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Navigating Dual Identities: The Barišić Affair and the Challenges of Consensus

Within the Ottoman legal system of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, religion played a central role in shaping individual identity, leaving a profound imprint on everyday life. This process, commonly referred to as confessionalization, can be traced as far back as the seventeenth century. Because Bosnia was inhabited by members of three major confessional groups, the dynamics of confessionalization there often assumed distinctive and complex forms. In the case of the Bosnian Catholic community, the Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena had played a significant role since the Middle Ages. Unlike the majority of Bosnian Catholics—especially after the large-scale migrations during the Great Turkish War (1683–1699)—the Bosnian Franciscans preserved certain memories of the medieval Bosnian Kingdom. Their identity was therefore shaped not only by their confessional affiliation but also by a strong sense of Bosnian historical consciousness. As their education had to be pursued abroad, the Franciscans were exposed to cultural and intellectual influences emanating from the West. By the late eighteenth century, their main destinations for study were Italy and the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, the differing experiences acquired in these two environments left markedly distinct impressions. These differences would later emerge as a significant factor during the Barišić Affair, a conflict that profoundly influenced the subsequent development of Bosnian Catholic identity.

Keywords: Confessionalism; Franciscan Province of Bosna Srebrena; bishop Rafo Barišić; identity issues

At mid-nineteenth century, the village of Márkó, near Veszprém, became a focal point of conflict between its German inhabitants and the Hungarian authorities. The dispute centered on the appointment of a new teacher for the village school. The German community— that called the village Markusdorf — refused to accept the government's candidate, citing his inability to speak German—the language they desired for their children's education. The Hungarian authorities countered that, as the Germans "eat Hungarian bread," they should accept the government's choice and allow their children to learn Hungarian. The Germans retorted: "It is our Swabian wives who bake the bread we eat." Ultimately, the Hungarian authorities conceded, and a German-

speaking teacher was appointed to the village school.[1] German language persisted there until 1945 when the majority of German inhabitants left Hungary and moved westward.

The source reffering to these events does not originate from Hungary, nor is it written in Hungarian or German. Its author was Jakov Baltić, the most notable Bosnian Franciscan chronicler from the nineteenth century. Baltić himself spent three years studying theology in Veszprém and he was obviously familiar with local dynamics. But why was he interested in introducing this to his countrymen?[2] Why did he find this story instructive and worthy of remembering? In order to fully understand the context, one has to examine the earlier period.

The identity of the people within Ottoman Bosnia was primarily expressed through their religious affiliation.[3] However, this does not mean that some did not consider identity in terms more closely aligned with trends in the rest of Europe, such as historical borders or shared ancestry. The reality was that this entire question of identity did not represent a major concern for the majority of people, nor for the literate population, at least not until the 1830s. Another challenge in analyzing this issue stems from the fact that people in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries did not contemplate or write about it using the categories or addressing the questions employed by modern historians. This can be particularly tricky in the Bosnian case, as the question of the identity of the people living there is inextricably linked to the question of who "owns" Bosnia, a question that still carries significant emotional weight and can still be used as a means of political mobilization.[4]

Focusing mainly on the Bosnian Catholics this paper will propose a framework for understanding the evolution of their national identity, the role of the Franciscans in this process, and how this issue manifested within their community. As members of the Catholic Church, with many having some experience of living in the West, the Bosnian Franciscans were a group particularly receptive to the ideas and influences emanating from Western Europe, which, during the eighteeneth and nineteenth centuries, established itself as a cultural and political centre of the world. Their identity was closely associated with their clerical status, which emphasized Catholicism as their most defining characteristic.[5] During the eigtheenth century wars between the Habsburg Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire, in which much of the fighting

[1] BALTIĆ 2003. p. 266.

[2] Baltić's Hungarian journey began in 1834, with his enrollment in philosophy at Dunaföldvár. The following year, he relocated to Pécs, where he pursued a major in philosophy and commenced his theological studies. In 1837, he was transferred to Veszprém. On Palm Sunday of 1840, he and three other Bosnian Franciscan students secretly departed Veszprém, a subject that will be addressed later. He ultimately completed his studies in Dubrovnik in 1841. BARIŠIĆ 2021a. p. 335.

[3] This is especially evident in works such as DŽAJA 1999; ANČIĆ 2004.

[4] HAJDARPAŠIĆ 2015 offers an analysis of how this struggle was conducted in the second half of the nineteenth century and by the time of the beginning of the First World War.

[5] The emphasis on Catholicism as the backbone of identity is evident in works such as DŽAJA 1971; DŽAJA 1999; KURSAR 2018; BARIŠIĆ 2021b.

took place in Bosnia, Franciscan sympathies were firmly aligned with the former. Many Franciscans actively supported Habsburg war efforts, particularly during the Dubica War (1788–1791).[6] Even in its aftermath and well into the nineteenth century, a significant group of Bosnian Franciscans maintained a strong pro-Austrian orientation, primarily based on their shared Catholic faith.

