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CARNIVAL
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AB-meeting in Nijmegen
The Century in Zagreb
The new cultural history
Views on Ottoman Bosnia

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History Students of the World, Unite!
We thank the Department of Social Science History of the University of Helsinki for the financial support that made this publication possible
Editorial

Editing the second issue of Carnival here in Helsinki has been a pleasant experience. There is no shortage of articles – we are even forced to build up a small reserve of quality material due to lack of space. A good sign for the future.

The Activity department is doing particularly well, as is the activity of ISHA. There are three major events coming up, in Zagreb, Bucharest and Turku, respectively. On the basis of the reports in this and the previous issue, they all appear very thoroughly and skillfully planned.

With the risk of accusations of a national bias, I would like to raise a point concerning the one in Turku. Since the seminar is integrated with an international symposium of “real” historians, it will entail a possibility to hear also the guest speakers of the symposium. Who they will be is still an open question, but previous events in the same series have featured, among others, Alf Lüdtke, the guru of the German “history of everyday life”, and F.R. Ankersmit, a Dutch scholar prominent in the field of the philosophy of history. I am sure we will be notified of any new information regarding the programme.

As for Discussion in this journal, things have started to roll at the very last moment. The two discussion articles in the paper edition of this issue present an insight into an influential field of historiography (the “new cultural history”) and an elaboration of the significance of Soviet traditions for the legal culture of today’s Russia, a very timely topic indeed. However, the article by Tadzio Müller on Globalization and “globalitarianism” will be included in the web edition – as will a further comment by Tadzio... Perhaps in the future issues, the journal will this way truly begin to take the role postulated by our man in Warsaw: that of a public “surface” of well-prepared, academically grounded discussion for the community involved.

A propos globalization, we did what we threatened to do and have continuously attempted to spread the word of the journal also outside the existing ISHA network. The Articles department of this issue again shows that this has brought fruitful contacts, with curiosity both for the journal and the organization (no conflict of interest there). The pursuit of topics of contemporary relevance continues here, e.g. with Edin Hajdarpasic’s intriguing article on literary contestations over the legacy of Ottoman Bosnia.

However, in relation to the number of people we believe to have reached, the response has so far been modest. It has been even more modest when we have tried to mobilize people via the international list server of ISHA. These experiences seem to reinforce the old rule of student volunteer work: results are mainly produced in a vast network of direct personal contacts instead of an “anonymous market”. Nothing wrong with that, but if there are new people out there wondering whether to join in, please, make our day! See last pages for details.

Sakari Saaritsa
Head of the Editorial Team
ISHA Helsinki
THE IS INFORMS

As you all already know, our biggest upcoming events will be the Annual Conference in Zagreb (19th - 23rd April 2000, see pages 6-7) and soon afterwards the seminar in Bucharest (NEW DATE, NOW 24th-30th July 2000, see last issue). But that is far from being all: our dear friends in Turku have promised to organize an international seminar in the autumn (2nd – 9th October 2000, see pages 8-9). Just in case someone is unaware – Turku is a beautiful city in south-western Finland, inhabited by some very odd people. The theme of the one-week seminar will be ‘Changing History’.

There will also be a smaller – but no less interesting – seminar in Riga (November 2000). This seminar is going to deal with the Baltic countries and it is directed mostly to students from Finland, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia and Russia. However – if you are for example specializing in this region, do not miss your chance! If you are interested, please contact Arvi (arfy@ut.ee) from Tartu. I have also heard rumours that some history students from Tartu are coming to Zagreb – so we will hear more about these events there.

I am pleased to see that many local sections are organizing smaller seminars, but I have to admit that I am still a bit worried. Worried, because no section has yet promised to organize the Annual Conference of 2001. Now, please, if your ISHA section is interested in taking this job, let me know immediately! The IS will of course do everything possible to help your section: we will provide you with useful information and – if possible – even some financial support.

I am sure that most sections that have organized an Annual Conference will agree with me: organizing a big conference is a great and rewarding experience! Let me also know if your section is interested in organizing the Annual Conference of 2002. It would be preferable to plan these things a couple of years ahead.

We have decided in our wisdom that from now on, all organizers must make an official report on their conferences and seminars for the IS – absolutely and always. Reports will help us to inform for example the EU about our activities, and it will also be important for us – as an organization – to know what has happened, when and how.

That’s all folks. See you all soon in Zagreb!

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THE ACADEMIC BOARD MEETING IN NIJMEGEN, THE NETHERLANDS

4-6th January 2000

In the beginning of January, ISHA Nijmegen kindly hosted a small (but in no way modest) AB meeting. I would like once more to thank the ISHA people in Nijmegen for all the efforts they put into organising the seminar. They did not only host the meeting but also continued working for ISHA after it by updating the web pages and creating a new ”advert leaflet” for ISHA. Thank you Nijmegen, we could not survive without your help and enthusiasm!

The International Secretariat was represented at the meeting by Mikko-Olavi Seppälä, president, Sara Roegiers, Belgian member, and Rae Häikiö, financial manager. The only AB member present was Elise Seppälä, and the Treasury Committee was represented by Corné Boomaars. Other participants at the meeting were mostly from Nijmegen, except for our ”Internet guru” Jan Verbrugge from Leuven.

So, what were the things that we discussed and was there anything important decided? First of all, we looked into our past and future activities. If you are interested in knowing more about the upcoming events, please check the seminar information above. It was decided that ISHA ought to get back to the old procedure of choosing the Annual Conference host two years before the conference actually takes place. The last time ISHA accomplished this was in Vienna in 1996. The procedure of choosing the host two years in advance gives more time to the hosting section to plan the conference, apply for grants and sponsorships, etc. – and it gives hope for ISHA’s continuity, too. Secondly, we decided on gathering information for the web pages. Please, if you have any information or links that could be useful, let us know!

It was more difficult to come up with new and tighter guidelines for finances. At the moment, ISHA’s financial situation is bad due to the fact that ISHA has not received an EU grant for the past few years. Applying for the grant is not going to be an easy task this year, as it is quite hard to convince the authorities at the Eu-
ropean Commission of ISHA’s more active role in the future – I am referring to the International Secretariat. We are still hoping that we will get a grant from the EU so that the IS can continue working in Leuven and re-open the office.

If there are no people interested in running for the IS in Zagreb, we will have to reconsider the future roles of the IS and ISHA seriously. If the IS keeps on circulating around the sections, we will not be able to apply for EU grants and we will either need to find new sponsors or raise the membership fee radically. The first alternative is unrealistic (as it is quite hard to find a sponsor on whom we could rely on every year) and the second one would probably not be welcomed by the majority of sections. However, there were discussions going on about every participant paying DM 5 extra at every conference and seminar. This money would go straight to the IS for e.g. postal expenses.

This alternative has to be taken seriously as fewer and fewer sections are willing to pay their membership fees. Last year, approximately 10 sections paid their membership fees. Everyone should understand that we simply cannot cover the secretariat’s expenses with such an amount of money. All other sections that did not pay the fee were just “observing members”.

It is not my intention to blame any section for not paying. I simply want to point out that ISHA’s income is quite modest. We cannot continue this way. ISHA as an organisation has to become more professional if we wish to have a working IS in the future. “Sacrifices” are demanded from each and every section.

The meeting was pleasant for the most part, but a great deal of the discussion was carried out in the traditional passionate ISHA style. The most controversial topic was probably Carnival – or its name, to be precise. Everyone at the meeting seemed to be quite satisfied with the journal itself, only the undemocratic way of choosing the name was seen as a major mistake. The IS agreed with that point of view and promised to become more active, e.g. on the list server. I would like to point out that all the things we discussed in Nijmegen are still open for discussion!

According to our constitution, we are not able to make major changes and decisions at AB meetings, but only at the Legislative Assembly. Please read the agenda for the Zagreb LA meeting in advance. The agenda will be on the list server a couple of weeks before the conference starts. Every official member section can affect ISHA’s future policies by voting at the LA in Zagreb. So, please do not forget to pay your membership fee and make a difference in ISHA’s decision-making this year!

The unofficial parts of the AB meeting can be read on pages 12-13.

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Dear all,

I’d like to bring a few excellent web sites to the attention of anyone interested in coming to study at the university of Leuven for a year, for the International Secretariat of Isha (hopefully) or other reasons. The sites should speak for themselves, but I’ll sum up a few of what I think to be the main attractive points of the K.U.Leuven:

1. Its academic standing. A year in Leuven will look good on your cv, it’s an internationally renowned institute.
2. The central location of Leuven: close to Brussels and the European institutions located there. It’s also possible to take courses at french-speaking universities close-by.
3. The official language of the K.U.L. is dutch, but a wide range of courses are available in English. Take a look at the ‘Junior Program’, ‘European Studies’ and the ‘Studies in American Culture and Society’.
4. Almost 10% out of our student population of 26.000 are exchange students, so they’re an important community. They have their own cultural center (Pangaea), newspaper (The Voice) and student organization (Portulaca).
5. Last but not least: Leuven’s a student sized university town, with a beautiful old city center, a vibrant social life and prices are relatively low (compared to the neighboring countries). It’s also easy to find accommodation, exchange students usually are entitled to cheap rooms of the university.

General information from the university itself:
http://www.kuleuven.ac.be/studeng/a_totaal/index_eng.htm
The Junior Program in European Culture and Society:
http://millennium.arts.kuleuven.ac.be/junior/juniorsite/
The web site of Portulaca (the foreign students in Leuven): http://www.portul.student.kuleuven.ac.be/index.htm
People who want more information on Leuven, it’s university or Belgium, are always welcome to contact me on the following address:

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All kinds of newspapers, magazines, Internet sites, TV and radio stations are asking their consumers to vote for “the best of” all that one can possibly think of. The signs “Millennium” and “Century” in all sorts of styles, fonts and colours can be seen all around us. Even bookshops are trying to attract customers with sparkling millennial and centennial chronologies, with lists of the best or the worst events that ever happened or persons that ever lived.

Why again?

It is clear that all this has quite a lot to do with history, but unfortunately not that often with real historiography. It would be nice to believe that the wish for taking a less commercial but a more academic attitude on the subject is the reason why ISHA cannot stay blind or deaf.

While the 1800s were called a century of hope and wishes, the 20th century was certainly less optimistic. The greater part of 1900s is still alive, and many people think that they know it because they witnessed it, because they still have it fresh somewhere in their memories. Some recent events will not be regarded as history that soon, but why not analyse all that has happened right now? Only this way can we find out what is thought about the ending century in its last year.

Besides, it is interesting to see how young people feel about contemporary history, young people who do not carry the burden of the whole century, because they grew up in its last quarter only.

Maybe because everybody is interested…

The Conference is planned for 150 participants. We had thought it would be great to receive a good hundred applications, because there would be fewer organizing problems and it would be easier to take care of a fairly modest number of participants. This should be quite acceptable a claim for anybody who has ever tried to organize an ISHA seminar or conference.

