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Adnan Jahić: Forging a new paradigm for the study of Bosniak history[1]

Abstract:

Over the past three decades, historian Adnan Jahić has played a central role in writing a new Bosniak history. Researching topics as diverse as the evolution of Islamic institutions from the Habsburg empire to the socialist period, debates over gender and modernity, the experiences and transformation of Balkan Muslim societies during wartime, and Bosniak responses to World War II, Jahić has unearthed the historical narratives of people, regions, ideas, movements, and publications that were silenced or marginalized in the historical record of the twentieth century and reintegrated them into the historiography of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of Europe. While recognized as an important voice in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jahić's scholarship has also left a global imprint.

In this essay, I briefly introduce some of the many contributions of Jahić's scholarship and demonstrate ways that it intersects with global movements and historiographical conversations. First, I examine Jahić's important role in shifting the historical paradigm for the study of Bosniaks in World War II, which was critical for moving beyond the dominant Yugoslav state socialist production of history. Then I turn to the question of diversity of thought among Bosniak elites, especially members of the

[1] I am grateful to my research assistant, Bakir Ovčina, who assisted me in researching for this essay, to Matthew Worsnick for his editorial support, and to the many scholars of Bosnia and Herzegovina who attend History Fest each year, with whom I have had the privilege to discuss some these ideas.

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ulema, reflecting on how Jahić has challenged homogenous approaches to the study of national histories. Finally, I examine the ways that Jahić has challenged standard Yugoslav periodization, bringing together new kinds of connections for thinking about Bosniak history.

Key words: Bosniak history, World War II, post-Cold War, *Hikjmet,* ulema.

Over the past three decades, historian Adnan Jahić has played a central role in writing a new Bosniak history. Researching topics as diverse as the evolution of Islamic institutions from the Habsburg empire to the socialist period, debates over gender and modernity, the experiences and transformation of Balkan Muslim societies during wartime, and Bosniak responses to World War II, Jahić has unearthed the historical narratives of people, regions, ideas, movements, and publications that were silenced or marginalized in the historical record of the twentieth century and reintegrated them into the historiography of Bosnia and Herzegovina and of Europe. While recognized as an important voice in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Jahić's scholarship has also left a global imprint.[2]

In this essay, I briefly introduce some of the many contributions of Jahić's scholarship and demonstrate ways that it intersects with global movements and historiographical conversations. First, I examine

[2] On the emergent Bosniak national historiography of the 1990s-2000s and Adnan Jahić's role in the Tuzla circle, see Husnija Kamberović, "Historiography in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Between Academic Discipline and Political Activism", *Contemporary European History* (2023): 886–894. For examples of international scholarship beyond Bosnia and Herzegovina that engage with Jahić's work, see: Xavier Bougarel "Le Reis et le voile: Une polémique religieuse dans la Bosnie-Herzégovine de l'entre-deux-guerres", in *L'autorité religieuse et ses limites en terres d'islam*, pp. 107–157. Brill, 2013; Ninja Bumann, "Scharia Nach k. u. k. Verordnung: Islamisches Recht Und Dessen Grenzen Im Habsburgischen Bosnien-Herzegowina (1878–1918)", *Recht Und Diversität: Lokale Konstellationen Und Globale Perspektiven von Der Frühen Neuzeit Bis Zur Gegenwart*, edited by Christina Brauner and Antje Flüchter, transcript Verlag, 2020, pp. 155–86 and also "Contesting Juridical Authority: Sharia, Marriage, and Morality in Habsburg Bosnia and Herzegovina", *Austrian History Yearbook* 53 (2022): 150–168; Fabio Giomi, *Making Muslim Women European: Voluntary Associations, Gender, and Islam in Post-Ottoman Bosnia and Yugoslavia (1878–1941)*. (CEU Press, 2021); Emily Greble, *Muslims and the Making of Modern Europe* (Oxford University Press, 2021).

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Jahić's important role in shifting the historical paradigm for the study of Bosniaks in World War II, which was critical for moving beyond the dominant Yugoslav state socialist production of history. Then I turn to the question of diversity of thought among Bosniak elites, especially members of the ulema, reflecting on how Jahić has challenged homogenous approaches to the study of national histories. Finally, I examine the ways that Jahić has challenged standard Yugoslav periodization, bringing together new kinds of connections for thinking about Bosniak history.

The First Paradigm Shifts: Tackling World War II

Adnan Jahić established his historical voice during the mid-1990s, a time when war in the former Yugoslavia, the end of the Cold War, and the collapse of state socialism across the region ushered in an historiographical revolution. Drawing on the opening of new archives, as well as new theoretical and analytical frameworks, historians called into question the ways that history had been written and who – and what – had been forgotten or erased as a result. It was not quite the "end of history," that Francis Fukuyama announced, but a radical paradigm shift occurred across the globe.[3] In the Balkans and Eastern Europe, this historiographical revolution sought to subvert and disrupt both official narratives of the past and dominant Marxist underpinnings of the historical discipline. The political transformation of the region in the 1990s added another dimension to this process. New national historiographies emerged that reflected and legitimized new political projects.[4] The human and political stakes of how history had been written were deeply apparent. History was used to legitimize some nations and their land claims, while other nations – like the Bosniaks – were being targeted for removal from their homelands.

[3] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* 16, Summer 1989, 3–18.

[4] Kamberović, "Historiography in Bosnia and Herzegovina". For how this process occurred in other parts of Eastern Europe, see for example Iryna Vushko, "Historians at war: History, politics and memory in Ukraine", *Contemporary European History* 27, no. 1 (2018): 112–124 and Timothy S. Snyder, Ivo Banac, Michal Kopeček, Egidijus Aleksandravičius, Andriy Portnov, Krisztián Ungváry, and Włodzimierz Borodziej, "Politics of history in Eastern Europe", *Journal of Modern European History* 8, no. 2 (2010): 141–163.

