

ABSTRACT

TITLE

Displaying a “Peaceful”¹ Colonization within Europe: The Austro-Hungarian Representation of Bosnia and Herzegovina at World Fairs and International Expositions

Although the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was part of the Balkan regional strategy intending to solve the problems created by the rise in south Slavic nationalism and the resulting political instability, the administration used every available instrument to justify it as a “cultural mission”. Benjamin von Kállay, the Joint Minister of Finance of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy in charge of the occupied territory between 1882 and 1903, followed a complex policy agenda designed to secure the annexation of the provinces through binding them to the new administration as the source of economic progress and political stability. Imputing equal importance to administrative, economic and nation-building aspects of modernization, in his eyes, the introduction of an effective administration system, the construction of an adequate transport network, and the introduction of new methods of production were of no less importance than the construction of an independent Bosnian nationhood.

Focusing on the idea of a common Bosnian identity served several purposes. First of all, it was an attempt to keep the Serbian and Croatian territorial aspirations under control and thus foster the assimilation of the newly acquired provinces into the multi-ethnic Monarchy. Moreover, Kállay relied on Bosnian landowners to support the regime, seeing in them the most “stable element for the country and people, with whom they feel at one in nationality and language”. At the same time, during the age in which a major part of the “Orient” was colonized, this focus also served as a justification for the claim that the Dual Monarchy performed a cultural mission.

In Kállay’s view, achieving cultural prestige at an international level was essential for legitimacy. It is also unsurprising that he recognized the opportunity represented by international exhibitions and world fairs – the most powerful and wide-reaching means of mass communication at the time, capable of reaching vast audiences. Creating exhibition sections that mediated the complexity of all of these angles the Austro-Hungarian administration showcased the results achieved in the occupied territories and presented the Dual Monarchy as a colonial power at several international exhibitions throughout Europe (1891 – Vienna; 1891 – Zagreb and Timisoara; 1896 – Millennial Exhibition in Budapest; 1897 – World exhibition, Brussels; 1898 – Jubilee Exposition, Vienna; 1900 – Universal Exposition, Paris).

The present research focuses on the analysis of this complex mediating apparatus – including pavilion architecture, interior design, the exhibited artifacts and documentation, and the accompanying publications – staging Bosnia and Herzegovina as a newly discovered Oriental colony thus strengthening the position of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy as a modernizer pursuing the imperative of a civilizing mission.

¹ The title refers to a presentation held by Henri Moser, the commissioner general of the pavilion of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the 1897 World Exhibition in Brussels and the 1900 Universal Exhibition in Paris at the 11th Congress of the Swiss Geographic Society in 1896 in Geneva (Moser, Henri: *Bosnie-Herzégovine: une oeuvre de colonisation pacifique dans les Balkans*. Communication faite au XI^{me} Congrès des Sociétés Suisses de Géographie. Paris: V. Goupy, G. Maurin, 1896.)