A teal-toned map of Bosnia and Herzegovina serves as the background for the title. The map shows major cities, rivers, and regional boundaries. The title text is overlaid in a white, serif font. The text is arranged in several lines: 'RELIGIOUS' at the top, 'SEPARATION' below it, 'et POLITICAL' with 'et' in a smaller, italicized font, 'INTOLERANCE' in a larger font, 'IN BOSNIA-' in a smaller font, and 'HERZEGOVINA' in the largest font at the bottom of the title block.

RELIGIOUS
SEPARATION
et POLITICAL
INTOLERANCE
IN BOSNIA-
HERZEGOVINA

Mitja Velikonja

*Translated from Slovenian
by Rang'ichi Ng'inja*

***Religious Separation
and Political Intolerance
in Bosnia-Herzegovina***

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TO ELENA,
with love, respect, and gratitude

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***Religious Separation
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INTRODUCTION

A Land of Dreams and Nightmares

The ominous calm that rests upon Bosnia-Herzegovina, a ravaged land strewn with the embers of war, offers its inhabitants little more than a life of spiri-

tual and material desolation at best, and a resumption of the carnage at worst. A nostalgia born of bewilderment for that which has been lost is passed on with bitter self-irony and enhanced by a dark premonition of what tomorrow might bring. When, why, and under whose leadership did it all come crumbling down? How fateful is the implication of epic and religious figures, national mythologies, and monotheistic doctrines, and what is the share of their guilt or innocence? Are the answers from the past also a harbinger of the future? These are some of the questions to which I sought answers during my research on the religious and mythological past and present of Bosnia-Herzegovina and South Slavs in general.

Indeed, researchers of the narrative and contemporary dynamics of the religious and national mythology of South Slavs have been shocked by the tragic events taking place in our close vicinity and in the midst of people we have known, by the scenario of their sanguine premiere several decades ago and again, only recently, by “the diabolical synchronization of the pen and the rifle butt, their bloodstained and functional symbiosis,” to borrow a poignant expression from Sarajevo historian Dubravko Lovrenović.¹ To me, the incredible expansion of literature on the Balkans, the former Yugoslavia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina over the last few years

***Weak and fragile is the kingdom where a
single language is spoken and a single
tradition prevails.***

—STEPHEN I (SAINT STEPHEN), KING OF
HUNGARY (CA. 975–1038), CA. 1030

means that the time has come for the scientific elucidation of issues that in the past were regarded as having been “settled”; the cross-examination of and confrontation with different analyses and discoveries; and associative, synthetic socio-historical discussions that preserve the diversity of opinion regarding the past, present, and future of South Slavic nations. These new revelations are a proper addition to and deepening of the numerous previous publications in Yugoslavia and around the world, which conformed to scientific criteria for impartiality, criticism, and comparison.

This topic has not aroused the interest of the social sciences and humanities—from history and anthropology to psychology and sociology—merely because of the bloodshed in that part of the world. A new necropolis in the body of Europe has fastened us to our television screens and sent social scientists rushing back to their dusty textbooks and to study new ones. There is another reason for this engrossment: the concepts we come across daily that have never been truly and completely elucidated. Concepts such as religious affiliation, national identity, historical myths, religious war, and so forth have again become the subject of heated arguments, disputes, and conflicts.

These loosely defined concepts have been more of a tool for political choice than a subject of scientific contemplation for South Slavs over the last two centuries; more a battle between politicians—where the most cunning, most ruthless, and strongest player reaps the transient victory—than a battle of wits that has no final victor and whose only meaning is dialogue and discussion. The result is that these concepts have been subjected over the last two centuries more to political rather than to scientific elaboration. Moreover, the latter was often replaced by politically apologetic, pseudo-professional instant theories. Perhaps the time has finally come when, in studying the challenging complexities of these delicate social phenomena and processes—religions, national mythologies, national and political histories, and mentalities—we are finally able to distinguish between erstwhile confusing concepts such as myths and history, religion and science, faith and knowledge, poetry and politics; to treat each one individually and, having thus set the stage, investigate and identify their dimensions, interrelationship, and advocates; and to introduce historical dimension into the study of contemporary social phenomena that otherwise often suffer from ahistorical, static explanations.