Despite the mutual confessional affiliation as the general principle of a certain allegiance of the Franciscans to the Habsburgs, at the practical level relations were not always cordial. Following the Treaty of Karlowitz [Sremski Karlovci, SRB] in 1699, the Province of Bosna Srebrena found itself under the political jurisdiction of three different states, and each part experienced a distinct development of its affairs.[7] These differences soon led to disputes, and the solution was found in the division of the province. In 1735, the Dalmatian part seceded. The division of the remaining two parts was also intended to occur at the same time, but the two sides could not agree on the future borders, as the papal representative's proposal sought to keep the Slavonian and Bosnian monasteries together. In the following years, the Bosnian and, as they were called, *Transavan* friars saw their relationship deteriorate. After a series of bitter mutual accusations, the province was divided along international borders: the new Province of St. John of Capistrano gained a vast number of monasteries north of the Sava River.[8]

Regarding the question of identity, the idea that the Slavonian and Bosnian monasteries should have remained together invokes the notion that this was motivated by reasons of shared national identity. This idea could be further emphasized by the fact that, according to some sources, this proposal failed to materialize because the monasteries in Syrmia, originally intended to be part of the province with those in Hungary, expressed their desire to remain with the Bosnian and Slavonian parts.[9] When examining Bosnian sources related to this issue, it is noted that the troubles began with the entry of Hungarians (and later also Germans) into the Franciscan ranks. Indeed, at its chapters held in 1700 and 1705, Bosna Srebrena petitioned the Court in Vienna to ban the youth of "other nations" from joining the Franciscans.[10] However, a decade later, a similar plea specifically identified these foreigners as Italians, rather than Hungarians.[11] Additionally, the chronicle of Bono Benić, the main advocate for the Bosnian side in these conflicts, identified Filip Penić and Josip Janković as the primary antagonists, vehemently accusing them of anti-

[6] Džaja 1971. p. 88.
[7] Džaja 1971. p. 118–121.
[8] A contemporary description from the Bosnian perspective can be found in Benić 2003. p. 59–105 and 200–201. Although Benić himself played a significant role in the division of 1757, which makes his writting heavily biased, he nevertheless offers a thorough and comprehensive description.
[9] Jelenić 1912. p. 140–142.
[10] Jelenić 1927. p. 4–6.
[11] Jelenić 1927. p. 11–12.

Bosnian bias.[12] This perspective sheds a different light on the concept of shared identity between Bosnians and Slavonians—an identity that would not be based solely on their shared Catholic faith.[13]

Based on the preceding discussion, it can be concluded that the Bosnian Franciscans exhibited two layers of identity. One was rooted in their Catholic faith, which shaped their relationships with the non-Catholic Bosnian population and was also crucial for their political orientation.[14] On the other hand, in dealing with neighbouring provinces and other ecclesiastical structures, their Bosnian identity took precedence. This identity was still vague and lacked consistent elements that would be developed later, but it cannot be disregarded in any analysis.

It is important to explore the internal dynamics within Bosna Srebrena itself. Again, this is an issue that can only be fully understood in retrospect. First, it is necessary to remember that there were only three monasteries remaining, with only two additional churches. These monasteries were all located in three small, more or less neighbouring towns, and they divided the parishes among themselves.[15] Having a monastery granted a certain religious and social prestige to each of these towns and their Catholic inhabitants, but there were other places where the Catholic population held a higher social status. For example, within the area of the Fojnica monastery, there were strong Catholic communities in Travnik, Jajce, and Livno, with many merchants and craftsmen. Within the area of the Sutjeska monastery, there was Vareš, with a strong mining community. A significant number of Franciscans originated from these social groups, thus manifesting a strong sense of local pride. This did not affect their Catholic or their Bosnian identity, but it did have a certain impact on internal affairs, perhaps influencing the allocation of resources or the prioritization of local needs. The case of the third area, that of the Kreševo monastery, provides a more pronounced example.

Within this area, Kreševo likely boasted the most prosperous Catholic community. It also encompassed Sarajevo, the most populous town in Bosnia itself, but the local Catholic community there never fully recovered from the population losses caused by migrations following the military operations of

[12] Penić and Janković were also members of Bosna Srebrena prior to the division, and the latter even served as provincial between 1751 and 1754. In his chronicle, Benić praised Janković for his education, but also strongly accused him of arrogance and a strong bias towards Bosnians. Benić wrote that Janković's tenure made the division inevitable, claiming that Janković acted dishonorably by sowing division among the Bosnians themselves, as he convinced members of the Kreševo monastery to support the division. BENIĆ 2003. p. 75–89.

[13] The longevity of these differences is further highlighted in MOLNÁR 2022.