However, as time was passing, it became more and more obvious that the maximum of 150 people would like to come to Zagreb. When writing this on February 10th, the list now contains more than 140 students who have sent their signed application forms. They are coming from 28 universities in 17 countries, but there are also some 20 others whose applications are on the way to Zagreb. If there are students who would still like to apply, they can feel free and welcome to do so, but unfortunately for the moment they will have to remain on the waiting list.

Anyway, it looks like those coming from a certain country where the IS is seated will be the most numerous this
Initially, we offered eleven workshops dealing with different aspects of the 20th century. We wanted to combine historiographical and interdisciplinary approaches, and thanks to the topics of the presentations, we hope it will be possible to achieve this goal. As said, the final number of groups and the division of papers within workshops will depend on the registered titles and abstracts that we will soon receive. Workshops will be led by history students, the members of ISHA Zagreb.

1. Wars
2. Prominent Individuals
3. Destinies of Nations and States
4. Cities
5. Religions, Ideologies and Movements
6. The Way of Living
7. Art and Culture
8. Development and Influence of the Media
9. Economy, Science and Technology
10. Hidden, Mysterious and Different 20th Century
11. Attitude to History

This is what we had offered. It is now clear that the workshop on the mysterious 20th century will be cancelled, and that the applicants for the workshops dealing with media and technology or economy will probably be working together. Some other papers will be transferred from the preferred workshop to another one in order to achieve a balanced number of presentations per workshop. It is also possible that some workshops will be split into two groups.

...excursions, parties and the rest of the program...

The programme will start on Wednesday (19th) afternoon and end on Sunday (23rd) around noon. Besides presentations and discussions at the workshops, the academic programme of the Conference will include short introductory lectures by professors from Zagreb. The administrative programme will include Academic Board meetings (AB) and the Legislative Assembly (LA). There will also be a celebration of ISHA’s 10th anniversary, and some old members will hopefully join us for that occasion. For leisure moments, the Conference will include parties, sightseeing in Zagreb and excursions in the picturesque region of Hrvatsko zagorje to the north of the city.

What is new is the accommodation, which will not be at the Youth Hostel in the city centre, as it was announced. Unfortunately, the hostel has moved to a new location, which is on the outskirts of the city. The good news is that there are comfortable rooms with two or three beds, and every room has an en-suite bathroom. The location of the academic and administrative programmes has not changed. It is the Faculty of Philosophy.

...and they always want to know more!

As applications have been coming in, we have been informing you, the Conference participants, by e-mail that your application has been accepted or maybe put on the waiting list. We thank you all for applying. By March 15th, you should e-mail us your abstracts (5-10 sentences). By doing so, you will reconfirm your arrival to Zagreb. We will also inform you if your presentation has been moved to another workshop and ask if you accept this, of course. We will send you a letter containing more information (the exact timetable, the list of participants at your workshop, the address of the hostel, phone numbers, and more) to your personal address by the beginning of April. Everything said in our letter about the outlines, papers and presentations or the participation fee, which will be DM 100 or 51.13, is still valid.

The fifteen organizers, among them the coordinators Ana Dordevic, Kristina Juric, Ivan Lajnvas, Renata Mikloska and the writer of this article, together with the other helpful members of ISHA Zagreb, wish you fruitful work on your papers and cheap and reliable travel arrangements, and they hope we will have a great time all together. Visit the Conference homepage (http://marvin.cc.fer.hr/isha) regularly and do not hesitate to ask for further information on zg_conference@mail.com. See you in Zagreb!
Changing history?
The past and the historian
An ISHA seminar in Turku, Finland, 2nd - 7th October 2000

Isto Vatanen
ISHA Turku
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........................................

Did you know that CHANGING your plans for next October could be something, for a CHANGE, that you should not miss?

ISHA Turku welcomes all ISHA members around the world to take part in the grand opening of the academic year 2000-2001. The atmosphere of the week long event in the city with the longest standing academic tradition in Finland will be something you should not miss.

The seminar “Changing history? - The past and the historian” will be a profound journey into history and historiography during which you can’t help meeting a bunch of fellow students from abroad, and to experience some of the many fascinating faces of south-western Finland.

Changing history?
A theme for you?

We are not alone with the ideas and realities of change in history. Change, continuity and crises unveil themselves when you least expect and come to the focus of historical work even when it seems most unlikely.

What is the relationship between the changing historical writing and the changing past itself?

As a theme, change is one of truly universal subjects in our field of study. The interest in changing history and coming across the ideas of change does not depend on the historical periods, nor the culture or continent you are studying. Change has quite a potential for joining students from every field of our discipline while still maintaining sharp edge and inter-
Ever been to Turku?

If you haven’t, now you are given a chance to regret that for only a few more months. Apart from being the oldest city in Finland, Turku is perhaps the most academic one of them. A considerable proportion of the city’s inhabitants are students or have some other relationship with the three local institutions of higher education. In addition to that, the universities are located quite near the city centre, giving it true academic colour.

Turku is easily reachable from Central Europe and beyond. You can fly here, but making your journey by train through the Baltic Countries or Sweden may be more rewarding. Especially the trip through the south-western Finnish archipelago is an unforgettable experience, if you are planning to take a ferry from Stockholm to Turku.

The programme and beyond

In the usual ISHA manner, “Changing history?” consists of the official academic programme and various social and cultural activities. The short lectures given by every participant, general discussions, guest lectures and other forms of study in six thematically arranged workshops will make the core of the programme. Workshops will concentrate on themes such as the origins of change, the people in the middle of changing history and also the changing historiography itself, among many others.

The seminar will also be your chance to meet fellow students from the ISHA sections around the world and get to know Finland. You are going to get a view of the Finnish archipelago, the centuries old history and the vivid contemporary life in the city of Turku and whole Finland. We can’t really promise that you will be able to speak Finnish fluently after one week, but some essential words and phrases such as “Täh?” or “Iso olut, kiitos!” will no doubt be a useful addition to everyone’s language skills. More international flavour is added to the seminar in Turku thanks to the cooperation with the Nordsaga network of Nordic history students.

Two seminars in one!

All the participants of “Changing history?” will also have a unique possibility to take part in an international symposium arranged at the same time by the departments of History and Political History of the University of Turku. Under the name “History and change”, the symposium consists of lectures given by leading international researchers. The two-day symposium is held in English and will be fully integrated in the seminar programme so that every participant will be able to make the best out of both.

Information on the Turku seminar will be posted to all ISHA sections during February. For participants willing to enter the seminar the deadline will be in the beginning of June. Additional material will be posted to the participants well in advance.

Most up-to-date information about the seminar is available at the ISHA-Turku web site at http://org.utu.fi/ishaturku. The organising secretariat is also happy to answer any questions concerning the event. Contacts by email to ishaturku@utu.fi or by mail:

ISHA-Turku / Secretariat
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FINLAND
Relations between neighbours: Conflict or co-operation?

An ISHA seminar in Tartu, November 26th, 1999

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In the end of last November, the Association of Estonian Students of History, Eesti Ajalooring, arranged a student seminar on the theme of neighbourly relations. The timing of the seminar fell upon festivities honouring the 80th anniversary of the University of Tartu as an Estonian-speaking university, but the seminar itself had very little to do with this event.

Foreign seminar guests came mostly from Finland and Latvia, and the audience totalled 25–30 participants with 9 presentations given. The presentations had various topics, but were in general quite well in line with the theme of the seminar. However, they were heavily dominated by 20th-century topics, with only two dealing with the time before and during the Baltic Crusades (up to the first half of the 13th century), and one with the 18th century. The gaps were partly due to the unfortunate cancellation of some presentations, but it is noteworthy that there were no willing speakers wanting to deal with the Middle Ages or the era of Sweden as a great power.

The presentations filled the criteria that can be set to any student seminar: the fair standard required of an academic essay. They were given in a rough chronological order for the whole of the audience. One could point out that presentations concerning earlier periods aroused scholarly comments mostly from those specifically interested in the topic, while the 20th-century themes often nurtured a discussion that was ampler and less strictly academic.

Coexistence before...

The earliest periods were given a proper coverage in the presentations of A. Geidans and O. Koskinen, the first one tackling the struggle of dominance in the Baltic countries during the first quarter of the 13th century, especially from the viewpoint of German – Estonian relations, and the second one dealing with the contacts between the trading centre of Novgorod in Russia and the tribe of Finnish Karelians (then living in a vast area in what is presently eastern Finland and north-western Russia) until the late 13th century. Both presentations had a strong factual basis, informing the audience that the German influence spread more by the force of arms, while the Greek Orthodox Church succeeded in a more peaceful cultural penetration to Karelia – until the time of Sweden’s intervention. Geidans’ presentation was followed by a short clarification of medieval taxation (i.e. tribute), and Koskinen was asked when Finns think the originally Scandinavian-Slavonic town of Novgorod could be called ethnically Russian. Traditionally, Russian historians have proposed remarkably early dates for this shift.

After a coffee-break, I held my presentation on the 18th century administration in two very different areas gained by Russia in the Treaty of Nystad in 1721: Baltic provinces and...
Karelia surrounding Lake Ladoga. The highly developed administrative structure run mostly by the locals in the Baltic provinces was contrasted by the rather rudimentary rule imposed on Karelia. The author was given one correction concerning the role of the central power under the Swedish rule and was questioned on the extent of Baltic autonomy and the implications of political democracy in Estonia and Finland, despite their superficial similarities, and explored the reasons for this. The presentations gave such a full coverage on their topics that they aroused little discussion.

The last three presentations related to questions still under discussion in the home countries of the participants. I. Abrama compared the economic policies of Latvia and Estonia, and put forth both the differences in the countries’ attitudes towards each other in commercial questions and the question of political democracy in Estonia and Finland, despite their superficial similarities, and explored the reasons for this. The presentations gave such a full coverage on their topics that they aroused little discussion.

The final presentation was intended to be a less ponderous one, pointing out questions of the Finnish foreign policy in the Cold War era. It caused a major dispute on the status of Finland during that time, the Finns bravely defending their independence, and the Balts questioning it with scientific criticism. The presenters handled their topics skillfully, but the audience was not always satisfied. What to learn?

It is obvious from things written that the seminar disseminated a great deal of information and partially opened up new points of view for the participants. We will be eager to hear more of these practitioners of the historian’s craft as the time goes by and they gain a higher position in the field of history. Surprisingly, none of the teachers of these students seemed to be interested in their pupils’ activities. However, the seminar also reminded us of some very basic facts of presentation. For one thing, a fair amount of professionalism the audience attributes to the speaker depends on his or her own conclusions. Standing at ease in front of the audience and reading the text as it stands straight from the paper may be convenient for the speaker, but it is not especially entertaining for the audience.

Another point is the specific nature of the speech: comparing notes made by the audience reveals considerable differences. One should make the essential points and the major conclusions very clear, and follow a logical order. One should not give an inappropriately great role for details following each other. The speaker should arrange his or her notes in such a way that they show their relevance for the final conclusion(s). And as a matter of course, one should acquaint oneself with the terminology and its proper translations. Only seldom do these cause misunderstandings, but more often they disturb the listener’s ear and damage the status of the would-be expert.
These are some personal remarks on the AB-meeting that was held in Nijmegen, the Netherlands, from the 3rd until the 6th of January 2000. This meeting was organised because a lot of topics concerning ISHA now and in the future had to be discussed before the annual conference in Zagreb (April 2000). Since the last AB-meeting was held in Zurich during the Millennium-seminar, it would have taken too long to wait until April. So, an invitation was published on the listserver and other arrangements were made.