My research on the history of the religions and national mythologies of Bosnia-Herzegovina repeatedly pointed at the internal diversity of the periods, phenomena, problems, and conflicts under discussion. I came

across no single explanations, no unanimity among authors—not only on the interpretation of facts, but also on the facts themselves. Because of the complexity of the events in Bosnia-Herzegovina and their dependence on events beyond its borders, I have had to expound on the religious and national issues of the countries and empires surrounding Bosnia-Herzegovina or of which it was a part, and of its neighboring nations, Serbia and Croatia. To this end, I have discussed the religious circumstances of the medieval Bosnian history, four centuries of Ottoman rule, four decades of Austro-Hungarian rule, the Karadorđević monarchy, the Second World War (when Bosnia-Herzegovina was annexed by Croatia), socialist Yugoslavia (when it became a “Socialist Republic”), and, finally, of the independent, internationally recognized but internally divided country that was established in 1992. The book thus follows the historical sequence of events chronologically, except in chapter 4, which synchronously discusses the evolution of the religio-national mythologies of the Serbs and Croats.

I have also considered sociological dimensions by analyzing quotations, statements, syntax, poems, slogans, messages, obituaries, and speech excerpts of religious dignitaries, politicians, military commanders, writers, and other public figures. I have also used statistical data, censuses, and the estimates and results from accessible and relevant public opinion surveys. Finally, I focused on a number of notorious events, personalities, and far-reaching episodes, comparing their mythical elaboration and transformation in stories that left their indelible imprint on history and today's national and religious communities. I tried to analyze and reach conclusions on the basis of a wide spectrum of sources written by authors from these countries and abroad and also from different historical periods. However, a complete history of the religious dynamics and national mythologies of Bosnia-Herzegovina has yet to be written.

Bosnia-Herzegovina was a stage for encounters, confrontations, symbiosis, transition and/or conflict between different religions, national mythologies, and concepts of statehood. I offer herein some basic views and answers to the questions mentioned earlier, and I try to elucidate some aspects that are less or insufficiently presented in other studies of this specific and controversial field. The most important of these are: relations between the religious and national identities of the peoples of Bosnia-Herzegovina; the gradual formation of national mythologies within and around that country; the religious elements of national mythologies; and, finally, the role of religious communities, institutions, rhetoric, and clergymen in the everyday life of the people as well as in the most fateful events of Bosnian history.

In this book I analyze the history of the religions and mythologies that slowly molded the national identities and political options of Bosnia-Herzegovina. I also explore the processes by which religious-cultural and ethnic identities and borders were gradually transformed into mainly national ones by considering how, why, and when the predominately religious and cultural self-consciousness of the Bosnian peoples was transformed into a national (and political) one;² the principal actors in the transformation process; if it was a homegrown or imported initiative; and under what conditions transformation came to pass. An equally important question I shall attempt to answer is that of religious nationalism or national clericalism.

An investigation into the history of the mosaics of religions and national mythologies within and around Bosnia-Herzegovina as a microcosm of the entire Balkan Peninsula cannot overlook several nonreligious factors that continue to mutually permeate, sequester, mold, or deny these religions to the present day. As such, I felt compelled to consider related political dimensions of these events, as much within Bosnia-Herzegovina's borders as beyond them—especially the emergence of religious and national mythologies in both Serbia and Croatia, and the religious and political history, cultural and social development, and territorial and administrative divisions of those neighboring states.

Myths remain very important and persuasive elements in the construction of reality in contemporary complex societies, self-defined as “disenchanted” or “enlightened” in most different fields—from politics to popular culture, from global questions to everyday life, from national and religious identities to cultural ones. As American sociologist Robert Bellah stated, “the separation of church and state has not denied the political realm of religious dimension.”³ If we limit ourselves only to the “profanized” twentieth century, we find mythic constructs, religious rhetoric, and archaic iconography at different times and in different parts of the world. Many nations have perceived themselves as being *Holy*, *Sacred*, *Heavenly*; as the *Christ among nations*, as the *Most Ancient*, even as the *Elected*, or on a *God-given mission* to fulfill. Other examples include self-declared *warrants of democracy* or *cultured nations*; military campaigns labeled as *crusades*; dictators being glorified as *sent* (or *chosen*) by *God Himself*, or as the *incorporation of the Will of the Nation*. Politicians often refer to religious tradition and values and swear before God at their inauguration. The struggle of the proletariat against the ruling classes was interpreted in terms of a cosmic struggle between *Good and Evil*. *Holy Wars* were fought in different parts of the world by differ-

ent religious fundamentalists. The *cleansing* of their different enemies was constitutive for many new states and regimes. An ‘*Eternal Allies versus Eternal Enemies*’ opposition could be found on many of the warring sides, as could the notion of the *Last Bastion* of the religion or *civilization* in question. Borders were perceived as *sacred*, *historic*, and *untouchable*, and enemies were often demonized, animalized, or bestialized.⁴

