

first publication

Introduction

¹ Further, I will use this term to refer to Serb, Croat and Muslim writers who have lived in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, resp. in socialist Yugoslavia. When their nationality in the strict sense of the word seems to be important, I will mention which nation they belong to.

² Cf. several articles from Wolfgang Müller-Funk on *Kakanien revisited* (www.kakanien.ac.at).

In this article, I will examine which image of the multicultural Habsburg Dual Monarchy can be found in the »Yugoslav«¹ historiography concerning Bosnia and Herzegovina under the Austro-Hungarian administration (1878-1918). It seems indeed justifiable to study the Dual Monarchy not only from the point of view of the »centre«, but also to take a look at it from the standpoint of the »periphery«.² This concerns not only the various peripheral cultures and literatures from the Monarchy in general, but also in particular cases, i.e. the historiography concerning a specific region during a specific period.

How is the period of Austro-Hungarian rule described/defined? In this article, I will focus on the colonial discourse. Can the »colonial« paradigm according to the Yugoslav historians who I will quote be used in examining power and cultural relations with regard to Bosnia as a part of the Dual Monarchy? Or is the »postcolonial« epithet nothing but a polemic metaphor, opposing the nostalgic Habsburg Myth? (It would be interesting also to investigate in this respect whether a kind of *Habsburgmythos*, similar to the one of Claudio Magris does exist not only in Austrian literature, but also in Austrian and Hungarian historiography.)

Thus, this contribution re-engages partly in the discussion how far the methods of postcolonial studies can be used for the Habsburg context and especially for Bosnia as a part of the Dual Monarchy.

The historical works which I refer to are partly written by authors who lived in Bosnia and Herzegovina under Austrian rule and who are not, for that reason, ordinary historians, but rather eyewitnesses who cannot easily distance themselves from the matter they describe. This, from my point of view, is even more interesting, since I am looking for an image of the Dual Monarchy rather than for objective facts. Moreover, some of them were not historians in the strict sense of the word, but writers, journalists, lawyers, geographers, prominent intellectuals of that time who among their other literary or publicist work published historical booklets and in this way tried to influence public opinion. Some lived in neighboring Croatia or Serbia at the time, or shortly after that in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes during the interwar period. Only in instances where I noticed striking similarities with earlier writings, will I refer to later works of history published in socialist Yugoslavia after the Second World War.

Main Characteristics of Austro-Hungarian Rule in Bosnia According to Some Yugoslav Historians

I will start by giving some of the main characteristics of Austrian rule in Bosnia according to some Serbian/Croatian historians from Bosnia. Dr. Vladimir Ćorović is one of the first Serbian historians to have studied and described in detail the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina, including the Austro-Hungarian period in his work.³ He was born in Mostar (1885) and from 1910 onwards assisted the owner and editor of the influential Serbian literary magazine *Bosanska vila* (*The Bosnian Fairy*), Nikola Kašinić, as co-editor.⁴ In his *Bosnia and Herzegovina*, he summarized the Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia in three characteristic moments: firstly, the Austrian occupiers' attempt to crush/strangle the national consciousness of the inhabitants of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Secondly, their systematic encouragement of resentment and reciprocal struggle between different ethnic elements within the country. Whereas the Ottomans were used to drive people down physically, the Austrians did the same but in a more refined, spiritual way, he writes. As a third characteristic, Ćorović cites Austria's economic politics, which, according to him, undoubtedly bore colonial features: »Economically«, he concludes, »the country was in fact degraded to a common colony.«⁵ With his three characteristics, Ćorović set the (undoubtedly negative) tone that we can find in many works and articles on the Austro-Hungarian period in Bosnia written by Yugoslav historians.

In the introduction to *Bosnia and Herzegovina under Austro-Hungarian Government*⁶ (which is not undersigned, but was probably written by the Serbian lawyer Nikola Stojanović), the following, similar quotation about the rule of Benjámín Kállay, minister of the joint Austro-Hungarian ministry of finances and the first governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina is to be found:

³ He published his *Bosna i Hercegovina* in 1925, his *Političke prilike u Bosni i Hercegovini* in 1939.

⁴ Djuričković, Dejan: *Bosanska vila*. Književnoistorijska studija. Sarajevo: Svjetlost 1975, p. 46.