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For historians in the war-torn Yugoslav state and its successor states, rewriting history became a political and historiographical calling.[5] Rewriting the history of World War II and the Partisan victory was seen as particularly urgent. This was Tito's Yugoslavia's foundational narrative – a narrative that had been carefully crafted to legitimize the socialist and Yugoslav political project. The official narrative had very clear ideas of who were the enemies, the victims, and the heroes of socialist Yugoslavia, with little sympathy or analysis of motive or nuance in the complex multi-sided war. In official discourse, Bosniaks were congratulated when their histories aligned with the Partisan narratives and the Communist party's goals, and marked as reactionary, fascistic, collaborationist, and anti-modern when their narratives and choices diverged.

In the former Yugoslavia, the historiographical revolution of the 1990s and 2000s was an emotionally fraught and messy project born in a time of war, political upheaval, and collective trauma. At times, the valid historical project of revising and recovering histories of the war and postwar would become enmeshed in more sinister projects of apologia, genocide denial, and the rehabilitation of war criminals. By challenging the legitimacy of Yugoslavia's representation of its foundations, as well as calling attention to peoples who had been murdered or repressed, and then erased or demonized in state histories, historians offered new interpretations of the war, and new ways of conceptualizing its place in new national histories.

Adnan Jahić emerged in this wartime and post-Cold War moment as an important voice establishing a new Bosniak history of World War II. His first book, *Muslim military formations in the Tuzla region during World War II (Muslimanske formacije tuzlanskog kraja u Drugom svjetskom ratu),* written in 1995 before he became a professional historian, analyzed Muslim militias in World War II Tuzla, notably the Hadžiefendić legion and the Green cadre (*zeleni kadar*).[6] Challenging the classic Yugoslav

[5] See Ivo Banac, "The dissolution of Yugoslav historiography", in *Beyond Yugoslavia* (Routledge, 2019): pp. 39–65; Emily Greble and Vladislav Lilić, "Nations, Politics, and the Role of History in East Central Europe", *The American Historical Review* 128, no. 2 (2023): 951–962; Kamberović, "Historiography in Bosnia and Herzegovina", p. 2; Mark Mazower, "Changing Trends in the Historiography of Postwar Europe, East and West", *International Labor and Working-Class History* 58 (2000): 275–282.

[6] Adnan Jahić, *Muslimanske formacije tuzlanskog kraja u Drugom svjetskom ratu* (Tuzla: Bosnoljublje, 1995).

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framework that suggests the war was fought by just three sides – the Ustashas, Chetniks, and Partisans – Jahić introduces a nuanced fourth front, that of the Bosniaks. The book contextualized the background and goals of the militias in the interwar period, as well as analyzed the ways that Bosniaks in the Tuzla region experienced the war and postwar period. Importantly, the book also tackles the dominant Yugoslav narrative of Partisan liberation, which Jahić alternatively describes as a new form of "occupation" for Bosniaks, underscoring the negative aspects of the Partisan victory and the new Communist state. He would later develop a more nuanced argument about the Partisan consolidation of power, including the Bosniak participation in it.[7] *Muslim military formations* was a war book, written by a journalist and political thinker in the midst of siege and genocide, and dedicated to the fallen legionnaires, militiamen, and other Bosniak martyrs "whose sacrifice prevented our disappearance from the region in World War II."[8] The study was an important part of the nascent project of developing a distinct Bosniak history, one that produced a narrative arc of Bosniaks' legitimacy and historical participation in the region's politics and self-defense. Adnan Jahić recognized that it was critically important in this wartime moment for Bosniaks to stake clear claims to their own historical record.

Jahić's important study formed part of a global project that called into question the black and white ethical and historical frameworks of collaboration, resistance, and retribution, and demanded more critical analysis of the choices people made during the Second World War, postwar violence, and the narratives surrounding Partisan victory and the consolidation of Communist Eastern bloc.[9] Throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, historians were actively showcasing forgotten and complex histories that did not conform to black and white moral categories of who should and should not be studied. These include groups as diverse

[7] See Adnan Jahić, *Između čekića i nakovnja. Bosanskohercegovački muslimani (Bošnjaci) u Drugom svjetskom ratu (1941–1945)*, (Bošnjačka nacionalna zajednica za grad Zagreb i Zagrebačku županiju, Zagreb, 2023).

[8] Jahić, *Muslimanske formacije tuzlanskog kraja u Drugom svjetskom ratu,* front matter. Quote: "Poginulim legionarima, zelenokadrovcima i ostalim Bošnjacima čija je šehidska krv spriječila naš nestanak sa ovih prostora u II svjetskom ratu."

[9] On the ways that this paradigm shifted in western historiography, see the seminal volume István, Deák, Jan T. Gross, and Tony Judt, eds. *The politics of retribution in Europe: World War II and its aftermath* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

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as Soviet mass rape of German women in 1945, postwar pogroms against Jews in Poland, and the violent expulsions of ethnic Germans.[10] Historians also suggested new frameworks for thinking about the very idea of the postwar and the complexities involved with the establishment of Communist states.[11] It became an historical imperative to understand how and why people behaved the ways that they did, rather than to simply classify groups as "collaborators" or "anti-fascists." Both inside and outside the region, historians of the Balkans addressed the deep complexities and multi-faceted traumas encountered by a wide range of people and situated them in both local and international contexts.[12]

Among the historiographies of the former Yugoslavia, it would take longer for these ideas, typically marked as "revisionist" to become detached from ideological and nationalist presumptions. It would also take longer for historians to sit with the discomfort that one's own nation could simultaneously be victims of crimes and perpetrators of others; or even more, that these labels are not always helpful for understanding and analyzing how people responded to the traumatic and difficult contexts of war. The term "revisionist" was deployed so frequently that it was soon rendered analytically meaningless. In thinking about this historiographical shift, and Adnan Jahić's place within it, I prefer the framework of "shifting paradigms," which the well-known Soviet historian, Sheila Fitzpatrick, uses to describe shifts that occurred within Soviet historiography. Drawing on the theorization of Thomas Kuhn, a scholar of the Scientific Revolution, Fitzpatrick suggests the label of "revisionism" is often used pejoratively precisely because such scholarship deliberately seeks to disrupt and challenge

[10] For examples of this important shift in the Anglo-American literature, see Benjamin Frommer, *National cleansing: Retribution against Nazi collaborators in postwar Czechoslovakia* (Cambridge University Press, 2005); Jan Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz* (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2007); Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany: a history of the Soviet zone of occupation, 1945–1949* (Harvard University Press, 1995).