I consider mythology as a dynamic, internally cohesive, but continually changing system of individual myths that has some very practical functions and goals to achieve in society.⁵ It is “a key element in the creation of closures and in the constitution of collectivities.”⁶ In some instances it is political discourse, although being told in a poetic way. In other words, “myths are not banal descriptions of the desired society but calls for action.”⁷ As such, mythology has three main functions, which are evident also in contemporary societies: integrative (it includes inward and excludes outward); cognitive (it explains most important past and present events and foretells future ones); and communicative (it provides specific mythic rhetoric and syntagma).

Myths can, in my opinion, be divided into two large, paradigmatic and ideal-typical groups that are strongly dialectically interacted. “Traditional myths” are those found in premodern forms of constructed social reality: folk traditions, old rituals, sacralized persons, objects and episodes, epics, ancient tales, sets of symbols, legends, beliefs, and so forth. They gaze into the past and try to explain important historical events (the origins and creation of a certain group, great leaders, hardship, “eternal” truths), and are characterized by the fact that they are “incomplete,” “unfinished,” and are forever characterized by an exegetical deficit. Or, as Claude Lévi-Strauss puts it, “since it has no interest in definite beginnings or endings, mythological thought never develops any theme to completion: there is always something left unfinished.” In short, they are “interminable.”⁸

On the other hand, “ideological myths” complement the original exegesis of traditional myths: they provide particular conclusions to their “openness.” Unlike the former, ideological myths gaze into the future and solicit changes, innovation, and transfiguration—but on ancient foundations. The ideological myth complements and elucidates the deficiency of the traditional myth. The actuality and flexibility of contemporary mythology is guaranteed by the ideological evocations of ancient myths. In other words, the traditional myth lends legitimacy to the ideological myth, whereas ideological myth complements the incompleteness of the traditional myth. Mythology is a dynamic and dialectic process in constant motion and encompasses both.

TABLE I-1 *Differences between traditional and ideological myths*

<i>Traditional myths</i>	<i>Ideological myths</i>
relative permanence	variability, transience
authority	dictation
static, latent	active, pretentious
reconciliation, justification	attack on the existing order
satisfaction	dissatisfaction
orientation	conduction
spontaneous, unconscious	systematic, reflexive, and
creation	intentional contemplation
socializing	resocializing

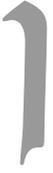
A few of the more typically presented differences between traditional and ideological myths that complement mythology as a whole are listed in table I-1.

Whereas the traditional myth is familiar to all or most of the members of a given society, the ideological myth is the projection of a small interest group that is chained to the past but decisively pointing toward the future. It is important to note that traditional myths do not necessarily anticipate antagonism, conflict, violence, or crime; they can also be used, in conjunction with and complemented by ideological myths, as an excuse for such. So, in terms of exegesis, mobilization, and initiative, the ideological myth is a far more important part of mythology than traditional myth. Another important contradictory, but complementary feature concerns the authorship of myths: whereas it is next to impossible to determine the authorship of ancient, traditional myths, the authors and advocates of ideological myths are usually readily identified (political parties, religious organizations, charismatic leaders). In the past, a period of several decades or centuries was required before a certain myth was accepted or rejected and forgotten. The process is much quicker and more acrimonious today.

Mythology thus synthesizes the inertness of traditional myths and the innovativeness of ideological myths; the conservatism and introverted nature of the former and the aggressiveness, dynamism, and expansionism of the latter. The traditional myth reveals ancient wounds that are nursed by ideological prescriptions. The main characteristics of mythology are an expressive, passionate, and suggestible modification of events; arbitrary interchanging of circumstances and figures; the mobilization of the collective memory and social strengths; a dramatization

of events; and substitution of the general with the particular and the particular with the general. Mythological existence knows no temporal constraints: actual historical events or figures were often equated, not merely compared, with examples from the past. Mythologies—in this case national and religious—that seek historical explanation reveal more than the mere fact itself but the conditions, their creators, and promoters, as well as the public and the interests of the mythmakers. From their ahistorical perspective, nations, countries, and religious organizations have always represented stable entities, unchanging through the centuries, existing in some kind of “eternal present.”

