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**BROWSING AMONG BOOKS ON THE HISTORY OF
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA IN HUNGARIAN
LANGUAGE // PRETRAŽIVANJE KNJIGA O HISTORIJI
BOSNE I HERCEGOVINE NA MAĐARSKOM JEZIKU**

**Vjekoslav Klaić, BOSZNIA TÖRTÉNETE A LEGRÉGIBB KORTÓL A
KIRÁLYSÁG BUKÁSÁIG. [The history of Bosnia from the earliest times
to the fall of the kingdom.] Fordította: [Translated by]:. Nagy-Becskerek,
Pleitz Fer. Pál Könyvnyomdája, Szamota, István 1890, 380 p.¹**

**László Bencze, BOSZNIA ÉS HERCEGOVINA OKKUPÁCIÓJA 1878-
BAN. [The occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1878], Akadémiai
Kiadó, Budapest 1987, 242 p.²**

**Tamás Binder, ed, BOSZNIA-HERCEGOVINA, A MESÉLŐ EMBEREK
FÖLDJE. [Bosnia and Herzegovina, the land of storyteller people.],
Katonai Nemzetbiztonsági Szolgálat [Military National Security Service],
Budapest 2022, 297 p.³**

There is little existing literature in Hungarian language on the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the past of the people living there. This is all the more surprising because the fate of the two peoples, the Hungarians and the Bosniaks, has been intertwined for centuries. We had common kings in the

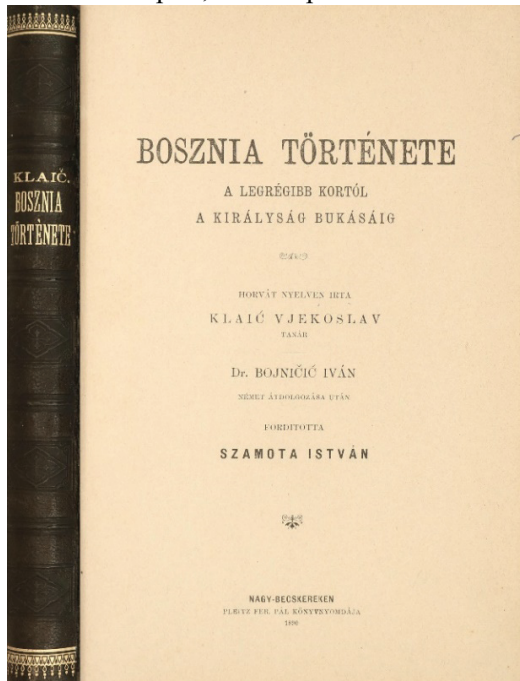
¹ It is possible to download it here: <https://real-eod.mtak.hu/5838/1/000911175.pdf>. Book cover - Source: <https://www.antikvarium.hu/aukcio/index.php?t=cd&bid=1116278&aid=28796>.

² Book cover - Source: <https://www.antikvarium.hu/konyv/bosznia-es-hercegovina-okkupacioja-1878-ban-146111-0>.

³ It is possible to download it here:

https://www.knbsz.gov.hu/hu/letoltes/kiadvanyok/04_Bosznia_Hercegovina.pdf. Book cover - Source: <https://hirek.unideb.hu/utazas-meselo-emberek-foldjen>.

middle ages (for example Béla II “the Blind” from 1137), and for 40 years (1878-1918), we belonged to the same empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In the turbulent and bloody 20th century, we also faced a similar situation on several occasions, such as the battles of the First World War, where Bosnian and Hungarian fighters fought as comrades in the trenches, or later the reigns of terror of Nazism and Communism. Many Bosniaks have come and lived in Hungary after the WWI, and similarly there is still a Hungarian diaspora in this Balkan country. We are bound together by our geopolitical position, our traditions and our common past, and the political-economic-cultural-educational and scientific



links between Hungary and Bosnia and Herzegovina are also growing. In fact, an increasing number of Hungarian tourists visit Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially in summer, to admire the beauty of the landscape and the built heritage, for example the “Old Bridge” in Mostar or the waterfall of Jajce. Both inspired the famous Hungarian painter, Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka⁴. In this review, I would like to present very briefly, for information purposes, three books written in Hungarian on the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The books were written in three different historical eras, the first one at

the very end of the 19th century, in the “happy times of peace” of the Monarchy, the second one in 1987, during the communism of the Kádár and post-Tito regimes, while the third one is a very recent and interesting publication, containing topical writings by contemporary Hungarian authors from 2022. In my opinion, all three works are of a high quality, based on extensive, in-depth research, often based on field experience. Of course, they were written in diverse historical background, and this is reflected in the language, the use of sources and the style of the authors. In addition, the last publication has 17 authors alone. Two of the books attempt to outline the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina in a comprehensive manner, while László Bencze’s opus deals with the 1878 occupation and its aftermath. Nevertheless, I think readers in Bosnia and

⁴ Csontváry Kosztka, Tivadar (1853-1919) was a Hungarian painter.

Herzegovina and neighbouring countries might be interested to know what books their Hungarian colleagues have brought to the table in the past decades.

