



Osmanlı Mirası Arařtırmaları Dergisi

Journal of Ottoman Legacy Studies

ISSN 2148-5704

www.osmanlimirasi.net

osmanlimirasi@gmail.com

Cilt 10, Sayı 28, Kasım 2023 / Volume 10, Issue 28, November 2023

ETHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE BALKANS

Balkanlar'da Etnolojik alıřmalar

Makale Türü/ Article Types : Kitap İncelemesi/Book Review
Geliř Tarihi/Received Date : 10.08.2023
Kabul Tarihi/Accepted Date : 22.09.2023
Sayfa/Pages : 665-666
DOI Numarası/DOI Number : <http://dx.doi.org/10.17822/omad.2023.260>

Hařim KO

(Dr.), Yükseköğretim Kurulu, e-mail: hasimkoc@gmail.com, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8669-0510>

Atıf/Citation

Ko, Hařim, "Ethnological Research in the Balkans", *Osmanlı Mirası Arařtırmaları Dergisi*, 10/28, 2023, s. 665-666.



Osmanlı Mirası Araştırmaları Dergisi (OMAD), Cilt 10, Sayı 28, Kasım 2023.

Journal of Ottoman Legacy Studies (JOLS), Volume 10, Issue 28, November 2023.

ISSN: 2148-5704

ETHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN THE BALKANS

Balkanlar'da Etnolojik Çalışmalar

Haşim KOÇ

Čarna Brković, *Managing Ambiguity: How clientelism, citizenship, and power shape personhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, New York: Berghahn Books, 2017.

EASA Series: 31 (European Association of Social Anthropologists; 31) ISBN: 978-1-78533-414-6 (hardback) LCCN: 2017013750 (xii,196 pages, bibliography and indeks)

Cyrrill Steiger, *Die Macht des Ethnischen: Sichtbare und unsichtbare Trennlinien auf dem Balkan*, Zürich: Rotpunktverlag, 2021. ISBN: 978-3-85869-9268

Scrolling through the Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) makes one feel ethnic segregation and tension between the three constituent ethnies at every corner of the country. This tensed atmosphere stemmed from the wars in the 90s of the previous century and, even though the wars stopped after the Dayton Peace Agreement signed in 14 December 1995, is still continuing in different forms. In order to analyze the reasons for the continuity of these problems, social scientists from the ex-Yugoslavian countries and from other countries are conducting research in the region using ethnological methods, which have been assuming to be ethnology as a special field for better understanding existing conflicts. In this short piece, two books published recently will be reviewed to understand the use and function of ethnological research for the Balkans.

The book by anthropologist Brković is on the ambiguity in interpersonal relations in Bosnia, whereas Steiger's book explains more on the strength of the ethnic approach for the seen and unseen divisive categories. In this short evaluation of the stand of ethnology and ethnological research in the Balkans, our aim is to show how the ethnological approach enables researcher to understand the complex and conflicting set of relationship in the Balkan peninsula.

Steiger gives in his introduction a very convincing summary of the 90s and dissolution of Yugoslavia signing delicately how the nationalistic greeds after the election and announcements of the nations states impacted people's understanding of belonging to an ethnies or to a nation. In his words, „one has to be either a Croat or a Serb. One has to stand at the one side or the other. Fluid or multiple identities were susceptible“.¹ As Brković rightly argues that „nationality has a relative importance in various contexts“,² the impact of re-generating ethnic nationalism can be

¹ Cyrrill Steiger, *Die Macht des Ethnischen: Sichtbare und unsichtbare Trennlinien auf dem Balkan* (Zürich: Rotpunktverlag, 2021), 11.

² Čarna Brković, *Managing Ambiguity: How clientelism, citizenship, and power shape personhood in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2017), 29.

seen in every fields of social and cultural life of BiH. Brković tries to understand this importance in social relationships with an anthropological lense, putting ambiguous conditions and cases at the spotlight of her analysis through the primary relationship categories as *veze/štele* in order to evaluate the ways and methods of ordinary people in BiH to overcome ambiguous conditions.

Steiger's book goes on the cities whose population ethnically mixed are. The author tries to understand in these cities how the ethnic division becomes a tool of regenerating power mechanism among each ethnies. Thus, the history lesson as being taught with different curricula even from the first year of primary school in different classes, schools specifiially designed only per each ethnies seems to stay at the core of this unhealthy education in Bosnia. On the other hand, Brković puts another long-lasting problem within the Bosnian society, in which, people's thorough belief that without having efficient ties and connections, there is no possibility of being prosperous and living a normal life in BiH. Thus, if necessary, people put forward their ethnic and national identities in order to attain their goals through their ethnical ties. This mechanism has been put forward for long times by the members of different ethnic groups in Bosnia so that the ethnographer tries to analyze this in her book as cultivating „shared concerns“. This very task is expressed in form of „Balkan mentality“ by different interviewees so that they make this fact in forms of polity of local knowledge obvious.

In both of the books, reader can easily follow the tracks of ethnonationalism and its impact on the Bosnian society, as if the policies stemming from ethnonationalistic ideas will make Bosnia to stay always as a divided society and polity. Even though, there are some examples mentioned in the pages of both books that not everywhere the applications of divided society are considered as correct. Steiger gives as a convincing example the school in central-Bosnian city of Jajce, where the politician had decided to seperate the school as Bosnian and Croatian, whereas the students and parents did not allow that with a motto of „we will not allow us divide apart“.³

Trying to understand to cope with the ambiguous situations or to grasp the mechanisms of ethnic division's ways of generating power and authority enable both author to ask many question behing the already-accepted limits. Thus, both pieces of ethnographic research show us the strength of ethnographical methods in order to get beyond our accepted categories and question them together with interlocutors. This attempt allows also the interviewer to recognize some unforeseen details, whereas the interviewee might be also influenced by the questions directed to him/herself that there might be some other ways of approaching every issue or affairs in our life.

Fragmentation of sovereignty due to ethnic nationalism is a major problem in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and unfortunately, the current political situation gives the Bosnian society no option for overcoming this division stemming from ethnically seperation in the near of far future. Thus, ethnographic research might give the intellectuals and politicians some clue that there seems to be no healthy and long-term future for a state and society without cooling down the hatred senses and reaching a solid basis to constitute a society and state around a common citizenship concept agreed upon all the constituent ethnies and nations of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

³ Steiger, *Die Macht des Ethnischen*, 127.