Unfortunately, it appeared that nobody from ISHA Zagreb or ISHA Bucharest (organizers of the upcoming events) was able join us due to lack of time and visa problems. As a matter of fact, besides the people we knew to expect in advance, nobody else contacted us. So the AB-meeting became a small affair of only 4 ISHA-sections: ISHA Helsinki, Finland (Mikko and Rae, both from the International Secretariat), ISHA Joensuu, Finland (Elise, AB-member), ISHA Leuven (Sara, AB-member and Jan, our one and only webmaster and Legal Belgian) and of course ISHA Nijmegen (Corne, Treasury Committee, Hans, Julien, Jasmijn, Andrea and myself).

Monday, January 3rd
Rae and Mikko arrived at the train station in Nijmegen after spending the whole afternoon in a rainy Amsterdam. All members of ISHA Nijmegen (and Elise from Joensuu who was already in the Netherlands) welcomed them and it became a warm reunion of old friends. We all went to my room (I’m living in a student house with 3 other persons) to wait for Sara’s arrival. After picking her up from the station we spent the rest of the evening in my room under the motto: how many students can you store in a pretty small student room…

Because it wasn’t really foreseen that we would all stay at my place we faced our first problem: there was absolutely no beer in the house. So Mikko, Hans and I went out to buy some very expensive beer. Now that the problem was solved, we had a really nice time and a lot of fun remembering some old ISHA-anecdotes. At the end of the evening (and for some of us in the early morning) we split up and went for a good night sleep (which turned out to be the only one that couple of days).

Tuesday, January 4th
The next morning we had to face our second problem: the lack of bikes… Yep, the AB-meeting took place in the Netherlands so on a bike you go! Luckily we could also solve this problem and continue our way to the university (the Catholic University of
called 

lating. At the end of the vivid brain-

meetings will be published in Carni-

later…). Over a couple of hot choco-

we decided to go with the meeting 

that afternoon but under different 

circumstances. We left the university 

and went into town to continue in a 

nice cafe (“De Compagnie”). Before 

we got there we almost drowned be-

cause of the heavy rain (also a typical 

Dutch phenomenon, unfortu-

nately…). Over a couple of hot choco-

lates and beers we had some really in-

teresting conversations. Again, some 
of them will be published and some 
of them were absolutely off the record.

Wednesday, January 5th

Because of some “almost hangovers” 

our second official meeting started a 
little bit later then planned. Coffee was 
the way out of that particular problem. 
Today Jan joined us and gave us the 
latest news about the ISHA-

homepage he is updating. Again the 
meeting was very productive. Today 
we also had lunch at the student caf-

teria. Then we all had some time for 
ourselves to spend before we would 
meet in town again. Sara and Mikko 
were so kind to come to my place to 
do enormous ISHA-dishes, for which 
I’m still very grateful to them.

We had to hurry to be on time 
for our home-made, improvised his-
torical guided tour through town. We 
didn’t get very far because everybody 
only wanted to do some shopping every 
time they saw a stop. The biggest 
mistake we made was to show them 
the town-brewery (“Stadsbrouwerij 
De Hemel”) – of 
course they wanted to go inside and when we 
finally came out it was already dark. Time for 
dinner. We went to an Italian restaurant were 
we met Andrea (also an ISHA-oldie). After 
that we went to…yes, a cafe. This one 
(“Camelot”) is a rather special one, because 
here the history students of Nijmegen very 
often meet. I had made some arrange-
ments so that our guests could meet 
the president of our local association of 
history students. There were also 
two fellow history students (and mem-
bers of the editorial team that edits 
our own history journal) who chose 
to interview Mikko, because he’s the 
president of the IS at the moment.

Natives greet the wise and glorious President with great enthusiasm.

Later on we went to another 
cafe (“De Muis”), but some of us were 
already a bit tired of the ISHA-way-
of-life of the last two days and went 
home early. The real die-hards (Mikko, 
Jasmijn and I) realised that this was 
already our last night together and 
stayed in town for a while. Around 2 
’o clock in the morning we went to my 
place and had a nice time over there, 
drinking beer and tea, eating yoghurt 
and “bastogne-koeken”…some 
strange combinations there.

Thursday, January 6th

Our last day together had come. This 
morning we had our last meeting, but 
not at the university; we went into 
town for that. Over a nice breakfast/ 
lunch we talked some things through 

once more and made sure everybody 
knew what he or she had to do for 
ISHA after we would split up. Then 
we did some cheese-shopping for Rae 
and Mikko (another typical Dutch 
phenomenon…cheese) and finished 
the guided tour where we had left it 
yesterday. Again we didn’t come very 
far. We ended up in…take a guess…yes, a cafe (“Kadinsky”) mak-
ing plans for a big surprise in Zagreb. 
That’s going to be really exciting!

Finally, it was time to say good-
bye. Goodbye to our friends and good-
bye to some really great days. But I 
can say it was the best way to start 
the new millennium and I’m looking 
forward to see them and you in Zagreb 
again. By the way, if you ever come to 
Nijmegen this article will provide you 
with a number of names of some nice 
cafes so you can have your own pub-
crawl!! Have fun and see you in the 
future!!
In the spring of 1987, a seminar in California set out to define the new cultural history. The effort was both ambitious and obscure at the same time. The history of culture has traditionally been one of the most distinguished themes of history, and from the 1970s onwards it has been highly appreciated. However, in the French Annales school, which has in many ways defined our conceptions of “how to examine history” during this century, cultural history has easily been left aside as economic and social history have taken the central place in explaining human actions. As a result, cultural history has been associated with the history of political events, and in this way the annalists have understood it to be “outdated”. However, Chartier attacks the most important contemporary tradition of historical research, and also a highly popular concept that has sold history to larger audiences. In many countries, for example Finland, Chartier’s criticism can seem ill-founded, because even its objects – especially the history of mentalities – have not yet become well known or applied by historians.

In recent decades the aims, topics and methods of cultural history have been in constant change. No longer can cultural history be referred to as dealing only with the culture of the elite: the term ‘culture’ itself has been redefined. Its old limits have been trampled underfoot with the result that today almost any trait of human life, whether elite or common, is included in ‘culture’. How can cultural history, then, be studied? One new answer has been given by Roger Chartier, who has been the main historian to implement methods of the new cultural history.
should be examined in its own coherence. Even the dominating phenomena could only be understood in their own temporal and spatial context. He also aimed to separate the ideal forms of ideas and their social expressions. According to Febvre, historians should be interested in the latter, for no idea was worth examining, if it was not investigated in its actual and practical manifestations and influences.

Secondly, a new generation of annalists transformed the concept of culture in the 1970s. It brought ‘the mentalities of human minds’ to the centre of historical research. As a term, mentality has been very difficult to define. Usually, the French historian Jacques Le Goff is mentioned to have given the definition “man’s mentality is the part in his ways of thinking and ideas that he shares with contemporary people”. Meanwhile, Georges Duby has abandoned the whole term because he considers it too complicated to be used effectively in historical research. Although ‘mentality’ was so difficult to define and discuss, it became a central theme for cultural history, because it offered a possibility to examine societies as wholes. Outside the intellectual elite culture, it found common people and an unrecognized basis for the outlook of life. The history of culture began to explore a vast, new field. Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie was maybe the best-known scholar for his excellent studies on French peasant life, but another French historian, Robert Muchembled, gave the clearest picture of a separate and coherent culture of the European common people in the time of the Ancien Régime. Muchembled wanted to show that before the eighteenth century there were two levels of culture in France, the level of the elite and that of the peasants’ popular culture, and that the elite tried to reshape and redefine popular culture in ways going against its original meanings. Following these claims, popular culture has become one of the most interesting topics of recent historical research.

Chartier’s criticism

Traditionally, the Annales school submitted cultural history to the third level, below economic and social histories. However, Chartier’s opinion is that this order should be the opposite, because representations of the social world give the constituents of social reality. Economic and social relationships do not define cultural phenomena, because they themselves are created by the customs and products of culture.

For Chartier, the economic and social tendency of the annalists has led to premature assumptions of cultural history. Research concentrated on mentalities when aiming to examine a predefined group of people: peasants, the bourgeoisie etc. This definition has usually caused the results to be led by social presumptions: before the actual research, the scholar has defined the social limits of her/his object, and in this way social scientific definitions of societies have also determined the cultural conclusions.

Research based on histoire sérielle does not satisfy Chartier either. This quantitative method that searches for phenomena of the longue durée has produced important knowledge concerning cultural history, but its aim, to examine development over centuries, is very problematic when discussing mentalities. Especially, the unchanging or slowly moving character of vast statistics does not show individual exceptions or the roots of slowly rising phenomena.

According to Chartier, the most important weakness of quantitative research is its tendency to simplify physical expressions of culture, like books. At the same time it is forgotten that the reception of cultural phenomena is a subjective event. Following the claims made by Ginzburg and Pierre Bourdieu, Chartier emphasizes the fact that the use of quantitative methods usually leaves out questions concerning the mediation, reception, adoption and use of cultural traits. This leads easily to false conclusions, because these issues are not dependent on cultural objects, but on persons creating, transmitting and receiving them, and their resources and comprehension.

In these ways, Chartier has underlined the need for a new cultural history. Although historians have been interested in people’s ways of thinking and outlooks on life, this research has concentrated on a few intellectuals, and on their ideas, not actions. This is why Chartier tries first of all to expand the concept of ‘culture’. He widens it in relation to the traditional elite culture, but also compared to research concerning popular culture. The new cultural history has borrowed its basis from anthropology – especially Clifford Geertz – and from

Etienne-Louis Boullée, Deuxième projet pour la Bibliothèque du Roi, Paris 1785.
the conception that culture encompasses everything from reflections of human mental reality to human action. As a consequence, Chartier does not try to examine only the materialized forms of culture (arts, artefacts, literature etc.) and the common meanings given to them. Chartier tries to avoid this weakness by examining personal habits of using actively the texts, pictures and other cultural messages.

Chartier writes about an “another production” of culture, as receivers reproduce the message to a form different from the original intention: any text is the product of reading, a construction by its reader... He invents within the text things other than what was the author’s intention... The work acquires meaning only through the strategies of interpretation that construct its significances.

Because of this, Chartier thinks that mentalities are almost impossible to capture. At the same time, every single person is considered an interesting topic of research for her/his individual differences. This means also that cultural entities should not be simplified: culture should not be divided into an elite and a common, popular culture, as historians have usually done. Actually, such groupings are directly appropriated from social history, and as such they are not valid for defining cultural limits. The continuation from one genre to others should be noted. Chartier thinks that this emphasizes the need for studying the actual contacts and distribution of cultural objects carrying conceptions and information.