[14] This was evident during the Napoleonic Wars, particularly after Dalmatia came under French rule in 1805. France established a consulate in Travnik, and the French consul attempted to establish connections with the Franciscans. Their response was polite, but lukewarm at best, primarily due to the papal excommunication of Napoleon. DŽAJA 1971. p. 89–93.

[15] The monasteries were located at Fojnica, Kreševo and Kraljeva Sutjeska, while the remaining two churches existed at Podmilačje near Jajce and at Vareš.

Prince Eugene of Savoy.[16] The majority of Catholics associated with the Kreševo monastery resided in Herzegovina, and they exhibited strong regional pride, even to the point of not readily identifying as Bosnians. This sentiment was mirrored by the local Franciscans, whose numbers surpassed those from Kreševo, Sarajevo, and Žepče, the only settlements located within regional Bosnia. These two regional groups were consistently at odds, to varying degrees, a dynamic that would have significant consequences in the nineteenth century.[17] Finally, it is worth noting that during the eighteenth century, Bosnia experienced some Catholic immigration, particularly from Dalmatia. These settlers initially maintained their non-Bosnian identity. This is interestingly reflected in Franciscan sources. On several occasions during elections, some candidates attempted to discredit their opponents by invoking that they were of Dalmatian origin.[18]

As mentioned, the Bosnian Franciscans were a group of Bosnian inhabitants with the most extensive ties to the West. When the concept of a political nation started emerging, it was inevitable that these ideas would also impact the Bosnians. The most important place during the eighteenth century with which they maintained connections was Italy, where they primarily travelled to pursue higher education, as prescribed by the Council of Trent. In the final decades of the same century, the Habsburg Monarchy began hosting Bosnian Franciscans for the same purpose, but on a more organized level.[19] These influences proved pivotal in shaping how the Bosnian Franciscans began to understand their identity.

In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, European states began to emerge as nation-states, giving rise to several important issues, primarily the Italian and German questions. As Italy and the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy regularly hosted Bosnian Franciscans, they were naturally exposed to these influences. This took place within a framework shaped by several factors. Firstly, the Bosnian students were members of a religious order, residing in monasteries and often attending classes there, thus their worldview was still significantly shaped by their faith. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, their perspectives were already moulded by their experiences at home, the traditions of their province, and the influence of older friars.[20]

[16] First major offensive of Habsburg Army into the Bosnian territory occurred during the winter of 1688/89 when it operated along the Drina River. Prince Eugene led the offensive in 1697 when his Army reached Sarajevo and burned it to the ground. DŽAJA 1999. p. 164-165.

[17] BARIŠIĆ 2021a. p. 29 and footnote 40.

[18] DŽAJA 1971. p. 208. Notably, these attempts exhibit a pattern of exclusion based not on the person's self-ascribed identity, but on assumptions about their origin.

[19] BARIŠIĆ 2021a examines the historical context and organizational aspects of the entire process concerning the friars who received their education in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy.

[20] This can be illustrated by the case of Bono Perišić, who studied at Pécs between 1831 and 1837. His mother's uncle, Mato Kristićević, was also a friar with a significant prestige among the Bosnian Franciscans. When Perišić entered the Franciscan ranks, Kristićević was already of advanced age and resided at the Fojnica monastery. This enabled him to play a crucial role in Perišić's education and formation. Kristićević dedicated considerable effort to teaching Perišić Latin, and encouraged

Finally, it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which each individual was interested in the broader social situation of their host country. Sources indicate that some Bosnian students maintained ties with local colleagues, while others tended to isolate themselves, preferring the company of their compatriots. Some were eager to learn local languages and read local newspapers. Many, however, let such opportunities pass them by, focusing solely on their personal goals and showing little interest in local affairs.

The two different locations also provided distinct circumstances for the Bosnian students' stays, further diversifying the influences they brought back to Bosnia.[21] In Italy, they resided within confessionally and linguistically compact communities. As the proponents of Italian unification largely held anticlerical views, viewing the pope and the Habsburgs as the primary obstacles to achieving their ultimate goal, this only pushed the Bosnian Franciscans to adhere more firmly to their faith and their pro-Habsburg stance. Conversely, students staying in Hungary had broader and more multifaceted experiences. Although they resided in parts of Hungary where Catholics constituted the majority of the population, they nevertheless had the opportunity to experience a multiconfessional society that could have reminded them of their homeland. For example, during the first half of the nineteenth century, Pécs[22] represented a Catholic stronghold, but its surrounding areas included many Protestant settlements.[23] Adding to the confessional plurality, Hungary was a multilingual society. The majority of Bosnian students spent at least some time among the Croatian-speaking population. As it was customary to occasionally move students from one place to another, many studied theology in Hungarian, German, or Slovak-speaking

him to write letters in this language. Owing to this influence, Perišić began, from an early age, to pay attention to preserving letters he received and started making copies of those he personally sent. The majority of them have been preserved and published: BARIŠIĆ, 2023a. The correspondence between the two demonstrates how Kristićević sought to influence Perišić's worldview. He used his influence to ensure that Perišić would be sent to Pécs to study and advised his young pupil to learn Hungarian and German. Perišić later gained a reputation as the most educated Bosnian Franciscan; however, he did not play a significant role in the community, as he never held the position of either the provincial or guardian of the monastery. After his death, he was quickly forgotten, despite leaving a substantial number of manuscripts that are yet to be published.

