Pinson maliciously points out, there were e.g. complaints about the fact that the Austro-Hungarian judiciary in the region would work more slowly than its Turkish counterpart51 — despite the fact that, compared with the Ottoman era, the total number of civil servants engaged in the administration had risen from 120 to around 9,500 by 1908.52) However, talk of Austria-Hungary’s «civilizing mission» has led not only Yugoslav53 but also English and American historians to extend the critical paradigm of colonialism to the Habsburg monarchy. Such is the case with A.J.P. Taylor, who writes on the subject of
Bosnia-Herzegovina:
The two provinces were the «white man’s burden» of Austria-Hungary. While other European Powers sought colonies in Africa for the purpose, the Habsburg Monarchy exported to Bosnia and Herzegovina its surplus intellectual production – administrators, road builders, archeologists, ethnographers, and even remittance-men. The two provinces received all benefits of Imperial rule: ponderous public buildings; model barracks for the army of occupation; banks, hotels, and cafés; a good water supply for the centres of administration and for the country resorts where the administrators and army officers recovered from the burden of Empire. The real achievement of Austria-Hungary was not on show: when the Empire fell in 1918, 86 per cent of the population was still illiterate.55

Taylor’s ironic tone here takes on polemical dimensions when discussion turns to the high rate of illiteracy and social/economic «underdevelopment» even after the Austro-Hungarian period (in researching these potential side effects of colonization, economic historians were more sober than their British colleague, without falsifying his findings, though56). It thus seems reasonable to suspect that the «civilizing mission» of the Habsburg monarchy was in fact only a half-hearted pretext for a geopolitical gambit in the Dalmatian hinterland that was not even remotely capable of achieving the «cultural» goals it had set for itself.

While later Yugoslav historians may admittedly be suspected themselves of having propagandistically rewritten the imperial prehistory of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the perspective of their own multi-ethnic state, the socio-economic and cultural implications, which Taylor, albeit exaggerated, cites, cannot be so easily invalidated. In 2004 the American historian Ian Setre subsumes:

Many analysts have come to regard the relatively short period of Austro-Hungarian administration of Bosnia and Herzegovina […] as one of considerable progress and prosperity. Indeed communications, industry and the transportation network were all noticeably upgraded in the region, but results of Austria-Hungary’s «modernization» campaign in Bosnia and Herzegovina were uneven at best. Their administrative strategies failed to facilitate any real or lasting semblance of ethnic cohesion and the most significant development […] was the political awakening of the three largest ethnic groups […].57

In 1976 the Viennese economic historian Kurt Wessely has already established that, in his discipline, the assessment of Austro-Hungarian rule over Bosnia-Herzegovina is conflicting («zwiespältig»); big achievements on a infrastructural level contrast with economic shortcomings and political failures:

[Gr]roßen Leistungen auf wirtschaftlich-kulturellem Gebiet […] stehen eine ungleichmäßige Entfaltung der Produktivkräfte, eine zögernde und ungenügende finanzielle Unterstützung der Landesfordernisse und ein Verkennen der wirtschaftlichen und politischen Wechselwirkung der Kmetenfrage gegenüber, welche den Erfolg des wirtschaftlichen Aufbauwerkes in Frage stellen mußte […]58

Of course, the Austro-Hungarian administration may credit itself with the willingness to construct social institutions and infrastructures such as a judicial system, transport routes and also, in part, educational facilities. On the other hand, the construction of structures of political and religious representation took place only after the Muslim, Orthodox (Serbian) and Croatian (Catholic) sections of the population mounted a fierce defence of their rights.59 Fateful mistakes are likewise to be noted, such as the fact that the foreign administrators never decisively relinquished the feudal principles; the campaign of land proprietary and dependent tenant farming (the kmetovi issue)60; instead, they merely modified and instrumentalized this manorial system for their own political ends.

Within the framework of the Colonialism debate, the aforementioned dispatch of officials becomes a point of some significance as well. The Yugoslav-British Balkan historian Stevan Pavlowitch, for instance, writes of the end of the military administration: «a much improved civil service was put in place, […] colonial [in the sense] that it was generally staffed by officials from all over the Monarchy.»61 We might further qualify this point with the following statement by the Yugoslav historiographer Ekmečić: «employment in the administration was also subject to discrimination.»62 (In 1904 only 26.5% of all officials with issue); instead, they merely modified and instrumentalized this manorial system for their own political ends.)

http://www.kakanien.ac.at/beitr/fallstudie/CRuthner5.pdf
Similar to British rule over India, the Austro-Hungarian occupiers also established their rule over a majority of the population with the participation and gradual "reformation" of already existing elites, in this case the Bosnian Muslims. But there are further pertinent points, which support the argument for colonialism. In the first place, Bosnia-Herzegovina was kept in a questionable "no man's land" status between national and international law for thirty years; even in 1908, with its annexation, it was not afforded the status of a "crownland" ("Kronland"), but of a "Reichsland" instead (in essence belonging to neither of the two halves of the empire). Accordingly, Bosnia-Herzegovina had no state assembly until 1910 (being governed in the interim by the Joint Finance Ministry), and even after annexation it could not send any elected representatives either to the Viennese Reichstag or to the parliament in Budapest; it is precisely in this context that the American historian William McCagg, borrowing from the example of the Soviet Union, speaks of a "satrapy." Besides, the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire in the late 19th century also saw the usurpation of other Turkish territories, as for example that of Egypt by England (1882) and Tunis by France (1881) – events which historians do indeed view within the context of a European colonialism.

Thus, though no ocean separated Austria-Hungary in 1878 from its territorial acquisition, the Habsburg monarchy can absolutely be regarded as colonial trendsetter in this respect.