[11] For example, Tony Judt, *Postwar: A history of Europe since 1945* (Penguin, 2006) and Norman M. Naimark and Leonid Gibianski, eds, *The Establishment Of Communist Regimes In Eastern Europe, 1944–1949* (Routledge, 1997).

[12] For an important example of the English-language literature that does this well, see Max Bergholz, *Violence as a generative force: Identity, nationalism, and memory in a Balkan community* (Cornell University Press, 2018). See also Emily Greble, *Sarajevo, 1941–1945: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Hitler's Europe* (Cornell University Press, 2011).

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long-held beliefs that have become ingrained in professional historical circles, public mindsets, school curricula, and political worldviews.[13] For professional historians, revising history is an acknowledgment of the evolution of a social scientific field, the integration of new methods, sources, and analysis.

Over the next two decades, as Jahić embarked on a career in the historical profession, earning a master's and a doctorate in history, and joining the professoriate as Professor of History at the University of Tuzla, he would return to the study of World War II, expanding his analysis, which came to rest on the belief that local histories matter and that historical experience and action cannot be distilled exclusively into ideological frameworks.[14] In his masterful book, *Between a rock and a hard place – Bosnian Muslims (Bosniaks) in World War II (Između čekića i nakovnja – bosanskohercegovački muslimani (Bošnjaci) u Drugom svjetskom ratu (1941–1945),* Jahić brings together these threads and revisits big questions about how we study the diversity of Bosniak experience in the

[13] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Revisionism in Soviet history", *History and Theory* 46, no. 4 (2007): 79.

[14] Articles that illuminate the gradual evolution of Jahić's thinking on World War II and the postwar period include: "Bošnjaci i Nezavisna Država Hrvatska: od nade i lojalnosti do ogorčenja i otpora", *Bošnjačka pismohrana*, Zagreb, sv. 9, br. 28–31, 2009/2010, 43–54; "Stanje KPJ na području Banovića u prvim poslijeratnim godinama (1945–1949)", *Zbornik radova sa naučnog skupa "Kulturno-historijsko i prirodno naslijeđe Općine Banovići"*, Tuzla – Banovići, 2010, 158–169; "Političko-društvene prilike na području zvorničkog sreza nakon Drugog svjetskog rata (1945–1947)", *Zbornik radova "Zvornik kroz stoljeća"*, Zvornik, 2012, 96–107; "Pismo hafiza Muhameda ef. Pandže hafizu Aliji Traki oktobra 1943. godine, *Zbornik radova "Bošnjaci i Drugi svjetski rat – tokovi i posljedice"*, Sarajevo, 2012, 66–85; "Sukob ideja: ko i kako se obraćao Bošnjacima u Drugom svjetskom ratu", Zbornik radova XIX simpozija "Bošnjačko iskustvo antifašizma", *Bošnjačka pismohrana*, Zagreb, sv. 12, br. 36–37, 2013, 101–132; "Ideja autonomije Bosne i Hercegovine 1941–1945, u okvirima izvora i historijske rekonstrukcije", *Historijska traganja*, Institut za historiju u Sarajevu, br. 12, 2013, 155–183; "Bilješke o djelovanju bosanskohercegovačke uleme u Drugom svjetskom ratu (1941–1945)", *Historijska misao*, br. 1, Tuzla, 2015, 181–206; "Odnos Islamske vjerske zajednice Nezavisne Države Hrvatske prema vojno-političkoj akciji hafiza Muhameda ef. Pandže u jesen 1943. godine", *Prilozi,* Institut za historiju u Sarajevu, br. 47, 2018, 217–228; "Muslimanske rezolucije 1941. godine – kontekst, motivi, dometi", Zbornik radova XXV simpozija 'Doprinos islamske civilizacije i kulture Europi'", *Bošnjačka pismohrana*, Zagreb, sv. 17, br. 45, 2018, 289–295; "Život i borba. Husein Đozo i 13. SS divizija", *Historijska misao*, br. 8, Tuzla, 2024, 89–107.

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Second World War.[15] Jahić systematically examines individual regions, towns, and local histories during the war, highlighting variations in experiences across class, cultural outlook, religiosity, political beliefs, and historical experience. Instead of organizing his narrative around ethical categories, such as collaboration, resistance, rescue, retribution, or around political frameworks, such as anti-fascists, victims of fascism, anti-Communists, victims of communism, pro-Ustasha or anti-Ustasha, Jahić instead seeks to understand and contextualize Bosniak experiences and actions in a host of geo-political, regional, local, and historical factors. They were perpetrators of violence and also victims of violence, they were members of ideological groups and also opposed to those same groups. Bosniaks were also often simply the people trying to survive. Jahić does not shy away from controversial subjects in Bosniak history during the war. These include analysis of Bosnian Muslims who aligned with Chetniks or Ustashas, those who participated in spreading Islam (*širili islam*) in the Ustasha state, those who perpetrated violence against Serbs. In each case, he seeks to explain motive and experience, exploring pragmatic needs, opportunism and material incentive, personal histories rooted in specific villages, towns, and regions, and national and political ideologies. In analyzing Bosniaks in the Partisan movement, he joins the school of historians who call for the recognition of a complex and dynamic anti-fascist front.[16] The result is a book that challenges the reader to reflect on the subtleties and complex moral problems that Bosniaks faced during the war, and the difficult decisions they made, whether working with Chetniks, Nazis, Ustashas, or Communists, or skirting political alliances and seeking a different kind of political movement rooted in Islam. It is a book that illuminates the complexity of the Bosniak nation in times of crisis, and also offers new insights into its centrality to many different historiographies of the war.