[21] In the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, the number of the Bosnian students studying in Hungary in its limits at that time surpassed those pursuing their studies in Italy. By the 1830s, Franciscan monasteries across Hungary hosted, on average, 32 students at various levels. In contrast, the number of Bosnian students in Italy was generally considered to be lower, although exact figures have not been established. In 1836, which can be regarded as the peak of the process during which Habsburg authorities financed the education of the Bosnian students, their number reached 35, while Italian Franciscan provinces hosted 27 Bosnian students. SchBA 1836. p. 33.

[22] By the number of Franciscan students from Bosnia hosted, the monastery at Pécs was surpassed only by the monasteries in Zágráb [Zagreb, HR] and Pozsega [Požega, HR]. The overall number of Bosnian students that spent some time at Pécs was 48. BARIŠIĆ 2021a. p. 493–495.

[23] For example in the parish of Bogdása the majority of the populace belonged to the Reformed Church, although Catholics represented majority within Bogdása itself. The parish consisted of 11 settlements with Protestants being majority in 8 of them. Furthermore, there were Protestant churches in each of the said 8 settlements, while Catholics possessed only 2, one in Bogdása and the other in Sellye. BARIŠIĆ 2023a. p. 160.

areas. Some of these were dominated by speakers of a single language, but many—with Pécs again serving as a suitable example—had populations speaking various languages, all of which shaped their identities.[24] As emphasized in Baltić's writing in the introduction, it was language that left the deepest impression on the Bosnian students.

The most profound impact on the Bosnian Franciscan students in Hungary had the Illyrian Movement and its leader Ljudevit Gaj. The main principle of this movement was that all South Slavs constitute one large family with a common origin and should therefore use the same language. Gaj himself was born into a family of German descent and grew up speaking both German and Kajkavian dialect of Croatian. While attending high school in Karlovac, he learned Shtokavian, which he later advocated as the basis for the Illyrian language, ultimately making it the foundation of the modern Croatian standard language.[25] It was precisely the idea of a common language and shared ancestry as the basis of a broader identity that proved so attractive to many Bosnian students. This phenomenon likely would not have occurred had they not encountered these questions while in Hungary. Not only does Baltić's writing, as quoted earlier, illustrate this development, but many other entries in his *Yearbook* also reflect it. Bosnians realized that Catholicism was not the only foundation for unity. Although Baltić and many other Bosnians expressed disdain for *Magyarization*, they simultaneously admired and respected the enthusiasm of the Hungarians for their language.[26]

It is essential to emphasize that Catholicism still had a significant impact on the attitudes of the Bosnian students, and this influence was also strong within Hungary itself. Six years after finishing his studies at Pécs and moving back to Bosnia, Bono Perišić exchanged letters with some of his former colleagues and

[24] During Bono Perišić's stay in Pécs, the Catholic parishes within the city provide relevant context. In 1837, among the Catholic population, Hungarian was spoken by 5,342 people, German by 4,779, and Croatian by 3,840. SchQE 1837. p. 58–59. These figures represent the primary language usage, while a significant degree of bi- or trilingualism existed. The overall numbers for both Hungarian and German-speaking populations were likely higher, as a negligible number of Protestants living in the city of Pécs probably belonged to one of these groups, as did the Jewish community. Within the diocese of Pécs, there were 143,332 Catholics who used Hungarian as their primary language, 107,079 who spoke German, and 63,397 who were Croatian-speaking. Among the non-Catholics, there were 18,953 Orthodox, 29,423 Lutherans, 75,172 members of the Reformed Church and 6,709 Jews. Barišić 2023a. p. 158.

[25] This represents a rather simplified overview of the ideology of the Illyrian movement. There is a abundant literature on this subject. The most concise work written in English is: Murray-Despalatovic 1975. There is also a later Croatian edition published in 2013.