In Austro-Hungarian texts of the time, however, the term colonialism is strictly avoided, and to the present day this still applies to a majority of Austrian historiography. Ironically, it is frequently the imperial German observers of the Austrian presence in the Balkans, who, in the phase of Wilhelminian expansion to Africa, also employ the term when referring to the Austro-Hungarian occupation. Ferdinand Schmid, head of the Office of Statistics in Bosnia and later a university professor in Leipzig, furnishes an interesting example of this when he discusses colonialism (in a broader sense) in his principally affirmative 1914 monograph and applies the term to the dual provinces:


Though essentially more florid, the fairytale description formulated some twenty years earlier by the Berlin journalist Heinrich Renner is similar in tenor and likewise expresses the hope that the Austro-Hungarian administration can serve as a model for other colonial regimes:

Dem grossen Publikum blieben [...] diese Gefilde gänzlich unbekannt; das bosnische Dornröschen schlief noch den jahrhundertelangen Zauberschlaf und fand seine Auferstehung erst, als die kaiserlichen Truppen die Grenzen überschritten und die neue Aera einleiteten. Jetzt wurde das Dickicht, das um Dornröschens Schloss wucherte, gelichtet und nach rastloser und schwerer Arbeit von nicht zwei Jahrzehnten steht Bosnien bekannt und geachtet vor der Welt. Was in diesem Lande geleistet wurde, ist fast beispiellos in der Kolonialgeschichte aller Völker und Zeiten [...].

[...] auch den in Europa jetzt so zahlreichen Kolonialpolitikern ein Besuch zu empfehlen; in Bosnien wird praktische Kolonialpolitik [!] getrieben und was gebaut wurde, stellt den leitenden Personen und Österreich-Ungarn im Allgemeinen das höchste Ehrenzeugnis aus. Einst gänzlich zurückgeblieben, reih sich heute die bosnische Schwester europäischen Ländern als würdige Genossin an.

For their part, however, the Germans do not only employ the term colonialism affirmatively and, at times, even panegyrically, but also as a critical tool. The travel writer Hermann Wendel, for example, writes in 1922: »[D]as österreichisch-ungarische Bosnien war eine Kolonie, ein Stück Orient, künstlich von den Wiener Machthabern gehüttet." With this statement the social democrat Wendel, who hails from another occupied territory, namely German Lorraine, accuses the Austro-Hungarian administration of engaging in a "disneyfication."
48 Immediate local authority for the occupied zone belonged to the military commander of the 15th Army Corps in Sarajevo, all whose side a civilian «assistant» was placed. Cf. Pinson 1994, p. 92; Vrankić 1995/98, p. 27ff; Sugar 1963, p. 25ff.


51 Alongside the existing Islamic law courts, the Austro-Hungarian administration created a parallel secular system after its own model, consisting of municipal and district courts as well as a regional court (Bezirks- Kreis- and Landesgerichten). On this topic cf. for example Sugar 1963, p. 31ff.


54 Aside from the quoted Taylor there are Donia 1981, p. 12ff and Pinson 1994, p. 113, amongst others.
55 Taylor 1948/90, p. 165.
56 In 1908, there were only 350 primary schools for 15% of the children, 12 high schools and no university (Sugar 1963, p. 202). Assessing the numbers is, however, a matter of conception; thus Malcolm 2002 defends the Austro-Hungarian educational policy with the words: «[...] no government which builds nearly 200 primary schools, three high schools, a technical school and a teacher-training college can be described as utterly negligent in its education policy» (p. 144). Nevertheless, the fact remains that the high rate of illiteracy continued even after the end of the Habsburg monarchy.

57 (avant la lettre) and of perpetuating the »Sklavinnenrolle der muselmanischen Frau«. The Russian count Leo Tolstoy is even sharper in his criticism when, after the annexation of 1908, which caused a severe international crisis, he referred to the Habsburg monarchy simply as a »nest of thieves«. Reports submitted by British diplomats in 1890 and quoted by the American-Hungarian economic historian Peter Sugar in 1963 take a similar line:

[...]

Everything is provisional here [in B-H, CR], and consequently few good employees will accept posts in the civil administration. With very few exceptions [...] we have nothing here but the scum of the Austrian official world, and bribery is as important a factor as ever in the arrangement of any matter with the Government.

Eventually, in the 1990s, the Croatian-German historian Petar Vrankić summarized matter-of-factly that one has to diagnose »dass Österreich-Ungarn, obwohl es viel für die Modernisierung, Sicherstellung und Durchführung der neuen Staatsideen getan hat, Bosnien und die Herzegowina auch weiterhin als Kolonialland behandelt hat.« Contained in this statement is a claim that holds exemplary validity for our present historical view of Bosnia-Herzegovina, for it reveals a portrait of the Francisco-Josephinian epoch that is, particularly in its most southerly periphery, Janus-headed – fluctuating between the discursive poles of colonialism and modernization. One need not even go as far as Robert Kann did in 1977 with his apology:

[...] we have to come to the conclusion that colonial trends had no significant place in history of the administration from 1878 to 1914 unless one considers the Habsburg Empire as a whole a residuum of the age of colonial administration. To do so would clearly transcend the mandate which the topic of this report intends to comply with.

A decade and a half later, the Viennese historian Peter Stachel wrote: »Definiert man Kolonisierung vorläufig sehr allgemein als ein hegemoniales Konzept der zwangsweisen Vereinheitlichung kultureller Differenzen, so erscheint es durchaus zweckentsprechend, sich mit dieser Konzeption auch der Geschichte der Habsburgermonarchie zu nähern.« Stachel, however, thinks that the Austro-Hungarian self-image of a »unity in diversity« or, respectively, a »family of peoples« counteracted a compulsory centralist standardization of the periphery – which does not exclude the heuristic benefits of a »postcolonial« take, but rather refines this approach to a »microlevel«:

Damit ist jedoch keineswegs behauptet, dass die Habsburgermonarchie von jenen Strategien der kulturellen Zwangsassimilation, wie sie für Kolonisierungsprozesse typisch ist, völlig frei gewesen wäre: An die Stelle eines dominanten, zentralistischen und reichsübergreifenden Kolonisierungsdiskurses traten vielmehr miteinander verschrankte regionale Mikrokolonialismen.