Practical advice

In his introduction to The Culture of Print Chartier gives practical advice on how to accomplish the principles of the new cultural history. He grounds his method on three basic elements.

The most important choice for research is to avoid topics that are too large or quantitative methods: The access to print culture we propose is not through a synthesizing, global approach but, quite to contrary, by means of case studies – more accurately, object studies.

The second preference is for particularity over preconceived generalization. Historians should not follow earlier assumptions, but approach their topic as it were always a fresh subject for them. Thirdly, Chartier tries to understand the use of cultural materials within the precise, local, specific context that alone give them meaning.

All these practical principles emphasize the individuality of the object. Chartier hopes that he could avoid trusting generalizations on social phenomena when examining the adoption of cultural traits. However, he also connects his research to traditional history by comparing his individual objects to earlier generalizations. The descriptions of cultural artefacts, concepts and actions are then clearer and their special traits are illuminated better. Finally, focussing on individual objects helps us to avoid anachronistic deductions, because in them the complexity of forms and the context are seen better than in quantitative studies.

The history of books

Chartier has used his methods especially in the field of the history of books. For him, the most important topic has been the relationship between the readers and the texts. This subject again emphasizes individuality, for Chartier wants to study a text as the reader understood it.

An important aspect is to notice the differences between editions: in the eighteenth century, texts were still manipulated between the editions, so they could have been greatly changed. These differences also affected the readers’ ability to interpret texts and to adopt the messages. Chartier has also reminded that historians should pay more attention to...
Although Chartier’s methods demand an almost overparticular approach to the object of study, and source criticism must be even more thorough, he has shown that the results are worth it."

Chartier practices his research in the French historical territory, so his criticism has mainly been directed against the tradition of Annales. For example, he has not discussed much his relationship with Italian microhistory, which however is quite clear. Despite this “Frenchness”, Chartier’s work has been considered valuable also in other countries, like the conference in California proves. Although Chartier’s methods demand an almost overparticular approach to the object of study, and source criticism must be even more thorough, he has shown that the results are worth it. The complex image of humanity is not underestimated, but given a central place.

Notes
1 Hunt 1989, pp. 1–6.
6 Le Goff 1974, pp. 82–85.
8 For example Le Roy Ladurie 1975 and 1979.
9 Muchembled 1978.
12 Chartier 1982, pp. 29 ja 33.
20 Chartier 1989, p. 3.
23 For more about History of Books, see Darnton 1983.
26 Chartier 1989, p. 5.

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Reflections of the past
Soviet heritage and human rights
in Russia

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Russia’s claim that the war in Chechnya is purely a domestic matter leans very strongly on the old Soviet way of thinking. What are we now fighting against – what kind of legal culture prevailed in the Soviet Union?

Soviet legal culture started to develop after the October Revolution of 1917. The change was not as sudden and radical as might have been expected. It developed over the years into a unique system characterised by instrumentalist and materialistic attitudes and the primacy of politics over the written law. Everything – including human and civil rights — was secondary to the great aim of constructing socialism. As Lenin stated: “Law is a political instrument, it is politics”¹. And politics - as we all know - can change overnight.

The Soviet legal system was not based on a legalistic culture. The socialist state and the communist party were the highest — and the only — sources of law. The underlying idea was that the state was a ‘friend’ of the people. Theoretically, it was impossible to think of situations where individuals and the state — let alone the party — would be on opposite sides.² Because law was just politics and a tool for the state, rights granted to the people were like little presents. No universal value was given to the law or — in particular — human rights.

The lack of legalism

At the core of the Western legal tradition lies the concept of legalism. Legalism means — first of all — that law has strong autonomy. This autonomy is guaranteed by formal rules regulating the development, principles and sources of law. Secondly, legalism means the rule of law: the government itself is bound by law. Law is seen as higher than political goals. Finally, legalism is characterised by the formal equal rights of citizens.²
The state was not bound by its promises. Soviet legal thinking also introduced the concept of collectivism. The common good overrode individual needs. The system of law had ambitious aims of constructing socialism and re-educating the entire society — it could not be bothered with the little demands of the ordinary person.

A system of contradictions

The politicised concept of law led to an unstable and contradictory system of law. The state itself systematically violated its own laws. Many thousands of administrative regulations were issued and put in force that clearly contradicted the constitution. One law could suddenly be followed by a conflicting one.

Due to this development the written law was generally not respected. Because laws were often only ideological rhetorics that most people did not believe, it was common to bend and break the rules. Civil servants’ arbitrary interpretations of laws were widely accepted. The Party’s role was crucial. Even in the cases of criminal jurisprudence, the Court’s decision was many times confirmed by phoning the local party leader.

The Soviet Constitution was not considered to be of primary value or even higher than average laws. It was just a political declaration that set out goals and made promises. It is notable that it was not self-executing. It needed other legislation before it came to force. In practice, many of the noble articles of the constitution turned into dead letters due to the lack of normal legislation.

Human rights in socialist society

Nevertheless, the Soviet Constitution had plenty of human right articles — many more and with wider scope than, for example, European Constitutions. Even as the Constitution guaranteed both political and economic and social rights, the latter ones were clearly emphasised.

The Soviet conception of human rights underlined the right to something — whereas the classical Western conception underlines the freedom from something. The Soviet State granted its citizens — for example — the right to housing, the right to access to cultural valuables, the right to a pension and the right to rest. These articles prop up the idea of a ‘guardianship society’: the state took care of its obedient citizens and their future and wellbeing. These benefits were rewards — it was hoped that citizens would become more aware of their responsibilities to state and society. Human rights had thus an educational function.

The constitution was not all about rights and freedoms but also duties. It is generally thought that the Soviet system emphasised the duties of citizens. However, the duties and the rights of citizens were considered — at least by legal scholars — just different sides of the same coin. The duty to work for the great socialist aim was also a right to do so.

The new synthesis of legislation

Soviet legal scholars introduced the concept of socialist legalism. They claimed that the Soviet politicised legal system was more developed than...
the Western ones and criticised the hypocritical way of separating political and legal systems.

Soviet scholars argued that in Western societies, equality between individuals was merely formal: in reality, there could not be ‘true equality between Henry Ford and his workers’. In a socialist system individual freedoms represented a synthesis of social relations, politics and law. True human rights could be granted only by a socialist society.13

Dissidents: parasites of society’s wealth

The Soviet Union was constantly attacked by Western accusations of poor human right conditions and the suppression of differing opinions. However, Soviet legal scholars and political leaders did not think of these as human rights matters but simply criminal acts. Every citizen’s duty was to work for the great socialist aim and contradictory opinions were thus a failure to perform one’s duties. Criticising the socialist state was “deliberate weakening of the system” and punished by the Penal Code.14

Dissidents were not consid-

ered as prisoners of conscience by the Soviet state: “Democracy as we understand it has nothing in common with liberal attitude towards shortcomings, with tolerating things that interfere with the life and work of people…Government of the people is…strict. It is inconceivable without conscious discipline and a high degree of organisation. And it does not sentimentalise over those who inflict damage on society, whether they are hooligans or criminals, bureaucrats or idlers, parasites or plunderers of society’s wealth.”15

A domestic matter of the state

The Soviet State also strictly opposed the idea of the universal nature of human rights. Socialist countries insisted for a very long time that the treatment of one’s own nationals was a purely domestic matter, in which neither other states nor the organs of the United Nations could interfere.

This attitude softened with the policy of détente, and from the mid-1960s the Soviet Union became party to a variety of international conventions on human rights. The Soviet Union accepted the idea that it had agreed about the provision of these rights, but the position was taken that the manner of implementation of these rights was still a matter for national discretion.

This emphasis was still clearly evident in the context of the Congress for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) in 1975 – where socialist countries claimed that the manner of implementation of human rights would vary according to the particular political system. In practise this meant, for example, that the freedom of speech in socialist society should be directed to the promotion of a socialist system.16

The introduction of legalism

In the last days of socialism, the official opinion towards the rule of law and legalism changed dramatically. The Western concepts were adopted; it was generally accepted that there was no special socialist democracy or

"With a beating pace, at full speed, fulfil the 5-year plan in 4 years." A Soviet political poster.

"A Russian soldier searches the clothes of a Chechen."
legacy, but only democracy and legacy as such.”

The Head of State, Mikhail Gorbachev, launched a widespread reform programme in the society and economy of the Soviet Union. A new political élite wanted to build ‘socialism with a human face’.

The aims of the legal reform programme were the introduction of the rule of law, more open and democratic procedures of legislation and the protection of universal human rights. Some serious efforts were made to improve the human rights conditions — for example — the freedom of expression improved fundamentally. The aims of democracy, market-orientated economy and legalism were to be adopted gradually. New structures were to be build without totally breaking the older ones.

The challenges of today

These reforms proved inadequate to keep the Soviet empire standing. The new Russia is still on the path to democracy, legalism and market economy. The goals are clearly expressed, but in practice the transition policy has however stumbled. Many steps have been taken side- and backwards.

In the field of human rights, Russia has adopted new legislation and many important international conventions. However, the present condition of human rights is not comparable with these positive reforms. There are still gross violations against the basic rights of people, media and religious groups. These human rights breaches are not only due to the governments’ inability to secure human rights — many of these violations are actually carried out by the federal government itself.

The war in Chechnya is without a doubt one of the loudest manifestations of Russia’s ignorance of international human rights standards. Russia’s claim that the war is purely a domestic matter leans very strongly on the old Soviet way of thinking. However, mass violations of human rights are not an internal affair of any state. Russia has also acknowledged and accepted this principle by the international conventions it has signed. Russia’s economic crisis, growing insecurity and the persistence of old patterns of thought help us to understand the ambivalent human rights policy of Russia. The political atmosphere has changed dramatically from the enthusiastic days of the early 1990s. Many Russians have turned towards old Soviet values and the “cringing behaviour towards the West” is often criticised. The failure in other fields of transition has clearly influenced Russia’s willingness to implement international human rights commitments.

However, human rights should not be blamed for the ills resulting from the erosive forces of the economy. Russia’s transition to legalism and to a general respect of human rights is going to be a long — and painful — process.

“the state itself systematically violated its own laws. Many thousands of administrative regulations were issued and put in force that clearly contradicted the constitution.”

Notes

1 Lenin, quoted by Hazard, p. 235.
5 Dimitrijevic, p. 67.
6 Berman, p. 49.
8 Dimitrijevic, p. 67.
9 Berman, p. 51.
13 Patyulin, p.7-8.
14 Patyulin, p. 21.
15 Brezhnev, quoted in Patyulin, p. 20.
16 Higgins, p. 97-98.
Glorious epochs, ghastly ages, and the meanings of history

Views on Ottoman Bosnia

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After the horrors of the recent war in Bosnia, it is no surprise that many journalists, political analysts, and scholars have embarked on a search for the causes of the bloody and often bewildering conflict. But amid the explosion of new interest in Bosnian history,¹ the period of Ottoman rule in the region has not received proportionate attention.