[26] At the same time when he was describing the dispute at Márkó, Baltić noted the following: "When I was staying for six years in Hungary pursuing my studies, I was astonished by how much Hungarians cherished their language. They *magyarized* dozens of our villages by placing Hungarians as teachers or priests thus *magyarizing* by force." Baltić 2003. p. 265–266. In Croatian Baltić writes the expression "sela našinaca" which cannot be translated literarly. The closest interpretation would be "villages where our people lives." Baltić spent two years in Pécs where local Croats still refer to themselves as *Bošnjaci* (Hungarian: *Bosnyákok* or *Bosnyák-horvátok*). In Baltić's time, this term was also used for Bosnian Catholics, but it is unclear whether he was referring exclusively to them or to the broader Croatian-speaking communities within Hungary.

professors.[27] They were interested in the conflict between Bosna Srebrena and Rafo Barišić.[28] The news coming to Hungary described Barišić's opponents—Perišić among them—as a group on the verge of reneging from the Catholic Church. Perišić's correspondents pleaded with him not to take that step, stressing the importance of Catholic unity.[29] At the same time, they made bitter remarks about the situation within Hungary. During that period, the Diet was discussing the matrimonial law that the Catholic Church vehemently opposed.

The main Bosnian supporters of the Illyrian Movement were Ivan Franjo Jukić, Grgo Martić, Martin Nedić, Jakov Baltić, and Marijan Šunjić, all of whom were educated in Hungary.[30] After returning to Bosnia, each of them participated in various activities beyond their pastoral duties. Each sought, to varying degrees, to overcome confessional boundaries, particularly towards the Orthodox population within Bosnia. This endeavour caused strife within the Franciscan province.

By the 1830s within the ranks of Bosna Srebrena the share of the Franciscans who pursued their education in Italy became smaller in comparison to the former Hungarian students, nevertheless they still held considerable influence within the province itself. The majority of the provincials were still elected from their ranks, which caused a certain displeasure among the rest. A rift began to occur, with two groups even

[27] Bono Perišić's correspondence offers valuable insights into his network. He wrote to several individuals, including former colleagues Károly Szentmiklósy, Josef Schmidt, and Károly Csajághy (whom he mistakenly believed to be dead), as well as his former lecturer Mihály Virág. He also corresponded with Stjepan Grdenić, parish priest in the Buda Suburbium of Pécs, and István Róka, a parish priest in Bogád. While he mentioned writing to János Ranolder, the bishop of Veszprém and another former lecturer, this letter has not been located. Perišić received responses from Szentmiklósy, Virág, and Csajághy. All these letters, published in BARIŠIĆ 2023a. p. 323–328 and 349–354, were written in Latin, with the exception of the letter to Grdenić, which was composed in Croatian. This exchange occurred between 1843 and 1844, coinciding with the height of the Barišić Affair.

[28] More on this below; see especially footnotes 38 and 39.

[29] This is particularly evident from Csajághy's letter, which stated: *Quomodo vobiscum? Condolendo legimus in novis animorum scissiones et praemetuimus deffectionem quam tamen Deus avertat etiamsi vos Itali perperam pro haereticis autument et obsecramus vos ut cedetis potius, quam causa religionis quidpiam patiatur* (= "How are you? We read with sorrow in the news of divisions of minds and we fear defection, which may God avert, even if Italians wrongly judge you as heretics, and we beseech you to yield rather than the religion suffers anything.") BARIŠIĆ 2023a. p. 354. This passage highlights the concerns regarding internal divisions and the potential for conflict, even suggesting compromise to preserve religious unity.

[30] Baltić's curriculum has already been presented, as well as the places of his staying. Jukić studied from 1835 to 1840, initially in Zagreb and later in Veszprém, where he and Baltić were classmates. Šunjić, representing an older generation, studied in Zagreb, Mohács, Baja and Székesfehérvár. After completing his theological studies in 1821, he spent three more years in Vienna where he studied oriental languages. Martić pursued his studies from 1838 to 1845 in Požega, Zagreb and Székesfehérvár. Nedić, in contrast, studied at various locations, including Szabadka [Subotica, SRB], Szolnok, Eger, Gyöngyös and Vác, where he graduated in 1835. BARIŠIĆ 2021a. p. 348–349, 367–368, 390–391 and 429.

adopting the names of the regions where they had been educated: *Hungars* opposed *Italians*.[31]

Rafo Barišić was never officially declared nor did he strive to be considered the leader of the Italian Party, but sources opposing him epitomized him as such.[32] The conflict that arose between Rafo Barišić and a significant part of the Franciscan Province was, to a certain degree, also a conflict between the *Italians* and *Hungars*. Feeling a lack of sufficient support within Bosnia itself, Barišić sought to gain the favor of authorities in Rome and Vienna. In doing so, he did not confine himself exclusively to church affairs. Always suspicious of the *Hungars*, Barišić began accusing them of disloyalty to the Habsburg Monarchy.[33] One of the best-known examples of this tension occurred when he revealed an attempt to incite an uprising among the Bosnian Catholics. This poorly conceived plan was undertaken by four students who secretly abandoned Veszprém and travelled to Bosnia, where they split up, each heading to a different region. Lacking proper means, they addressed their religious elders, who dissuaded them from their idea and quickly moved them out of Bosnia.[34] It is not known how Barišić discovered these plans, but he attempted to leverage the situation to his advantage.

