

Introduction

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The current volume, *Slavia Islamica*, fills an important gap in recent scholarship on the Slavic peoples and their languages. Acknowledging the extensive influences of the Islamic world on the Slavs, it presents several key case studies that focus on both historical and contemporary Slavic/Islamic interactions ranging from the period of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to the contemporary plight of Slavic Muslim populations in the Balkans.¹ **The underlying theme in all the works is the centrality of language as a marker of identity and cultural belonging.** This theme is explored both in connection to issues of translation from Arabic or Turkish into Slavic, or with regard to contemporary sociolinguistic questions and national narratives. The volume consists of five articles and three re-

1 In an earlier work, I proposed the term “Slavia Mahometana” to describe the Muslim Slavic community of the Balkans. This term is based on the distinctly Turkish rendering of the proper name Muhammad, and would be appropriate to describe the Slavs who converted to Islam under Ottoman rule. For the purposes of this volume, however, the term *Slavia Islamica* is better suited, since it covers other regions where Slavic peoples have come into contact with non-Slavic Muslims. For the proposal of the concept of *Slavia Mahometana*, see Robert Greenberg, “Bosnian or Bosniac: Aspects of a Contemporary Slavic Language Question,” in H. Goldblatt and K. Stanchey, eds., *Slavia Orthodoxa and Slavia Romana: Essays Presented to Riccardo Picchio by His Students on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday* (New Haven: The MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies at Yale University, 2008), pp. 149–161.

view articles, and introduces readers to the richness of a Slavia Islamica cultural patrimony hitherto overlooked in earlier scholarship.²

The term Slavia Islamica complements the two well-known designations introduced by Riccardo Picchio in his work in the area of Slavic philology and Slavic cultural history: Slavia Orthodoxa and Slavia Romana.³ **These two concepts reflect the broadest possible cultural division** among the Slavic peoples into two primary supranational communities. The community of Slavia Orthodoxa, or Orthodox Slavdom, received its religious traditions from Byzantium, and as a broader cultural community adopted the Church Slavonic literary language in its various regional recensions. It was characterized by a common tradition of textual transmission, and survived as a supranational community through the end of the seventeenth century despite the intervening episodes of invasions and subjugations by foreign conquerors such as the Mongols and the Ottoman Turks. The supranational community of Slavia Romana, or Roman Slavdom, adopted its faith from Rome, and experienced many of the influences that permeated Western European Catholicism especially during the time of the Reformation and the Counterreformation. In Slavia Romana, several local Slavic literary languages emerged in the sixteenth century under the influence of the Reformation, only to be stymied in the seventeenth century under the weight of the Counterreformation. The individual Slavic nations as we know them today emerged from the shared cultural patrimonies of Slavia Orthodoxa and Slavia Romana. The rise of new national identities among the Slavic peoples was accelerated in

2 I Thanks are due to work of Maria Hristova, a PhD candidate in Slavic Languages and Literatures at Yale University, for her invaluable assistance in editing the articles and preparing them for publication, and to my co-editor, Motoki Nomachi, for his collaboration on this project.

3 See Riccardo Picchio, “Models and Patterns in the Literary Tradition of Medieval Orthodox Slavdom,” in Victor Terras, ed., *American Contributions to the Seventh International Congress of Slavists, Warsaw 2 (1973)* pp. 439–467. Later, the term “Slavia Latina” had been proposed, see, Nikita Tolstoj, “Slavia Orthodoxa i Slavia Latina: Obshchee i razlichnoe v literaturno-iazykovoi situatsii (opyt predvaritel’noi otsenki),” *Recherche slavistische* XLII (1995), pp.89–102.

