

Armina Omerika, *Islam in Bosnien-Herzegowina und die Netzwerke der Jungmuslime (1918-1983)*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag. 2014. Pp. XIV, 362. 68.00 Eur.

The short format of review does not allow to elaborate on all merits of this book. Armina Omerika, of Goethe University in Frankfurt, makes three major contributions by: tracing relations between Islamic Community and Yugoslav state, missing in all previous works on church (sic) and state; discerning the history of Islamic thought in Yugoslavia in 20th century; and assessing the role of Islam in the formation of Bosnian Muslim/Bosnyak nation. She achieves the above by studying the Young Muslims, a remarkable and controversial religious/political movement, which became known to wider public only when its most famous member Alija Izetbegović was jailed in 1983, accused of promoting Islamic fundamentalism, and more notably in 1991, when he became Bosnia's first and most embattled (also literally) president.

In addition to published sources, court recordings, archives of Islamic community and many secular and Islamic periodicals, in this ground-breaking work Omerika surveyed a number of private archives of Young Muslims and interviewed eight of those still alive. From a wealth of evidence she pieces together a history often in contrast to established wisdom and national narrative unearthing new materials and shedding light on other, barely known ones. Unlike Christian revivalists, the Young Muslims were descendants of old urban sometimes even aristocratic families, upset with what they experienced as a threat to and corruption of Islamic values in Bosnia during the Austro-Hungarian occupation from 1878 and Yugoslav state from 1918, and striving to bring about Islamic and moral renaissance. As Omerika shows, in this endeavour the likes of Oswald Spengler influenced the Young Muslims more than Islamic theologians. While the initiators of the movement were secular students, the Islamic establishment, like its Christian counterparts, from the very beginning wanted to use their

energy for its own aims of not just revitalising faith but strengthening community structures and functions. This will change in the postWW2 period when the Communist repression forced them to look for allies in traditional village folk and imams, and when they gradually shifted from revivalists to anti-Communists (and somewhat unusual proto-nationalists). Tito-Stalin split awoke false hopes among the Young Muslims and radicalised some to propagate regime change. Eventually, the whole movement paid high price for attempting to undermine the regime under siege with four executed and over 700 members and affiliates imprisoned for years. Re-emerging in 1960s, the Young Muslims' opposition to subservient Islamic Community, which nevertheless managed to undertake important centralisation mostly thanks to the role awarded to it by the Communist Party, and opening of new avenues for their religious/political activism continued. In what turned out to be their peak days in 1960s and 1970s, the early Salafist influences from the times of WW2 were revived with ties to the Muslim Brotherhood via students coming to the non-aligned Yugoslavia. Yet the Young Muslims were tried once again, most notably for the so-called *Islamic Declaration* attributed to Izetbegović. This treatise upon the relationship between Islam and politics celebrated pan-Islamism but did not even mention Bosnia let alone furnish a blueprint for an Islamic Bosnian state for which he was sentenced to long-term imprisonment. Until the end of their activism the Young Muslims' Islam remained transnational and ahistorical whereas the Bosnian Muslim Communists and few diaspora groups actually created the nation in classical sense though, as Omerika demonstrates, eventually several discourses will merge or overlap. By the late 1980s Izetbegović and his Young Muslims associates were free again and their networks became key resources for both the official ranks of Islamic Community and the newly founded Party of Democratic Action, which together with its Serbian and Croatian nationalist counterparts won the first multiparty elections in Bosnia.

What happened after is much better known but still heavily disputed and Omerika's book furnishes serious and evidence based historical background analysis that cannot be overlooked any longer. What's missing in this rich book and should be a task for future researchers and scholars is to explore and compare the Young Muslims with other political/religious movements of their immediate and less immediate Catholic and Orthodox Christian neighbours in the same period (Croatian Catholic Movement - Orlovi, Bogomoljci, Zbor...) and extrapolate and better understand political or religious nature of their motivations, activities and beliefs. While Omerika is native of Herzegovina her fine book is yet another example of German language scholarship being at the forefront of the Balkan studies in recent years.