III. VorBilder: Prolegomena to an Austrian Imagology of the Bosnian Other

The remainder of this essay presents the groundwork for a research project that focuses on the cultural construction of otherness in Austrian (and German) texts dealing with Bosnia-Herzegovina between 1878 and 1918. The approach is in keeping with the conceptual framework of Edward Said, Maria Todorova, and other postcolonial theorists, along with Robert Musil’s famous term for the k. und k. Habsburg Monarchy. The aforementioned argument for colonialism can namely be substantiated by examining not only Austro-Hungarian administrative measures or Bosnia-Herzegovina’s problematic special legal status, but also by analyzing the narratives and discourses within the hegemonic Austrian culture during the occupation. They projected, insinuated and indeed even imposed their own imagery and conceptual worlds on Bosnia-Herzegovina – symbolic forms, which circulated between occupier and occupied during the forty year span of the Habsburg period, in some cases even much longer.
As the secondary works on French literature have amply demonstrated through the famous journeys of Napoleon, Chateaubriand, Nerval, Flaubert and Du Camp, etc., the «Orient» is a very special space for the projection of European phantasms — to such an extent that it actually exists only as a historical plurality, with a multitude of stock, transnational, controversial, but also ultimately interchangeable, stereotypes. Quite naturally, this poses the question as to which Orient Austria-Hungary thought to find in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As an initial thesis, one could formulate that with the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, former arch-enemy of the Habsburg monarchy, the self-styled protector of Christianity in Central Europe and the Balkans, Bosnia became the imagological plaything of the occupying forces — and with this also the site of symbolic occupations (Besetzungen).

Thus, the main goal of the research project in question is to investigate the «cultural semantics of the [Bosnian] Orient» in Austro-Hungarian texts, which is basically a discourse marked by a certain inventory and tradition(s), as well as disparities, contradictions and aporias. For reasons of limited space, the present contribution has to restrict itself: firstly, to furnishing an approximate sketch based on random sampling and, secondly, to developing a set of theses, which admittedly still require vetting. By the same token, it will preliminarily forego in-depth theoretical and/or methodical discussions, such as those connected with Maria Todorova’s Balkanism thesis and the topic of imagology as a problematic organon.

Aside from the aforementioned memoirs of Austro-Hungarian officers, the corpus of texts on Bosnia in German contains, above all, travelogues, ethnographic texts, reminiscences of officials and their family members, not to forget political essay writing. In the canonized Austro-German belles lettres the Bosnian adventures begun in 1878, which may be said to have paralleled the Oriental creations of Karl May (his novel In den Schluchten des Balkan e.g. appeared in 1885-88), has left behind astonishingly few traces. The Austrian author Robert Michel (1876-1957), on whom important studies have already been published elsewhere (as well as useful preliminary studies on Bosnian travel literature), is likely of most importance here.

The research project makes a similar claim as Vesna Goldswothry has already put forward in her own exemplary study of English travel literature dealing with the Balkans. Indeed, it seems as if the Austro-Hungarian occupiers, too, preferred to speak secretly to and of themselves in their texts on the Bosnian foreign land rather than describe the «external» world. Or, in Goldswothry’s words:

The concept of imaginative, textual colonisation, as suggested by this examination of literary exploitation of the Balkans, shows the way in which an area can be exploited as an object of the dominant culture’s need for a dialogue with itself.

Considering Goldswothry’s concept is a major reason why our research project in question focuses almost exclusively on hegemonic discourses originating with the occupiers, and thus on the construction of an Austrian rather than Bosnian identity. This has already incited the ire of early (and hasty) readers for, in their eyes, this approach perpetuates the unequal power relationships between Austria and its «Other». Thus, for the sake of completeness, it should be added here that a cooperative partnership has been established with the Gent Slavist Stijn Vervaat, who has dedicated himself solely to examining the Bosnian and/or Yugoslav perspective of the period of Austro-Hungarian occupation (1878-1918), and with young Bosnian scholars working on similar topics.

However, scholarship on Bosnian literary sources is not without problems of its own. If one rephrases Gayatri Spivak’s famous question — «Can the Subaltern Speak?» — in this context, it quickly becomes clear that any research, looking for contemporary native accounts, finds itself confronted with the lack of first-person documents from both the Ottoman and the early Austro-Hungarian era, as the Harvard historian Mark Pinson has pointed out.

In studying Ottoman attitudes and changes in attitudes, one quickly comes up against the almost total absence of first-person literature — diaries, collected letters, and autobiographies — even from highly placed officials. [...] Not surprisingly, since the Bosnian notables of the Austrian period were largely products of that same culture, there is little such first-person literature from them either.
The emergence of an extensive body of native literature is not very likely to have occurred after the occupation (also on account of the high illiteracy rate), especially in the phase of the national awakening of the Serbs, Croats and Muslims. Here it is necessary to consider the category of ruling authority, or hegemony, respectively, as the power of definition: allowing any individuality, regardless of type, to emerge from among the native population, for instance, was certainly not part of the identity policy of the occupying forces. Instead, the aim was to format them exogenously, if not yet as Bosnians, then at least as new Austro-Hungarian subjects. The development of the respective political and literary movements of the Bosnian Croats, Serbs and Muslims was a reaction to this process that took manifold forms, ranging from civil protest, resistance and redrafting to consent to and even collaboration with, or at least adoption of, the symbolic forms of Central and Western European modernity introduced by the invaders.

Thus, it is out of the question to repeat the silencing of South Slav voices by Austrian academia; the central problem of all the research projects mentioned is rather to encounter the specific cultural situation of inequality between 1878 and 1918 with means suitable to the task, i.e., with a dialogically functioning, decentralized network which works transnationally. This approach could effectively realize the desideratum of Larry Wolff, who, at the end of his influential work Inventing Eastern Europe, proposes an intellectual history of the reaction of Eastern Europe to the imposed images of the West:

My book is about the intellectuals of Western Europe, inventing Eastern Europe. As Milosz suggests, the intellectuals of Eastern Europe have had to respond to the imposed images and formulas devised in Western Europe. The intellectual history of that response would be another book, an account of the complex cultural strategies of resistance, appropriation, deference, complicity, and counterattack pursued in the different lands of Eastern Europe.