[15] Jahić, *Između čekića i nakovnja. Bosanskohercegovački muslimani (Bošnjaci) u Drugom svjetskom ratu (1941–1945)*.

[16] For analysis of the idea of the popular front in the English-language scholarship, see for instance Ivo Banac's introduction in Georgi Dimitrov, *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov, 1933–1949* (Yale University Press, 2008) and Phyllis Auty, "Popular front in the Balkans: 1. Yugoslavia", *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 3 (1970): 51–67.

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Diversity and Complexity of a Nation

Throughout his scholarship, Jahić has rejected a homogenous or ideologically-driven national history, and instead underscored the deep complexity of Bosniaks and the rigorous debates they held in confronting modernity, political and ideological revolutions, and the secularization and modernization that came to define the modern era.[17] Through his large body of work, Jahić underscores the collective experiences of change that Bosniaks faced, from the withdrawal of the Ottoman Empire to the Habsburg occupation and annexation, from the devastation of World War I to the centralization of the first Yugoslav state, from the collapse of Yugoslavia and devastation of the Second World War to the consolidation of the Communist Yugoslav state. Throughout these tumultuous changes, Bosniaks experienced revolutionary and often traumatic changes to their lives. This included ruthless military occupation, violent expulsions, coercive migration policies, agrarian reform that undermined traditional Ottoman land structures and social patterns in the countryside, armed uprisings, anti-Muslim discrimination, proselytization, secularization that distinctly targeted Islamic institutions, and other crises that accompanied modernization and industrialization. Jahić's research demonstrates that throughout the twentieth century, Bosniaks understood well that their political and social worlds were in the midst of revolutionary change. They were concerned that the new European order was being created in ways that excluded them. But their responses, belief systems, and political visions conflicted. It is only through the careful consideration of the rich diversity of experiences, ideas, and responses across regions, classes, genders, and professions that we can develop a comprehensive historical framework to account for the Bosniak past.

In *Hikjmet: The Word of Traditional Ulema in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Hikjmet – Riječ tradicionalne uleme u Bosni i Hercegovini),* Jahić analyzes a journal and society of ulema that put forth a traditionalist approach

[17] See for example, Adnan Jahić, "Politics of Bosnia and Herzegovina During the First World War – the Disappearance of the United Muslim Organization and the Rise of 'Insignificant and Frivolous Elements'", *Društvene i humanističke studije (Online)*. 2017 (2): 211–228 and "Bilješka o socijalnim i kulturnim prilikama Bošnjaka nakon uspostave Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca", *Ostrvo*, Tuzla, V/2008, br. 10, 95–103.

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to thinking about Islam and politics in the late 1920s and early 1930s.[18] The book offers a powerful retelling of the history of the ulema in interwar Bosnia and their engagements with global reforms across the Islamic world in the wake of the collapse of the Ottoman empire and the abolition of the caliphate in 1924. Focusing on the milieu who founded *Hikjmet* and close readings of the journal itself, Jahić gives voice and agency to conservative ulema during the interwar period. First, he shows how different threads of Islamic thought emerged through the educational institutions in the late Habsburg period, notably the Shari'a Court Judge's School (*Šerijatska sudačka škola)*. He then weaves together human biographies with intellectual debates, probing how different ideas and opinions reflected discrete historical moments. He then connects these tensions and dynamics in the late Habsburg period to the crisis of World War I and the foundational moment of the first Yugoslavia, exploring how ulema in Bosnia wrestled with and engaged with transformations of global Islamic thought. Throughout the study, Jahić explains how to read the journal, walking the non-expert through the unfamiliar language and explaining its meaning across dual registers – the Bosnian and the Islamic. He carefully pieces together this historical movement from the words and ideas of those who lived and created it, without the ideological framing of scholarship produced in the Communist period, and without the presumptions of presumed unity among Bosniaks that would become inherent in certain national narratives.[19]

The project introduces a theme that will resonate across many of Jahić's studies on Islam and modernity: the ways that Bosniak movements and ideas are entangled in global histories. For example, in his examination of the interwar period, Jahić persuasively argues that a variety of Islamic and Muslim national movements intensified globally after the abolition of the caliphate. His work connects threads of reformist ideas in Bosnia and Herzegovina to movements in

[18] Adnan Jahić, *Hikjmet – riječ tradicionalne uleme u Bosni i Hercegovini* (Tuzla: BZK "Preporod", Općinsko društvo Tuzla, 2004).

[19] See Adnan Jahić, "The Attitude Of Bosnian *ulema* Towards the National Question in the Yugoslav Kingdom" in *Klerus und Nation in Südosteuropa vom 19. bis zum 21. Jahrhundert*, Peter Lang: Frankfurt am Main, 2014, 171–186; "Odnos bosanskohercegovačke uleme prema nacionalnom pitanju u monarhističkoj Jugoslaviji", *Historijska traganja*, Institut za historiju u Sarajevu, br. 11, 2013, 145–170.

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Turkey, the government of Ibn Saud in Arabia, and events in Palestine.[20] Members of Bosnia's ulema, he shows, were part of a dynamic and at times contentious global conversation on Muslim responses to political modernity. They drew on a wide range of influences and had different understandings of reformism, connecting international ideas fomenting in Muslim communities under colonial occupation to support local goals at home. Some supported a brand of reformism promoted by then Reis-ul-ulema, Džemaludin Čaušević, others opposed it. Not only was *Hikjmet* drawing on intellectual inspirations across the Islamic world, the Bosnian movement was also an inspiration to other Muslim thinkers wrestling with how best to protect Muslims from political and personal subjugation in the modern world. The group's theological and political framework gained traction outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina, forging an intellectual community of conservative and traditionalist Muslims that integrated ulema in Kosovo, Macedonia, Serbia, and Croatia.[21] To this end, Jahić's study situates *Hikjmet* and debates among Bosnia's ulema in the broader history of the Ottoman empire's collapse of the 1920s, and the crisis of Europe and debates over secularism that emerged in the 1930s.