Despite the paucity of available English-language scholarship², generalizations about Ottoman Bosnia abound. In 1995, President Clinton observed that the war in Bosnia “is tragic, it’s terrible. But their enmities go back 500 years.”³ Thus at the end of the fifteenth century, at least according to the President, the seeds of the recent bloodshed were sown as the Ottomans were completing their conquest of Bosnia (which is usually dated 1463).

Others too see the Ottoman influence as a crucial and fatal factor in the history of the Bosnia and the entire region in general. “The Turks ruined the Balkans, with a ruin so great that it has not yet been repaired and may prove irreparable,” wrote the American journalist Rebecca West in her highly praised 1930s travel account, which continued to exert influence well after it was first published.⁴

The “Ottoman Shadow”

Of course, one could contend that such negative views of the Ottoman legacy are merely indicative of the Orientalist prejudices that permeate the “Western” point of view, as Edward Said forcefully argued some twenty years ago.⁵ However, some of the harshest indictments of the Turks have come not from Western European or American observers, but from prominent Balkan politicians, writers, and intellectuals. Ivo Andric, the famous Bosnian writer and the sole Nobel laureate from the former Yugoslavia, enshrined the image of a ruined, debauched Ottoman Bosnia in his doctoral thesis at the University of Graz in 1924. Andric wrote that the Turks, “an Asiatic military people whose... religion... shackled the life of the spirit and the mind in Bosnia,” practically annihilated all progressive accomplishments, interrupted and halted the “natural” cultural development of the region, and finally killed off all creative outlets. The Ottoman “shadow, where four centuries of ghastly history were played out, was to lie heavy on the landscape to either [Serb or Croat] side into the far distant future.”⁶

The grievances of the emerging Balkan nations, such as Serbia or Greece of the nineteenth century, against the Porte were not without reason: the declining Ottoman state mismanaged its resources, succumbed to corruption on nearly every level of government, and rarely protected or cared for the vast majority of its subjects.⁷ Coupled with such incompetence was the Porte’s overt and fre-
quently brutal hostility toward the national aspirations of the emerging Balkan countries. It is not surprising, then, that many inhabitants of the Balkans greatly resented - and genuinely hated - anything associated with the Ottomans.

... or a “Flourishing Epoch”

Rather than further delving into similar (and abundant) accusations and incursions of the Turkish rule, I will present and evaluate a contrasting view that is rarely, if ever, heard in academic discussions of Ottoman Bosnia. It should be noted that the aim of my essay is not to assess claims of Andric (or Clinton) in light of actual historical evidence, because other historians already furnished enough evidence to justify alternate conclusions. Instead, I will examine and assess an interpretation advanced by the Bosnian scholar and poet Safvet beg Bašagic, who portrays the Ottoman period not as “four centuries of ghastly history,” but as the heyday of cultural achievements that define the national identity of the Bosniac (that is, Bosnian Muslim) community.

Safvet beg Bašagic Redcepašić, born in 1870, was one of the most prominent figures of turn-of-the-century Bosnia. As a youth he composed poems and studied Islamic literature at the University of Vienna, while simultaneously promoting the interests of the Bosniac community. While writing more poetry and scholarship, Bašagic was active in several cultural organizations, which aimed to educate and make the Bosnian Muslims aware of their history and their representative to the Bosnian Parliament (Sabor) to presiding over that body, the First World War abruptly ended his brief pursuit of politics. Bašagic then returned to cultural concerns such as writing fiction and numerous studies. He died in Sarajevo in 1934.

Of interest to this essay is a relatively small but very important part of Bašagic’s opus, namely his views on the cultural legacy of the Ottoman period in Bosnia. It is a topic that pervades much of his scholarship. The earliest expression of Bašagic’s interpretation of the Ottoman period can be found in the appendix to his first scholarly study, A Short Instruction in the Past of Bosnia and Hercegovina, written in 1900. Though entitled “Herceg-Bosnia and Eastern Scholarship,” his essay is more than a mere overview of Bosnian writers who composed works in Turkish, Arabic, or Persian and thus influenced the learning and culture of the Near East. It is an encomium to a past filled with splendid cultural achievements. Bašagic spends most of the essay conferring acclaim on Bosnian poets, scholars, philosophers, and judges who bequeathed their works to “the Eastern Parnassus.” Furthermore, he believes that the Ottoman Bosnian writers are not only contributors to the literary lore of the Near East, but that they constitute “a separate genre”:

Instead of borrowing expressions from the Arabs and Persians, as was the usual custom of the Turkish poets before the rebirth of literature, our poets would unintentionally journey into the garden of our folk poetry...

Thus Bašagic, unlike Andric who judged Ottoman Bosnian literature to be “utterly restrictive and barren,” portrays the Ottoman period as a “glorious epoch,” a time when great literary arts and culture flourished in Bosnia.

Autonomous Bosnians?

Yet why is this curious characterization important? Bašagic provides a direct answer in the very first paragraph: by describing the glory of the past, “I want to say to certain people, to get out of their heads the usual
prejudices that our [Bosnian Muslim] fathers were unfamiliar with culture. They accomplished, I can freely say, in the field of Eastern scholarship as much as our neighbors did for Western learning.”

To understand why this essentially defensive stance is delivered at the very beginning of the essay, it is necessary to review briefly the circumstances under which Bašagic wrote it in 1900. The “national question,” that fascinating conundrum which continues to vex the region, was certainly the most controversial issue in Bosnia during the Habsburg reign (1878-1918). After occupying Bosnia in 1878, the Austro-Hungarian administration initially attempted to foster a native Bosnian identity that would prevent the neighboring and rising Serb and Croat nationalisms from gaining support in the newly acquired province. However, the Habsburg policy of promoting interconfessional “Bosnianism” failed to unite the Orthodox, Muslim, and Catholic inhabitants of the province for a number of reasons that need not detain us here.

Simultaneously, the neighboring Croat and Serb nationalisms laid rivaling claims on the allegiance of Bosnian Muslims. Because of the Bosnian Muslims’s Slavic ethnicity and shared language, the Croat and Serb nationalists were able to make the case that there was really no difference - aside from religious belief - between a Bosniac or any other South Slav identity. The implications was, of course, that the Bosnian Muslims were “really” Croats or “really” Serbs, because they were the same people who only happened to have converted to a foreign religion some centuries ago. Furthermore, these neighboring nationalists tended to dismiss and belittle any potential sources of the sense of separate Bosniac identity, such as a historical tradition. The Serb nationalists were especially prone to disparage the Ottoman period, which had, according to them, erected an unnatural barrier

between the once united (Serbian Orthodox) people by creating an alien and barbaric Muslim society in Bosnia.

Bašagic’s intent to dispel “the usual prejudices that our fathers were unfamiliar with culture” is precisely an answer to the Serb charges that Bosnian Muslims had no distinctive past or culture. Most educated Bosniacs of the time, like Bašagic, found the Serb reprobation of the Turks rather offensive for several reasons. The nostalgia among the Bosnian Muslims for the familiarity of the recently departed Turkish regime, as opposed to the new confusing changes brought by the Habsburgs, may be one motive behind the lingering appreciation for the Ottoman period. Most importantly, the Ottoman rule had given Bosnian Muslims the most conspicuous mark that separates them from their Croat and Serb neighbors: their religion. Under the Turks, Islam became the chief distinguishing attribute of the culture of a considerable native Slavic following. For Bosnian Muslims, therefore, to revile the Ottoman period would mean a denunciation of their own origins and heritage.

But Bašagic’s characterization of the Turkish reign as “a glorious epoch” is not just a rejection of the Serb attempts to reduce the Bosnian Muslims to a group of renegade Orthodox Christians. His reverence toward Eastern literature and scholarship is also more than an influence of German Romanticism enchanted with the Orient, as one has critic suggested, though the Romantic impact is certainly evident in Bašagic’s works. I believe that Bašagic’s invocation of the past glories is an attempt to express and “revive” the existence of an autonomous Bosnian Muslim nation.

Old pride of a glorious people

Before proceeding with this sensitive and complex topic, it must be noted that Bašagic’s own political record does not clearly point to a purely
Bosniac orientation. For reasons above, he repudiated the Serb label that his Orthodox neighbors wanted to attach to Bosnian Muslims. In 1891, amid the quarrels over proper national allegiances, he boldly declared that in the entire country, “there were never any Serbs or Croats,” implying that Bosnians have an identity disparate not just from Serbs, but also from Croats. Yet just a few years later, Bašagic was swayed by the subtle but effective approach of the Croat nationalists, who, in contrast to the Serbs, did not vituperate the origins of Slavic Islam nor belabor the legacy of Ottoman rule. Instead, they offered praise for “the Croats” of Muslim faith, along with a chance for Bosniacs to advance their education and political career in Croatia. By the end of the nineteenth century, Bašagic openly espoused the Croat origin of (Bosnian) Muslims and even penned a poem extolling “the Croatian language,” which “can link together East and West, song and intellect.”

Despite his ambivalent relationship with the competing Croat and Bosnian Muslim identities, Bašagic’s exaltation of the past reveals his efforts to legitimize the existence of a distinct Bosnian Muslim nation. The key part of his argument is the appeal to history, more specifically to the continuity of the Bosnian Muslim tradition.

As discussed above, Bašagic stated that the purpose of his essay on the literary accomplishments of Ottoman-Bosnian poets was to defend the integrity of the Bosnian Muslim community. Already at this point, certain assumptions about the course of history are manifest. The past is directly linked to the present, because the historical precedent of Bosnian literature and culture immediately suggests legitimacy and authenticity of the modern Bosnian nation. In other words, the sheer existence of a distinct tradition, however remote or different from the practices of the modern Bosnian Muslim community, is supposed to validate the separate national identity of the descendants of that once glorious people. This “process of reading nationalism genealogically, as the expression of an historical tradition of serial continuity,” to use Benedict Anderson’s useful phrase, is evident throughout Bašagic’s essay. Perhaps the best illustration is Bašagic’s poignant reminder to the (Bosnian Muslim) reader that the names of the great Ottoman-Bosnian writers are like “bright torches on the horizon of our lands, lighting the old pride in the hearts of our young generation, urging it to seek after Eastern and Western education and to contribute something to the progress of our homeland.”

The national character of the young generation stems directly from the old pride, which stands like the timeless “bright torches on the horizon.”

As Benedict Anderson explains, “the transition from New Time to Old” as well as the accompanying assurance of some immutable national trait are some of the most prominent features of European nationalist ideologies. The need to relate the nation’s past to the present became apparent when the modern “intelligentsias and the bourgeoisies were becoming conscious of themselves as” members of a particular nationality. The emerging national elites construed “nationality in terms of continuity,” which gave historical depth - and legitimacy - to the modern nations.

Lofty history for the hearts of the young

Bašagic’s characterization of the Ottoman period as a “glorious epoch,” I believe, fits into the pattern described above. In his historical account, the modern Bosnian Muslim community is united with its past through “the old pride,” which occupies a place of vital essence - “the hearts of the young generation.” The concerns over national identity provide a good starting point for an assessment of Bašagic’s interpretation. Even though the sense of Bosnian Muslim nation-
“At a time when a most odious effort to dehumanize Slavic Muslim culture and people was underway in Serb nationalist circles, Bašagic furnished much needed but terribly exaggerated historical evidence that proved that indeed there was genuine culture in Ottoman Bosnia. No better example of these lofty pretensions is needed than his overblown estimate of the influence of Bosnian writers on Islamic literature as a whole.”