The imagological problems, however, already inhere in the very designation of the ethnic groups to be found in Bosnia-Herzegovina before and after 1878, and it is a difficulty that does not occur only in texts written in German. The question is therefore not only, whether one can/should simply label all Catholics as Croats, all Orthodox Christian believers as Serbs, and all Muslims as Bosniaks, as is customarily done to the present day – and indeed they are all Bosnians, too. Equally salient in this respect is the construction of the imputed or, more accurately, accentuated Herzegovinian identity, which, wherever it occurs, is frequently situated topographically and also subjected to a process of gendering. As a case in point, Johann (Janos) von Asbóth (1845-1911), civil servant of the Austro-Hungarian Joint Ministry of the Exterior and elected member of the Hungarian parliament, writes on the Herzegovina:

All das, die schweren, soliden, fast befestigungsmässigen Häuser, ebenso wie die Gegend selbst, gibt der ganzen Land-schaft einen trotzigen, drohenden Charakter, der sich bis auf die Einwohner selbst erstreckt. Trotzige, stolze, mächtige Männer mit entschieden südlichen Zügen, fast alle brünett, während in Bosnien viel blondes Haar zu sehen ist. Die Volkstracht steht hier schon näher der montenegrinischen, als der türkischen, die in Bosnien die herrschende ist. Auch die Weiber stehen über den Bosniakinnen. Auch diesen Letzteren fehlt es keineswegs an Schönheit, ja man findet in Bosnien auffallend viele edle Gestalten und Physiognomien, die dortigen Frauen aber sind meist flachbrüstig, während die hiesigen mächtig entwickelt sind.

Then as now, western authors in Bosnia-Herzegovina, who come from outside, frequently see themselves confronted by a complexity that refuses to fit into their modern category of nation – for which reason the discourse of cultural lack is immediately invoked again.

In his 1889 volume on Bosnia-Herzegovina in the series Die Länder Österreich-Ungarns in Wort und Bild, Moriz Hoernes opines:

Das Band der Nationalität, welches die überwiegende Masse der eingeborenen Einwohner Bosniens und der Herzegovina einigt, [...] wird von den Trägern selbst nicht empfunden. Sie sind culturell noch nicht genügend fortgeschritten, um sich der Sprache wegen als ein besonderes Ganzes, als ein Volk zu fühlen. Die Stelle der Sprache als einzigendes Band [...] vertritt die Confession; sie antworten, wenn man sie nach ihrer Abstammung fragt, nicht wie der Westeuropäer, der da sagt: ich bin ein Engländer, ein Franzose, ein Deutscher; sondern bei ihnen heißt es: ich
bin ein Türke, ein Rechtgläubiger (griechisch-Orthodoxer), ein Lateiner (römischer Katholik).\textsuperscript{102}

Judging by the fact that, at the time, even exonymic and endonymic terms were scarcely to be reconciled with one another, the task of determining the ethnographic condition in Bosnia-Herzegovina seems to have been even more complex in the 19\textsuperscript{th} century than it is today. In German language texts of the period, for example, the Muslim population is often carelessly generalized as »Turkish«,\textsuperscript{103} creating the impression that the converted South Slavs of Bosnia-Herzegovina had actually immigrated to the region, just as the former elite of Ottoman officials and functionaries had done. A similar situation occurs in some older works, which readily labels all orthodox Bosnians/Herzegovinians as »Greeks« or »Vlachs«, just as, conversely, the new Austro-German rulers, in the region as elsewhere in South Eastern Europe, are dubbed »Swabians«\textsuperscript{104} on account of their language. In textual documents of the Serbian (Orthodox) and Croatian (Catholic) populations, there are, in turn, frequently extensive argumentations to convince the Bosnian/Herzegovinan Muslims of the fact that they do not possess their own independent (cultural) identity, rather are merely Islamized Croats and/or Serbs;\textsuperscript{105} this intent is also plainly evident in the following passage from an anonymous German text:

Die ein und eine Drittelmillion Menschen, welche heute die Provinzen Bosnien und die Herzegovina bewohnen, gehören (bis auf ein paar tausend Mohammedaner, deren Vorfahren im Laufen der Jahrhunderte theils aus Asien, theils aus Afrika eingewandert sind, und die 3000 »spanolischen« Juden) zu einer Rasse und sprechen eine Sprache: die kroatisch-serbische.\textsuperscript{106}

The complex and disparate set of problems associated with the nomenclature of »ethnic groups« is not the only issue of great interest for discourse analysis. There are, in addition, also those stereotypes, which, from the Austrian and German viewpoint, seek to legitimize the Habsburg monarchy's presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina through narrative and argumentation. As was already pointed out, virtually no German-speaking author refrains from adding the »cultural mission«\textsuperscript{107} of Austria-Hungary, which is frequently accompanied by an imagery of fairy tale purity. In the previously cited 1896 work of the Berlin journalist Heinrich Renner, for instance, Bosnia becomes a kind of oriental Sleeping Beauty that must be awakened by the kiss of Europe, or more properly, by the Habsburg prince (the use of gendering\textsuperscript{108} in these cases is no more accidental than the »westernizing« figural tension which, so to speak, relocates Bosnia from 1001 Nights into a Grimm Brothers' fairy tale).

Bosnia–Herzegovina is constructed in most of the texts analyzed as the extreme case of a periphery, which is in need of a new centre, the more so because the old one was unable to fulfil its »duties«. The justifications for this are stereotypical: Ottoman »decadence« (the decline of the »sick man of the Bosphorus«) and the »oriental despotism« of the Turks to name only two. The periphery as an area remote from civilization is fixed not only in images of wild landscapes, but also in the catalogue of characteristics attributed to its inhabitants, a catalogue which is virtually rewritten in the cultural memory after the Austro-Hungarian occupation. A Historisch-Topographische Beschreibung von Bosnien und Serbien, for instance, which appeared anonymously in Vienna in 1821, states:

Die Bosnier sind ein starker, kühner Menschenschlag, der vorzüglich zum Soldaten- und Expansionstum ist. [...] Wenn der Bosnier in Hinsicht auf Ackerbau, Gewerbe, Handel, das nicht leistet was er könnte, so ist hiervon einzig die Politik des herrschenden Volkes, nämlich [sic] der Türken, Schuld.\textsuperscript{109}

That the Bosnian would be strong, brave and industrious were it not for his subjugation and exploitation at the hands of the Ottomans,\textsuperscript{103} is a form of argumentation that is largely abandoned in the German and Austrian sources after Austria-Hungary assumed the administration of the area. Henceforth, one reads primarily pejorative classifications, which also refuse to conform to the image of the Sleeping Beauty painted by Renner: the Bosnian is supposedly characterized by his »kindlich naive Denkungsweise«, as Count Attems, Kavaliergeneral der Reserve, writes in 1913.\textsuperscript{111} Moreover, in the native inhere» etwas von der
südslawischen Indolenz, gemischt mit mohammedanischem Fatalismus«, a point at which the category of power and coercion comes into play:


In a chapter portentously entitled Ethnic Types and Ethnic Character, the aforementioned Moriz Horneus pronounces a similar judgement on the attitude of the »Slavic Mohammedan«, whom he describes as follows:

[Das] ewige Zuwarten und Herbeisehnen unter lange dauernder Bedrückung hat ihn ängstlich, energielos gemacht: es hat ihn auch gelehrt, sich brünstig an seinen Glauben anzuschließen [...].