Slavia Romana beginning with the period of the Enlightenment and the under the era of Romanticism of the nineteenth century. Within Slavia Orthodoxa, Russia became the main center of cultural and literary activities especially with the consolidation of power under Muscovy beginning in the fifteenth century. To the South, given the weakening of the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Orthodox Southern Slavs also emerged from the common literary and cultural tradition of Slavia Orthodoxa and embraced distinctive national identities. The process of national awakening for the Southern Slavs of Slavia Orthodoxa has continued beyond the demise of the Ottoman Empire, with the emergence of a distinctive Macedonian language and nation in the 1940s, and a new Montenegrin language and a rejuvenated Montenegrin national identity in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

However, Scholars who have focused on Slavia Orthodoxa and Slavia Romana have largely ignored the significant numbers of Slavs in the Balkans who converted to Islam under Ottoman rule. Prior to their conversions, these Slavs had for several generations belonged to the realms of both Slavia Orthodoxa and Slavia Romana. While the largest group of converts were residing in what is today known as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Islamicized Slavs lived in other parts of the Balkans as well, including current-day Bulgaria, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, and Greece. Although the Muslim Slavs of the Balkans have shared certain linguistic, literary, and religious traditions over the centuries, these literary traditions were the most fully expressed within Bosnia-Herzegovina, which boasted the Alhamijado literary tradition written in a Slavic vernacular using the Arabic script.

The events of the late twentieth century, including the fall of Communism in Bulgaria (1989) and Albania (1990), and the breakup of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia in 1991 accelerated the process of Muslim Slavic national awakenings in the Balkans. The most prominent of these newly-invigorated ethnic groups is that of those Muslim Slavs who declared themselves to be members of the Bosniak nation in 1993.⁴ **The status of the Bosniaks as a separate nation was**

4 The term “Bosniak” was a Turkism used by the Ottomans to define the inhabitants of Bosnia, and it was a term that the Christian Slavs of Bosnia viewed

acknowledged by the international community through the 1995 Dayton Accords, which affirmed that the Bosniaks, alongside the Croats and Serbs, are the nation-forming groups in postwar Bosnia-Herzegovina. Since then, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia have extended constitutional guarantees to their own Bosniak minority communities. However, the Bosniaks are not the only national group to have emerged in the contemporary Balkans. The political situation in the successor states of the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and in neighboring Bulgaria and Greece has created a complex mosaic of Muslim Slavic communities exhibiting varying stages of national consciousness. This complexity can be seen in the numerous designations still attributed to Muslim Slavic groups in the Balkans, including the term “Torbesh,” for Muslim Slavs of Macedonia, “Gorans” for Muslim Slavs in the Kosovo-Macedonian-Albanian border area, and “Pomaks,” for the Muslim Slavs of Bulgaria and Greece. Simultaneously, in Macedonia and Bulgaria the politically-charged terms “Macedonian Muslims” and “Bulgarian Muslims” have been used, respectively.

A consensus on the precise classification of the Muslim Slavic populations into “communities,” “ethnic groups,” or “nations” remains elusive. For instance, Bosniak intellectuals and politicians claim that members of the Bosniak nation reside well beyond the borders of Bosnia-Herzegovina, and they include among the Bosniak people the Muslim Slavic communities of Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Macedonia, and Turkey.⁵ Does this assertion imply that all the Gorans and Torbesh are actually Bosniaks, while the Pomaks of Bulgaria are non-Bosniaks? How many Muslim Slavic “nations” are there in the Balkans, and what is the difference between a “nation” and a “community”? **Are the Pomaks**

as foreign and associated with Ottoman Turkish repression. The term had mostly fallen out of use with the transfer of the territories of Bosnia-Herzegovina from Ottoman to Austro-Hungarian rule in 1878. During the 1880s, the Austro-Hungarian administrator of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Benjamin Kallay, attempted to bolster a more inclusive Bosnian, rather than Bosniak, national identity in an effort to counter growing Serb and Croat nationalism within the territory.