Italian essayist and writer Claudio Magris notes that the ambivalence of each myth lies in its ability to portray “a bit more and a bit less than is the fact.”⁹ It furnishes this diminished picture with new elements and dimensions. The comprehension of a historical or actual event can very easily slip into myth. The amorphousness of historical events and political interests presents innumerable possibilities for the mythical comprehension and ideological transformation of the past and present. In other words, the myth “trims” the ramifications and complexity of a historical event and offers in its place a simplified portrayal. I agree with Romanian-American social scientist Vladimir Tismaneanu, who approaches myth not “as a necessarily mendacious vision of reality but as a narrative that is able to inspire collective loyalties, affinities, passions, and actions.” For him, “the value of myth is that it mobilizes and energizes the infrarational segments of political behavior.”¹⁰



BOSNIA'S RELIGIOUS AND MYTHOLOGICAL WATERSHED

The perception of national identity in eastern, central, and southern Europe was different from that of western and northern Europe and emerged at a much later date. Whereas a specific historical course of events in the former resulted in the prevalence of the

territorial-political concept of the nation-state, the east was more heavily influenced by linguistic, cultural, and religious considerations. There was, however, a very big difference between the way national identity was perceived by individual South Slavic peoples themselves: it emerged first among the Serbs, Croats, and Bulgarians, and developed from medieval traditions of statehood (*translatio imperii*). The identity of the Slovenians that first appeared during the Protestant reformation and later in the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century was based principally on their linguistic and cultural dissimilarity. The Montenegrins identified themselves as the unconquered nation in the midst of a vastly superior adversary. For the Macedonians and Bosnian Muslims, the evolution of a national identity was—besides some clear linguistic-cultural characteristics for the first and religious-cultural characteristics for the latter—to a large degree a response to the territorial appetites of

*We belong to no-one, always on a frontier,
always subject to God-knows whose heritage.
. . . We live on the dividing line between worlds,
on the frontiers between peoples, exposed to all
and sundry, always in someone's way. Our
backs are the shoals that break the waves of
history.*

— MEŠA SELIMOVIĆ, "DERVISH AND THE
DEATH"

their neighbors in the late nineteenth century and especially in recent decades.

Religion is generally considered to be one of the earliest and most fundamental forms of collective distinction. Religious dimension also represents one of the most important factors in the creation of national consciousness and politics, especially in the absence of other, more compelling, factors. Indeed, religious dimension is considered one of the most enduring factors, persisting even when other factors weaken and vanish. Churches and religious organizations, as institutionalized manifestations of religions, are social and political entities and, as such, play an important role in the creation and survival of a nation, often providing transcendental goals for the political process. Religious differences play a greater role in the shaping of national identity in those states where religious heterogeneity was and is prevalent.

This book, which examines the history of the religions and national mythologies of Bosnia-Herzegovina, shall focus among other issues on the tension between religious universalism and particularism. An important invariable quantity that must be considered when examining the religious history of South Slavs is the merging of the concept of nation with that of religion. That is, the “nationalization of religions” or the subjection of religious universalisms to tribal or ethnic ideas. In general, religion has always been more of a representation of tradition and collective (national, social, political, even military) action than of individual faith, judgment, choice, and devotion. However, it is important to understand that similar cases exist elsewhere in central and eastern Europe: Polish Catholicism in the midst of Russian Orthodoxy and German Protestantism; during the German diaspora in Hungary and Romania, Lutheranism was considered to be *their* religion; Presbyterianism in Hungary was named the “Hungarian religion” as opposed to Habsburg Catholicism; the emergence of the National Church of Czechoslovakia after the establishment of the country; Romanians and *their* Orthodox religion, and so forth.¹ This logic is quite opposite from the concept of “civil religion,” developed by late-eighteenth-century enlighteners or, for example, by the “founding fathers” of the United States, for whom it was not “ever felt to be a substitute for Christianity.”²

