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## **NADA KLAJĆ AND SIMA ĆIRKOVIĆ ON EARLY MEDIEVAL BOSNIA – TWO EXAMPLES OF APPROACHES TO THE ISSUES OF THE EARLY HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL BOSNIA**

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**Abstract:** This article presents the attitudes of two respectable historians, Nada Klaić and Sima Ćirković, on the earliest history of medieval Bosnia. Although mutually conflicting to a large extent, their attitudes represent a breakthrough in studying Bosnian history but also the history of the Middle Ages in the Balkans. Challenging the concepts related to this subject developed during the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th century, Klaić's and Ćirković's positions faced difficulty reaching not only history enthusiasts but also some experts. Sima Ćirković's approach is analytical, cautious, and meticulous, written with the wish to encourage divergent thinking rather than to provoke. He points out the problem of researchers' subjectivity and frequent projections of the present onto the past. Nada Klaić's approach is more polemical and imbued with the need to refute the theories that projected modern times onto the past, and in those efforts, she often fell prey to the very errors she tried to correct in other people's work.

**Keywords:** Bosnia, Nada Klaić, Sima Ćirković, ethnoscience, the Middle Ages.

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The question of ethnic character and identity of Bosnia in earlier periods started to attract the attention of historians and scholars in other humanities and social disciplines only recently. That is, from the time when modern nations developed in this territory. The answer to this question, which, in its nature, is much more political and contemporary than historical, is not simple. In addition to being difficult to define methodologically, unclear and scarce sources represent another obstacle to a more precise answer. Regardless of all these difficulties, there have not only been interested amateurs but also often educated historians who have readily provided inconclusive answers to this question.

Historicism was an extremely important element in creating modern national consciousness in the territory of the Western Balkans. Modern nationalism—and the politics derived from it—was as intertwined with history as much as history, especially the one related to the pre-Ottoman medieval period, was intertwined with the needs of national ideologies and politics. Consequently, the questions and answers related to the history of medieval

Bosnia and especially its ethnic identity were influenced by national identity and political needs and often by various prejudices of historians and other participants in these discussions.

In this paper, we will not deal with a number of historians' views that can be reduced to a simple line of thought on medieval Bosnia as a Serbian, Croatian or Bosniak medieval state structure.<sup>1</sup> We will consider the thoughts of two respectable historians whose views have left a mark only in the narrow circle of specialist historians but have remained without a wider recognition—Nada Klaić, professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb, and Sima Ćirković, professor at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade.

For a clearer understanding of their somewhat concordant but largely opposing theses, it is necessary to define the term of medieval Bosnia in the territorial sense but also to define the term of ethnos in its dynamic meaning. These issues are the ones that both scholars agree on.

They search for the original Bosnia within Porphyrogenitus's "little land Bosnia," known from the 10<sup>th</sup>-century historical source titled *De administrando imperio*. They recognize the borders of this original state in the upper and middle course of the Bosna River, the areas that gravitate to it, the middle course of the Drina River in the east and the upper and middle courses of the Vrbas River in the west.

The notion of ethnos is seen by both as a dynamic category, with emphasis on the various factors which contributed or hindered the processes of ethnic development, such as the durability of state formations, the rule of a ruler or dynasty, institutions, and primarily estates, linguistic proximity (remoteness), religious traditions of the territory, distinctive medieval social structures (Ćirković), that is, dynamic through mixing of different tribes which continuously attributed new qualities (Klaić). This is where any similarity in the opinions of these two scholars ceases when it comes to the development of Bosnia in the early Middle Ages.

Any cogitation on this subject will face the most important obstacle—very few historical sources, even far fewer in comparison to other neighbouring areas in this period. Traces of unclear and often contradictory data can be found in the report of the emperor writer Constantine Porphyrogenitus, known as *De administrando imperio*, *Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*; *Annales regni Francorum*; and some indirect historical and archaeological sources.