⁵ Ćorović, Vladimir: *Bosna i Hercegovina*. Beograd: Srpska književna zadruga 1925, p. 80-83: »Ekonomski, [...] zemlj[a] je u stvari bila degradovana na obiānu koloniju.«

⁶ Skarić, Vladislav/Hadžić-Nuri Osman/Stojanović, Nikola: *Bosna i Hercegovina pod austro-ugarskom upravom*. Beograd: Geca Kon 1938.

⁷ Ibid., p. 6-7: »Nasilna, antisrpska, kolonizatorska uprava ovog vrlo talentovanog državnika, koji je poznati pisac »Istorije Srba« i bivši dugogodišnji austro-ugarski konzul u Beogradu, imala je za cilj, pored uništavanja svega nacionalnog, da prikaže stranom svetu velike »kulturne blagodati« austro-ugarske uprave u Bosni i da tim pripremi aneksiju.«

11 Cf. Romsics, Ignác: Hungary in the Twentieth Century. Budapest: Corvina, Osiris 1999.

12 Ćorović Vladimir: Odnosi između Srbije i Austro-Ugarske. Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Jugoslavije 1936.

13 Jovan Cvijić: Aneksija Bosne i Hercegovine i srpsko pitanje. Beograd: Državna štamparija Kraljevine Srbije 1908.

14 Interesting from this point of view is the cooperation of people from the periphery in their struggle for more (national) autonomy. Tomáš Masaryk, the leader of the Young Czech movement, held a furious speech in the Austrian parliament, thus defending the peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina against the rule of Benjámín Kállay. Published (in Croatian) by A. Malbaša: Hrvatski i srpski nacionalni problem u Bosni za vrijeme režima Benjamina Kállaya [The Croatian and Serbian National Problem in Bosnia during the Regime of Benjamin Kállay]. Osijek: Tisak građanske tiskare k.d. 1940, part II.

15 Hauptmann refers to Berend, I./Ránki Gy.: Economic Development in East Central Europe in the 19th and 20th Centuries. New York, London 1974 and to Buszko, J.: Zum Wandel der Gesellschaftsstruktur in Galizien und in der Bukowina. In: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Phil. Hist. Kl., Sitzungsberichte 343 (Wien 1978).

16 Ćorović 1925, p. 81-83: »Ekonomske, Bosna i Hercegovina su bile sistematski eksploatisane za račun austrijske i mađarske industrije i njihovih kapitalista. Glavno bogatstvo zemlje, ogromne bosanske šume, bile su uz neverovatno niske cene ustupljene stranim firmama. Tarifna politika bila je, bez imalo obzira, tako udešena da je onemogućavala domaće tamičenje sa stranim proizvodima. U samoj zemlji na očigled su pomagana preduzeća sa stranim kapitalom. Za pivo iz tuđinske sarajevske pivare plaćalo se od Sarajeva do Mostara po 1,01 krunu na kilometar od hektolitra, a za domaće vino iz Mostara u Sarajevo 1,65 kruna!«

17 Skarić/Jovanović/Nuri-Hadžić 1938, p. 7.

18 Ćorović 1925, p. 83.

19 Hauptmann, Ferdinand: Die Österreichisch-Ungarische Herrschaft in Bosnien und der Herzegovina 1878-1918. Wirtschaftspolitik und Wirtschaftsentwicklung. Graz: Univ. of Graz 1983, p. 36.

*Relations between Serbia and Austria-Hungary in the 20th Century*¹² or even more explicitly in Cvijić's *The Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Serbian Question*¹³ we come across the origins of the anti-Austrian point of view, shared by the majority of Serbian historians: Austria hindered Serbia from realizing its territorial ambitions, beginning with the *Congress of Berlin* (1878), and continuing later on with the definite annexation of Bosnia (1908).

This explains why Austria-Hungary has often been seen in Serbian public opinion as »the most hated state« during the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Defending the struggle for a greater Serbia or a greater Croatia in a tripartite Habsburg Monarchy or for an independent Yugoslav state that would have to unite Serbs, Croats and Slovenes results *a priori* in a negative image of the Dual Monarchy. In defending their alternative constructions, it was important for them to acquire the support of public opinion and the governments of other European states. A way to obtain this support was not only to express the need or even necessity of the Yugoslav people to live in their own state, but in a way also to employ the »colonial discourse« against Austria-Hungary and in favor of their own national struggle. Later on, during the days of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (*Kraljevina Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca*), this rhetoric was used to justify the new state.

