

Pål Kolstø (ed.), *Myths and Boundaries in South-Eastern Europe* (London: Hurst & Company, 2005). xi + 357 pp., index, bibliography

This volume is based on papers presented at a conference in Sarajevo in 2002 for the research project ‘Historical Myths in Changing Balkans Societies’ conducted by the University of Oslo and the Sarajevo Institut za istoriju. In most cases the scholars write about their own countries, with refreshingly critical pens, although the article on Macedonia is by a German scholar, Ulf Brunnbauer – apparently historical myths there are still too delicate a subject for a local scholar to tackle. Despite the title of the book, the nine contributions are limited to the South-Slavonic countries.

While everyone was horrified by the ferocity of the recent wars, some people were surprised to see that much of the warmongering was instigated and fomented by intellectuals, but, as Zoran Terzić writes: ‘Writers, artists and intellectuals – and not politicians – created the fault lines along which the battles of the 1990s were fought’ (223), while pointing out that they had famous predecessors in the West, such as Richard Wagner or Paul Valéry. In Yugoslavia, the war was the final realization of ‘national fantasies, which intellectual élites had been promoting for several years’ (223). And he quotes Miladin Životić, who wrote: ‘In a society where pre-modern values dominate, most intellectuals were destined to cultivate a chauvinist cultural exclusivity’.

In his excellent introduction, ‘Assessing the Role of Historical Myths in Modern Society’, Kolstø asserts that much of the violence in Yugoslavia was due to the use and abuse of historical myths, while rejecting the widespread view among western journalists and politicians that this is a typically or even exclusively Balkan problem. Kolstø reminds us of the extensive and often highly effective use of historical myth by fascist and Stalinist régimes in other parts of Europe. In the scholarship on myths Kolstø distinguishes ‘enlighteners’ and ‘functionalists’. Enlighteners believe that professional historians should explode myths, while functionalists see myth-making as an inevitable, even benign element of well functioning human societies. Myths are boundary-defining mechanisms (Barth 1970): ‘The factors that lead members of two groups to see each other as different rather than as members of the same collective are often “mythical” rather than “factual”. The differences are located in “the head”’ (3). Kolstø presents four types of historical myths: those of *sui generis*, of *antemurale*, of *martyrium* and

of *antiquitas* (we are unique, we are the bulwark against ‘the other’, our national essence is sacrifice and ‘we got here first’). This typology is taken up by the various contributors. Ana Antić refers to the Serbian myth that their nation made the most significant sacrifices to liberate the Balkans from the Turks, that the Serbian sacrifice at the Battle of Kosovo was a major turning point in world history and that Yugoslavia was the first country to declare its opposition to the US tyranny directed at Europe (197 f.).

Ivo Žanić discusses ‘The Symbolic Identity of Croatia in the Triangle *Crossroads–Bulwark–Bridge*’. The central figure here is the heroic Defender-of-the-castle-who-died-under-its-walls, Ban Nikola Šubić Zrinski, the ‘Croatian Leonidas’, who perished in 1566 in the defence of the ‘Croatian Thermopylae’, Siget. In 1892, Ferdinand Quiquerez painted *Antemurale christianitatis*, an allegory of Croatia defeating the Turks. In a fascinating and detailed study, Žanić traces the development of the metaphor ‘Bulwark of Christendom’ from the French theologian Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153) through the centuries up to its use to depict Croatia as defending Christian Europe from Tito’s partisans as the ‘vanguard of Soviet imperialism’ and from the Bosnian ‘Turks’.

Ivo Goldstein examines the many and sometimes tortuously adapted variations on the theme of the Drina as the boundary of civilization. After the death of the Emperor Theodosius I in 395 the Roman Empire was divided into two parts, the boundary running south from Sirmium down the valley of the Drina to the Montenegrin coast, although even this ‘historical fact’ is only relatively exact. If the Drina is the boundary between East and West, that is, between Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, how is one to understand the strong presence of Islam west of the Drina? But mythologically the battle for the freedom of Croatia is fought on the Drina, and a prominent émigré chauvinist magazine was called *Drina*: ‘Our name is our programme, and our name is “Drina”’ (96).

Srećko Džaja reveals the mixture of historical reality and fiction that contributed to the shaping of Bosnia and Hercegovina. Because Bosnia-Hercegovina is claimed by three nations, there are three accounts of its history. The first to mythicize Bosnian history were Dositej Obradović (1742–1811) and Vuk Stefanović Karadžić (1787–1864), who, on linguistic grounds, claimed the area for the Serbs. Croatian claims were complicated by the conflict between established Roman Catholicism and the unestablished form of Roman Catholicism headed by the Bosnian Franciscans. The historiographic myths built by the Bosnian

Muslims (Bosniaks) began with the myth of Bosnia as a *serhat* or *Islamic antemurale* against the West. Then there was the Bogomil Myth and the myth of the ‘good Bošnjani’, the latter a misunderstood legal term signifying in reality the *boni homines* of late classical law. All Bosniak mythology aimed to establish the autochthony, identity, antiquity and moral excellence of the Bosniak people. Albena Hranova examines the myths of *sui generis*, antemurale and antiquity in Bulgarian textbook historiography between 1878 and 2001, but beginning with Georgi Rakovski’s writings in the period 1858–1867.

These are all well written, well researched, profound and detailed studies by outstanding scholars. Where appropriate, the articles are lavishly illustrated with black-and-white and colour plates. No student of South-Slavonic history, mythology or nationalism can afford to ignore this volume.

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Andreas Umland (ed.), *The Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights in Russia. Philosophical, Legal, and Empirical Studies*, Proceedings of an International Conference Held at Yekaterinburg on 6–7 April 2001 (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2004), 224 pp.

This book, the first in a series on Soviet and Post-Soviet politics and society, comprises fifteen papers, most of which were presented at the conference named in the subtitle. With the exception of three essays in English (by Arnold, Burkov and Hussner), the volume, including an Introduction and forward-looking Conclusion by Andreas Umland and Oksana Stuppo, is in Russian. Yekaterinburg was pointedly selected as the conference venue for its reputation as a centre of juridical education and research, the relative political diversity of the Sverdlovsk region and because Russia’s main centres are not representative of the state of affairs in the regions (17). The conference was envisaged as a ‘progress report on the implementation of the ECHR in Russia’ (219), three years after its ratification by the Russian Parliament in 1998. It was planned in the spirit of optimism and brought together such diverse constituencies as academics in law and social sciences, government officials, human rights activists and former dissidents. The crackdown on independent media in 2001 by the new Putin administration, how-