According to the later memories of some of the insurgents, among them Baltić, they were inspired by a Serbian family from Veszprém with whom they shared a friendship.[35] It is impossible to discern if Barišić was aware of this connection, but it is precisely this point that strongly contrasted with his own stance. Barišić could not fathom Catholics acting on an incentive from the Orthodox. Two years earlier, he penned a memorandum intended for the Habsburg Court, pleading for assistance.[36] On a broader level, the text contains the typical topics expected on such occasions. However, when examined within the framework of the identity question, some particularly interesting points emerge.

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[31] The Hungarian party significantly emphasized this division, providing the majority of sources describing the reasons and consequences of the clash, often with a notable degree of bias. Barišić 2021a. p. 248–249. In Croatian, the two groups involved were referred to as *Ugri* and *Talijani*. While *Talijani* corresponds to the term for Italians, *Ugri* was used in a historical context because the Croatian words for Hungary and Hungars (*Mađarska*, *Mađari*) are similar to the Hungarian terms. Therefore, the term *Hungars* is employed to better represent the original context. Notably, Baltić utilized both terms (*Ungarija/Ugarska* and *Mađarska*), gradually transitioning towards the latter, and increasingly emphasising its ethnic connotations. Barišić 2023b. p. 39–40.

[32] This has been reflected for example in Jelenić 1915. p. 181.

[33] After finishing his novitiate and taking religious vows, Barišić was initially supposed to continue his studies in Hungary. However, at the last moment, for unknown reasons, this decision was changed, and Barišić was sent to Italy instead. Barišić 2021a. p. 260.

[34] Barišić 2021a. p. 265–267.

[35] Baltić 2003. p. 140. While the precise identities of the insurgents were subjects to various interpretations, it has been definitively established that they included Jakov Baltić, Franjo Jukić, Blaž Josić and Bartol Jurič.

[36] This memorandum was published in its original Latin version in: Batinić, 1885. p. 110–116. It is possible that Barišić eventually sent a shorter version. Additionally, a Croatian translation was first published in 1900, which can be found in Jelenić 1915. p. 150–162.

Barišić presented a stark, black-and-white portrayal of the situation in Bosnia, casting Catholics as heavily oppressed by Muslims and urgently pleading with the emperor for aid. What is particularly fascinating are the nuances within his plea. Barišić emphasized a sharp contrast between Catholics and Muslims by asserting that the former had consistently maintained loyalty to the sultan and the Central Government in Constantinople, even when the latter were in rebellion. In describing the loyalty of the Catholics, Barišić articulated a powerful sentiment: "We do not seek freedom, which some, especially in these times, claim for themselves, for the sake of empty deception, to the detriment of the faith and the state whose name we do not even know".[37] It is highly justifiable to surmise that with these words, Barišić was targeting movements that opposed the *ancien régime*, of which the Habsburg Monarchy was a primary proponent, and that he was fully aware of the Habsburg policy which intended to preserving *status quo*. In this context, Barišić sought to gain Habsburg support for the improvement of the rights of the Bosnian Catholics, although he probably privately held a desire for ending the Ottoman rule. All of this leads to a compelling conclusion: for Barišić, Catholicism represented the sole cornerstone of his identity. As previously stated, this perspective also reflected his Italian upbringing and the context within which his conservative stance aligned his faith with a pro-Habsburg position. Regarding the Barišić Affair, it's crucial to recognize that most available sources display a strong anti-Barišić bias, originating from his adversaries.[38] Because of his pro-Habsburg leanings, Barišić has also faced consistent criticism from many historians and in various lexicons. For instance, the *Encyclopedia of Yugoslavia* from 1955 characterizes him as an "Italian pupil, a good servant of Vatican and an open proponent of the Austrian policies towards Southslav lands."[39] Nevertheless, even his most vocal critics conceded that he garnered support from a considerable segment of both the Franciscans and the general populace. His Franciscan supporters stemmed from the two main groups. On one hand he could rely on the *Italians*, and the other group where he found a significant degree of support were Franciscans from Herzegovina the majority of whom initially sought to distance themselves from

[37] JELENIĆ, 1915. p. 159. The author even claimed that the Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerifi ("Supreme Edict of Gülhane") proclaimed by the Sultan Abdülmecid I in 1839 was a direct consequence of Habsburg pressure incited by Barišić's plea. JELENIĆ, 1915. p. 162.

[38] BARIŠIĆ 2025a. An often quoted monograph on Barišić Affair is KECMANOVIĆ 1954. It represents an overview of the whole affair but with a strong degree of bias, and the author was more interested in emphasizing the ties established by the part of Barišić's opponents and the Serbian government. See also the following footnote.