Historian Adrian Hastings points out that “the Bible, moreover, presented in Israel itself a developed model of what it means to be a nation—a unity of people, language, religion, territory and government.”³ In the Balkans, historical and contemporary developments were interpreted in religious terms: analogies were made between contemporaries and episodes and personalities from the Scriptures or the religious history of

their own nation. Pedro Ramet cites five crucial reasons for the “marriage” between religion and nationalism: religion represents the historical essence of culture; religion is a symbol of collective identity and distinguishes one people from another; the avant-garde role of religious groups in the development of a national language and literature; the leading role in society assumed by the clergy because of their education, prominence, and political awareness; and the conviction that the religion of a group of people—as opposed to a neighboring people or religion—is theirs alone.⁴ National religious messianism strengthens the bond between national identity and religion.

THE INTERMEDIACY OF BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

There can be no doubt as to the historical legitimacy of Bosnia-Herzegovina—a land which, more so than any of its neighbors, is characterized by extreme religious changes. Bosnia-Herzegovina constitutes “a historical entity which has its own identity and its own history” that has been shared by people of all its religious denominations.⁵ Across the ages, its borders have been more consistent and received wider recognition than those of Serbia or Croatia. These two neighbors have, indeed, occupied parts of its territory, but only for brief periods of time and, as such, cannot make substantial historical claims against Bosnia-Herzegovina. The Serbian and Croatian national identity of the Bosnian Orthodox and Catholic population is more recent than Bosnian, because it only emerged—as will be discussed in subsequent chapters—in the second half of the nineteenth century. Bosnian Serbs and Croats thus have “unique and distinctive features that are not identical to the national cultures of the matrix countries” Serbia and Croatia.⁶

Bosnia-Herzegovina’s foremost disposition was and is its universal heterogeneity. This diversity (*šarolikost*) was well represented in Bosnia’s prevalent and intricate religious and national structure which—on several occasions in the course of history—proved to be a potential cause of strife. Because individual religious organizations served also as national and political organizations, religious identity usually became synonymous with national and political identity. Starting mainly in the second half of nineteenth century, the behavior and train of thought of the clergy and laity resulted in and reflected the close relationship between the religion and nationality of the three largest communities living in Bosnia-Herzegovina, although the relationships between them were quite different. As a rule, an examination of the association between religion and nationality must always consider the great diametri-

cal differences that characterized the history of these relationships and which have remained to the present day.

Ibrahim Bakić, a Bosnian expert on religio-national relations mentions seven primary reasons for the likening between religion and nationality in that country. First, many pagan aspects acquired a religious and national character. Second is the predominately folkish character of religious life (“ethno-religious” traditions). The third and fourth reasons are the gradual development of secular national institutions and the evolution of social life through religion, and a predominately rural culture in which religious and national institutions were readily interchangeable. The fifth reason is the predominately religious content of cultural output. Sixth, religion is the origin of historical, cultural, and political mythology. Finally, the belated separation of ecclesiastic and national phraseology and the constant interference of religion in society and politics.⁷ This immoderate blending of religious and national identity illustrates the impact of religion on the majority of South Slavs, especially in Bosnia-Herzegovina: it has been an important factor in preserving ethnic and cultural identity, and it has obstructed any form of ethnic development independent of religion.⁸

The intermediacy of Bosnia-Herzegovina—lying between great religious and cultural areas of Europe (Western and Eastern Christianity and Islam and their cultures, social organizations, and mentalities)—always exerted an important influence on the internal events of this mountainous country. Over the centuries, territorial divisions in its vicinity invariably resulted in division within the country itself. The Drina River, for example, served as a demarcation line between the Eastern and Western Roman Empires rendered by Theodosius I in the fourth century. Later, the central and eastern Balkans served as the stage of conflicts between the Germanic Ostrogoths (who adopted *Aryan heresis*, *Arriana Haeresis*) and the “orthodox” Byzantines during the sixth century; after 1054 between Eastern and Western Christendom; between Christian and Ottoman Europe from the fourteenth to the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries; and between the prevailing Catholic Habsburg Empire and the small aspiring Orthodox Slavic states in the southern Balkans. It also was the stage for the encounter between the nationalist concepts of Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia on one hand, and the aspirations of Muslim Slavs and the Yugoslav idea on the other. Another important factor contributing to the specificity of these events is the remoteness and impenetrability of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which hindered passage through parts of the territory. Consequently, direct interference and external control were greatly limited.