⁵ See Senahid Halilović, *Bosanski jezik* (Sarajevo: Bosanski krug-Biblioteka Ključanin, 1991).

of Bulgaria indeed “Bulgarian Muslims” or are they a separate people/nation speaking a distinctive Pomak language? What role do the region’s non-Slavic Muslims – **including ethnic Turks and ethnic Albanians** – play in creating/defining the national identity of the Muslim Slavs of Kosovo, Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Macedonia? These kinds of questions are touched upon in the articles of this volume, and they remain important questions for future research. In addition, this volume reveals that the concept of *Slavia Islamica* extends to the Northern Slavs as well, as the Tatars brought Islamic culture to the lands of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and to the borderlands between Western and Eastern Slavs.

The five articles in this volume are grouped thematically, with the first four contributions dedicated to *Slavia Islamica* in the Balkans, and the fifth article and first review article focus on the cultural heritage of the Lithuanian Tatars. The volume concludes with two review articles focused again on the Muslim Slavs of the Balkans. The first of these reviews considers a collection of articles on the various Muslim Slav communities, while the second is dedicated to a monograph on language and identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina. This final contribution brings us back full circle to the Balkans and to a review of the work of one of the authors whose article coincidentally appears earlier in the volume.

The first article by Branko Tošović provides a comprehensive overview of language standardization processes in the central South Slavic speech territory, and especially those features that distinguish the Bosnian language from Serbian and Croatian. Tošović uses the formulation Bosnian/Bosniak language, since both terms have been used to specify one of the standard languages of post-1991 Bosnia-Herzegovina. While the Bosniaks have preferred calling their language Bosnian, the Serbs and Croats of Bosnia have mostly rejected this term and prefer the ethno-national term “Bosniak language” as the proper designation of the language of Bosniaks.⁶ Tošović argues that Islamicization, archaization, Croatization, and distancing of the standard language from Serbian have been the key tendencies that have shaped the development of a distinc-

6 For discussion of these two terms, see especially Chapter 6 in Robert Greenberg, *Language and Identity in the Balkans* (2nd edition) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004 [2008]).

tive Bosnian/Bosniak norm beginning in the 1990s. Since he considers these processes are still ongoing, it is still premature to elaborate all the structural differences between Bosnian/Bosniak and Croatian and between Bosnian/Bosniak and Serbian.

In her article, Hanka Vajzović focuses primarily on the language of the Bosniaks within Bosnia-Herzegovina, but raises the key questions of definitions and classifications of the Muslim Slavs in the Balkans. As she admits, there has been no agreement on whether all Muslim Slavs should be called Bosniaks, especially since the language of the Pomaks varies greatly from the language of the Bosniaks of Sarajevo. She distinguished between the terms “Muslim Slav” and “Slavic Muslim,” believing that the former underscores a religious distinction, while the latter emphasizes an ethnic distinction. She suggests that while some scholars or politicians may want to unite all Muslim Slavs based on their common religion and their shared ethnic origin, there has been no consensus to embrace such an over-arching trans-national identity that would encompass the Islamicized Slavs stretching from the Dalmatian coast to the shores of the Bosphorus. For instance, she concludes that decisions on whether or not the Muslim Slavs from around Gora on the Kosovo/Macedonia border are Bosniaks is purely a political decision. She also believes that the obsession with language and identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina has resulted in a confusing situation that has come at the expense of the quality of the standard language and the poor usage exhibited in everyday speech by the citizens of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The next article, Radivoje Mladenović’s contribution on the Muslims Slavs residing in the southwestern part of Kosovo, considers the small and linguistically diverse Muslim Slavic population residing in three settlements of Kosovo: Gora, Podgora, and Sredska. Increasingly, these Muslim Slavs have been viewing themselves as Bosniaks, although Mladenović believes that their Bosniak identity is not yet firm. They and have recently sought to be educated in the Bosnian language, even though their native dialects differ markedly from those spoken across the border in the Sandžak of Serbia and Montenegro, or the dialect of the Bosniaks in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In fact, Mladenović claims that the population of Gora speak a dialect of Macedonian, while the Muslim Slavs of Podgora and Sredska speak varieties of Southern Serbian dia-

lects. Mladenović stresses that the identity of the Muslim Slavic inhabitants of Kosovo remains in the balance and depends on current external political factors.