The contrasting approaches by Andric: they were both from Bosnia, they were roughly contemporaries (1870-1934 and 1892-1975, respectively), they both loved and wrote literature, both studied the past of their own homeland at Austrian universities (Vienna and Graz, respectively) - and yet they came to such jarringly disparate conclusions about the Ottoman legacy and the validity of Bosnian culture.

What explains these profound differences? How were they constructed in the first place? One could argue that both Bašagic and Andric consciously used bits and pieces of history as means for constructing their respective Bosnian and Serbian nationalisms, just like many other nationalist intellectuals of East and Central Europe did for their own movements. According to Ernest Gellner, one of the most influential theorists of nationalism, “the cultural shreds and patches used by nationalism are often arbitrary historical inventions. Any old patch would have served as well.” The past can indeed be picked apart and appropriated for an astonishing variety of purposes. In search of old splendors and terrors, for instance, much historical evidence is done enormous injustice.

But such notions, these nationalistic “inventions”, have surprisingly long and independent lives. Bašagic did his best to enhance the reputation of Bosnian Muslim literary tradition, but he did not invent it out of nothing. Similarly, Andric did not fabricate the evidence for his indictment against the Turks. Rather than inventing arbitrary patches to justify purely political aims, nationalist histories often rely on pre-existing cultural and social contexts that substantially limit the framework of nationalist rhetoric.

Furthermore, ideas about glorious epochs and ghastly histories continue to influence people even after those who espoused them are long gone. For example, because of his fame as a Nobel laureate, Andric and his writings (including his disserta-

ality did not fully develop within his lifetime (as his ambivalent political career amply shows), Bašagic’s portrayal of the “glorious epoch” did provide an attractive foundation for the establishment of the Bosniac community.

Furthermore, at a time when a most odious effort to dehumanize Slavic Muslim culture and people was underway in Serb nationalist circles (see above), Bašagic furnished much needed but terribly exaggerated historical evidence that proved that indeed there was genuine culture in Ottoman Bosnia. No better example of these lofty pretensions is needed than his overblown estimate of the influence of Bosnian writers on Islamic literature as a whole. Yet despite these shortcomings, Bašagic documented the heritage of Slavic Islam, whatever its worth, while the Serb nationalists decried its very existence.23

The information preserved in Bašagic’s writings and manuscripts is indeed valuable, but what can one make of the effort (driven not by scholarly curiosity, but by the desire to vindicate a present-day cause) to view history as proof of national essence and continuity?24 Not surprisingly, the result of his research was an affirmation of the legitimacy of Bosniac culture, as well as an unbalanced, incomplete historical account. In his desire to rekindle the hearts of the young generation, Bašagic disproportionately emphasized the cultural achievements while neglecting important political and social trends (such as the faltering economic situation or rise of Balkan nationalisms toward the end of eighteenth century).

The ultimate illustration of the blindness which the nationalist view of history can induce is Ivo Andric’s doctoral thesis. As mentioned above, Andric depicted the Ottoman period in Bosnia as the rule of an alien, barbaric people and their Slavic Muslim underlings; therein he saw “the whole meaning of Turkish rule and Turkish influence”. This image of a flagitious oppressor served several contemporaneous purposes, such as dehumanizing the Slavic Muslims by reviling their origins, as well as inspiring indignation at an old enemy, thus rousing Serb national pride against the background of ghastly history.

Additionally, at the end of his work, Andric was compelled to include a peculiar supplement on “The Hybrid Literature of the Bosnian Muslims,” for he could not “simply pass over [this subject] in silence and... claim to complete coverage.” Yet in the few pages of the supplement, Andric does precisely that. Continuing on the theme of his dissertation, he bluntly asserts that in the area of literature “as well, the influence of Islam proved to be utterly restrictive and barren.” What is profoundly disturbing about this conclusion is that Andric actually cited Bašagic, who went to great lengths to document Bosnian Muslim heritage, to support his argument. Andric mounts no counter-argument against Bašagic’s claims, nor does he allow for any meaningful significance of Ottoman-Bosnian literature.

Conclusions
The comparison between Bašagic and Andric is useful in another way, for it highlights larger questions about the roles, uses, and meanings of history. The contrasting approaches by Bašagic and Andric toward the same historical topic raise significant problems regarding the nationalist appropriations of the past. It is strange to observe these two men, Bašagic and Andric: they were both from Bosnia, they were roughly contemporaries (1870-1934 and 1892-1975, respectively), they both loved and wrote literature, both studied the past of their own homeland at Austrian universities (Vienna and Graz, respectively) - and yet they came to such jarringly disparate conclusions about the Ottoman legacy and the validity of Bosniac culture.
tion) are frequently approached by many with surprisingly uncritical ver-

The reactions of Bosnian Muslim intellectuals during and after the recent devastating war are also quite telling of the persistence and the power of nationalist accounts of the past. As one might expect, the conflict prompted many Bosnian Muslims to re-evaluate their heritage and their identity, perhaps less expected was the amount of attention and respect paid to Bašagić and his colleagues who celebrated and recorded the achievements of Bosnian Islam.23 The old pride continues to light the hearts of the young generation, it seems.

Finally and most importantly, how can we assess the validity of these nationalist interpretations of the past? In case of Bašagić and Andric, it would be foolish to accept either one’s vision as “the true” representation of the Ottoman period in Bosnia. It would be equally inappropriate to say that the truth lies somewhere in between the two views, for that would still relate the Ottoman period from the point of balancing two competing prejudices. Much like understanding of other cultures, a proper understanding of history requires not only skepticism toward accepted stereotypes, but also an awareness of one’s own and others’ beliefs and practices, and sensitivity to the complexity of the human experience.

Notes

1 A number of other books discuss aspects of Bosnian history; see Books on Bosnia: A Critical Bibliography of Works Relating to Bosnia-Herzegovina Published since 1990 in West European Languages, edited by Quintin Hoare and Noel Malcolm (London: The Bosnian Institute, 1999), as well as Sarah Kent’s literature review “Writing the Yugoslav Wars: English-Language Books on Bosnia (1992-1996) and the Challenges of Analyzing Contemporary History,” American Historical Review, Vol. 102, No. 4, October 1997, 1085-1114.

2 See pertinent selections of books named in above reviews, as well as parts of Peter Sugar’s thorough account, Southeastern Europe under the Ottoman Rule (1977), and the articles in the Journal of Islamic Studies 5.2 (1994). But besides excerpts from these (and other similar) works, there is not a single English-language book-length study devoted to examining either the social, political, or economic aspects of the Porte’s long rule in Bosnia.

3 Clinton added, “some would even say al-


4 Rebecca West, Black Lamb and Grey Falcon: A Journey Through Yugoslavia (New York: Penguin, 1994), 1066. It should be noted that West’s great tome, originally published in 1941, was deemed worth re-printing in 1994 as a “Penguin Twentieth Century Classic,” whose supposedly time-less “cultural commentary” and “historical insight” would shed light on a region that “is once again at the center of international concern” (quotes from the back cover). The underlying notion that the Balkans never change was taken up by another influential journalist, Robert Kaplan, who explicitly modeled parts of his book (The Balkan Ghosts) after West’s travel account.


6 Ivo Andric, The Development of Spiritual Life in Bosnia under the Influence of Turkish Rule, trans. Zelimir B. Juricic and John F. Loud (Durham: Duke University, 1990), 16-17, emphasis mine.


1 “The Ottomans are blamed for cutting off their European provinces from the great intellectual trends...They are accused of re-tarding educational and economic changes and progress...Although each of these charges contains some truth, they are stressed much too heavily.” Peter Sugar, Southeastern Europe under the Ottoman Rule, 1354-1804 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1977), 282. For a different and thought-provoking approach to the subject, see Maria Todorova’s “The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans,” in Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Impact on the Balkans and the Middle East, ed. L. Carl Brown (New York: Columbia University, 1996), 45-77.

9 Safvet beg Bašagić Redcepašić, Kratka uputa u prošlost Bošne I Hercegovine, 1463-1850, (Sarajevo: Vlastita Naklada, 1900).


11 Bašagić, “Herceg-Bosna i istosna prosvjeta,” in A Short Instruction, 189-215. For my translation of this essay into English, visit: http://www.sar.usf.edu/~ehajdarp/safvet.html

12 Ibid., 208 and 199.

13 Ibid., 189.


16 Banac, 361-63, also see Ivo Andric’s remarks above for similar statements.

17 Namely Dcemal Cehajic; see Mahsin Rizvić, “...ehajceva Studija o Bašagićevoj Disertaciji, Analiz Gazi Hasrev-begove bibliotike” (Issue 17-18, 1990), 385-387.

18 Banac, 363-365.


20 In original: “A njihova imena sjajne su zublje na obzoru naših krajeva, koje rasvjetljjuju stari ponos u srcima mladog narodja, da prenje za isto...nom i zapadnom prosvojeti i dopriješe neža za napredak domovine.” “Herceg-Bosna i Istosna Prosvjeta,” 199; emphasis mine.

21 Anderson, 194-197. Also see Anthony D. Smith’s views on the nationalist uses of the past in his Nacionalism and Modernism (London: Routledge, 1998), 41-46.

22 In the judgment of a contemporary scholar, “...rather in quantity than quality can the works [composed in Persian and] produced there [in Bosnia] be compared with the Persian literature of other regions.” Compare that with Basagic’s insistence that Bosnian poets occupied the highest places in “the Eastern Parnassus.” Hamid Algar, “Persian Literature in Bosnia-Herzegovina,” Journal of Islamic Studies 5.2 (1994), 254-67.

23 Such refusal to acknowledge any value of the Islamic tradition in Bosnia contributed to actual destruction of Muslim culture in the recent war. See Michael Sell’s analysis of “Christoslavism,” in his The Bridge Betrayed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 29-92.

24 See Anderson, 187-206, for more discussion of “History employed in particular ways.”

25 Andric, 67-69, footnote citing Basagić on 97.


28 “In the first place it [Andric’s dissertation] enables the broadest encounter with the author’s conscience, ...with all archetypes from which he builds his characters, with all motifs that obsess him, with the motif of constant genocide [presumably against the Slavic Christians as perpetrated by the Turks]... In the dissertation, the genesis of all that Andric as a literary au-

29 An Old Pride continues to light the hearts of the young generation, it seems.


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32 Clinton added, “some would even say al-
The profound antimony between astring and Western thought is revealed by the historian Peter Brown in his study "The Rise and Function of the Holy Man in Late Antiquity". Brown reproduces a passage from Mansi, Concilia XV, in which it is recorded that a delegate of the Pope assisted at the confession of the Byzantine protospatharius Theodore by a holy man. Puzzled by this strange phenomenon, the delegate asked Theodore: "Was he a priest?" "I don't know. He was a holy old man, and I put my trust in the man." 1

For the Westerners, the idea of a "holy man" outside the Church system, who by virtue of his own personality alone could hear confession and erase the sins of another, was preposterous, if not heretic. The position of the Western mystics – who were greatly influenced by Eastern thought – was always ambiguous, bordering on heresy.