Jahić's next wave of scholarship turned to the writing (and rewriting) of the history of Islamic institutions and its responses to the political upheaval and crisis of modernity in the early twentieth century. In *The Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the Monarchist Yugoslavia (1918–1941)* (*Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije (1918–1941),* Jahić illuminates the relationship between institution, policy, and modernization within a centralizing state structure. He examines the twists and turns in the evolution of Islamic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, highlighting especially the heated debates that occurred among different Muslim thinkers over how best to structure the relationship between Islam, modernity, political thought, and mass movements. [22] Jahić stakes out a subtle argument

[20] Jahić, *Hikjmet,* 167.

[21] Ibidem, 64.

[22] Adnan Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije (1918–1941)* (Zagreb: Islamska zajednica u Hrvatskoj i Medžlis islamske zajednice u Zagrebu, 2010). Among his many essays on this subject, see also Adnan Jahić, "Krug nade i razočaranja – bosanskomuslimansko vjersko vodstvo i Veliki rat (1914–1918)", *Vrhbosnensi*a, god. XIX, br. 2, Sarajevo, 2015, 301–318; "Između politike i ehlu-islama:

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on the Bosniak national question, seeing religion and its institutionalization in the modern period as being a key division between different peoples in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He takes seriously the analytical power of religion in the formation of national consciousness and collective experiences and worldviews.[23] In the aftermath of the Ottoman Empire, he suggests, Bosniaks continued to understand themselves as a collective of Muslims, in an Ottoman sense.[24] Moreover, the Ottoman Empire, he argues, continued to provide an important intellectual and cultural reference point for Bosniaks living under Habsburg occupation. Interrogating the history of Islamic institutions and their relationship with politics, culture, and the modernization project is critical to understanding Bosniak history. The book is at once a study of the first Yugoslavia and the place of Islamic institutions within it, revealing how state policies of violence, treaty negotiation, land reform, property law, nationalization, and secularization both shaped and were responded to by Muslim religious leaders.

Throughout his scholarship on Islamic institutions and Islamic thought, Jahić underscores divisions that occurred among members of the ulema for personal, political, regional, and theological reasons, and he explores how these intellectual and political divisions shaped both the transformations of Islamic institutions in the region and the ways that Islam mediated individual experiences with modernity. The tensions within institutional leadership are important, especially debates over the centralization of social and legal norms. For example, he thoughtfully explores the debate over the head of the Islamic Religious Community, Reisul-ulema Čaušević's move to centralize the institutions of the Islamic community, revealing why some groups might view it as problematic, and others as beneficial – that is, for the management of waqf or because it reflected the democratic and universal nature of Islam.[25] He also sheds new light on the debates over theological and

Islamska vjerska zajednica u Kraljevini Jugoslaviji za vrijeme Spahinog rijaseta", in *Muslimani Jugoslavije nakon Velikog rata: odjeci Mirovnog ugovora iz Saint-Germaina 1919*, (Institut za islamsku tradiciju Bošnjaka, Sarajevo, 2020) 101–129.

[23] This draws upon and is in conversation with scholarship on religion and nation in Yugoslavia, such as the important study, Vjekoslav Perica, *Balkan idols: Religion and nationalism in Yugoslav states* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[24] Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije*, 102.

[25] Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije*, 366.

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social questions, such as inter-confessional marriage and the structuring of the waqf, as well as political questions, such as the locally well-known Arnautović Affair and the contentious election of Reisul-ulema Fehim Spaho in the late 1930s.[26] Moreover, in wrestling with the ways that the twentieth-century Bosniak nation was shaped in part through its marginality and negotiations with the Yugoslav project, the book examines how Yugoslav modernization and centralization affected Islamic institutions and also Muslims' every day lives. From school curricula suddenly infused with Christian rhetoric and nationalization to state policies that affected the financial mechanisms and legal structures of critical Islamic institutions, such as schools (*medresa)* and pious endowments (*vakufi),* the institutions of Islam came under great pressure to conform to the priorities of the Yugoslav state.[27]

An essay entitled "In the Jaws of 'Degeneration and[or] Necessity': a contribution to the research on Muslim women's issue in Bosnia and Herzegovina under Austro-Hungarian rule", Jahić uncovers the minutiae of how everyday human problems sparked diverse institutional responses from Muslim leaders. To offer just one example: Jahić analyzes a case of two Muslim women who ran away from their homes with their children during World War I, likely to convert to Christianity. He analyzes how and why different people responded differently. Firstly, the head of the mufti's office felt strongly that "the community cannot be indifferent to the loss of its individual members", thus establishing a sense of high-level protection and guidance from the part of official Islamic institutions. For its part, the council of ulema, the Ulema-medžlis, was simultaneously interested in the individual women and an assurance that the 1891 law on conversion was being upheld even through the war.[28] A local government department in Bihać charged

[26] See also Adnan Jahić, "Usponi i padovi zagonetnog Mostarca. Skica za biografiju Šerifa Arnautovića", *Arhivska praksa*, br. 18, Tuzla, 2015, 455–470 and "Reis Fehim Spaho i hrvatski nacionalizam (1937–1942)", Zbornik radova simpozija 'Bosna i Hercegovina – Hrvatska – Europa. Društveno-historijski, politički i kulturološki aspekti', *Bošnjačka pismohrana,* Zagreb, sv. 19, br. 47, 2020, 37–48.

[27] See also Adnan Jahić, "Odnos Islamske vjerske zajednice prema obilježavanju dana Sv. Save u školama monarhističke Jugoslavije (1918–1941)", *Države praznujejo. Državni prazniki in skupnosti na območju bivše Jugoslavije* (Znanstvena založba Filozofske fakultete Univerze v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2017), 183–199.