Vjekoslav Klaić⁵'s work was originally written in Croatian in 1882, translated into German by Ivan Bojničić⁶ and then translated into Hungarian by István Szamota⁷. This work was published in 1890 as the 22nd volume of the "Historical Folk and Geographical Library" edited by the parish priest Ferenc Szabó⁸. As written in the book's foreword, "Bosnia and Herzegovina were a powerful and cultured state in the Middle Ages, which very often had a great influence on the fate of the Balkan Peninsula. The interesting history of these countries, however, has remained relatively unknown to the outside world until recent times, owing to the fact that the oldest sources of South Slavic history are written mostly in Old Slavonic and are scattered all over the world and difficult to access. This is the reason why the works written so far on the history of Bosnia in German are superficial and of little value. Through his many works and treatises, Klaić has done much to dispel the obscurity surrounding the earlier history of the Southern Slavs, and at the time of the publication of this work, he has attracted considerable attention from the whole world of Slavic scholarship. In the present work, Klaić completely broke with tradition, only briefly discussing the older literature on the history of Bosnia, which he knows well, in the introduction; he himself follows his own path, which is precisely defined by modern historical criticism. The entire content of the work is based on source research alone. He has diligently selected the source material he has found and has used only those sources of unquestionable authenticity in his work."⁹

Klaić has published an authoritative and thorough work, with an introduction on the sources of the country's history, followed by a detailed description of the historical geography of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The volume presents the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina in chronological order, covering - without claiming to be exhaustive - the earliest times up to the 7th century AD, and from the settlement of the Slavs in the south to the beginning of the reign of Kulin the Ban of Bosnia (1180). The author then sketches the reigns of the bans of Bosnia, Kulin and Ninoslav Mate. Then there is a separate chapter on the history of "Hum-land", i.e. Herzegovina, from its beginnings until the 14th century. I believe that only after these are the most sophisticated and thorough parts of the volume, with a thorough description of the reign of Stjepan II Kotromanić (1314-1353), who was the father of Queen Erzsébet of Hungary (Elizabeta Kotromanić) and the father-in-law of King Lajos I (Louis I) of Hungary (and here is another connection with Hungarian history). Then comes the life and work of the first Bosnian king, Stjepan Tvrtko I, a member of the

⁵ Klaić, Vjekoslav (1849-1928) was a Croatian historian, professor and writer.

⁶ Bojničić Kninski, Ivan (1858-1925) was a Croatian historian.

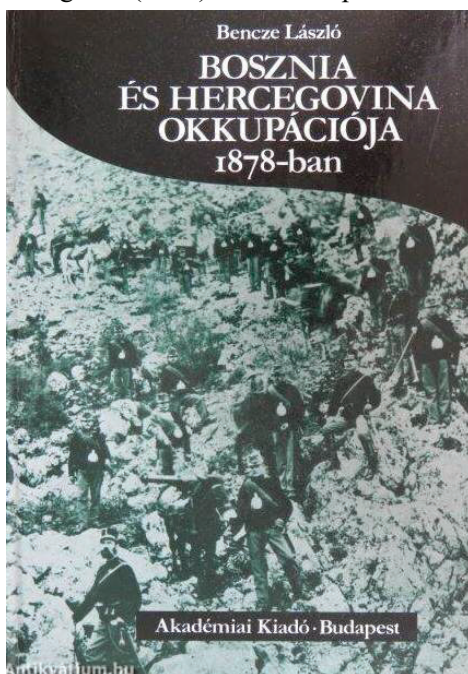
⁷ Szamota, István (1867-1895) was a Hungarian linguist, historian, national archives officer.

⁸ Szabó, Ferenc (1843-1905) was a Roman Catholic parish priest, historian and member of parliament.

⁹ Bojničić Kninski, Ivan: Preface to the German edition. in: Klaić: *Ibidem*. pp. V-VI.

Kotromanić dynasty too and great-grandson of King Stephen V of Hungary, who reigned from 1377 to 1391. The author then outlines the history of the reign of Stjepan Dabiša (1391-1395), and the interesting period when his wife Jelena Gruba became King of Bosnia as a woman instead of her minor son after the death of her husband (1395-1398). Sometimes Bosnia had a history of civil strife, turmoil and turbulence. In this, too, it was similar to the Hungarian period under a few Hungarian kings of Árpád and Anjou. Klaić devotes a separate chapter to the era of the rival kings and their struggle for the Bosnian throne (1398-1421), and then to the reign of Tvrtko II (Stjepan), who largely restored order (1421-1443). It is perhaps important to note that Tvrtko II found refuge in Hungary between 1409-1415 and 1433-1436, and was helped to power by King Zsigmond (Sigismund) of Luxembourg of Hungary, Germany and Bohemia. Of course, the reign of the Bosnian king Stjepan (Ostojić) (1443-1461) and the “swan song” of the last sovereign ruler of Bosnia, Stjepan Tomašević (1461-1463), cannot be ignored in this truly turbulent period. What follows is one of the major shortcomings of the book. Only a 13-page appendix deals with the brief history of Bosnia from the fall of the Bosnian kingdom (1463) to the occupation of the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1878). While this is a really readable and concise account of 415 years of events, it is unfortunately rather truncated, focusing only on the most important political and military events. Nevertheless, Klaić has put a tremendous amount of work into writing this book, and it still has a place on the bookshelf of anyone interested in Bosnia's history more than 140 years later.

