

Party. In the sections titled “Relationship with Pašić 1904” and “Pašić and I (26 Oct. to 22 Nov. 1912)”, he accounts their conversations, and brings his correspondence with Djordje Genčić and a few quotations from the Serbian and German press.

Now available to the general public, the memoirs of Vukašin Petrović are an invaluable contribution to the publication of the sources for the history of the reigns of two last Obrenovićs, King Milan and his son, King Alexander. Of course, historians need to be cautious when dealing with memoirs, and for more than one reason. The inevitable issue of the authors’ objectivity set aside, their frequently frag-

mentary narrative tends to paint an incomplete picture of events and persons. In this particular case, the supplements contribute to a greater clarity and completeness of the body text. The relevance of Vukašin Petrović’s career as a statesman and his acquaintance and collaboration with the most prominent political figures of Serbia and Austria-Hungary make such drawbacks appear less important. The memoirs of Vukašin Petrović should be considered an unavoidable source for the history of political and social life of the Kingdom of Serbia in the last decades of the nineteenth and early twentieth century.

PHILIPPE GELEZ, *SAFVET-BEG BAŠAGIĆ (1870–1934). AUX RACINES INTELLECTUELLES DE LA PENSÉE NATIONALE CHEZ LES MUSULMANS DE BOSNIE-HERZÉGOVINE*. ATHENS: ÉCOLE FRANÇAISE D’ATHÈNES, MONDES MÉDITERRANÉENS ET BALKANIQUES, 2010, pp. 807.

Reviewed by Veljko Stanić*

The book presented here originates from a doctoral thesis defended at Paris Sorbonne University (Paris IV) in 2006. Its author, Philippe Gelez, a former fellow of the French School in Athens, has been assistant professor at the Paris Sorbonne University Department for Slavic Studies since 2010. His main area of interest is the past of Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially its Islamic component. With the biography of Safvet-bey Bašagić, he joined the ranks of modern French Balkan studies scholars.

Safvet-bey Bašagić (1870–1934) belongs to the circle of Muslim intellectuals of Bosnia-Herzegovina of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries championing a Bosniak nation. A poet, translator, literary historian and Oriental studies scholar, Bašagić is also a politician whose activity coincides with the last years of the Austro-Hungarian administration of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Moreover, Bašagić sees Austria-Hungary as an unavoidable patron of the Bosnian Muslims in the process of modernization, opening to Europe and an understanding between East and West. Not fully accepted in Bašagić’s lifetime, his work has seen an exuberant revival in the last few decades, and notably so since 1992.

Gelez offers an exhaustive biographical account applying the classical chronological approach. Despite its extensiveness, it is systematically and readably structured, and very well written. The book is organized into three large parts: *Aux origines de la pensée de Bašagić: racines familiales et formation intellectuelle (1596–1890)*; *Nationalisme et orientalisme chez Safvet-beg Bašagić (1890–1906)*; *Kultur et politique chez Safvet-beg Bašagić (1907–1934)*, each comprising several chapters. Apart from

* Institute for Balkan Studies, Belgrade

an introduction, epilogue and conclusion, it contains extensive appendices (a census data table for Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1866–1931, personal documents, translated excerpts from Bašagić's literary and history writings), a bibliography, and an index of personal names. The central corpus of documentary source material comprises Bašagić's personal archive kept at the Historical Archives in Sarajevo, the Bašagić family archive from the Archives of Herzegovina in Mostar, and official sources from the period of Austrian administration kept in the Archives of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo. Finally, the author's thorough familiarity both with Bašagić's writings and with the literature on him contributes to a more comprehensive picture of the man and his work.

Gelez paints a vibrant and suggestive portrait of Safvet-bey, a lonely intellectual poised between two worlds, lacking the energy to assert himself as an intellectual or political leader of the Bosnian Muslims. Yet, it was Bašagić who outlined the major tenets of Bosniak nationalism, and today his name holds a central place in the revival of the Bosniak ideology in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The origin and history of the Bašagić family, to which this book pays special attention, leads us to a prominent bey family from Herzegovina. Aristocratic origin and an attachment to the land and tradition are key elements of Bašagić's intellectual as well as political profile, decisively contributing to his conservatism and elitism. However, Bašagić belonged to the minority part of the Muslim elites in Bosnia-Herzegovina who did not see the 1878 Austro-Hungarian occupation of this Ottoman province as a disaster. On the contrary, having completed his education at a religious school, the boy proceeded to the Austrian State Gymnasium in Sarajevo, and from 1895 to 1899 pursued Oriental studies at the University of Vienna. His experience of fin-de-siècle

Europe led him to try to find a middle ground between the Ottoman Empire and Europe, between Islam and laicism. He found it in the idea of Bosniakness, elaborated and supported by Austria-Hungary for ideological and geopolitical reasons of her own. It was based on the hypothetical continuity of the Bosniak nation from medieval Bogomilism, to the voluntary conversion of feudal families to Islam, to the Bosnia-Herzegovina of Bašagić's own times.