[28] Adnan Jahić, "U raljama 'degeneracije i[li] nužde': Prilog istraživanju Muslimanskog

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with finding the women seemed not to have religious motives, but rather, understood it in terms of "frivolity" of the women and questions of morality. This one example sheds light on the diversity of thought and motive that could play out in a single event or crisis, in which various Muslim leaders, Muslim women, and civil bureaucrats grappled with questions of community in different ways.

Diversity of experience and thought is also legible in Jahić's work on the Muslim resolutions during World War II. The resolutions were a series of petitions crafted and signed by members of the Bosniak elite in towns across Bosnia and Herzegovina, which denounced injustice, brutality, and mass violence.[29] The resolutions were a rare example of public protests against state-sponsored violence in Hitler's Europe. They presented a paradox: many of the authors held roles within the institutions of the Independent State of Croatia (a wartime Nazi satellite state) or supported the Third Reich's causes, but they were willing to put themselves on the line publicly to fight certain forms of injustice within the fascist system. Was this collaboration, or was this resistance? Through a close reading of the resolutions, and the process that went into writing them, we learn how members of the Bosnian Muslim elite, in their capacity as actors operating within the system, were empowered to vocalize opposition to the escalating mass violence and the absence of rule of law. Rather than situating the signatories in a simple ideological paradigm of collaboration or resistance, Jahić argues that these resolutions emerged from and belong to a distinct local Bosniak and Muslim history of petitioning against violence. Drawing attention to other forms of protest against Ustasha violence, notably the individual appeals of the Reisul-ulema, Fehim Spaho, Jahić also shows how the "resolutionaries" understood themselves as part of a particular community, one grounded in distrust of Muslim officials and frustration over the erasure of law and order. It would be disingenuous, Jahić suggests, to see the resolutions in purely moral terms: questions of law, politics,

ženskog pitanja u Bosni i Hercegovini pod austrougarskom upravom", *Historijska traganja* 16 (2015): 119–20.

[29] On the resolutions broadly, see the seminal introduction to the subject and translations of resolutions in Hikmet Karčić, Ferid Dautović, and Ermin Sinanović, eds., *The Muslim Resolutions: Bosniak Responses to World War Two Atrocities in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (Sarajevo/Virginia: Institute for Islamic Tradition of Bosniaks and Center for Islam in the Contemporary World at Shenandoah University, 2021).

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pragmatism, society, and Islamic ethics all came together to produce the need to publicly condemn the erasure of law and the widespread use of violence.[30]

While underscoring the diversity of thought and action, Jahić is nevertheless committed to the project of writing about a collective Bosniak past. In contrast to scholarship that argues nations are superficial or false constructs, Jahić argues that the distinct worldviews of Muslims in the post-Ottoman period, along with the specific role played by Islamic institutions, Islamic thought, and shared experiences among Muslims across the Ottoman and post-Ottoman periods, forged a collective political imagination among Bosnia's diverse Muslim communities and became the glue for a Bosniak national identity. He joins here historians of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Ivo Banac, John Connelly, and Helmut Smith, who have analyzed the deep-seeded cultural and historical experiences that contribute to the development of national groups.[31] For Jahić, the history of Islamic institutions, debates among the ulema, and social transformation of Muslim societies in Bosnia and Herzegovina is essential to understanding modern Bosniak history.

These ideas are brought to the forefront in his 2014 volume, *The Time of Challenges. Bosniaks in the First Half of the 20th Century* (*Vrijeme izazova. Bošnjaci u prvoj polovini XX stoljeća*) in which Jahić synthesized many of his ideas on Bosniak history from the late Habsburg to the socialist period.[32] In this study, Jahić challenges the notion that Bosniak history should be framed predominantly through a victim narrative, noting: "In the Bosniak public today, and partly in scientific circles that touch on the recent past of Bosniaks in their observations and analyses, a Manichaean discourse dominates, in which all national

[30] Adnan Jahić, "The Muslim resolutions of 1941: Eighty Years On", in *The Muslim Resolutions,* 63–102.

[31] Vladislav Lilić and I discuss this process in more detail in Emily Greble and Vladislav Lilić, "Nations, Politics, and the Role of History in East Central Europe", *The American Historical Review* 128, no. 2 (2023): 951–962. For examples of this scholarship, see Ivo Banac, *The national question in Yugoslavia: origins, history, politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984); John Connelly, *Peoples into Nations: A History of Eastern Europe* (Princeton, 2020); Helmut Walser Smith, *Germany: A Nation in Its Time: Before, During, and After Nationalism, 1500–2000* (Liveright, 2020).

[32] Adnan Jahić, *Vrijeme izazova. Bošnjaci u prvoj polovini XX stoljeća,* (Zagreb-Sarajevo, 2014).

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and political-social movements in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the past century are viewed within the framework of predetermined relationships, with Bosniaks as constant and exclusive victims of great-state aspirations from Bosnia and Herzegovina's neighborhood, in a continuous struggle for their own survival and the rights that are being denied to them."[33] Instead, Jahić emphasizes the importance of analyzing Bosniak agency. He also wrestles with the idea of how and what we call this history, suggesting that it is appropriate to use Bosniak historically, even when it was not in official usage and even when the historical movements under investigation were grounded in a-national or even anti-national frameworks.[34] The terminology avoids the risk of reducing Bosnian and Herzegovinian Muslims to a religious community, when they operated as far more. Yet, at the same time, he suggests that it is precisely the foundational frameworks of Islamic institutions, Muslim religious, social, and cultural practices, and the ways that Muslims grappled with the legacy of the Ottoman Empire that became the basis for these political and national debates through the twentieth century. We find within this scholarship a genuine grappling with how to historicize the complex past, while protecting the legitimate political present.