The final article on the Muslim Slavs of the Balkans is by Vemund Aarbakke, and focuses on the plight of the Pomaks, especially the plight of the little-known Pomak minority in Greece. Aarbakke provides a useful overview of the language and identity of the Pomaks, and the national narratives surrounding the Pomaks as elaborated in Turkey, Bulgaria, and Greece. He brings in observations from his own experiences researching among the Pomaks of Greece, and discusses the merits behind a Greek-led politically-motivated effort to codify a separate Pomak language.

The next two contributions, **Joanna Kulwicka-Kamińska's article** on the problems of translating names from Arabic to Polish and Czesław Łapicz's review article of Iwan Łuckiewicz's *Kitab*, are significant works on the legacy of the Tatars in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Kulwicka-Kamińska analyzes the many difficulties of translating the names of angels and spiritual beings into Polish. She concludes that the Slavic translations of the religious texts of the Tatars include numerous Arabic and Turkish borrowings, neologisms, or creative attempts at literal translations from the Arabic or Turkish into the local Slavic speech variety of the time. Łapicz's review article focuses on a recent reprinting of the *Kitab*, or religious manuscript, of the Lithuanian Tatars. The original manuscript was discovered by Iwan Łuckiewicz in 1915. The interest in manuscripts that had remained undiscovered for some two centuries is reminiscent of the work that Riccardo Picchio and other philologists have carried out as they documented the cultural richness of Slavia Orthodoxa and Slavia Romana. The Iwan Łuckiewicz *Kitab* constitutes a monument to a Slavia Islamica cultural tradition. The eighteenth century manuscript is considered to be based on an original sixteenth century manuscript. The new edition of the *Kitab* presents a facsimile of the manuscript with translations of the text into Lithuanian and Russian.

Returning the focus to the Balkans, Victor Friedman's review article of a collection of contributions edited by Klaus Steinke and Christian Voss covers a wide spectrum of issues surrounding the language, identity, cultural history, education, economic situation, and political status of Slavic-speaking Muslim communities in the South Balkans. Friedman

provides a detailed overview of the twelve articles in the volume, making important corrections and additions when needed, and providing a useful overall framework for understanding the disparate Slavic-speaking Muslim communities of Kosovo, Albania, Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey. He concludes that despite the volume's flaws, it provides valuable data and represents an important contribution to Southeast European studies.

The final contribution in this volume is by Svein Mønnesland, who reviews Hanka Vajzović's 2008 monograph on language and national identity in Bosnia-Herzegovina (*Jezik i nacionalni identitet*). Mønnesland brings forth the key points from Vajzović's thorough analysis of the complex language situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and highlights her refreshingly non-nationalistic approach to the question. He agrees with Vajzović's conclusion that the symbolic function of language as a marker of separate national identities has come at the expense of the communicative function of language.

While this volume does not pretend to cover all aspects of Slavic/Islamic interactions, it provides a comprehensive picture of some of the key points of convergence and divergence between the Slavic and Islamic worlds. Given the emergence of several new or reinvigorated identities and ethnic/national groups in the Balkans over the past century, it is not surprising that the bulk of the attention in this volume is focused on the contemporary Muslim Slavic communities of the Balkans. Nevertheless, as this volume demonstrates other regions and historical periods characterized by intensive Slavic/Islamic contact help fill out a rich understanding of Slavia Islamica, a supranational community of Slavs influenced and shaped by Islamic culture and peoples. It is my hope that the scholarship presented in this volume will inspire new directions for research on this topic, and that new aspects of Slavia Islamica will be discovered and analyzed in the future.