

Book Review

Religion and the Politics of Identity in Kosovo by Ger Duijzings. London: Hurst & Co., 2000. 238 pp., £35 (hardback), £16.50 (paperback).

Duijzings, a cultural anthropologist at University College London, undertook fieldwork in the villages of Kosovo some ten years ago. Based on extensive use of materials in the Albanian, Serbo-Croatian, German, French, Dutch and English languages, *Religion and the Politics of Identity* devotes separate chapters to the exodus of Kosovo's Croats, joint pilgrimages, crypto-Catholics, Albanian dervishes, the so-called 'Egyptians' of Kosovo and Macedonia and the uses made of the history of Kosovo in Serbian nationalist mythology. The result of Duijzings' research is an ethnographic study of confessionality and village life in Kosovo that reveals a long history of friendly interconfessional and interethnic contact. Among other things, we learn that until recently local Albanian Muslims were accustomed to joining local Serbs in making the annual pilgrimage to the Orthodox shrine at Zočiste near Orahovac.

Serbs and Croats too coexisted peacefully in rural Kosovo. Indeed, their relations were more harmonious and problem-free than the relations between those same Croats and their fellow-Croats in Croatia would be after the former took refuge among their supposed ethnic kin.

Similarly, Duijzings shows that Catholic and Muslim Albanians have enjoyed largely unproblematic relations in recent decades, with Catholic Albanians joining Muslims in the Kosovo Liberation Army. Indeed, the author reveals that during 1990, after the abolition of Kosovo's autonomy and with repressive acts multiplying with each week, many Albanian Muslims talked openly of the possibility of a collective conversion to Roman Catholicism and even began attending Catholic Mass (pp. 104–5).

On the other hand, intraconfessional and intraethnic problems have not been unknown in the area. Kosovo sheiks, for example, conducted open polemics with the Islamic community of Yugoslavia in the 1970s and resisted efforts by Sarajevo Islamic authorities to weaken the dervish orders in Kosovo (p. 118). These polemics calmed down only when the state authorities intervened in 1979.

Similarly, Duijzings points out, although Serb nationalist propaganda made much of the fact that well-to-do Albanian families were buying up lands owned by less pecunious Serb peasants in Kosovo in the 1970s and 1980s, no attention was paid to the fact that the same Albanian families were equally busy buying up lands owned by economically marginal Albanian peasants (p. 126 n.). In other words, economic considerations lay behind these buy-outs and not some sort of anti-Serb conspiracy on the part of Albanians, as Serb propagandists claimed. On the other hand, Duijzings points out that until the escalation of hostilities a decade ago, Bosnian

Muslims generally preferred to marry Croats or Serbs in preference to Albanian Muslims.

The point to be stressed here is not that Duijzings is mounting a counterintuitive argument, but rather that he shows, in this excellent book, that the views which have become so widespread in the West about the enduring character of the Serb–Albanian and Christian–Muslim enmity in the Balkans have no basis in fact and that the reality is considerably more complex.

SABRINA P. RAMET