The project of writing complexity into national histories is especially difficult in a multireligious and multinational polity like Bosnia and Herzegovina, where multiple, conflicting national histories overlap and conflict. It is especially difficult for peoples like Bosniaks, whose historical and national legitimacy has been deeply contested by their neighbors, and whose lives and political agency have been undermined and threatened for generations. It is notable that Jahić has found a balance between outlining the central themes and contours of a national

[33] Ibidem, p. 11. Quote: "U bošnjačkoj javnosti današnjeg vremena, a dijelom i u naučnim krugovima koji se u svojim opservacijama i analizama dotiču novije prošlosti Bošnjaka, dominira manihejski diskurs u kojem se sva nacionalna i političko-društvena kretanja u Bosni i Hercegovini tokom minulog stoljeća posmatraju u okvirima unaprijed određenih odnosa, s Bošnjacima kao stalnim i isključivim žrtvama velikodržavnih aspiracija iz bosanskohercegovačkog susjedstva, u neprekidnoj borbi za vlastiti opstanak i prava koja im se osporavaju."

[34] On Jahić's evolving thoughts on the framework of the Bosniak in historiography, see also "O korištenju naziva 'Bošnjak' u suvremenoj historiografiji", *Behar*, Zagreb, XVII/2008, br. 85, 55.

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history, while recognizing and underscoring its conflicts, debates, and complexities.

Historical Continuities and Periodization

Throughout his scholarship, Jahić adopts what we describe in the Anglo-American historiography as a "continuities" approach: instead of seeing 1918 or 1941 or 1945 as simple points of rupture, Jahić interrogates institutional, social, and intellectual continuities across political divides.[35] In so doing, he challenges the ways that Habsburg and Yugoslav history subsumed Bosniak history, and instead highlights the intellectual, political, social, and Islamic threads that transcended any one political era. Yugoslavia was not alone in establishing a certain way of thinking about historical eras. A standard periodization emerged across the historical profession in the twentieth century that was reified through public historical production. The historical profession in socialist Yugoslavia and its corollary institutes, archives, and textbooks, generally standardized periodization around the political history of the state of Yugoslavia (e. g., 1918, 1941, 1945, 1991). This is what states do. But for histories of people on the margins of society, such as Bosniaks, these artificial barriers often hinder a clearer understanding of how ideas and beliefs change over time.

Continuities are central to Jahić's important body of work on Islam, gender, and modernity. In *The Muslim Women's Question in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (*Muslimansko žensko pitanje u Bosni i Hercegovini),* he examines the scholarly, legal, social, and cultural debates and ideas on the woman question from the late Habsburg period to the early socialist era, demonstrating how our understanding of Islamic thought, social norms, health policies, and cultural practices need to be interrogated across multiple chronologies.[36] In this work, Jahić teases out the ways that women's morality came to represent a crisis in the question of modernity and secularism that was central to the European project. He probes

[35] I am grateful to Bakir Ovčina for pointing out the continuities argument in Jahić's scholarship and helping me to situate it in the broader Anglo-American literature.

[36] Adnan Jahić, *Muslimansko žensko pitanje u Bosni i Hercegovini. Žena u intelektualnom i društvenom životu Bošnjaka od aneksije do Zakona o zabrani nošenja zara i feredže (1908–1950)* (Zagreb: Bošnjačka nacionalna zajednica za Grad Zagreb i Zagrebačku županiju, 2017).

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how diverse Muslim thinkers across a half century and many different states debated the role that Islamic law and morality could or should play in modernizing society, analyzing local debates among ulema over the role that Islamic institutions should play in defining and policing community norms in a secularizing world, and situating these local debates in global narratives. The "woman question", Jahić contends, was deeply entangled with the crisis of modernity they confronted. Some Bosniaks blamed European culture and influence and secularization; others believed that "poverty and deprivation" during World War I had led to a shift in the traditional roles of women. Indeed, just as across the Muslim world, Islamic scholars in Bosnia and Herzegovina held varying interpretations of Shari'a and advocated for distinct kinds of policies grounded in their interpretations.[37]

Ultimately, by analyzing the evolution of the "woman question" over time, Jahić challenges the prevalent idea in the Yugoslav historiography that the "emancipation" of Muslim women was predominantly a project undertaken by the Communist regime. Instead, he demonstrates how debates over morality, social norms, culture, and clothing emerged in the late nineteenth century and took on multiple forms in the following decades. By analyzing debates across political eras, Jahić reveals the complexities of a system in transformation: from the Ottoman period through the interwar period, through the Second World War and into the Communist era, ideas of behavior, morality, gender, and social norms were in flux.

In considering how Islamic institutions managed notions of morality and gender, Jahić presents an analytical arc from the Habsburg to the early socialist period, disrupted and reshaped in times of crisis. In World War I, for example, the leaders of Islamic institutions, notably the High Shari'a Court (*Vrhovni šerijatski sud*) and the council of ulema (*Ulema-medžlis*), grew wary from the chaos of ad hoc wartime policies, and they began to consider centralized solutions, such as establishing

[37] On the diversity of Islamic policy and Islamic thought in the interwar period, see for example: Cemil Aydin, *The idea of the Muslim world: A global intellectual history* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017); Mehdi Sajid, Umar Ryad, and Bekim Agai, eds., *Muslims in interwar Europe: a transcultural historical perspective* (Leiden: Brill, 2015); Roy Bar Sadeh, "Worldmaking in the Hijaz: Muslims between South Asian and Soviet Visions of Managing Difference, 1919–1926", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 66, no. 1 (2024): 185–212.

