

Grandits, Hannes. 2022. *The End of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia: Conflicting Agencies and Imperial Appropriations.* New York: Routledge. 359 pages. ISBN (ebook): 9780429023989.

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Dismantling dominant narratives and challenging convictions, Hannes Grandits explicates the Ottoman rule in Bosnia during the second half of the nineteenth century by analysing the entangled history of social and political transformations, individual agencies, violence and great power politics. Grandits rejects teleological approaches to Ottoman rule in the Balkans (p. xix) and his study contributes to the literature by problematizing regional histories which treat the period of analysis as merely a step towards the formation of nation states or an outcome of imperial rivalries.

Focusing on the often-overlooked subjects, refugees and people who were not against the Ottoman rule in the Bosnian Vilayet, Grandits gives voice to a great number of individuals and contextualizes their agencies within the larger political dynamics by conjoining the local and the international aspects. The research exposes the diverse constellations of social and political constituents in a period which was marked by violence. Prioritizing the experiences of the communities of the region, the author includes numerous ego-documents by contemporaries, analyses them with reference to periodicals, newspapers, diplomatic sources and documents from the regional archives.

Rejecting the convention that Ottoman rule was in steady decline and there existed an ‘unwillingness’ on the part of the Ottomans to initiate reforms (p. 1), chapter one describes the effects of Tanzimat reforms during the 1860s and early 1870s, arguing that they ‘significantly changed the appearance and character of an increasingly bureaucratized administration’ (p. xxiii). Focusing on the changes in administrative structures, architectural elements, educational facilities, trade networks and the transportational infrastructure, the author claims that ‘there is no evidence of a ‘steady decline’ of Ottoman state rule in provincial life’ and adds that there is ‘little evidence of major hostilities against and opposition to Ottoman rule’ (p. 2) in Bosnian Vilayet. Giving voice to Ottoman officials, European subjects in the Ottoman service and diplomatic personnel, Grandits utilizes a large number of personal narratives and archival documents not only to reveal the ways in which reforms were implemented but to show the diverse mechanisms that the local elites implemented vis-à-vis an imperial administration which struggled in reinforcing the reforms.

Chapter 2 aims to situate late Ottoman Bosnia ‘into the political zeitgeist of the late 1860s and early 1870s’ (p. 42) and reveals the multifaceted regional interactions. Following a discussion on the upheavals in the Serbian Principality, Habsburg Dalmatia and the Montenegrin Border regions surrounding Ottoman Bosnia, Grandits posits that political activism in the Bosnian Vilayet was marginalized by the mid-1870s, the

national rhetoric was a peripheral concern and imperial identities of different confessional groups revolved around loyalty to the Sultan (p. 41). In comparison with the activists and fighters of the neighbouring regions, the author defines a lack of ‘youth activism’ in Bosnia (p. 60) and claims that political nationalism was limited among the intellectual circles.

Chapter 3 discusses the beginning of the crisis in 1875 and by focusing on numerous actors such as villagers, local notables conducting commission work on behalf of the Ottoman state, an Ottoman chronicle, a Montenegrin captain and the leader of an insurgent group, the author convincingly shows how a local event came to occupy an international outlook. Highlighting the pressure on the local actors - such as merchants and official local representatives (*muhtar*) - which stem from agrarian difficulties, cross-border banditry, violence, plunder and assassinations, Grandits sheds light on the inter-regional dynamics and mobility behind the initial local affair, which was amplified by the influx of volunteers, correspondents and humanitarian agents.

Chapter 4 reveals the Ottoman-Habsburg cooperation on the issue of the return of the refugees and discusses the details of pacification efforts. The sudden increase in the number of displaced populations affected the policies of both parties involved and by making the issue of refugee return the main theme of the chapter, Grandits challenges the assumption that Habsburg expansionist policy was the defining characteristic of the early phase of the ‘Great Eastern Crisis’ (p. 131). The author exemplifies how Habsburg authorities worked towards eliminating revolutionary militancy in the Ottoman-Habsburg border regions not to jeopardize the refugee return. This chapter also reveals how the crisis in Herzegovina galvanized Bulgarian revolutionary action and how guerilla warfare and para-military formations were created in a context that involved power politics, changing allegiances, and the socio-economic realities of the regions.

Chapter 5 discusses the ways in which intertwined political and strategic interests were reflected in the everyday lives of the people during the War of the Principalities. Tracing the earlier war preparations and the hesitations of the Habsburg and Russian authorities, Grandits underlines the dominance of the Pan-Slavic/Pan-Serbian sentiments and reveals the relation between the ideological discussions and political calculations before and during the War. Highlighting the overarching dominance of the multi-confessional fabric of Ottoman Bosnia and Herzegovina, Grandits shows how this multi-confessional fabric came to be challenged in the earlier mobilization and during the armed conflict. His analysis reveals the effects of mobilization on social life and regional economy both in Ottoman Bosnia and the Principalities. In discussing the financing of war, the author shows how provisioning of the army contributed to the regional economy in the Bosnian Vilayet.

The focus of chapter 6 is the Ottoman-Russian War and its effects on the Bosnian Vilayet. This chapter argues that Bosnian Vilayet was not part of the armed conflict however there were instances of insurgencies in Herzegovina which the Ottoman military suppressed with Austro-Hungarian cooperation. Grandits incorporates Ottoman constitutionalism into his analysis and regards the Ottoman parliament and the increasing patriotism as important factors which affected how the events unfolded.

Grandits describes some of the changes in mobilization practices and underlines the fact that Ottoman rule in Bosnia was generally unchallenged throughout the war, which is a recurrent theme in the book. A discussion on the economic aspect of mobilization might have contributed insights into the local dynamics, an approach which Grandits utilizes in the fifth chapter.

In the final chapter, Grandits discusses the effects of the armistice and the San Stefano Treaty, focusing his analysis on the local elite's endeavour towards autonomy. Providing a narrative of the discussions during the Congress of Berlin with a particular focus on Bosnia, the chapter then delves into the ways in which the diplomatic decisions affected the populations of Bosnia. Grandits narrates, through archival documents and eye-witness accounts, how events unfolded after the Congress's ruling on military occupation. According to Grandits occupation of Bosnia serves as an example for the implementation of imperial aspirations in the 'Age of Empires.' (p. 298)

Hannes Grandits's elaborate research rests on diverse sources including ego-documents, correspondences, memoirs, press coverage and archival sources. Grandits prioritizes regional dynamics by emphasizing local actors' experiences and profoundly narrates the interplay between 'complex local rationalities' and the larger political context (p. xix) in the Ottoman Vilayet of Bosnia during the late 1870s. *The End of Ottoman Rule in Bosnia* is a major contribution not only to Balkan and Ottoman histories but also to the recent studies which aim to challenge the prevailing historiography of the 'Eastern Question' by incorporating diverse actors and varied perspectives.