Apart from declaring himself as a Bosniak, however, Bašagić claimed, especially in his younger days, to belong to the Croat nation as well. This Croat component was important in the formation of Bašagić's political culture, and had never faded away completely. During the First World War and the interwar Kingdom of Yugoslavia, he remained close to the stance of Croatian nationalists. Namely, in the 1890s he belonged to the circle around Ante Starčević (1823–1896), the ideologist of the Croatian Party of Rights and leader of Croatian extreme nationalism. Among the lasting friendships that Bašagić established in those years, reconstructed in detail by Gelez, was the one with Ivo Pilar (1874–1933), a geopolitician and advocate of Bosnia-Herzegovina's unification with Croatia. This dual situation has confronted Gelez with the central contradiction: How does Bašagić define the cornerstones of Bosniak national identity, while emphasizing his Croatness? The answer should be looked for not only in the endeavour, by the Serb and Croat sides alike, to nationalize the Muslims of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the late nineteenth century, but also in Bašagić's enduring attachment to the Austro-Hungarian political and cultural orbit. Moreover, as a loyal subject, Bašagić entered politics, and as President of the Diet of Bosnia and Herzegovina from 1910 until its dissolution after the outbreak of the First World War. Two years

of central importance in Bašagić's life were certainly 1878 and 1918, as clearly emphasized by his biographer. In view of the victorious Yugoslav idea at the end of the First World War, however, these two dates marked the withdrawal and demise of foreign, imperial rules, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian, in the South-Slavic world. After 1918, Bašagić was no longer a man of politics and influence.

Gelez identifies four separate but complementary approaches in Bašagić's endeavours to modernize the Bosnian Muslim community: historiographic, literary, educational and religious. His work as a historian is best illustrated by his *Brief Introduction to the Past of Bosnia and Herzegovina* published in Sarajevo in 1900, which puts forth, in a literary and romantic manner, the abovementioned theory of the continuity of the Bosniak nation from medieval times. The same perspective was used in Bašagić's doctoral dissertation defended in Vienna in 1910, and published in Sarajevo two years later (*Bosniaks and Herzegovinans in Islamic Literature*). In the field of literature, in 1900 Bašagić started the magazine "Behar" (Blossom Tree), and in 1903 became the first president of Gajret (*Zeal*), a society committed to establishing closer ties between Muslim elites and masses, and to a general moral and national renaissance. Among other things, Bašagić urged Muslim youths to pursue higher education in Europe. Finally, Bašagić's stance as regards the religious question shows a certain measure of liberalism, as he saw the aristocratic, bey, class rather than Islam to be the mainstay of the Bosniak nation. In his view, there is nothing controversial about Islam as a religious or cultural trait, but the conservative social role of the ulema is difficult to balance with Europe's rationalism: Bašagić was inclined to European Orientalism. There resides yet another of Bašagić's contradictions: elated by Islam as a poet, Bašagić as a politician brought

upon himself the disapproval of extremely traditional Muslim circles and thus further undermined his own position.

A particular merit of Gelez's book is its nuanced analysis of Bašagić's ideology, which he justifiably terms *Kultur*. What it means in Bašagić's case is an amalgamation of poetic expression, scientific discourse and political action. It is this ideology, rather than practical politics, that has enabled the continuity of Muslim nationalism in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Gelez sees it as an "ideological substratum in which the roots of various national ideas are embedded, especially those of the Party of Rights before 1895, of the Independent State of Croatia during the Second World War, of 'Muslim' nationalism in the second Yugoslavia, and finally, of contemporary *Bosniakness*" (p. 613). It is regrettable that Gelez, while giving a precise account of Bašagić's *posthumous fate* in the "Epilogue" (e.g. the appropriation of Bašagić by Croatian nationalists in the 1930s, or, during the Second World War, by the Ustasha, who organized a commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Bašagić's death in Zagreb in 1944), has not embarked upon an analysis of the evolution of the Bosniak ideology in the twentieth century, notably since 1992, a process in which the "rehabilitation" of Bašagić holds a very important place.¹

Gelez's book has a few weak points which should be noted as well. While admitting that the name "Bosniak" for the language spoken in Bosnia-Herzegovina was in use only in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, reemerging since 1992, he chooses to use it, and not "Serbo-Croatian". In much the same way, he also chooses to define the population

¹ On the evolution of the Bosniak ideology, see Darko Tanasković, "La renaissance de l'idéologie bosniaque", *Dialogue* 20 (Dec. 1996), 33-45.