For his part, the previously cited anonymous author, who in 1886 expresses concern for »Bosnia’s Present and Near Future«, assesses the Bosnian Muslim as follows: »selbst den Boden zu bearbeiten, dazu hat der echte Türke weder Lust noch Verständniß; er weiß zu genießen, aber nicht zu schaffen.« After its political decline, the Ottoman Empire, the once mighty adversary, resides, so to speak, only in its ethnic remains, which are disparagingly looked down on; the »lethargy« of the locals does not require merely the intercession of a fairy tale prince, but rather »encouragement« by a stronger hand.

In this regard, only the so-called Kronprinzenwerk represents an exception. In the »political correctness« of its propagandistically patriotic, »holistic« approach to the Habsburg monarchy, this anthology of edited ethnographic essays, like the aforementioned anonymous text of 1821, also acquires a taste for the locals, and not surprisingly so, given the background of some of the authors. Here, as for example the Osijek-born Croatian archeologist Ćiro Truelka writes in his contribution, the Bosnian is ended with »eine bewundernwerte Auffassungsgabe«, »eine präcise, logische Ausdrucksweise«, »eine natürliche Einfachheit« and »ein ausgeprägtes Wahrheits-, Rechts- und Ehrgefühl«. The Bosnian’s checked »energy« or, »creative enthusiasm«, however, comes at the expense of the Turkish oppression. Consequently, the claim, »[den] Arbeitstrieb erweckt zu haben«, is here as well »ein nicht genug hoch zu schätzendes Verdienst der [k.u.k.] Occupation«.

At any rate, the predominantly negative characteristics, which have been taken up again from the old European stereotypes of the so-called »Table of Peoples« (Völkertafeln) and other reservoirs (e.g. the cliché of the »effeminate« Oriental), are meant to justify that civilizing mission which a previously cited anonymous text from the year 1886 formulates in a particularly crass fashion:


This Europeanisation is also seen as the task of German-speaking colonists, who are to serve the native population as role models of rural modernity, as is extolled in the text of a church newspaper penned by a certain Trappist Father named Franz as well as in other contributions; it is after all a question of providing the desirable settlers from Austria and Germany with a clarion call to immigrate.

Frequently the contrast between »Orient« and »Occident«, which is here intensified into the polarity between »Europe« and »Asia«, is shown in the texts by using examples from architecture; the splendid new Austro-Hungarian buildings of the narrated present stand in contrast to the quaint but »primitive« and »dirty« oriental house of the Ottoman past. The following is a quote from an automobile travel guide of 1908, which praises how »safe« the Balkans have become under the governing hand of Austria-Hungary:

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HABSBURG’S LITTLE ORIENT
Clemens Ruthner (Edmonton)

literature of Moritz Hoernes, Milena Preindlsberger-Mrazović and Ćiro Truelke, amongst others, for which reason I will rely upon other textual examples, in order to avoid the risk of repetition.


90 In addition to Goldsworthy’s study, Hall’s exemplary work proceeds from a similar set of problems: Hall, Catherine: Civilising Subjects. Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867. Cambridge: Polity 2002.

91 Cf. his existing preliminary work (Vervaet 2004) and his contribution to this anthology. Vervaet’s PhD project, entitled Orality and Ethnicity, was still alive at the time of the occupation, holds its own in the context of Bosnian-Herzegovinian intellectuals to Vienna (for the purpose of diplomatic negotiations etc.), as well as other indicators. For example, the indigenous population groups in the later period of the occupation, the migration of Bosnian-Herzegovinian intellectuals to Vienna (for the purpose of study etc.), as well as other indicators.


93 Correspondingly, it is incumbent upon Stjin Vervaet not only to evaluate those few early first-person accounts but also to consider, for example, the journalism of the individual population groups in the later period of the occupation, the migrations of Bosnian-Herzegovinian intellectuals to Vienna (for the purpose of study etc.), as well as other indicators. For example, the authors who record the songs and epic poems and who canonize them (and to what purpose?) Frequently, they come from outside, from Austria, Serbia, Croatia. Sometimes it is Franciscan monks. These are questions that Stjin Vervaet will also pursue.


95 The antecedent oral literary tradition, which was still alive at the time of the occupation, holds its own problems. For example, who are the authors that record the songs and epic poems and who canonizes them (and to what purpose?)? Frequently, they come from outside, from Austria, Serbia, Croatia. Sometimes it is Franciscan monks. These are questions that Stjin Vervaet will also pursue.