Constantine Porphyrogenitus speaks of five Serbian territories in the Balkans: Paganía, Zahumlje, Travunia, Serbia and Bosnia. There are contradictions in his text. Zahumlje, Paganía and Travunia are listed as lands inhabited by the Serbian population but also as the territories of separate tribes. Unlike these areas, Bosnia is, as Porphyrogenitus

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<sup>1</sup> Summarizing the thoughts related to national interpretations of Bosnian medieval past in the sense of Serbian, Croatian, and Bosnian medieval exclusivity in that territory, we can reduce them to the following theses:

- Bosnia as ethnically Serbian territory, which partially lost that character only in the process of Islamization at the time of the Ottoman Empire.
- Bosnia as Croatian land, which only embarked on independent development in the late medieval period.
- Premises of a separate Bosnian ethnos, related to the emancipation of one of the younger nations in these territories, Bosniaks, who saw in those premises, leaning on historical and even more often pseudohistorical tools, a means of identity defence against aggressive and older nationalisms of Serbs and Croats.

On these theories abound with explicit political historicism, see: Lovrenović 1996: 26–37; Lovrenović 2002: 60–84. Ekmečić 2021: 268.

states, undoubtedly connected to Serbia.<sup>2</sup> Confirmation of the connection between Bosnia and Serbia is also found in the semi-mythical *Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*, which states the following when mentioning Serbia and Zagorje:

Serbia, however, which is also called Zagorska, he divided into two provinces: one, which stretches westward from the great Drina River to Borova mountain, he called Bosnia, and the other, stretching from the same Drina River eastward all the way to the villages of Lipljani and Lab, he called Raška.<sup>3</sup>

Some data relevant to drawing conclusions on early medieval Bosnia is also found in the *Annales regni Francorum*.<sup>4</sup>

Nada Klaić formed her unique scholarly work often by opposing the very tradition of defending Croatian political needs using various historical constructions.<sup>5</sup> In the efforts of Croatia to express its statehood within the complex Habsburg monarchy, very important political premises of historical borders on the Drava and Drina rivers and exclusively Croatian heritage of Dalmatia impacted the course of historical conclusions on the early medieval history during the 19<sup>th</sup> and part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even very prominent historians such as Franja Rački, Vjekoslav Klaić, Ferdo Šišić and others were led by the political needs of the Croatian state, which strived for emancipation within the Habsburg monarchy, and they subordinated some of their conclusions to those efforts. A unique character, Nada Klaić polemicized with all historical myths in existence, both those in the Croatian public and in historiography. In her most important work on the history of Bosnia, *Srednjovjekovna Bosna: politički položaj bosanskih vladara do Tvrtkove krunidbe (1377. g.)* (in English *Medieval Bosnia: The Political Position of Bosnian rulers up to Tvrtko's Coronation, 1377*), speaking of the emergence of the Bosnian state, she stresses the Avar origin of authorities not only in that area but also in Carantania, Croatia and probably Serbia.<sup>6</sup> Sharply opposing the theses of Serbian core and Croatian core, which were dominant in the Western Balkans and in a short time integrated all independent communities and areas, she often presented original and unorthodox theories on the beginnings of states in the Western Balkans. She fiercely opposed the position of Sima Ćirković on the gradual and long-term stratification of the Bosnian society, which Ćirković says cannot be tracked but ultimately leads to the elevation of *župans* (chieftains) and their clans “over the mass of free and equal Slavs” and imposition of “their authority on the surrounding territories”. Referring to the fact that the title of *ban*, which is mentioned in Croatia and Bosnia, is Avar in origin, she draws the conclusion that Bosnia must have been an Avar *banovina* and then grew into an independent

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<sup>2</sup> Maksimović 1959; Moravcsik 1967. Famous work by Constantine Porphyrogenitus is the subject of a number of papers. The most significant source on the history of these areas is Ostrogorski 1948: 24–29. For a list of more recent scientific literature, see Živković 2010: 161–180 and Živković 2012: 313–332.

<sup>3</sup> *Gesta regum Sclavorum* 2009: 59.