of Bosnia-Herzegovina exclusively in religious terms, that is, as Orthodox, Roman Catholic and Muslim. According to Gelez, religious identities in Bosnia-Herzegovina not only precede national identities, but national identities purportedly took shape quite late in history; and mostly as the result of the pressure of aggressive nationalisms from Serbia and Croatia in the late nineteenth century. By keeping aloof from "endless debates", however, Gelez makes a choice, which is as much political as it is theoretical. When it comes to defining nationalism, Gelez does not enter into theoretical discussions, but rather calls for a minimalism: "Nationalism is the idea which tends to influence political grouping around a community of values. In other words, the existence of a people (a community of people sharing the same values) is a prerequisite for the emergence of a nation (political grouping)." However, he fails to take his definition to its ultimate consequences in the case of Bosnia-Herzegovina, because he overlooks the fact that the religious and ethnic identities of the subjugated Christian population went hand in hand with one another. In other words, through their patriarchal culture the numerically strongest Orthodox population preserved self-awareness as a community of Serbian people and the historical memory of the old, medieval Serbian state. The Serbian Orthodox Church embodied in the Patriarchate of Peć acted as their ethnic as well as political representative. According to one of the most eminent historians of the Balkans, Traian Stoianovich, the early nineteenth-century Serbian insurrections were a social as much as a national revolution which sought to overthrow the Ottoman feudal system quite in the spirit of the ideas of the Enlightenment. Leopold Ranke's well-known *Serbian Revolution* was published as early as 1829. A leading British expert on the history of central Europe and the Balkans, Rob-

ert William Seton-Watson, wrote: "In Herzegovina and Bosnia, to which the revolt [1875] speedily spread, unrest had been chronic since the beginning of the [nineteenth] century. The two provinces have been hermetically sealed from the outside world ever since the final Turkish conquest in 1483. Of purest Serbian blood, the population was divided between Moslem, Orthodox and Catholic."² Otherwise, how can one explain the enthusiastic response that the insurrections generated among the Orthodox Christians in Bosnia-Herzegovina,³ Srem, the Banat, Montenegro and southern Serbia, or the series of peasants' revolts in Bosnia-Herzegovina throughout the nineteenth century?⁴ This is the reason why Dimitrije

² R. W. Seton-Watson, *Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question* (London: Frank Cass, 1971; first published in 1935), 17.

³ "The Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina actively participated in the preparation of this insurrection. One of the prominent leaders of this insurrection, Mateja Nenadović, negotiated an agreement in 1803 with notable Sarajevarian Serbs on joint revolt in order to bring the two insurgent movements together. The preconditions for such an agreement were excellent, as the Serbs from Bosnia and the Serbs from Serbia had long had a close connection ... The Nenadović family, for example, playing a leading role in 1804 insurrection, had its origins in the Bosnian Birča area, and the parents of Vuk Karadžić, at first a rebel and a revolutionary and later the famous cultural and educational reformer who modernized the Serbian alphabet and the Serbian language, came from Petnica in Herzegovina (Montenegro today). Altogether, about one fourth of the leadership of the 1804 insurrection had roots in Herzegovina and Bosnia." The quotation comes from Dušan T. Bataković, *The Serbs of Bosnia & Herzegovina: History and Politics* (Paris: Dialogue, 1996), 42, a book which has, unfortunately, escaped Gelez's notice.

⁴ There are plentiful other examples, to mention but, e.g. in the field of cultural his-

Djordjević, in his typology of Balkan nationalisms, opens with “agrarian nationalism”, which was at work from the beginning of the nineteenth century until the 1840s; it then was ushered into the age of “historical nationalism” (historicism) by the Balkan elites (1840s–1878), followed by the age of “state nationalism” (1880s–WWI). Peter Sugar also speaks of a popular or egalitarian nationalism among the Serbs. In other words, Gelez tends to overlook the bigger picture, i.e. the processes that were taking place across the Balkan region of the Ottoman Empire and not only in the Pashalik/Principality of Serbia. Muslim revolts against the sultan in Bosnia-Herzegovina were encouraged, inter alia, by the Ottoman concessions to the Principality of Serbia under Prince Miloš Obrenović (autonomy from 1830), its system of free peasant tenure etc. Serbian national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina, therefore, is not a tardy development, but an integral part of Serbian nationalism, one of the key integrative forces in the nineteenth-century Balkans. It had its religious and ethnic basis which, from the beginning of the 1800s, became incorporated into the overall process of Serbian national emancipation and modern nation-state building modelled on contemporary European examples.⁵

tory: a reader for Serbian primary schools in Bosnia-Herzegovina published in Cyrillic script in Sarajevo in 1867, cf. *Istorija srpskog naroda*, vol. V-1 (Belgrade: Srpska književna zadruga, 1981), 500; or oral history: in 1878, Grga Martić, a Franciscan from Bosnia-Herzegovina, wrote down narrations of a ninety-year old man, Pantelija, who referred to Turkey and Austria-Hungary in the following way: “Both are tyrants. This is a Serbian land”, cf. Fra Grga Martić, “Zapamćenja” (1828–1878), *Izabrani spisi* (Sarajevo: Svjetlost, 1956), 266.