Similar victim rhetoric from »oppressed nations in the multiethnic prison of the Habsburgs« or against the »German and Hungarian domination« is frequently heard from the side of the other non-German or non-Hungarian-speaking populations in the Monarchy (Czechs, Romanians, Slovaks, Croats from Croatia proper) as well.¹⁴ In the case of Bosnia, however, even outside of the nationalist discourse or the use of the colonial discourse in favor of nationalist purposes, the economic policy of the Dual Monarchy seems in truth to have been the main argument to depict it so negatively: we find it even in the work of authors who are not nationalist at all, and in the work of authors from the end of the 20th century (cf. the aforementioned mentioned Lovrenović), who are able to distance themselves from the period described. The only regions in the Habsburg Dual Monarchy that seem to have shared a similar fate as Bosnia are Galicia and Bukovina.¹⁵

Thus, when using the term »colonialism«, most authors refer of course mainly to the economic circumstances, since this is the most obvious way to prove that the policy of an empire can be called colonial. To reach to his conclusion that Bosnia was reduced to »a common colony«, Ćorović describes the economic policy of Austria-Hungary as follows:

Economically, Bosnia and Herzegovina was systematically exploited to bolster the Austrian and Hungarian industry and their moneylenders. The main wealth of the country, the huge Bosnian woods, was yielded at unbelievably low prices to foreign firms. The tariff policy was, without any consideration, arranged in such a way that any competition of domestic with foreign products was impossible. In the country itself were enterprises founded by foreign capital supported in an obvious way. For one hectoliter of beer from a foreign brewery in Sarajevo, one paid from Sarajevo to Mostar 1,01 crown per kilometer, but for domestic wine from Mostar to Sarajevo 1,65 crowns!¹⁶

Stojanović gives a similar example: the transportation of one wagon of corn per kilometer from Sisak (a city in Croatia proper) to Mostar was charged at a price almost two times cheaper than from Doboj (Northeast Bosnia) to Mostar.¹⁷ As for railway construction, which started in Bosnia seriously only with the Austro-Hungarian occupation, Ćorović notes that the railways weren't constructed according to local interests, but according to the strategic and political interests of Austria-Hungary. He gives as an example the very expensive construction of the eastern double track railway line on the Serbian-Turkish border (in use from 1912 onwards) or the connection with the Boka Kotorska (strategically important for the Austrian navy) from 1901 onwards, whereas the fertile valley of the Posavina, with Gradačac and Bijeljina, didn't have any railway connection at all and a connection with Split wasn't considered until 1912. For that reason, he maintains, the railways in Bosnia were a loss-making business, resulting in a deficit that Bosnia itself had to carry.¹⁸ He was right, since Bosnia and Herzegovina had, according to the *Gesetz über die Verwaltung Bosniens und der Herzegovina* from 1880, to finance its own administration and investments in the development of economy and infrastructure (albeit Austria or Hungary sometimes helped with loans, e.g. for the construction of railways) with its own income.¹⁹

The Croatian engineer / economist Ante Malbaša considers that Bosnia and Herzegovina was a colony of Austria-Hungary in the precise sense of the word; stating that it was true that



20 Malbaša 1940, p. 13-14.

21 Prof. Dr. Eduard Richter: *Bosnien, Österreichische Rundschau*. Bd. 4. Wien 1906 [1898], str. 151.

22 Malbaša 1940, p. 14, cites Richter in his own (Croatian) translation: »Bosna je kolonijalni posjed monarhije. Ona istina nije ni Java ni Indija. Ali ako se Bosna uporedi sa kolonijama koje su stekle druge evropske države posljednjih desetljeća, mora se priznati da je Austrija ipak dobila mnogo vrednije i sa povoljnijim položajem područje, nego li većina ostalih država.«

23 Kruševac, Todor: *Privredne prilike grada Sarajeva za vreme austro-ugarske uprave (1878-1918)* [The Economical Circumstances of the City of Sarajevo during the Austro-Hungarian Administration]. Sarajevo: Separat iz *Godišnjaka istoriskog društva Bosne i Hercegovine za 1956* [Offprint from the *Yearbook of the Historical Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina for 1956*].

24 Božić, Ivan/Čirković, Sima/Dediđer, Vladimir/Ekmečić, Milorad: *Istorija Jugoslavije* [The History of Yugoslavia]. Beograd: Prosveta 1972, p. 352: »polukolonijalno stanje u Bosni i Hercegovini«.