Between the fourteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Balkans became the battlefield on which Christian and Islamic states and civilizations clashed. Bosnia-Herzegovina found itself in the midst of this turmoil. However (with the exception of the twentieth century), despite the high level of religious pluralism and dynamism, frequent changes, and occasional tension, Bosnia was able to avoid the kind of religious antagonism and keen conflicts that were characteristic of other European countries.⁹ The religious history of Bosnia is therefore a history of religious division as well as religious coexistence. This Bosnian peculiarity must be given full consideration when examining the history of its religions and national mythologies.

A complex approach and an open mind must be adopted when examining the field of religion: we cannot limit ourselves to doctrine, theology, and dogma but must consider the changing social, cultural, and political ramifications as well. We cannot simply accept the official version; we must also consider specific reception and transformation. We must look beyond inherently universal religious aspirations and examine local and national usurpation, reinterpretation, and “domestication.” Both the “true faith” and the “heresies” must be examined. In other words, we must consider both mainstream religions and the alternatives; orthodoxies and heterodoxies, or—in Bellah’s words—“various deformations and demonic distortions.”¹⁰ The origins of important aspects of the identity and day-to-day life of the majority of South Slavs can be traced to their religious and mythological tradition: from personal names and surnames to collective symbology; from cultural templates to culinary customs, apparel, and behavior. In short, we are dealing with a mutual, almost indistinguishable conglomerate of religious, cultural, mythical, national, and political attributes blended with characteristics arising from everyday life. The differentiation of all these fields in Bosnia-Herzegovina was—in comparison to neighboring countries—very slow and recent.

The individual religious and national communities in Bosnia-Herzegovina developed in close association and interaction with each other. According to Francine Friedman, “national identification in this area of the world escapes the religious factor only with great difficulty.”¹¹ From the second half of the nineteenth century, the evolution of the three major national groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina was strongly influenced by three major religions—Islam, Orthodoxy, and Roman Catholicism—the first (but not only) lines of division during the evolution and development of the national groups. Religious affiliation and nationalism often proved to be convenient bedfellows and drew strength from each other.

Religious affiliation became the badge of nationalism and nationalism became a “sacred duty.” This principle was also adopted by and defined the roles of the religious hierarchies, which more often than not conformed to the prevailing behavioral trends in their national communities.

Another important and common characteristic pertaining to religious practice in Bosnia-Herzegovina was its synthetic and eclectic nature. This resulted in the evolution of heterodoxy rather than religious orthodoxy. Different religious beliefs and features often mixed and merged, new religious elements appeared, customs were borrowed from neighboring religions, on so forth. Another characteristic is religious conversions. Balkanologist Harry Thirlwall Norris discovered several factors connected to this frequent praxis that can be applied also to Bosnia-Herzegovina: for example, a low level of religious (doctrinal) education and the superficiality of conversions.¹²

There were, however, several crucial cultural, economic, political, and other differences between the religious communities. During times of hardship, people of the same faith would combine forces, sometimes with faraway coreligionists with whom they had little in common. Another peculiarity of this region was the endless antagonism between the higher and lower ranks of the clergy, and between different currents within one religion. Furthermore, religious martyrs in the Balkans corresponded to national and political martyrs: the “great men” (politicians, military commanders, religious leaders) were often given religious as well as national eminence for their service to “God and Country.”

As a rule, religious institutions pursued an internal policy of integration and assimilation while displaying exclusivity and hostility externally. From the eighteenth century the religious and cultural dissimilarities of South Slavs—in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the mid-nineteenth century—became the most important basis for the development of nationhood, resulting in (forcible) conversions and the slaughter of “enemies and traitors of the faith” and, therefore, of the nation. Due to the identification of the national with the religious-cultural identity, wider or local interreligious tensions and intolerance resulted in the spread of hatred between these nations.

Orthodox churches are, as a rule, autocephalous and are based on a nation-state principle. This autocephalic concept was formed in contrast to the Roman popes’ absolutist claims of primacy. According to the Council of Calcedon in 451, the borders of church organization are—ideal-typically—the same as those of the state (a practice that was always difficult to achieve and often led to serious conflicts).¹³ Although

they cannot change religious Orthodox doctrines, they have jurisdictional and administrative autonomy and their bishops are elected by synods. Despite the existence of “national” elements and connotations in the history of the Orthodox churches, its theology remained as uniform and universalistic as Catholicism or Islam. However, they lack the international organization of the other two mentioned religious communities.