<sup>4</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* 1895: 158: “Exercitus de Italia propter Liudewiticum bellum conficiendum in Pannoniam missus est, ad cuius adventum Liudewitus Siscia civitate relicta ad Sorabos, quae natio magnam Dalmatiae partem optinere dicitur, fugiendo se contulit et uno ex ducibus eorum, a quo receptus est, per dolum interfecto civitatem eius in suam redegit dicionem.”

<sup>5</sup> For more details on the scholarly work of Nada Klaić, see Galović–Aličić 2014.

<sup>6</sup> Klaić 1994: 11–12.

state organisation after the fall of the Avar Khaganate at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Believing that Serbian and Croatian migration into the Balkans did not take place in the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century, she emphasises that:

We no longer... need to wonder about the nature of the relationship between the Avar-Slavs and Croats or Serbs, but rather about the nature of the position Slavs held in the Avar-Slavic community and how the Avar-Slavic relationship developed until the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, when the Avar Khaganate disappeared in the Frankish-Avar wars.<sup>7</sup>

Referring to the conclusions of Kronsteiner on Avar-Slavic symbiosis in the Alps, Nada Klaić reaches a logical conclusion that in the course of two hundred years there had to have been such an influence in Bosnia too.<sup>8</sup> She also accepts the thesis that Croats were Avar-Slavic warrior cast that spoke a Slavic language.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, she draws the definitive conclusion that:

Bosnian lands – I deliberately speak in plural – in the Avar period also have their own organisation of government like all other Slavs who found themselves within the Avar empire. In other words, this means that they had Avar bans and župans, whose existence, naturally, cannot be doubted. And just as Avar župans became rulers in Raška at some point, so has the title of the former Avar most dignified official continued to serve Bosnian rulers as the title of ruler up to Tvrtko's coronation in 1377.<sup>10</sup>

The problem with this very interesting hypothesis is that the few historical sources available do not confirm it. This, however, was not an obstacle for Nada Klaić, who in her methodological processing sometimes uses methods that she consistently criticizes when they are employed by 'patriotic' historians.<sup>11</sup> Historical sources that do not suit her thesis she rejects as forgeries or interprets them in a methodologically incorrect manner, accompanied by highly imaginative interpretations. While we can accept part of her argumentation for rejecting the work of Constantine Porphyrogenitus and the *Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja* as deliberate and partly accidental forgeries, her interpretation of a short statement in *Annales regni Francorum* is an example of unjust distortion of facts in order to confirm a thesis set beforehand that ethnic Serbs (whoever they may be at that moment) are not found west of the Drina, and, criticizing Ćirković, she states:

'But these inept 'projections' about Bosnia as Serbian are as valuable as Šišić's attempts at proving Bosnia to be Croatian. Oh, Ćirković will not take into account that the Serbs the Frankish chronicler is referring to are today's Serbs along the famous centuries-old Una route, which not only formed a separate Croatian parish in the Middle Ages, but also exists in the same place to this day!<sup>12</sup>

It would suffice to read a record from 822 in the *Annales regni Francorum* to notice

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<sup>7</sup> Klaić 1994: 22.

<sup>8</sup> Kronsteiner 1978: 137–157.

<sup>9</sup> Klaić 1994: 24–25.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* 26–27.

<sup>11</sup> For more details on the specific characteristics of Nada Klaić's scholarly work, see Budak 2014: 113–131.

<sup>12</sup> Klaić 1994: 10.

inevitably how methodologically problematic her interpretation is, since this source, which annuls her thesis of a unique Bosnia where there are no Serbs and Croats, she could not declare a forgery.

Regardless of the significant objections to her interpretation of historical sources, her theses are certainly inspirational due to their comprehensive and interdisciplinary historical, philological and sociological approach to the problem of the early Middle Ages in the territory of the Western Balkans and Pannonia. A number of historians, especially in Croatia, partially introduced elements of her methodology into their works.

Different in character, Sima Ćirković approached this problem level-headed. Believing that it was largely introduced from modern times and not overly important to medieval people, he concentrates on the historical sources themselves. Evaluating them, Ćirković attempts to introduce them into the appropriate relations by analyzing the frames of mind, which set out from the same facts and lead to different conclusions in modern historiography.