25 Enciklopedija Jugoslavije. Zagreb: Leksikografski zavod 1982, lemma »Bosna i Hercegovina / Austro-Ugarska uprava«, p. 189: »Potrebe austro-ugarske kolonijalne privredne politike u Bosni i Hercegovini hitno su zahtijevale njeno uključivanje u carinski sistem Monarhije.«

26 Figures by: Skarić/Jovanović/Nuri-Hadžić 1938, p. 7.

27 Kapidžić, Hamdija: *Austro-Ugarski političari i pitanje osnivanja univerziteta u Sarajevu 1913 godine* [Austro-Hungarian Politicians and the Question of the Founding of a University in Sarajevo in the Year 1913]. Sarajevo: Separat iz *Glasnika arhiva i društva Bosne i Hercegovine za 1968* [Offprint from the *Herald of the Archives and the Society of Archivists of Bosnia and Herzegovina*], p. 293: »Austro-ugarske vlasti su suviše sporo radile na podizanju opšte kulture i otvaranju osnovnih škola. Nešto više je urađeno za vrijeme ustavnosti (1910-1914), pa i tada vrlo malo. U godini 1916. bilo je u Bosni i Hercegovini svega 469 osnovnih škola, pored 126 srpskih, koje je dokinula Zemaljska vlada za vrijeme prvog svjetskog rata. Od srednjih škola bilo je 7 punih i jedna niža gimnazija, 12 trgovačkih škola i nekoliko stručnih. Ovakvo stanje u školstvu bilo je posljedica jedne politike koju su sprovodile austro-ugarske vlasti, a koja je, nema sumnje, imala sva obilježja kolonijalizma.«

the Austro-Hungarian officials tried to avoid using the term ›colony‹ and describing the economic policy in the country as »colonial«, mainly because it would be too strong a reminder of the African colonies.²⁰ To support his statements, he refers to the economic isolation of Bosnia from the Dalmatian coast in favor of the Hungarian market, the disruption of direct economic connections between Bosnia on the one side and France, England and Italy on the other (business with these countries went through Vienna or Budapest from 1878 onwards), the construction of railways with a view to exploiting the natural resources of Bosnia, the loan policy via Austrian and Hungarian banks instead of the active development of domestic Serbian/Croatian banks, the selling of concessions to exploit the Bosnian woods to foreign firms at low prices. Interesting in his argument is, however, that he not only uses similar or nearly the same arguments as the above-mentioned historians do, but that he also cites an Austrian academic, Dr. Eduard Richter, who expressed the same opinion in an article dating from 1898.²¹ Malbaša quoted Richter, a geographer and professor at the University of Graz, as follows:

Bosnia is the colonial possession of the Monarchy. It is true that it is neither Java, nor India. But when Bosnia is compared with the colonies that other European states obtained during the last decades, we have to admit that Austria acquired a region that is of much more worth and much more favorably situated than the majority of the other countries did.²²

In various historical works written at a later date during the time of socialist Yugoslavia, one comes across similar statements arguing that the economic policy of Austria-Hungary can be called ›colonial‹²³ or at least ›partially colonial‹. In the »official« *History of Yugoslavia* (an English version of the book was edited in the USA in 1976), the following quotation is found: »Bosnia and Herzegovina remains even at the beginning of the 20th century the one and only colonial possession in Europe.«²⁴ Also in the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia*, we find the notion of »colonial« domination: »The needs of the Austro-Hungarian colonial economical policy in Bosnia and Herzegovina urgently required her enclosure in the custom system of the Monarchy.«²⁵

Next to the economic arguments for the case that Austria ruled Bosnia as a colonial possession, Yugoslav historians also find secondary proofs in the fact that the Austro-Hungarian administration invested more than twice the amount of money in police equipment and the building of military barracks, than they did in educational affairs (in 1906 the budget for the *Gendarmerie* counted 3,750.000 crowns, whereas the education budget counted 1,300.000 crowns).²⁶ The Bosnian historian Hamdija Kapidžić also saw colonial features of the Austro-Hungarian rule not only in their economic, but also in their cultural and education policies:

The Austro-Hungarian administration worked very slowly in opening primary schools and developing the culture in general. A little bit more was done during the period of the constitution (1910-1914), but even at that time it was really little. In 1916, Bosnia and Herzegovina had only 469 primary schools, apart from 126 Serbian, which the territorial government (*Landesverwaltung / Zemaljska vlada*) during the First World War closed. As for the secondary schools, there were only 7 high schools and one lower secondary school, 12 business schools and some professional schools. Such conditions in the education system were the consequence of a policy that the Austro-Hungarian government carried out and which without doubt possessed all the features of colonialism.²⁷

He sees the disastrous educational policy of Austro-Hungary in Bosnia as a consequence of their colonial policy in general. As he finds it needless to define ›colonialism‹, it seems that he sees this as something that goes without saying. Kapidžić refers very properly to the »cultural mission of the Dual Monarchy in Bosnia and Herzegovina« to which Austria-Hungary appealed in defending the occupation of Bosnia at the *Congress of Berlin* (1878) and later. This may appear ironic when one takes into account the meager results in the field of education at the end of the Austro-Hungarian rule.