Historical experience has taught Orthodox churches that survival often demands flexibility and political complacency, and they have learned to support the regime even when it is autocratic, non-Orthodox, or atheistic.¹⁴ They are, in other words, wont to the whims and unpredictability of politics and politicians. We need only remember examples from Tsarist or Soviet Russia and from the Ottoman Empire. The Orthodox concept of *ethelodouleia* means voluntary subordination to political power (the sultan’s authority for example).¹⁵ This Orthodox tradition of reverence to political leaders dates from the Byzantine period. The state was the domain of God, and the king and the patriarch harmoniously led God’s people in fulfilling God’s will. In line with the established typology of relationship between the church and the state, the Orthodox Church held the “absolutist sacral” status of the “state church.”¹⁶ The principle of “coordinated diarchy” means the “coordination and cooperation of the Church and the state in all vital issues and in mutual respect of autonomy.”¹⁷ Thus, the relationship between the Serbian state and the Orthodox Church was interpreted by generations of theologians as analogous to the relationship between body and soul.

Likening religious unity to political unity and later (in the nineteenth century) to national identity became the *raison d’être* of autocephaly in the Orthodox world.¹⁸ Such reasoning was upheld by patriotic clergy, vernacular (Slavonic) liturgy, and a policy of congruity between the church, the state, and the people. Because of its strong assimilative ability and group orientation, the Serbian Orthodox Church not only preserved, but also strengthened and expanded the Serbian language, culture, customs, political traditions, and, of course, the Orthodox faith under Ottoman rule. The term *Serbian faith* became a familiar expression denoting Serbian Orthodoxy.

This inviolable unity between the church, the nation, and the state is also illustrated in the Serbian national and religious symbol, the four Ss surrounding a cross, with a popular meaning: “Only unity saves the Serbs”¹⁹—and then, naturally, only if they rally around the cross. In other words, the church rallies the Serb people together as the sole institution that—as is often emphasized—never betrayed them. For the Serbian Or-

thodox Church, the national issue is not a distinct political problem, it is a form or element of the religion that tries to function as a national and not as an exclusively religious institution.²⁰ The nationalist bearing of the Serbian Orthodox Church was sometimes, if not often, of greater importance than its liturgical role: It was and is perceived as the Serbian people's last line of defense. It also portrayed itself as the "suffering church," inseparable from its equally "innocently suffering," even "heavenly people." One of the defining attributes of the Serbian Orthodox Church was the sacralization of national phenomena and national heroes, its deep-rooted conservatism, its inability to break with the past, its noncritical and servile relationship with the authorities, and its belief that it was the protector of the Serb people. In short, the influence of religion on the emergence and development of the Serb national group was very important and quite apparent.²¹ We must, however, differentiate between the evolution of the Serbian national identity in Serbs living in Serbia and Croatia and Serbs and Croats living in Bosnia-Herzegovina. In the case of the Bosnian Serbs and Croats, the religious and cultural factors in the development of national identity in the nineteenth century were particularly important. First, because of the religious and cultural heterogeneity of the country, and, second, because other nation-building factors such as political or administrative unity and the development of nation-building cultural, intellectual, and educational institutions were missing.

Catholicism and Islam—both of which are universalistic and transnational religions—played significant roles in the development of the national identity of Catholics and Muslims. Croatian historian Ivo Banac believes that "far more than among the other South Slavs, religious affiliation among the Serbs helped to shape national identity."²² Nevertheless, the influence exerted by Catholicism and Islam on the political and cultural development of their nations was, and remains today, significant. There were specific periods in history when both the Roman Catholic Church and the Muslim religious community played a dominant role in society—receiving privileges from the state, often in the form of ecclesiastic absolutism or religious monopoly (more often the former than the latter).