Speaking about historical disputes and prejudices, Ćirković says:

It appears that the most numerous and most stubborn ones originate in old disputes on what is whose. For their overcoming it is not as necessary to question the cognitive tools we use as it is to apply traditional historical critique which was developed in the period of positivist orientation. Refining the chronology only leads to the elimination of anachronisms, to the balanced perception of discontinuity, equally as of continuity, while the broadening of horizons brings into balance the observation of what is inside the borders of 'own' and the part of the world which remains outside that, often imaginary border. Consistent application of such criticality will disperse or reduce to true measure many a dispute.<sup>13</sup>

Insisting on critical methodology, Ćirković emphasizes that it is not to be understood only in the positivist sense of comparing historical sources and verifying their authenticity and credibility. These questions have already been resolved rather successfully by the historical science in these regions. Within the critical approach, one should examine and verify "the general cognitive tools utilized and the framework within which the reconstruction of the past took place." The essence of the critical approach is not so much in problematizing and reevaluating the results of the previous generations of historians as it is in recognizing whether those results were limited by "the general ideas of the time in which these historians created and ideologies which, most often unintentionally, steered their thinking."<sup>14</sup>

Older generations of historians examined individual aspects and partial processes of historical development according to the highest methodological standards of the historical science, but in reconstructing larger wholes, such as, for example, national histories.

preconception of nations ... directed research and did not change or adjust in accordance with the progress of empirical research. This is why, on the basis of the same source materials and carefully determined details, it was possible to reach very different reconstructions of the whole.<sup>15</sup>

Challenging the static notion of ethnic community (tribe, people, nation) whose

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<sup>13</sup> Ćirković 2008: 3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.* 2–3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* 3.

shared identity characteristics are passed down through generations, not only on the subject of Bosnian but also all other medieval topics, Ćirković puts forward the contrary notion that:

Tribes, peoples, nations, are simply social communities that, like a bond, are held together by the awareness of belonging to the same community. And this awareness springs from various circumstances: ruled by the same authority, sharing the same beliefs and customs, and common symbols, and accompanied by a perception of the differences that separate them from members of other such groups. If such a concept is appropriate, then genealogy plays a minor role. Incomparably greater is the role of changes in social structure and culture, on which the nature of the aforementioned bonds depends, which ensure cohesion in a social group.<sup>16</sup>

Although older generations of researchers felt that there were differences between epochs and generations, they believed that they did not pose a threat to identity and that,

‘They do not tamper with the essence, which remains the same.’ The tacit assumption that Serbs, taken as an example, both in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, represent parts of the same whole, has far-reaching consequences for historical opinion also because it postulates staticity that makes it impossible to see the magnitude and depth of changes that have occurred over time.<sup>17</sup>

In the example of the most important source for early medieval history of the Western Balkans, *De administrando imperio*, Ćirković points out the problem of interpretation using the instance of the early medieval border between Serbs and Croats. Here, Ćirković stresses, there is an explicitly stated border between them:

On the Cetina, and circumstantially it can be concluded that it stretched east of the Croatian parishes of Imota, Pliva and Livno. The Serbian tribe settled eastward to the city of Ras (near present-day Novi Pazar), which in the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century was located on the border between what was then Bulgaria and Serbia.<sup>18</sup>

Speaking about how this historical source should be interpreted, Ćirković says:

It would be natural for the emperor's statements to be interpreted in the context of what preceded and what was contemporary with the events. It so happened, however, that the data from these accounts were often limited to what followed, implying the identity of the tribes over thousands of years, as a result of which boundary stones of the territorial arrangement of the tribes from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> centuries were sought and found in those that separate the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century national territories, which were fought over and agreed upon. The tacit equating of tribe members from the era of the Slavic migrations with members of the Serbian nation in the 19<sup>th</sup> century prevents us from seeing and realistically assessing the major changes with far-reaching consequences that have occurred in the same area in the meantime.<sup>19</sup>

Ćirković also interprets the early history of Bosnia in the same context, emphasizing its separate organisation and structure, estate (*sabor*) general and dynasty, as well as a