⁵ See Dimitrije Djordjevic, “Balkan versus European Enlightenment – Parallelism and Dissonances”, *East European Quar-*

When it comes to the period of Benjamin von Kalláy’s administration in Bosnia-Herzegovina (1882–1903), the reader remains unconvinced that Gelez has succeeded in his attempt to relativize the classical findings of Yugoslav historiography, least of all Tomislav Kraljačić’s study *Kalláy’s Regime in Bosnia 1882–1903*, which Gelez himself qualifies as an “excellent monograph”. In this particular case, Gelez describes Yugoslav historiography as “postcolonial” and points to the neglected positive aspects of Kalláy’s regime, denying its quintessentially colonial nature. In his view, Kalláy was facing a difficult challenge of fighting the existing nationalisms. There is no doubt about that; but Gelez makes no effort to expand his view by analyzing the relationship of interdependence between imperialism and nationalism in the Balkans, the interdependence discussed by, for instance, Mark Mazower in his book *The Balkans: A Short History*. We cannot go into detail here, but, on the whole, Gelez seems to be overly willing to show understanding for the intentions and needs of Austro-Hungarian policies, which is more than one can say for his perspective on Balkan nationalisms.

Fully committed to critically reconstructing the life of his “hero”, Gelez sometimes denies his readers the broader intellectual backdrop against which Bašagić’s life and work unfolded. His portrait of an often lonely and isolated Bašagić is not balanced with sufficient information about those Muslim intellec-

terly IV/4 (1975), 487–497, as well as his “National Factors in Nineteenth-Century Balkan Revolutions”, in *War and Society in East Central Europe*, vol. I *Special Topics and Generalization on the 18th and 19th centuries*, ed. B. Király & G. Rothenberg (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 197–214, and “Agrarian Factors in Nineteenth-Century Balkan Revolutions”, *ibid.*, 163–182.

tuals in Bosnia-Herzegovina who opted for the Serbian or the Yugoslav national cause and tied the future of their community to a wider corpus of democratic ideas radiating in the South-Slavic world in the early twentieth century. The same goes for the Serbian intellectual circles in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even though they belonged to the numerically strongest ethnic and national group in this province of the Ottoman, and subsequently Austro-Hungarian, empire, they are hardly ever mentioned, and if they are, they almost unfailingly figure as exponents of Serbian nationalism. The critique of Bašagić's historical writings put forward by Stanoje Stanojević (1874–1937) or Vladimir Ćorović (1885–1941) is, for Gelez, in the first place nationalist, in the second place scholarly. The *Young Bosnia* movement, the major youth movement in Bosnia-Herzegovina, is only mentioned in passing.

Finally, the reader will vainly search this extensive book for the most important Serbian intellectual figures such as Jovan Cvijić (1865–1927) or Jovan Skerlić (1877–1914), as if the political, ideological and aesthetic battles that they fought, at the time of the Modernist movement, had not been fought in the whole of the Slavic South, and thus in Bosnia-Herzegovina, too. In other words, Bašagić's intellectual and political work can hardly be properly understood if viewed solely within the confines of Bosnia-Herzegovina; it needs to be looked at and evaluated comparatively, against the background of the rest of the South-Slavic world.

There are a few imprecisions and errors that escaped the author's notice: a mediocre Croat writer such as Mile Budak can hardly be described as an "author of great renown" (p. 563), and a political émigré such as Djoko Slijepčević as an exponent of "Yugoslavia's official cultural policy" (p. 591). Finally, Gelez, quoting Ivo Andrić's ironic remark about Safvet-bey, which he

dates to 1934, offers an unfounded claim that Andrić was a "sympathizer of socialism". In the 1930s, Andrić, a high-ranking royal diplomat, certainly was not one; and even after 1945, the communist regime needed him more than he needed the regime. Yet, Gelez remembers Andrić with good reason: the greatest Serbian writer, born in Bosnia-Herzegovina, had little sympathy for the Bosnian bey class.

The book of Philippe Gelez is no doubt an important contribution not only to French historiography, but also to the historiography on Bosnia and Herzegovina at large. The broadness of its analytical approach, which encompasses the literary, scholarly and political work of Safvet-bey Bašagić, makes it the most comprehensive piece of historical writing on this intellectual figure. On the other hand, some views and thoughts it puts forth suggest that Balkan and other European historiographies need to establish a broader critical dialogue.