As Paul Evdokimov puts it, "In Western theology, the intertwining of the divine and human nature was totally excluded: tertium non datur, that is, becoming divine is not possible". 2 In Eastern thought, on the contrary, the idea of such holy men, who by the means of asceticism could achieve a state of teosis (union with God) was even part of the official theology.

According to Evdokimov, "The orthodox anthropology is...the ontology of becoming divine. It does not aim at the conquest of this world, but at the metaphorical ‘theft’ of the Kingdom of Heaven, the inner transformation of the world and the pro-

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Asceticism was one core issue which divided Eastern and Western Christianity already at a time when the two churches had not yet separated officially. In Western thought ascetics were considered to be suspicious, heretic mystics. In Eastern Christianity, on the contrary, asceticism has always been valued as a means to achieve a union with God. It was also believed that the hermits had miraculous powers to heal illnesses and cast out demons.
gressive illumination through divine energies.” Thus, in Eastern Christian thought asceticism was seen as the primary means of achieving a mystical union with God. Therefore ascetics were fundamentally transformed into powerful holy figures.

Symbolic martyrdom

Asceticism has been a constituent part of Christianity from the very beginning, as it sprang directly from the four Gospels. The early ascetics were primarily inspired by the charismatic figure of St. John the Baptist, who lived in the desert. “John had his raiment of camel’s hair, and a girdle made of leather about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.”

Jesus was also linked to the ascetic tradition, as he had to go and live in the desert for forty days before the start of his holy mission. “Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was hungry afterwards.” Furthermore, asceticism was directly suggested by Jesus himself, in his dialogue with the wealthy young man: “If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.”

Early Christians were doing just that, but in light of the early persecutions, ascetic practices were far less meritorious than death by martyrdom. By dying the death of Christ, the martyr became one with his Savior – according to the earliest traditions he entered immediately in the Kingdom of Heaven. Or, as put by St. Jerome, “It was the Christian’s prayer in those days that he might, for Christ’s sake, die by sword.”

After the triumph of Christianity in the 4th century martyrdom was no longer possible. Asceticism became an alternative for those seeking union with God, and was as such promoted by the Church Fathers. The self-mortification of asceticism was considered martyrdom of the flesh, and the ascetic “a daily martyr to his conscience”. The ascetic no longer died literally but symbolically. “Mortifie ton corps et crucifie-le, et tu auras toi aussi la couronne du martyre. Ce que le glaive faisait pour les martyrs, que la volonté le fasse pour toi”, teaches John Chrysostom.

Towards a divine union

Asceticism, whether Eastern or Western Christian, has always placed at the core of its beliefs the idea of suffering as a means to unite the spirit with God. To an ascetic, the human body is fundamentally depraved, the casting away and continuous denial of the matter achieving the freedom of the soul.

Christianity has been deeply influenced by Platonism, which perceived the soul as being trapped within the material world. But Western Christianity was further shaped by the pessimistic outlook of St. Augustine, who saw humankind as a massa damnata, already predestined to rise or to fall. By comparison, Eastern Christianity maintained a more moderate, optimistic view: it is true that matter is depraved, but any person can redeem himself by ascetic practices, thus becoming God-like once more. In the Eastern view, human beings have a spark of divinity within them, which they can cultivate to achieve union with God. According to St. Gregory of Nyssa, “man carries within himself a certain dimension of divine knowledge.”

Therefore, in Orthodoxy, asceticism under its most basic form of eremitism gained a reputation and a prestige not equalled in the West, where the cenobitical life prevailed. Asceticism meant primarily giving up what is human, becoming a “stranger.” The model of renunciation was St. Antony who, from an early age, gave up all his possessions and withdrew to the barren desert. A great number of hermits imitated him, practising extreme mortification in the forbidding deserts of Egypt and Syria.

The practices of asceticism were based on a continuous denial of basic human needs. The ascetics refrained from food, wore rough clothes, slept on the ground, or stood up for many hours without moving. These extreme feats of self-mortification were
not meant to be gratuitous; they aimed at achieving inner purification through the denial of egocentric desire.

The ascetics hence became morally humble, spreading around them a profound love for all mankind: “We saw another old man that surpassed all men in his gentleness, Benus by name, of whom the brethren that lived with him declared that never had an oath or lie come from his mouth, nor had any mankind ever seen him angry… but that his life went by in a great silence, and he was quiet in his ways, and in all conjuncture did reckon himself of no account.”

Can God be seen?

The ultimate goal of employing various ascetic practices was the mystical union of the ascetic with God. This was achieved by reaching metanoia, which the Eastern theologians defined as a mystical state of “seeing” God. However, this contemplation did not imply an absolute knowledge of the divinity.

On the contrary, Orthodox theologians expressly denied the possibility of such knowledge. What an ascetic could reach was a state of perceiving the supreme vision of God granted to a human being. That, of
course, was not God in Himself, because He remains forever hidden to mankind, or even to angels. St. Ephrem observed ironically that "whoever thought they saw God, that saw himself and his own fantasies". St. Gregory of Nyssa explained further: "The true vision and the true knowledge of what we seek consists precisely in not seeing, in an awareness that our goal transcends all knowledge and is everywhere cut off from us by the darkness of incomprehensibility."  

Greek theologians constantly rejected the rationalism of Aristotle or St. Thomas Aquinas, because it reduced God to the level of human intelligence. On the contrary, "God is far more than existence, especially under its logical form, because He is the Creator of every form, and hence higher and beyond any concept. The simplicity of God is entirely different from our idea of simplicity. Thus, every dogma has to be antinomic, beyond logic, but never contradictory." The Greek mystics therefore did not really pretend to see God, but the darkness of His supreme manifestation to mankind.

Immortal healing powers

Once he reached the high mystical state of union, the ascetic had a new mission on Earth: he was to be a guide and a helper to those around him, a Christian Bodhisattva. St. Antony, after twenty years of practising ascetic life, “came forth as out of a shrine, as if consecrated in sacred mysteries and filled with the spirit of God”. The Eastern holy men were considered miracle-workers, and there were several areas in which they were considered professionals. 

Primarily, they were specialists in exorcism. In Peter Brown’s view, “Exorcism was the classic cure associated with the holy man: for it involved both the formal designation of an authoritative healing agent, on which the sufferer and his companions could focus their hopes, and the equally precise isolation and extrusion – often in a satisfactorily visible form – of the disturbing element.”

Linked to the power to cast out demons was also the power to heal illnesses. “There was a man named Fronto who…had a dreadful disease. He came to the mountain and asked Antony to pray for him. The latter prayed and then said to Fronto: ‘Go, and you will be cured.’” The Eastern ascetic could also be responsible for other miracles such as bringing about rain: “We have a holy father in our country who by one single prayer can fill the whole world with rain.”

This power did not pass away with death – it was preserved in the bones carefully collected by the Orthodox Church. The relics were a great source of power. “So prized were the relics of saints among all Byzantine classes, especially the lower, that it was not uncommon for the bones of famous holy men to be stolen from one village by citizens of another.”

From common people to super-humanity

Thus, during their life and even after death, the Orthodox ascetics were considered to be blessed by God, infused with His Holy Ghost. They constituted a class of super-human beings who acted as intermediaries between God and the common people. They were hence able to accomplish what no other mortal – not even the emperor – could: to cause rain by prayer, cure illnesses, hold burning charcoal in their hands, as Daniel the Stylite is recorded as having done.

Peter Brown rightfully compared these Christian holy men to the shamans of Asia: “Like the shaman of Siberian tribes, he could master, by diagnosing, by entering into relation with, by solemnly overpowering, those inexplicit undertones of aggression, envy and mutual recrimination that build up so easily in the relatively small groups, with which the historian of exorcism deals.”

Indeed, Orthodox charismatic figures do share the stature in society and the function the shaman had in more traditional societies. But there is also a fundamental difference between them. The shaman was a singular figure, chosen by the gods and endowed naturally with certain supernatural powers.

The Christian ascetic, however, is born an ordinary human. Thus, the holy men of Christianity set forth an optimistic message: anyone, no matter how low he is, can arrive at this Grace of God through his own efforts. The path is certainly not easy, but not impossible either – it is a path open to any common person who has a deep burning desire to unite his soul to God.

Notes

2 Paul Evdokimov, Orthodoxy, translated into Romanian by Irineu Ioan Popa (Bucharest: The Biblical Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1996), p. 102.  
3 Ibid., p. 103. 
5 Matthew 4:2-3. 
6 Matthew 19:21. 
7 Evdokimov, p. 23. 
11 Evdokimov, p. 53. 
12 Brown, p. 265. 
13 Desert Fathers, p. 65. 
14 Evdokimov, p. 120. 
16 Evdokimov, p. 30. 
17 St. Athanasius, p. 32. 
18 Brown, p. 96. 
19 St. Athanasius, p. 69. 
20 Brown, p. 95. 
21 Geanakoplos, p. 199. 
23 Brown, p. 89.
The government of skillful speakers

Political leaders in the fourth century BC Athens

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Modern people’s idea of the Athenian democracy is mostly somewhat mistaken. It is usually said that all citizens had their role in leading the city (polis) and that everyone participated in the government. The contemporary theory, then again, was that the Assembly of the People (ekklesia) was “sovereign” in Athenian political life, and thus it were the citizens who had the political power. Consequently, it was “enough” for anyone to have Athenian parents and to be male in order to have the possibility to speak in the popular assembly and to stand for one’s own political proposals. But in practice, this “sovereignty of the Athenian people” was often restrained.

The Athenian democracy was a direct and conditional democracy, a self-control mechanism in the citizens’ body for keeping everybody’s behavior within fair limits. This self-control did not entail an obligation that every Athenian citizen should be able to participate in the government. In any case, this could not be possible. But the citizens’ self-control was based on the power of communication between them, especially between the ordinary people and the elite, developed in public arenas: the peoples’ courts, the Assembly, the theatre and the Agora. This process of communication was the primary factor in the promotion and maintenance of social harmony, and it made democratic decisions possible.

The government of rhetors

If every citizen did not participate in the formulation of Athenian political decisions, we should ask: “Who were the citizens that formulated these decisions?“ and “Who really led the Athenian politics in the fourth century BC?”

It is possible to see from the political speeches of Demosthenes in the fourth century BC that the rhetor was the advisor and the Assembly the decision-maker. In the mid-fifth century BC, the rhetor “was apparently a legal term for one who proposed a motion in the Assembly; by the later fifth and the fourth century BC it was ordinarily used of individuals recognized as active political experts: those who addressed the Assembly frequently and who competed in political trials with other rhetores.”