Wir führen durch zahlreiche verträumte türkische Dörfer. Meist waren sie schmutzig und bestanden hauptsächlich aus Lehnhütten. Obgleich ein gewöhnlicher Wochentag, sahen die Türken in südlem Nichts unter den Türen „ihrer Häuser“. Der Ausdruck ihrer Gesichter verriet beim Anblick des Automobils nicht die geringsste Bewegung. Auch wenn wir anhielten und nach der Straße fragten, kamen sie nicht näher.122

Another stock motif that circulates in the travelogues and other textual documents of the time centres on the »mystery« of the oriental woman in Bosnia-Herzegovina, which seems again and again to incite the fantasy of the Western male from Austria, Germany or Switzerland,123 and to release a syntax fashioned from gendering. On the other hand, »Filius« [!], the pseudonymous author of the aforementioned automobile travel guide, conducts himself in his account with an amazing serenity that verges on self-reflexivity when he writes:

Anders die Türkinnen. Die Harems sind leicht kenntlich an den vergitterten oder mit einem Vorhang versehenen Fenstern. Ich glaube, der Grad der Schüchternheit der Türkinnen steht in umgekehrtem Verhältnis zu ihrer Schönheit, denn diejenigen, die sich für mehr als Augenblick unverhüllt zeigten, waren zumeist häbisch. Wie merkwürdig es doch mit der Neugierde der Menschen bestellt ist! Läge nicht der Zauber des Geheimnissvollen über dem Haremsleben und seinen Bewohnern, die Türkinnen würden gewiß nicht mehr Interesse erregen als die Frauen irgend eines anderen Landes.124

Yet it is precisely the veiled, forbidden and invisible nature of the »Turkish« (read: Muslim) woman that is capable of sending some of the authors into veritable raptures. The description, though, does not offer up that which is seemingly obvious about the »Oriental«, but rather, on the contrary, that which no one may see, perhaps not even the author himself. It is here that the phantasma manifests itself.

It is striking, for instance, how Western texts often describe the fascinating and eroticising »primitiveness« of the foreigner through the use of a bathing scene as a thematic connection between race, gender and water, while the country itself appears »dirty« on its surface. This applies to fin de siècle African ethnography as it does to the North German Bernard Wieman, who at the time traveled to Bosnia-Herzegovina at the invitation of an Austrian friend. Analyzing Wieman’s text, it is possible to demonstrate its »scopic regime« (Martin Jay), i.e. the principle by which the narrative directs the reader’s gaze — a process that involves the transfer of the (erotic) curiosity of the beholder onto his sexual object:

Es naht die Zeit der Abendwaschung; die türkischen Mädchen kommen mit den schlanken Kannen an den Fluß, und wenn wir nahen, fliehen sie in holdem Schrecken und in Schamhaftigkeit; mir, dem Fremden, der ich alles mit staunenden Augen und empfänglich sehe, kommt es so vor; es mag Gewohnheit sein und die Türkinnen würden gewiß nicht mehr Interesse erregen als die Frauen irgend eines anderen Landes.

However, no travel account of Bosnia and Herzegovina would be complete without a description of the bazaar, especially of the Baščaršija in Sarajevo. Here, the Bosnian merchant, in his narratively emphasized indolence, can more often reckon with a higher popularity rating by the narrator than the overzealous Sephardic Jew. Renner raves:

}[...] erst nach und nach breitet der Mohammeder seine Schätze aus, ein Stück nach dem andern holt er aus irgend einem Versteck. Er ist auch nicht unwillig, wenn kein Kaufabschluss erfolgt. Er wartet ruhig weiter, während die Spaniolen mit lautem Geschrei Kunden anzulocken versuchen.127


97 The failed venture of the Joint Finance Minister Benjamin von Kállay, administrator of Bosnia from 1882-1903, is briefly worth mentioning here. Through the banning of national designations and/or organizations, and the imposition of a Bosnian identity (bošnjakstvo), he sought to conduct a homogenization of the populace that went beyond religious creed. The anticipated land reform, which never occurred, also strengthened the ethnic difference, which was at the same time a social one. Burian was the first to allow the existence of political and religious organizations for the Serbs, Croats and Muslims. Cf. for e.g. Pinson 1894 and others.

98 The situation of the Bosnian Muslims and Serbs in this regard is well documented, as is the emancipation movement of the individual national churches. Cf. further Sehić, Nusret: Autonomni pokret Muslimana za vjersku samoupravu. Sarajevo: Svjetlost 1982.


100 On this cf. also Malcolm 2002, p. 148f.

103 A century later the renowned historian Robert A. Kann 1977, p. 177 still stumbles into this conceptual trap when he categorizes Bosnian Muslims in general as »Turkish speaking«.

104 E.g. Schmid 1914, p. 247f, also makes reference to this.


106 [anonymous]: Bosniens Gegenwart und nächste Zukunft. Leipzig: Brockhaus 1886, p. 1 [emphasis i.o.].
What lies concealed behind this German critique of Capitalism is closet anti-Semitism. Also Wieman openly voices his preferences when he describes the inhabitants of Banjaluka: »[…] zur Hälfte sind es Mohammedaner; aber das sind sehr gute, brave Leute, die keinem ein Unrecht tun, sie haben hier 40 Moscheen; sind sehr fromm, glaube ich, und sie gefallen mir besser als die Serben und die Spaniolen.« Approval and disapproval are thus expressed from the perspective of the »superiorly civilized« German observer, who is bolstered by the knowledge that the cultural hegemony of the Austro-Hungarian occupation force is behind him. The point of view ossifies into a scopic regime that is supposed to work as »reading glasses« that try to direct the recipient’s opinion.

Narrative contact with the Other in Bosnia represents a type of exoticism that is typical at the turn-of-the-century; here, however, it serves not only the colorful import of foreign images, but also the justification of Austro-Hungarian rule and political disenfranchisement. But still, the very periphery that is to be civilized is also worth protecting. As is frequently the case in the European imagination since the 18th century, the foreigner becomes something of an ambiguous amalgam. At times s/he is the poor barbarian, whom it is necessary to »civilize«, at others, the noble savage, who lives in a lost paradise. Sometimes, though, s/he even appears eerily similar to oneself, a kind of mirror image without the »degeneration« of the West. Heinrich Renner comments along these lines that the Muslims are also worth protecting. As is frequently the case in the European imagination since the 18th century, the foreigner becomes something of an ambiguous amalgam. At times s/he is the poor barbarian, whom it is necessary to »civilize«, at others, the noble savage, who lives in a lost paradise. Sometimes, though, s/he even appears eerily similar to oneself, a kind of mirror image without the »degeneration« of the West. Heinrich Renner comments along these lines that the Muslims are also worth protecting. As is frequently the case in the European imagination since the 18th century, the foreigner becomes something of an ambiguous amalgam. At times s/he is the poor barbarian, whom it is necessary to »civilize«, at others, the noble savage, who lives in a lost paradise. Sometimes, though, s/he even appears eerily similar to oneself, a kind of mirror image without the »degeneration« of the West. Heinrich Renner comments along these lines that the Muslims are also worth protecting.