In his book, as you can read on the blurb László Bencze¹⁰ draws on extensive research to present one of the most important events in the half-century-long history of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the military occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He analyses the foreign policy efforts to acquire the provinces belonging to the Ottoman Empire, the development of the conflict of interests between the Monarchy and Russia in the Balkans, and the possibilities and pitfalls of an anti-Russian Austro-Hungarian-English foreign policy and military cooperation. It describes the military-geographical conditions of the



¹⁰ Bencze, László (1933-2022) was a Hungarian military historian.

provinces, which were unfavourable to the invaders, and the population of the area, divided by social and religious conflicts and lacking a developed national consciousness, of which the Muslim part in particular took up the armed struggle against the foreign conquerors. It describes in detail the three-month campaign of the army, which was made up of 270.000 Austro-Hungarian-Czech-Romanian-Croatian-Polish-Slovak troops, and the pacification, i.e. physical violence against the population, mass disarmament, house searches, organised looting, punitive expeditions and the use of detachment terror, which was carried out in parallel with the fighting.

If we look at the table of contents of the book, the author outlines the Balkan politics of the Austro-Hungarian Empire before the occupation, and then discusses the military geography and population of Bosnia and Herzegovina. He then writes about the uprising in Sarajevo and the attitude of the Serbian, Montenegrin and Turkish leaders towards the uprising. He analyses the Armed Forces of the opposing parties, then writes in detail about the operations of the Monarchy from the beginning to the taking of Sarajevo, describes the general situation after the capture of the capital, and then talks about the suppression of the uprising in eastern Bosnia and the conquest of western Bosnia and Herzegovina. The book is enriched with excellent photographs and maps. Furthermore, in the appendix, the author provides detailed information about the occupying k. u. k. 2nd Army.

Finally, I would like to present a comprehensive, high-quality, gap-filling work, which was published in 2022, entitled *Bosnia and Herzegovina, the land of storyteller people* and realized in cooperation between two institutions. The historical and political processes, natural values and geological features of Bosnia-Herzegovina were written in a joint book by researchers from the

Institute of History of University of Debrecen's Faculty of Arts and the Military National Security Service. The volume edited by Lieutenant Colonel Tamás Binder has a total of 17 authors, eight of whom are researchers and lecturers at the University of Debrecen, while several are employees of the Military National Security Service, but there is also an assistant professor at the Ludovika University of Public Service. The volume is divided into five main parts:



geography; history; economy and society; famous people of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and sights and attractions. Readers can get their hands on a well-edited, readable and informative book, abundantly illustrated with photos, graphs and maps. As an appendix at the end of the volume, we even get a “taste” of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s gastronomic culture.

In the geography chapter, we can read about the country’s natural geography, then its settlement and economic geography. In the historical part, the authors cover the main chapters of the country’s history one by one, starting from prehistoric times to the first Bosnian state, followed by the period of feudalism (1180-1482). This is followed by the chronicle of the long centuries (1482-1878) spent within the framework of the Ottoman Empire, followed by a brief characterization of the period spent in the periphery of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy (1878-1914). In my opinion, the unique parts of the volume are those that deal with the events of the 20th century and the present day, such as the brilliant outline of the period from the First World War to the Yugoslav Wars (1914-1992), then the part describing the Bosnian War (1992-1995). Finally, the recall of the bumpy and conflict-filled “road” can be highlighted that led to the formation of the independent state organization from 1995 follows. In my opinion, it is not an ordinary achievement that the authors, Eric Beckett Weaver and Szilárd Szabó, were able to summarize objectively and interestingly the “short 20th century” history of Bosnia-Herzegovina (1914-1992) in 13 pages. Similarly, it proved to be a successful venture for Péter Kustra to revive the chronicle of the Bosnian war in 14 pages. Later on, we can read objective descriptions and studies about the political system and state organization of the country, about the armed organizations operating in the region, about the structure and situation of the economy of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and finally about the meeting of ethnicities and religions present in the region. The book also contains a meaningful summary of the life and work of famous personalities from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Well-known writers, poets, painters, photographers, actors, directors, composers, musicians, many scientists and athletes are included in this chapter. Needless to say, the only Yugoslav literature Nobel laureate, Ivo Andrić, is also featured in the section. Finally, we get a description of the natural values and cultural heritage of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and a summary of the interesting chapters (the history of the Sarajevo tram line, Tivadar Csontváry Kosztka’s stay in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Hungarian involvement in the reconstruction of the “Old Bridge” in Mostar) of Hungarian-Bosnian-Herzegovinian relations. I read this fresh and well-made book with pleasure and interest.

The publication of these books, but especially the last work in 2022, in English and Bosnian language should also be considered and welcomed.