[39] KECMANOVIĆ 1955. p. 368–369. The Encyclopedia's portrayal of Barišić must be understood within its historical context, where several factors contributed to a negative sentiment. A prevalent literary trope depicted individuals educated abroad as losing their connection to their homeland and people. Furthermore, the absence of diplomatic ties between Yugoslavia and the Vatican, coupled with a critical view of the Church's historical role, added to the complexity. Finally, the perception of Austria, in all its manifestations, as an oppressor of various peoples, further shaped the narrative. Given these circumstances, it is evident why Barišić was ultimately depicted as a historical villain.

the affair, but they eventually sided with Barišić mainly because they believed that he would assist them in the construction of a new monastery within Herzegovina.[40]

While the entirety of the quarrel was not solely instigated by questions of identity, these factors undeniably played a significant role, particularly from Barišić's perspective. It is symptomatic within this context that the two groups most aligned with the apostolic vicar were precisely those for whom the (proto)national Bosnian identity held the least significance. The Herzegovinians, for instance, demonstrated a stronger orientation towards their regional identity, an identity deeply interwoven with historical ties to the medieval entity. This regional focus offered a distinct sense of belonging, separate from broader national aspirations.

Similarly, the *Italians* placed a strong emphasis on Catholicism, viewing their pro-Habsburg orientation as a potent expression of their political aspirations.

To what degree religion, traditional affiliations, and politics became intertwined is perhaps best illustrated by the aforementioned uprising. According to one version, the entire attempt had been conceived on a far broader scale, encompassing several circles. Besides the four students, these plans allegedly included several Franciscans who were situated in Posavina, a region bordering Habsburg Slavonia. Among them was Ilija Starčević, a well-known Habsburg informant who also served as a liaison to Husein-beg Gradaščević, the leader of the local Muslim elite, who openly rebelled against the central government. Another significant figure was Ambrozije Matić. These two allegedly were buying and storing gunpowder and guns intended for the uprising. Both Starčević and Matić were known for their pro-Habsburg orientation, but they were also staunch opponents of Barišić. As a person of impeccable reputation, Starčević was tasked by his province to travel to the Habsburg Monarchy to advocate for better treatment of Bosnian students, and then to Rome to come out against Barišić's ambitions. Nevertheless, according to the mentioned version, it was actually Starčević and Matić who hindered the uprising. The story goes that they believed the whole thing had been organized with Habsburg backing, and when they discovered they had been deceived, they simply withdrew, leaving the uprisers without the means to proceed with their plans.[41]

In reality, the idea of Starčević's and Matić's participation in the uprising, and their subsequent sabotage of it, lacks plausibility. On one hand, it was based on various reports and rumors, some of which originated even 50 years after the events occurred. On the other hand, these reports mirrored the

[40] In the aftermath of the affair, Herzegovina was separated from the Bosnia in an ecclesiastical sense with the establishment of a new apostolic vicariate and Franciscan custody. Notably, several Franciscans from Herzegovina choose to remain within Bosna Srebrena, and all of them were *Hungars*. Barišić 2021a. p. 314–315, 351, 356, 366, 377, 388, 391, 443.

[41] This interpretation, presented in Doklestić 1982. p. 15–41, offers a potential perspective. However, it is important to note that the author did not endorse this view but rather presented it as one of several possibilities.

complexity of various factors influencing the affairs of Bosnian Franciscans. Starčević and Matić also belonged to the *Hungarian* party, but they had resided in Hungary before the emergence of the Illyrian Movement.[42] To a certain extent, they experienced the phenomenon previously discussed regarding the importance of language transcending confessional divisions. However, they remained unprepared or unwilling to apply the same approach within Bosnia.

For his part, Barišić took the opportunity to smear his opponents by every means possible. He wrote to Rome and Vienna, and travelled to the Vizier in order to personally accuse the insurgents, whom he linked with the opposing party. In Rome, he accused them all of heretical tendencies. In Vienna, he tried to broaden the alleged plans of the uprising by linking them with Habsburg opponents. At the Vizier's court, he advocated that he was the guarantor of the loyalty of the Catholic populace.[43] His actions bore fruit, as the decisions made in Rome in the following years went in his favour, and Vienna sought to distance itself from the whole affair. In 1841, Rome forbade Bosnian students from further attending their studies in the monasteries within Croatia and Hungary, and in 1843, Habsburg authorities did the same.[44] On the other hand, Barišić never gained the support of the Ottoman side, both local and central.