The inscrutable ethnic complexity of Bosnia propels one either to the maintenance of the official Austro-Hungarian equipoise towards all cultural groups or to partisanship. Where the Berliner Renner can feel enthusiastic about the Muslims in a style which reminds one of the descriptions of North American natives, Austrian texts, particularly those of anonymous origin, would rather demand the removal of the potential danger. In the process, arguments such as the Turkish resentment and a reticent attitude towards the modern age are brought into play when it comes to denouncing the Muslims. As one source text quite openly opines: »[E]s lässt sich ja doch die orientalische Frage in populärer Weise nicht anders ausdrücken als ›hinaus mit den Türken‹. Nirgends wird man daraus Oesterreich einen Vorwurf machen.« The author of this self-published text is a certain Dr. Josef Neupauer, who, incidentally, not only suggests the expulsion of the Muslims but also the conversion of whole Bosnia-Herzegovina into a kind of corporation (»Aktiengesellschaft«) in the interests of better economy.

Admittedly, the Bosnian Serbs make out even worse. With their alleged national pride actually attributed not only to their women, they generally find even less approval in the texts than the Muslims, who are ambivalently coded all the same. For instance, it is said that

Allien bei dem Serbenthum bestehen manche andere Hemmnisse, welche es bedenklich erscheinen lassen dürften, dasselbe zum herrschenden Staatselement zu erheben. Da ist vor allem die verhältnismäßig niedere Kulturstufe, auf welcher das bosnische Serbenthum bis zur Stunde steht, namentlich in den höhern Volkschichten, dem handelstreitenden und besonders dem geistlichen Stande.

The Croats in Bosnia-Herzegovina, on the other hand, are backed by a strong lobby. This can be seen not only in the case of Milena Preindlsberger-Mrazović, a Viennese of Croatian descent and editor of the Bosnian Post, who writes in her Bosnisches Skizzenbuch (1909) of Krešević and its Franciscan monastery:

In den schmalen Tälern dieser Berggebilde lebt ein scheues, dunkelgekleidetes, ungeheuer gutartiges Volk, die Katholiken, gleichsam in Verstecken[...].) Diese Streiter für ihren Gott und ihr Volk nötigten selbst ihren Verfolgern, den Muhamedanern, Ehrerbietung ab. Nicht selten suchen Muhamedaner bei den Fratres Rat und Hilfe in Unglücks- und Krankheitsfällen.

An examination of the texts of the Austro-Hungarian administration reveals that they suggest, time and again, the strengthening of the Croatian element of the population on account of its »occidental« transparency and, more importantly, its religious and political loyal to the Empire. Then there are also Croatian politicians like Ferdinand von Šišić, a university professor and historian, who openly voices his preferences when he describes the inhabitants of Banjaluka: »[…] zur Hälfte sind es Mohammedaner; aber das sind sehr gute, brave Leute, die keinem ein Unrecht tun, sie haben hier 40 Moscheen; sind sehr fromm, glaube ich, und sie gefallen mir besser als die Serben und die Spaniolen.« Approval and disapproval are thus expressed from the perspective of the »superiorly civilized« German observer, who is bolstered by the knowledge that the cultural hegemony of the Austro-Hungarian occupation force is behind him. The point of view ossifies into a scopic regime that is supposed to work as »reading glasses« that try to direct the recipient’s opinion.
professor and member of the regional parliament in Zagreb, who, after the annexation in 1908, attempts to demonstrate with much historical misrepresentation that Bosnia had always been Croatian;138 his argument is directed principally against the hegemonic power ruling the Croatsians, i.e., the Kingdom of Hungary, which thinks itself capable of asserting its historical rights on the basis of Bosnia’s belonging to its domain of state in the Late Middle Ages. According to Šišić, however, the Croatian on Bosnian soil ought to win his independence as well as a new position of supremacy.

IV. NachBildungen: Appropriations and Incorporeations of the Other

All narratives that have been sketched here,139 as disparate as they may seem in places, are overarched by the discourse of civilization and culture, which is supposed to be implanted, as it were, in the Balkans. The symbolic incorporation of Bosnia-Herzegovina follows in the wake of its military occupation and administrative affiliation. In this context might considered (mutatis mutandis) what Catherine Hall writes in her exemplary study on the relationship between ‘white’ homeland (England) and ‘black’ colony (Jamaica):

Marking differences was a way of classifying, of categorising, of making hierarchies, of constructing boundaries for the body politic and the body social. Processes of differentiation, positioning men and women, colonisers and colonised, as if these divisions were natural, were constantly in the making, in conflicts of power. The most basic tension of empire was that ‘the otherness of colonised persons was neither inherent nor stable: his or her difference had to be defined and maintained’. This meant that ‘a grammar of difference was continuously and vigilantly crafted as people in colonies refashioned and contested European claims to superiority’. The construction of this ‘grammar of difference’ was the cultural work of both colonisers and colonised.140

This brings us to the problem of representation at a meta-level as well. If it is supposed to be more than simply a ledger list of the textual constructs of a ‘grammar of difference’, a serious imagological analysis like the presented research project cannot but pay heed to the methodological crisis it encounters when dealing with the (stereotypical) images. By the same token, it ought also to resist the temptation of wanting to ‘correct’ these images in reference to a ‘reality’: After all, there is no ‘real’ escape from the maelstrom of the images. For the researcher, there remains only the reference to their projected phantasms. In his latest book, the Anglicist Graham Huggan has pointed to a further ‘dilemma’ by asking:

[...] is it possible to account for cultural difference without at the same time mystifying it? To locate and praise the other without also privileging the self? To promote the cultural margins without ministering the needs of the mainstream? To construct an object of study that resists, and possibly forestalls, its own commodification? The postcolonial exotic is the name that one might give to this dilemma, a name that accompanies the emergence of postcolonial studies as an institutional field.141

Huggan’s reproach would thus be that Postcolonial Studies, with its self-ascribed political mission of changing perspectives and/or properly adjusting viewpoints, does not really undermine exoticism as such, but rather re-inscribes it in a politically correct format and, in doing so, makes it socially palatable. Nevertheless, a ‘postcolonial’ critical imagology seems sensible where an egregious political imbalance of the images is notable. The stereotypes may in fact reflect nothing ‘real’, but they do achieve something in the Lebenswelt of social realities.