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<sup>16</sup> Ćirković 2008: 3.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.* 4.

specific 'Bosnian Church' with an authentic interpretation of Christianity. He states the necessity to:

Remind ourselves of the disintegration and collapse of that state and the creation of the administrative units of the Ottoman Empire; a fundamental change in religious relations, a large-scale movement of the population through emigration from that area and immigration to that area. Ignoring the changes and their consequences acted as a message that the people do not change, regardless of everything that happens to them and around them. This belief could not be shaken even by experiences from the real world, in which, not only at the level of families, but also of smaller groups, especially in migrations, ethnicity changes over the course of two to three generations. The consequence of the dogma of immutability was the fact that all state creations of previous periods were tacitly attributed the character of a nation-state, at least in the embryonic stage, even though research revealed that ethnic levelling and homogenization within a vast territory were relatively new phenomena.<sup>20</sup>

Ćirković notes that as the circumstances in the Balkans changed:

Ethnic groups with new characteristics emerged, often more stable and permanent, but also unfinished ones, open to further changes and adaptations. Just as the tacit use of identity blurred the view and prevented a realistic perception of the dynamics of ethnic development, it also hindered understanding the complexity of these processes, recognizing their main components.<sup>21</sup>

According to Ćirković, it was not until the 13<sup>th</sup> century that church circumstances, nowadays so important for ethnic identification in the Western Balkans, start to gain importance in defining identity. He quite clearly notices that:

From the point of view of ethnic development, the differences between churches in the basic points of their teachings are not so important, but what is important is the cultural differences that accompanied the confessions. The tacit acceptance of the idea that nation is a natural creation that does not change in essence prevented the processes of merging and separation inevitable in the development of an ethnic community from being noticed and evaluated in accordance with their significance.<sup>22</sup>

Speaking about how important the religious component has become since then in the process of assimilation and apostasy, Ćirković indicates that the purpose of the research is not to make a balance sheet of national profit and loss:

But instead to demonstrate how unrealistic it is to tacitly operate with ethnic unity and purity, preserved through the centuries. The deeply rooted belief in the folk spirit, inherited from Romanticism and maintained through heritage and transmission through folk culture, prevented the question of the bonds and cohesive forces that hold an ethnic group together from being raised and discussed. First of all, the question arises as to whether it is possible for these bonds to be equal in the Middle Ages and the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in such significantly different socio-economic conditions and cultures?<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ćirković 2008: 4.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

Commenting on the events that largely influenced the identity fractures of more lasting significance, Ćirković lists several important events mostly related to Christianization but also to the development of certain state institutions, assemblies (*sabor*) and the sacral legitimization of ruling dynasties.

In the Serbian case, several turning points can be distinguished. One is certainly the adoption of Christianity, when the Serbs, like other Christianized peoples, had to fundamentally change their attitude toward pagan deities and the ties of the earthly hierarchy to them.<sup>24</sup>

These differences, which remained permanent and gradually became deeper, overcame and nullified the differences between the tribes that participated in the migrations. Along with the characteristics acquired on the Balkan Peninsula under the auspices of the Roman Empire and the Patriarchate of Constantinople, life in Christianity and its increasingly complete acceptance and development created the conditions for the emergence of unique traits specific only to Serbs. They appear relatively late, only from the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and in connection with the dynastic ideology of the ruling house that was then consolidating its power. The source of these ideas was to be found in the opposition to the universalism of the Byzantine emperors by emphasizing immediacy in the relationship with God.<sup>25</sup>

‘By creating a special Serbian tradition as an extension of the general Orthodox tradition, the area of the autocephalous archbishopric acquired an ethnic identity which it would preserve in later centuries, when there was no state, no powerful protectors, and no support from the authorities. During the Ottoman period, this ideology could not be developed or supplemented, but its essence was preserved and transmitted in an impoverished form—as part of regular church life. In this way, a part of history remained permanently in consciousness as an important element of Serbian identity.’<sup>26</sup>