According to Roman Catholic teaching, the nation is viewed as "a product of the local undertakings of Catholicism and the local church," and the aim of local churches is to "preserve national characteristics and thus strengthen their religious dissimilarity" with the others.²³ In Croatia, the Roman Catholic Church—*Mater et Magistra*—was one of the more

important factors influencing the evolution and preservation of Croatian national identity, but it was not the only one. According to Croatian historian Dinko Tomašić, it was “only one of many elements of Croatian national culture and by no means its basic or most important part.”²⁴

However, some basic Roman Catholic customs and traditions were eventually nationalized and became the basis for the development of national traditions and institutions. Catholicism became the “patron” of national development and evolution. Croatian nationalism thus sought support in Catholicism by nationalizing its essential social functions.²⁵ However, this is but one aspect of Catholicism in Croatia. If we were to use the labels commonly applied to denote the main branches of Croatian Catholicism, then this nationally exclusive and potentially hegemonic and traditionalist “Stepinac” tendency (after Archbishop and Cardinal Alojzije Stepinac, 1898–1960) is opposed by the more tolerant and ecumenical “Strossmayer” form (after Bishop Josip Juraj Strossmayer, 1815–1905), which was known for its liberal and modernist brand of ecumenism and conciliation.

Islam is a more all-embracing religion than Roman Catholicism and Eastern Orthodoxy and its secular and spiritual spheres are more tightly knit. Islam is not merely a religion; it is a way of life, a legal and political system, and an agglomeration of different cultural practices. As an anthropological and cultural paradigm, Islam does not recognize “the unbridgeable difference between religion and politics or the separation between the church and the state.”²⁶ Because of its universal character, Islam tends to function on a global and more general level, which does not mean that it plays no role in the shaping of national identities. However, advocates of traditional Islam view nationalism (as well as other modernist ideologies) as the greatest danger to their faith.

The Muslim community in Bosnia-Herzegovina became the strong westernmost oasis of this monotheistic religion in what was otherwise a religiously exclusive “Christian” Europe. The evolution of Muslim national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina shares many similar characteristics with that of the Serbs or Croats, but it is distinguished from them by the significance of the religious factor. There are many different opinions concerning this particular issue. Zachary Irwin and Pedro Ramet, experts on Balkan religions, note that Islam exerted a greater influence on the national identity of Muslims than Orthodoxy did on the Serbs or Catholicism on the Croats.²⁷ One well-versed assumption is that Islam is the “mother” of the Muslim national group. According to a contemporary leader in the Bosnian Muslim community, the Islamic religious

cadre “has always stood by the people, shared with it good and evil, was directly linked to it and sincerely served it within the range of its possibilities.”²⁸

I believe that a temporal dimension must be added to these views: despite its universal orientation, Islam has indeed exerted influence on the shaping and evolution of the Muslim national identity—but at a much later stage than the Christian religions. The main reasons for this belatedness were that the national identity of Muslim Slavs was categorically and persistently opposed by both Serbian and Croatian ethno-religious extremists who labeled them “Poturice” or “Turkified” Serbs or Croats, and the national policies of the multiethnic states to which this territory belonged and which did not support their national self-affirmation until Yugoslavian communist authorities did so in the late 1960s. Norwegian anthropologist Tone Bringa states that “Islam is the key to understanding Muslim identity in Bosnia,” and yet “Bosnian Muslim identity cannot be fully understood with reference to Islam only, but has to be considered in terms of a specific Bosnian dimension,” namely religious heterogeneity.²⁹

Islam therefore made a significant contribution to the national acknowledgment of Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Muslim Slavs, who since the late 1960s have been referred to simply as Muslims. Over the centuries, Islam in Bosnia-Herzegovina evolved “into a specific and rather independent cultural system, which gradually influenced the ethnic bases of the Muslims” on one hand, and “today performs an important contribution to religious and confessional pluralism and interconfessional relations” on the other.³⁰ In other words, Islam played a cultural and ethnogenic role in Bosnia despite its general transnational orientation. Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Muslim community was more loosely organized than its Christian neighbors and lacked an institutionalized religious hierarchy or clergy. The closest thing they had to clergy were and are the *ulema* (“*Ilmija*” in the local language): the “learned in Islam.” The most senior religious leader in Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Muslim community is the chief *ulema* or head of the Muslim religious community (*reis-ul-ulema*; *reis* is the Arabic word for chief), while *imams* and *hodžas* provide leadership at the local level.

Bosnia-Herzegovina’s Muslim religious community has been autonomous since 1882. On the basis of a special document issued by the Porte and approved by the Austro-Hungarian emperor, the Menšura, Bosnian Muslims chose their *reis-ul-ulema*, who exercised certain powers usually reserved for the caliph. The emperor also appointed four of his closest collaborators, a group of elders known as the *ulema-medjlis*.