In symbolic practice, however, Austrian exoticism vis-à-vis Bosnia-Herzegovina, i.e., the fiction of otherness and of a periphery in dire need of civilization, always turns out to be inherently threatened by the potential heterogeneity and presumed decadence of its own culture, i.e. the Habsburg Monarchy. As a foreigner in the oriental Balkans, fixed as they are by inscrutable inner differences between Serbs, Croats and Turks, on the one hand, and Muslims, Christians and Jews, on the other, the Austrian intruder encounters, in this opaque
The gastronomy seems positively predestined for cultural hybridity. The example of an East Galician Jewess who operates a (Viennese) hotel café amidst Serbs and Muslims even found its way into the work of the Croatian-Bosnian author Ivo Andrić (1892-1975). With his famous, oft-quoted and oft-misused 1945 novel Na Drini čuprija (The Bridge over the Drina), the Yugoslav Nobel Prize laureate certainly provides more than just standard reading fare for the knapsacks of later crisis tourists, where several centuries of Bosnian history parade by in compact episodes. In his depiction of the period of Austro-Hungarian occupation, Andrić nurture a point of view that casts an eye at both shores of the river Drina, a fitting complement to the central cultural symbol of the bridge with which the text posits Bosnia as the link between East and West, Occident and Orient. In a narrative constrution typical of the novel, the narrator, who stands above time, and the bridge over the waters practically merge into one, as if to suggest that the edifice itself reports the story. The result is the emergence of a stereoscopic, hybrid optic, which criticizes the Austrian invaders’ obsession with civilization and »cleanliness«, without, however, falling prey to a nationalistic counter-discourse of naïve »nativeness«, which would view an insistence on »tradition« as truly desirable. In the swaying bridge arch of his irony, so to speak, the narrator dismisses both extremes. He wonders, amongst other things, what restlessness drives the Austro-Hungarian occupiers: The newcomers were never at peace; and they allowed no one else to live in peace.

It seemed that they were resolved with their impalpable yet ever more noticeable web of laws, regulations and orders to embrace all forms of life, men, beasts and things, and to change and alter everything, both the outward appearance of the town and the custom and habits of men from the cradle to the grave. All they did was to protest about. [...] This continual need of the newcomers to build and rebuild, to dig and to put back again, to put up and to modify, this eternal desire of theirs to foresee the action of natural forces, to avoid or surmount them, no one either understood or appreciated.

It is as if the arches of the bridge also connect the national stereotypes and with that the ambivalence invested in them. The disapproval of the hectic bustle of the Austro-Hungarian invaders contains at once a hint of praise for their civilization as well as an admonishment of the ›lazy‹ ›Oriental‹. The desire to attach a general message to the construct of the text, however, represents an impracticable task, for the perspective of the story frequently remains uncertain; it is not clear who speaks here, the figures or the omniscient bridge-narrator who strategically constructs this intermediate position. At the same time, the narrator develops a very odd, self-reflexive variant of the Habsburg myth, which remains cognizant of the principle of foreign rule and which places the narrative of k.u.k. Civilisation and Pax Austriaca squarely in the dubious light of irony and illusion, thereby tracing the myth of civilization back to its own phantasmatic structure:

Such were those three decades of relative prosperity and apparent peace in the Franz-Josef manner, when many Europeans thought that there was an infallible formula for the realization of a centuries-old dream of full and happy development.
of individuality in freedom and progress [...]. But to this remote Bosnian township only broken echoes penetrated of all this life of the nineteenth century, and those only to the extent and in the form in which this backward oriental society could receive them and in its own manner understand and accept them.

The people found order, work and security. That was enough to ensure that here too life, outward life at least, set out ›on the road of perfection and progress‹. Everything else was flushed away into that dark background of consciousness where live and ferment the basic beliefs of individual races, faiths and castes, which, to all appearances dead and buried, are preparing for later far-off unsuspected changes and catastrophes, without which, it seems, peoples cannot exist and above all the peoples of this land. The new authorities, after the first misunderstandings and clashes, left among the townspeople a definite impression of firmness and of permanence (they were themselves impregnated with this belief without which there can be no strong and permanent authority). They were impersonal and indirect and for that reason more easily bearable than the former Turkish rulers.

In this ›illusionistic‹ process of narrative irony certain ethnic stereotypes nevertheless remain in place as does the myth of the ›just‹ Austro-Hungarian rule; they are, however, in quotation marks, as it were, and are deferred, so to speak, in light of the utopia of a metamorphosis, which Andrić develops. Nothing and no one keeps its form – not even the rule of Austria-Hungary. Against the problematic civilizing task of the Austrian texts, which fantasize about education and development, Andrić sets the hybridity of a conglomerate as both a combination and, in a further step, a transformation of the heterogeneous:

Old ideas and old values clashed with the new ones, merged with them or existed side by side, as if waiting to see which would outlive which.

On the other hand, after a certain time, even these newcomers were unable to avoid completely the influence of the unusual oriental milieu in which they had to live. [...] It is true that the local people, especially the Christians and Jews, began to look more and more like the newcomers in dress and behaviour, but the newcomers themselves did not remain unchanged and untouched [...].

Andrić shows here the beginning undecidedness of an intermediary state of colonial existence, a state of ›de-automatizing‹, as to which image of the Orient is meant and precisely what cultural position Austrians and Bosnians occupy within it. This could be more than just the loss of one’s ›roots‹ and, on the other hand, even transcend Bhabha’s concepts of mimikry and hybridity. Perhaps, in the hope for a future ›uncommon‹ Oriental or Westerner (who thus resists stereotyping), and in the idea of the transitory nature of every rule and the permanent metamorphosis of culture/s, there also exists that small residual utopia. Those who research stereotypes might accept it as a possible solution to their aforementioned dilemmas, at least on a (retrospective and individualistic) literary level. It remains uncertain, however, if this is of any general comfort for those who were actually – as social groups – exposed to the ambivalent political and economic practices of a patronizing k.u.k. colonialism, and its aftermath.


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