According to Ćirković, specifics of the emergence of the identity foundations on which the nations of the Western Balkans would be created in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries will lead to:

Being trapped in the shell of one's own nation and isolated from others resulted not only in the application of double standards, which was already opposed by positivism in 19<sup>th</sup>-century historiography, but also in an unrealistic view of relations with neighbours and other nations.<sup>27</sup> In the case of Serbs and Croats, the repertoire of such topics was particularly enriched by the mutual effort to demarcate the boundaries, which started after they became familiar with each other. Clarifying the relations between the two peoples is more susceptible to exploitation for political purposes than to the reconstruction of the whole. In our case, this is best reflected in the long oscillation between assumed unity and fundamental division. Historically, the arguments of those who advocate either of the opposing views have played an equally significant role. The perception of relations between nations has always been influenced by numerous popular representations of the past, partial, fragmentary, located in the most diverse ‘places of memory’. What they all have in common is a disregard for accuracy, chronology, discontinuity, and a lack of concern for historical context. Anachronism is their essential characteristic—everything is viewed from the perspective of the present; the ideas that were current at the time of the emergence of such collective ideas about history are transferred to all epochs. A significant part of the aforementioned disputes originates from a kind of overriding of history, the conscious or

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<sup>24</sup> Ćirković 2008: 7.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* 8.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* 9.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*



unconscious erasure of the differences between the time in which one is speaking and the time about which one is speaking.<sup>28</sup>

Consciously trying to avoid the traps of projecting modern national determinants into the far past, Ćirković steers clear of hypothesising. In principle, what Ćirković presents on the early history of Bosnia is only what the sources offer and what they are in agreement on. He states facts brought to us by the three main sources: Serbs live in Bosnia:

Exercitus de Italia propter Liudewiticum bellum conficiendum in Pannoniam missus est, ad cuius adventum Liudewitus Sisciaui civitate relicta ad Sorabos, quae natio magnam Dalmatiae partem optinere dicitur, fugiendo se contulit et uno ex ducibus eorum, a quo receptus est, pei dolum interfecto civitatem eius in suam redegit dicionem (*Annales regni Francorum*).<sup>29</sup>  
Croatia borders Serbia on the Cetina and Livno (Constantine Porphyrogenitus).<sup>30</sup>  
Serbia, however, which is also called Zagorje, he divided into two provinces, one of which stretches from the great Drina River westward to the mountains of Pina; this one he also named Bosnia, and the other encompasses the territory from the aforementioned Drina River eastward to Lupia and Lake Skadar; this one he named Raška (*Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja*).<sup>31</sup>

This is where all stories of the beginning of Bosnia end. In Ćirković's still unsurpassed work *Istorija srednjovekovne bosanske države* (in English *History of the Medieval Bosnian State*), six pages are dedicated to this early period, as opposed to the work of Nada Klaić, who dedicates twenty-four pages of her monograph to this subject.<sup>32</sup> With no desire to deal with the questions that are certainly interesting but cannot be answered outside pure hypothesising, Ćirković is only interested in subsequent events, among others, also in the question of the new individuality of Bosnia, which he places in the period between the 12<sup>th</sup> and mid-14<sup>th</sup> century. Remaining contemplative in the face of this problem, Ćirković points out that:

Some things are very difficult to clarify due to the scarcity of sources. Among the obscurities is the question of the influence of the Bosnian state framework, the nobility estate, the idea of the crown and the kingdom on the formation of the awareness of individuality manifested in the name Bosniaks, 'good Bosniaks' for the subjects of the Bosnian rulers, regardless of the region they came from.<sup>33</sup>

Speaking of the influence of the Bogomil church and specific religious circumstances on the broader acceptance of Islam in the early Ottoman period, Ćirković notes that this influence could have been only circumstantial...<sup>34</sup>

These attitudes of Sima Ćirković were in collision with the widespread belief of the Serbian public about the ethnically Serbian Bosnia, which was partially Islamized with the arrival of the Ottomans.<sup>35</sup> Although Serbian medieval historiography today no longer has

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<sup>28</sup> Ćirković 2008: 9–10.