The above-mentioned examples show how most historians, be they Serbian or Croatian, stress the colonial features of the economic policy of Austro-Hungary and agree completely on this point, referring above all to the economic circumstances in Bosnia and Herzegovina under Austrian rule. *Stricto sensu*, Bosnia and Herzegovina were not a colony of Austria-Hungary, but the Austro-Hungarian rule reminds us in many ways of the colonial policy of Western powers elsewhere in the world.²⁸ Hauptmann pointed out that from the occupation onwards (1878), there existed the possibility that Bosnia and Herzegovina might become a colonial property of the Monarchy, because Bosnia was a less developed, marginal region from the beginning:



28 Detrez, Raymond: Colonialism in the Balkans. In: www.kakanienrevisited.ac.at/RDetrez1.pdf v. 15, 05.2002. Hauptmann, Ferdinand: op. cit., p. 1.

29 Hauptmann 1983, p. 1.

Angesichts des Anschlusses an wirtschaftlich bedeutend entwickeltere, stärkere Gebiete der Monarchie hing die Zukunft dieser Länder davon ab, wie rasch sie aufholen und sich entwicklungsmäßig jenen Gebieten angleichen würden. Denn im entgegengesetzten Falle wäre für sie die Gefahr entstanden, auf die Stufe eines Rohstofflieferanten, eines Kolonialgebietes der österreichisch-ungarischen Wirtschaft herabzusinken.²⁹

The definite answer to the question *if* Bosnia was a colony of Austria-Hungary depends ultimately on how a colonial system is defined. Problematic in this respect is that none of the authors give a definition of the term ›colonial‹. Nevertheless, we may assume that the historians cited here do not use the term figuratively, as they base their statements on many dates and statistical material from the period 1878-1918.

Conclusion

We may conclude that the general picture of Austro-Hungarian rule in Bosnia-Herzegovina in Yugoslav historic works differs essentially from the one given in (history) literature of the »centre(s)«. There is no golden time of the Double Eagle, and no *Habsburgmythos* to be found. Some historians present the positive sides of Austrian rule, but not without at least mentioning or even stressing the negative sides as well. It is beyond doubt that reason for this negative depiction of the Dual Monarchy in the Balkans (and as a part of it the colonial discourse on Bosnia) can partly be found in the Serbian/Croatian, respectively Yugoslav nationalist discourse. Nevertheless, this nationalist discourse does not seem to be the main reason for the negative depiction of the Dual Monarchy in Bosnia and thus its depiction as a colonial empire. The fact that many Yugoslav historians, even those outside of the nationalist discourse, refer to the economic policy of Austro-Hungary in the occupied and later in the annexed provinces of Bosnia and Herzegovina mainly as ›colonial‹ and ›exploitative‹, proves that they do not use the term ›colonial‹ as a polemic epithet or in a metaphorical sense of the word. According to them, Bosnia literally was a colony of the Dual Monarchy. The fact that they experienced Austro-Hungarian rule as colonial and present it as such in historical works is a factor of importance in reconstructing (the development of) the self-image of the Bosnian/South-Slav periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. The extensive use of the colonial discourse in Yugoslav historical literature shows that, at least according to the historians cited here, a post-colonial approach to the Dual Monarchy seems to be justified.

Stijn Vervaet, geb. 1980: Studium Ost-Europäische Sprachen und Kulturen (1998-2002) an der Univ. Gent (Belgien), Diplomarbeit: *Miroslav Krleža und die Österreichisch-Ungarische Monarchie. Eine Analyse des Romans Zastava*. Zur Zeit an der Univ. zu Gent Doktorand des FWO (*Fonds für Wissenschaftliche Forschung Flandern*), bereitet in Belgrad seine Dissertation über das Bild der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie in der Bosnisch-Herzegowinischen Literatur vor.
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