According to J. Ober, the prevalence of descriptive terms which emphasize the speaking skills and the advisory function of Athenian political leaders (e.g. hoi legontes= “the speakers”, politeumenos= "the one who is involved in the affairs of the polis" or “politician”, samboulos="advisor”, demagogoi="those who lead the demos", hegemonos="those who lead" etc.) however “suggest that public speech was a major aspect of their leadership role”.

A political leader who benefited from the people’s trust could enjoy great influence, but his power was manifested indirectly. The orators (rhetores) did not make, strictly speaking, political decisions, but they were
Demosthenes wanted to become an orator after he had seen the prestige that the orator Callistratos enjoyed thanks to his speeches. But Demosthenes had natural speaking difficulties and when he addressed the people of the Assembly for the first time, they made fun of him and he had to leave the speakers’ platform. Only after he had taken a lesson in declamation by the comic actor Satyros and undertook vigorous physical training of various kinds, Demosthenes tried to speak again in front of the Assembly.10

Rhetorics according to Aristotle

The example of Demosthenes shows us how important the art of persuasion was for an Athenian aspiring to become a political speaker. According to Aristotle, the four ways of using rhetorics were: it was the means by which truth and justice maintained and asserted their natural superiority to falsehood and injustice; it was the only method of persuasion suitable for an unscientific audience; as it taught us to see both sides of the case and to sustain either one side or the other, it enabled us to see through the arguments of our adversary, if they were unfair, and to refute them; and it was the means of self-defence. The function of rhetorics “is not to persuade, but to discover the possible means of persuasion in any subject”11.

Consequently, the perfect rhetor should possess: the power of argumentative reasoning; knowledge of human characters and virtues; and knowledge of the nature and quality of human emotions.12 Discussing rhetorical skills, Isocrates tells us that this is “a moral capacity of the people from which result the greatest advantages” and good speaking is a sign of good thinking.13 Anyone who wants to be a defender of the people and a good citizen “had to be a man with judgement and he should have the speaking ability”, because judgement would help him to choose the best option for the city, and the art of persuasion would convince the listeners to follow that option.14

Mantitheus, involved in the trial of dokimasia, said that his enemies sued him because he wanted to become an orator and to take part in the state affairs. And he did that because the Athenians valued citizens with “this kind of character”15.

Demosthenes’ criticism against the orators

In the speech The Second Olynthiac, Demosthenes criticized his contemporary orators in comparison with the old orators. The orators of his age only did what was good for them and what pleased people only for a moment, but not what was good and right for the city. Now, said Demosthenes, people are not the masters of the orators, but the slaves of the political leaders.16 Their predecessors cared about the interest of the state and “they made political associations not for their private interest but for the common good”17.

In The Second Olynthiac, Demosthenes spoke about a form of political clientelism, which was manifest in the Athenian society: “Men of Athens, you used to pay your taxes by symmories (groups) now you conduct your politics by symmories. There is a rhetor in charge of each, and a strategos (general) as his henchman and three hundred to do the shouting and the rest of you are divided between them, some in one group and some in another”. Demosthenes demanded the Athenians to abandon this reality and become independent citizens. This development would lead to a situation where everyone would have the right “to speak”, “to deliberate” over state affairs and “to act”18.

Regarding the accusation of Aeschines that he was the one guilty of Athen’s defeat in the war against Philip of Macedonia, Demosthenes replied that not only had he decided
the policy of the state, but it was also a "common deliberation on the public interests"[19].

The change of the political sphere

According to Plutarch, in times of peace the orators were using the power, but during wars the generals had the power in Athens[20]. During the fourth century BC, political leaders became more and more specialized in rhetorics. Thus the person that imposed a certain political decision in Athens was the rhetor. He was making proposals and he was granted responsibility over them. There was a transfer in decision-making within the Athenian political sphere. Theoretically, the Athenian people in the Assembly made the decisions, but in practice, they were just voting over proposals made by a minority.

Political debates were limited to spectacular rhetorical competitions in politicians' word-handling skills. Sources attested to the existence of "the political class of these politeumenoi which opposed more and more to the ordinary citizens (idiota), who more often listened without making use of isegoria, the equality of the right to speak, which was a sign of democracy"[21].

The political position of the Athenian rhetor was linked to the size of his fortune, his speaking ability and the number of his "friends". Demosthenes did not sue the aristocrat Midias in court because the latter had a higher political position. He was a wealthy citizen, with very good speaking skills, and he had powerful friends.[22]

The people in the Assembly tended to allow more and more political decisions to be made by the rhetor and by the political group around him. In spite of the negative appearance, the advantages of the system could be attractive to the ordinary citizens in the Assembly; they could directly control the citizens who took the responsibility for a motion and they could act directly upon them by way of different juridical proceedings if the results were not what they wanted them to be.

It should not be underestimated how big the risk of political activity was to the Athenian orators.[23] "There was also a scrutiny procedure that applied specifically to speakers in the Assembly, forbidding any citizen who had mistreated his parents, failed to perform his military duties properly, prostituted himself, or squandered his inheritance from addressing the demos"[24].

So, even if the Athenian political leaders more or less controlled the people of the Assembly, social harmony existed in the Athenian society. This social harmony, based on the citizens' self-control, assured the stability of democracy in the fourth century BC. During this period, sources did not attest any attempt to overthrow the democratic form of government (as in the fifth century BC). In 322 BC, the Athenian democracy was replaced by an oligarchy not because of an aristocratic revolution but because of a foreign conquest.[25]

Notes
2 For the limits of the Athenian democracy, see S. Hornblower, op. cit., pp. 157 – 161.
5 Demosthenes, On the Chersonese, (1); First Philippic, (51); Second Philippic, (6); Third Philippic, (76); First Olynthiac, (1); Third Olynthiac, (15), (18), (21), (36).
7 Ibidem, p. 107.
12 Ibidem, I, 2.
14 Aeschines, Impotriva lui Ktesifon (Against Ktesiphon), (174), in, Pagini alese din oratorii greci, ed. cit.
15 Lydias, Pentru apararea lui Mantiteus (For Mantitheus), (20), in, Pagini alese din oratorii greci, ed. cit.
16 Demosthenes, Second Olynthiac, (18)-(31).
17 Isocrates, Panegiric (Panegyricus), (75)-(82), in, Pagini alese din oratorii greci, ed.cit.
22 Plutarch, Demosthenes, 12 (5) : for the accusation of Demosthenes against Midias see also: Demosthenes, Against Midias, (1)- (3), (7), (8), (31), (34), (126), (127), (201)-(204).
23 On the legal action against orators, see M. H. Hansen, op. cit., pp.205-218 and J. Ober, op. cit., p.109: "The proposer of a decree in the Assembly could be indicted by the procedure against unlawful decrees (graphe paranomon); he who proposed an unlawful law could face a charge of having done so (graphe nomon me epiteideon theiata); he who spoke against the public interest due to having taken a bribe could be indicted to the eiasangelia (treason trial) procedure."
24 Aeschines, Impotriva lui Timarbus (Against Timarchus), (28)-(30), in, Pagini alese din oratorii greci, ed. cit.; apud J. Ober, op. cit., pp. 109-110:
Recruitment information
An international journal of history students seeks writers and local editors

Carnival is an international journal published by the International Students of History Association (ISHA). During the academic year 1999-2000 the journal will be edited and printed at the present site of the presidency of the organisation, the University of Helsinki, Finland.

The recruitment of contributors as well as the distribution of the journal are international and expansive. So far, the main field of operation of the journal has been the network of universities with active ISHA sections located mainly in continental Europe. However, we aim at developing the profile of the journal from an internal publication of the organisation to a general international journal of history students. The journal is distributed to various university departments and libraries in Europe and overseas and published also as a web edition. In the future, the visibility and circulation of the journal will be systematically increased according to possibilities.

Presently, the journal is financed by ISHA International, ISHA Helsinki and various sources in Finland. During this academic year, EU funding will be applied for.

Like all activities of ISHA, however, the journal is a non-profit project: distribution is free and production is based entirely on volunteer work. No monetary compensation for contributions is therefore possible. The publication of the journal seeks to balance the situation where there are innumerable international professional journals in the field of history, but none for students, and therefore to serve the 3rd academic aim of ISHA, that of offering international publication channels for history students, in yet a new way.

Contributing to Carnival provides you with the possibilities of:

- having a publication in an international student journal with increasing visibility
- getting feedback for your work and ideas from an international community of history students
- gaining practice and experience in working in English if that is not your native tongue
- getting into contact with history students of other countries regarding your particular projects
- becoming involved in the activities of a major international organisation of history students

The editorial board consists of a cross-section of students of the various historical disciplines taught in the University of Helsinki, such as economic and social history, political history and general history. We call for contributions related to any historiographical field, such as the history of ideas, gender history, business history, medieval history, labour history, the history of consumption, rural history, the history of international relations, etc. Methodological and theoretical articles, discussion papers as well as cross-disciplinary approaches are encouraged. As a student journal, Carnival naturally also seeks contributions related to the practical interests of this particular group. Interested graduates are more than welcome to contribute as well.

Of the various types of articles that are welcomed, the following can be mentioned as examples:

- general articles relevant to history students, e.g. on recent discussions of wider interest within the discipline
- articles on experiences of studying at various departments as an exchange student or on new international employment opportunities for young historians
- historiographical articles based on studies and research at home universities or conference/seminar presentations
- book reviews, such as reviews presenting domestic research on generally interesting themes not available in English or treating generally known international research from a fresh student angle

We ask for the permission to reproduce a contact address (preferably e-mail) with every article to facilitate further exchange on the texts.

In addition to contributors, we are also looking for local editors: people who are willing to recruit writers from their home universities and take responsibility for the timely delivery of local material to Helsinki on a regular basis. We ask anybody interested in such a task to contact us without hesitation.

According to possibilities, an international editorial board of a recognised status will be formed of such volunteers.

The deadline for the next issue is Monday, May 8th, 2000. Submit proposed articles according to following Guidelines.
Guidelines for Carnival contributors
Read this before delivering your material!

Length
Maximum length for a contribution intended as an historiographical article is approximately 21000 characters, or approximately 4100 words, or approximately six pages in 10pt font size, single line spacing. Maximum length for other kinds of contributions is approximately 13000 characters, or approximately 2500 words, or approximately four pages in 10pt font size, single line spacing.

Abstracts, captions, subheadings
If your contribution is intended as an historiographical article, start it with a short abstract of one paragraph. Start other kinds of contributions with a caption. In both cases, please, do use subheadings to structure your text at suitable intervals!

Endnotes
When notes are used, please define them as endnotes, not footnotes.

Delivery & queries
All contributions are to be delivered as attachment files to jyrki.hakapaa@helsinki.fi or via snailmail on disk to
Jyrki Hakapää
Pengerkatu 25 A 32
00500
Helsinki
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Queries related to the suitability of material may be addressed to
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Laivalahdenkaari 11 E 79
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Helsinki
Finland

Pictures
If you have any suitable pictures to go with your contribution, please scan them and send them to us as attachment files in .TIFF, .JPG or other common format, or deliver them to us via snailmail!

The deadline for the next issue is Monday, May 8th, 2000!