<sup>29</sup> *Annales regni Francorum* 1895: 158.

<sup>30</sup> Maksimović 1959: 35.

<sup>31</sup> *Gesta regum Sclavorum* 1959: 59.

<sup>32</sup> Ćirković 1964: 37–43.

<sup>33</sup> Ćirković 2020: 79 and 219.

<sup>34</sup> Ćirković 1997: 239.

<sup>35</sup> Compare Ekmečić 2021: 146, who states that Muslims became a majority in Bosnia after the Great Turkish

any dilemma on the different paths that Raška and Bosnia departed on since the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, as soon as one leaves that narrow scientific circle, the concept of the Islamization of Serbian Bosnia during the Ottoman period as the main cause of present-day national divisions becomes dominant.

In the course of his work, Sima Ćirković has also had to face obstacles primarily related to the mythical notions of the Ottoman period, which blurred many a thing related to the medieval period, among others also the early and late period of Bosnian history. In the territory of modern Bosnia and Herzegovina at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Serbs constituted almost half of the population. The Serbian public was not ready to accept any interpretation of the past of that area outside the Serbian framework and partial Islamization of that population. Any other opinion, even if it had not been contested, was pushed out to the margins of public discourse.

Since it was impossible then, just as it is impossible now, to enter into a corroborated discussion with the stances of Sima Ćirković, due to the widespread unscientific notions of medieval Bosnia, only a narrow circle of specialist historians is familiar with them today, while they remain unknown to the broader public.<sup>36</sup>

Similar problems also arise from the historical contribution of Nada Klaić. Although she is today acknowledged for her role in re-examining older historical sources and dispelling many myths related to the political use of Croatian historiography, some historians notice that her book on medieval Bosnia has become a 'breviary' of Bosniak political unitarianism, regardless of that not being her intention.<sup>37</sup>

The views of these two scholars have influenced medievalist historians significantly, but they have not been received in the broader public, chiefly due to the mythical historicism as the essential part of national ideologies in these areas, but also due to the lack of understanding of the dynamics in the development of ethnic communities.

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War, referring to the book by Pejanović 1955, which makes no such claims.

<sup>36</sup> Theses proposed by Sima Ćirković have been explained recently in detail by Isailović 2019: 33–58; 2018: 261–282.

<sup>37</sup> Lovrenović 2014: 336.

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**НЕНАД ЛЕМАЈИЋ**

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**НАДА КЛАИЋ И СИМА ЋИРКОВИЋ  
О РАНОСРЕДЊОВЕКОВНОЈ БОСНИ – ДВА ПРИМЕРА ПРИСТУПА  
ПИТАЊИМА РАНЕ ИСТОРИЈЕ СРЕДЊОВЕКОВНЕ БОСНЕ**

**Резиме**

Питање етничког карактера Босне у средњовековном периоду почело је да привлачи пажњу историчара и других научника тек у новије време у периоду стварања модерних нација. У раду се износе размишљања двоје угледних историчара Наде Клаић и Симе Ћирковића о овом питању. Њихови ставови мада у много чему међусобно супротстављени представљају продор у проучавању историје Босне али и историје средњег века на Балкану. У много чему супротстављени концептима о овој теми који су се развили током XIX и почетком XX века њихови ставови тешко су налазили пут не само до љубитеља прошлости већ и дела стручњака. Приступ Симе Ћирковића је аналитичан и опрезан, акрибичан, писан са жељом да подстакне на друкчије размишљање пре него да провоцира. Он указује на проблем субјективности истраживача и честе пројекције садашњости у прошла раздобља. Нада Клаић је више полемична и прожета потребом да сруши теорије које су модерно доба пројектовале у прошлост, често у тој борби западајући у грешке које је код других покушавала да исправи. Погледи ових двоје научних радника оставили су значајан утицај у ужим круговима научника медијеалиста али нису имали рецепцију у широј јавности првенствено због митског историцизма као суштинског дела националних идеологија на овим просторима.

**Кључне речи:** Босна, Нада Клаић, Сима Ћирковић, етноси, средњи век.

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