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committees to combat immorality, especially cases of underage marriage, and cracking down on wartime practices of polygamy by establishing new marital paperwork consent from military officials.[38] Questions on how to surveil or police Islamic marital law and related questions of morality persisted into the 1920s and 30s.[39]

Jahić also joins the school of history that questions the clear-cut "ending point" of WWI in 1918, examining the persistence of violence in Yugoslavia's early years, including revenge killings, dispossessions, and other forms of mass violence.[40] He draws attention to the ways Islamic institutions persisted through political upheaval, providing stability and also spaces for Bosniaks to mediate radical political changes. For instance, he writes: "The formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1918 did not have a direct impact on the legal status and organizational structure of the Islamic Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The new state authorities accepted the autonomous character of the waqf administration's affairs in Bosnia and Herzegovina – less out of benevolence towards the religious rights of the Bosniak people, more out of the objective inability to impose solutions that would more directly bind the Muslim religious community to the state."[41]

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[38] Jahić, "U raljama 'degeneracije i[li] nužde': Prilog istraživanju muslimanskog ženskog pitanja u Bosni i Hercegovini pod austrougarskom upravom", 130–131.

[39] See for example Fedja Buric, *Becoming mixed: Mixed marriages of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the life and death of Yugoslavia* (Unpublished dissertation: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2012).

[40] Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije* (1918–1941), 89–93. Examples of this approach in the Anglo-American literature include Robert Gerwarth, *The Vanquished: Why the First World War Failed to End* (New York: Macmillan, 2016); John Paul Newman, "Post-imperial and post-war violence in the South Slav lands, 1917–1923", *Contemporary European History* 19, no. 3 (2010): 249–265; Dominique Kirchner Reill, *The Fiume Crisis: Life in the Wake of the Habsburg Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020).

[41] Jahić, *Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini za vrijeme monarhističke Jugoslavije (1918–1941)*, 299. Quote: "Formiranje Kraljevstva Srba, Hrvata i Slovenaca 1918. godine nije imalo izravnog uticaja na pravni položaj i organizacijsko ustrojstvo Islamske zajednice u Bosni i Hercegovini. Nova državna vlast je prihvatila autonomni karakter muslimanskih vjerskih i vakufsko-mearifskih poslova u Bosni i Hercegovini – manje iz benevolentnosti prema vjerskim pravima bošnjačkog naroda, više iz objektivne nemogućnosti da oktroira rješenja koja bi vjersku zajednicu muslimana direktnije vezala za državu."

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Finally, the theme of continuities is on display in Jahić's research on WWII, which connects responses to earlier upheaval and political transformations to the choices that people made during the war. To this end, we find continuities that look backward to the Ottoman and Habsburg periods, but also those that extend forward, demonstrating how Bosniak actions, movements, and institutions in the 1990s are connected to a deeper national past. For instance, in analyzing Bosniak militias during World War II, Jahić argues that the Bosnian Army in 1995 was not a "turnip without roots" (*repa bez korijena*).[42] Bosniaks were a legitimate nation with a legitimate historic right to defend themselves in their homeland and to write their own history.

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The shifting of historical paradigms is critical for the study of Balkan and East European history broadly as scholars seek to diversify forms of knowledge and decolonize both the narratives and frameworks of historical production. Indeed, as the president of the Association of Slavic, East European and Eurasian Studies (ASEEES), the Ukrainian scholar Vitaly Chernetsky, described in his presidential speech in 2024, there remains a great need for a paradigm shift in our epistemic structures and understandings of how we think about war, victimization and the production of knowledge in Eastern Europe.[43] While Chernetsky's speech focused largely on Ukraine, his call for the liberation of history and his strategies for paradigm shifts easily applies to Bosniak history, which has suffered similar silencing and epistemological colonization through the production of history in the twentieth century. Adnan Jahić has been answering this call for three decades, and will no doubt continue to do so in the future.

[42] Jahić, *Muslimanske formacije tuzlanskog kraja u Drugom svjetskom ratu*, 121.

[43] Vitaly Chernetsky, "Liberation as Goal, Practice, and Strategy: A Paradigm Shift for Our Field in Challenging Times", Presidential Speech, ASEEES, Boston, USA, November 23, 2024.

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Adnan Jahić: stvaranje nove paradigme za proučavanje bošnjačke historije[1]

Sažetak

Tokom protekle tri decenije, historičar Adnan Jahić odigrao je centralnu ulogu u pisanju nove bošnjačke historije. Istražujući raznolike teme, od evolucije islamskih institucija od Habsburškog carstva do socijalističkog perioda, debata o rodu i modernosti, iskustava i transformacije balkanskih muslimanskih društava tokom ratnog vremena, te bošnjačkih reakcija na Drugi svjetski rat, Jahić je otkrio historijske narative ljudi, regija, ideja, pokreta i publikacija koje su bile ušutkane ili marginalizirane u historiografiji dvadesetog stoljeća i reintegrirao ih u historiografiju Bosne i Hercegovine i Evrope. Iako je prepoznat kao važan glas u Bosni i Hercegovini, Jahićev rad je ostavio i globalni trag.

U ovom eseju ukratko predstavljam neke od mnogih doprinosa Jahićevog rada i pokazujem načine na koje se on preklapa s globalnim pokretima i historiografskim razgovorima. Prvo, ispitujem Jahićevu važnu ulogu u promjeni historijske paradigme za proučavanje Bošnjaka u Drugom svjetskom ratu, što je bilo ključno za prevazilaženje dominantne jugoslovenske državno-socijalističke produkcije historije. Zatim se okrećem pitanju raznolikosti mišljenja među bošnjačkim elitama, posebno članovima uleme, razmišljajući o tome kako je Jahić osporio homogene pristupe proučavanju nacionalnih historija. Konačno, ispitujem načine na koje je Jahić osporio standardnu jugoslovensku periodizaciju, spajajući nove vrste veza za razmišljanje o bošnjačkoj historiji.

Ključne riječi: bošnjačka historija, Drugi svjetski rat, period nakon Hladnog rata, Hikjmet, ulema.

[1] Zahvalna sam svom istraživačkom asistentu, Bakiru Ovčini, koji mi je pomogao u istraživanju za ovaj esej, Matthewu Worsnicku za uredničku podršku i brojnim naučnicima iz Bosne i Hercegovine koji svake godine prisustvuju Festivalu historije, s kojima sam imala čast razgovarati o nekim od ovih ideja.

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