Ultimately, he conceded. Regardless of having the upper hand in the eyes of ecclesiastical authorities, he could not break the resistance of the opposing side, who relied on the support of the local Ottoman authorities. Following the events, most of the available accounts came from his opponents, who were critical of his actions, and also of his supporters, who were often portrayed as morally compromised, and depicted as both weak and cruel. Consequently, it remains difficult to determine their precise positions and how they communicated them to the populace, which was itself fractured. In subsequent accounts, Barišić's opponents often depicted his supporters and followers in a similarly negative light, portraying them as ignorant and easily swayed.[45]

While Bosna Srebrena emerged victorious, many within its ranks viewed the outcome as pyrrhic. The most significant impact stemmed from what many perceived as a betrayal by their protectors, and they were also dismayed by the creation of a separate custody in Herzegovina. This prompted Bosnian Franciscans to further underscore their traditions and their unique status

[42] Starčević arrived in Slavonski Brod in 1811. He subsequently resided in Požega, Pécs, Baja and Szombathely. In 1816 he completed his second year of theological studies. However, he was excused from further studies because Bosna Srebrena faced a shortage of priests due to a plague that resulted in several deaths. Consequently, he was sent back home. Matić commenced his studies in 1816 in Požega, but was soon transfered to Pécs. For reasons that remain unclear, he left Pécs without permission in 1818. Along with a fellow Bosnian student, he attempted to reach Zadar, but their attempt failed, and they returned to Bosnia. He was reinstated to his scholarship resumed his studies in various locations, including Máriaradna [Radna, RO], Újlak [Ilok, HR] and again in Pécs where he graduated in 1824. BARIŠIĆ 2021a. p. 427–428, 433–434.

[43] BARIŠIĆ 2021a. p. 267. Franjo Plehaček, a translator at the Vizier's court, informed Barišić's opponents about of his actions. Plehaček, a Czech, had briefly converted to Islam, but later reverted to Catholicism. His testimony can be found in JELENIĆ 1915. p. 181–183.

[44] BARIŠIĆ 2021a. p. 272–276.

[45] BARIŠIĆ 2025.

among all Franciscan provinces. Disillusionment with Habsburg policies spurred them to turn their attention towards South Slavic connections, irrespective of religious differences, which ultimately resulted in a more prominent role for the *Hungars* in the ensuing decades.

The Barišić Affair thus may serve as an important indicator that the absence of consensus could manifest itself on several interconnected levels. The issue of identity was not the principal motive behind the conflict, nor is it the aim of this paper to contend that identity-related considerations constituted the decisive factor in the Bosnian friars' alignment for or against Barišić. Nonetheless, it is indisputable that identity played a certain—potentially even a significant—role. Since neither side refrained from employing virtually any means to discredit its opponent, Barišić and his supporters regarded the invocation of political orientation as a strategic advantage. This ultimately facilitated the apostolic vicar's success in securing support in Rome and Vienna; however, it simultaneously contributed to a state of stalemate, as his adversaries received backing through the Ottoman legal system.

Barišić continued to emphasize Catholicism as the backbone of the identity of the community to which both he and his opponents belonged. Although many of them nurtured profound resentment toward local Ottoman authorities, they nonetheless proved willing to seek Ottoman assistance and even turned toward Serbia. Such a shift would hardly have been possible without the experiences they acquired during their stay in the Hungarian part of the Habsburg Monarchy. Historiography has frequently attributed this reorientation solely to the influence of the Illyrian Movement, yet a closer examination of the Bosnian Franciscan students' stay in Hungary and Croatia demonstrates that many of them initially remained beyond direct Illyrian influence. Even so, their exposure to new intellectual environments led them, in general terms, toward a similar outcome: the conception of common language and shared origin as central pillars of identity.

Baltić's case may be viewed as paradigmatic in this regard. Although he later emerged as one of the foremost advocates of Illyrian ideas, his formative experiences in Veszprém and Pécs had already inclined him toward such notions. He preserved these impressions consciously and sought to transmit them as instructive examples for future generations. He admired the German-speaking population of Márkó because he wanted his compatriots to act similarly. His reminiscence on the events he heard of while studying at Veszprém was inspired by a conflict in which he himself played a leading role. At the time of writing, he was a chaplain in Livno, in southern Bosnia, near the Dalmatian border. The local Catholic community was engaged in a similar dispute over the selection of a new teacher. One group of parents, primarily merchants and craftsmen with close economic ties to neighbouring Dalmatia, favoured a teacher from Dalmatia. They desired their children to learn Italian, which remained the dominant language of commerce in Dalmatia. Baltić, however, aligned himself with the opposing group, who wished to maintain the *status quo* and have their children taught by a Franciscan. On that occasion, the

first group prevailed. Disappointed, Baltić wrote, "Swabians and Italians share a common trait: they disdain other languages and champion their own"—a characteristic he clearly wished the local Catholics to possess.

The main consequence of this trend was an increasing emphasis on the idea of South Slavic unity. Many prominent Bosnian Franciscans tried to overcome confessional barriers and establish ties with members of the other two major religions present within Bosnia.[46] In the end, these attempts failed to materialize, as religious identity proved to be a border too difficult to overcome. In the following decades, the identity of Bosnian Catholics continued to be grounded in both Catholic and regional Bosnian identities, with both eventually becoming increasingly intertwined with Croatian identity.

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