

“Nekünk nincsenek gyarmataink és hódítási szándékaink.”
Magyar részvétel a Monarchia gyarmatosítási törekvéseiben a
Balkánon (1867–1914) [“We have Neither Colonies, nor Ambitions
to Conquer.” Hungarian Participation in the Colonisation Efforts
of the Monarchy (1867–1914)]. By Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics.
Budapest: Bölcsészettudományi Kutatóközpont Történettudományi
Intézet, 2022. 452 pp.

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Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics is a senior research fellow at the HUN-REN Institute of History in Budapest. His research focuses on the nineteenth-century history of the Balkans, with a special emphasis on the Albanian national movement, as well as the diplomatic, political, and scientific relations between the Austro–Hungarian Monarchy and the Balkan states. His most recent volume was published in the *Monumenta Hungariae Historica* series in 2022. The monograph analyzes Hungarian participation in Austria–Hungary’s colonization efforts in the Balkans. The quotation in its title, “We have neither colonies, nor ambitions to conquer,” is taken from the 1910 parliamentary speech given by Ákos Bizony, a member of the oppositional Party of Independence and ‘48. In his speech, Bizony spoke up against the allegedly large budget contributions for the Austro–Hungarian army by referring to the generally accepted narrative of the Hungarian elite. According to that narrative, the Kingdom of Hungary is a state built upon liberal nationalism with a long pre-history of fighting for freedom. Therefore, the state refuses most forms of contemporary colonialism, as well as territorial and economic expansionism. This claim, convincingly refuted by the author, was a recurring motif in Hungarian public discourse, often used as a sort of moral high ground over other nations. However, recent historiographical works offer a more critical and nuanced picture of the—not so innocent—relationship between Hungarian nationalism and colonialism using the approach of (post-)colonial theories and New Imperial History. The author draws on the work

of Trutz von Trotha,¹ Jürgen Osterhammel and Jan C. Jansen,² Clemens Ruthner,³ Ignác Romsics,⁴ Bálint Varga,⁵ Imre Tarafás⁶ and Zoltán Ginelli.⁷ Moreover, a great inspiration for the work of Csaplár-Degovics is the extensive research conducted by Imre Ress on Hungarian influence in the Balkans.⁸ Csaplár-Degovics honors his mentor, Ress, by dedicating the present volume to him.

The author provides an in-depth analysis of the development of Hungarian political thought on colonialism and imperialism, its individual and institutional actors, and its embeddedness into the international ‘cloud’ of imperial knowledge.⁹ Csaplár-Degovics has conducted extensive research, exploring previously unknown archival sources (using the collections of the Austrian State Archives, Hungarian State Archives, the State Archive in Rijeka, the Hungarian Natural History Museum, the Austrian National Library, as well as the National Széchényi Library in Budapest). At the same time, he provides a reinterpretation of already-known sources, reading them through the lens of New Imperial History. The author argues that creating a compilation—a (German–Hungarian) ‘colonial dictionary’—of Austria–Hungary would be of great importance for identifying colonial discourses in the written sources of the era. The narrative of the book is centered around two dominant historical figures: Benjámín (Béni) Kállay, Austro–Hungarian Minister of Finance and governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1882–1903), and the anglophile scholar, politician, lobbyist, and expert of Albanian lands, Ferenc (Franz) Nopcsa. The volume provides an analysis of their colonial endeavors, highlighting their substantial personal and institutional autonomy but also their intellectual environment consisting of colonial experts and propagandists. Subsequently, the author shows how their views on Austria–Hungary’s ‘civilizing mission’ were shaped by contemporary British, French, and Russian discourses on colonization. In doing so, he highlights how, Nopcsa and Kállay understood themselves as simultaneously officials and/or agents of the common empire and members of the Hungarian liberal political elite.

Through numerous case studies, Csaplár-Degovics’s work provides a detailed and nuanced analysis of imperial thought and its dynamically changing relation to Hungarian nationalism in the second half of the long nineteenth century. Inspired

1 von Trotha, “Colonialism.”

2 Osterhammel and Jansen, *Kolonialismus*.

3 Ruthner, “Habsburgs,” 2–14.

4 Romsics, *A magyar birodalmi*.

5 Varga, “A Magyar Birodalom,” 1187–206.

6 Tarafás, “Civilizáló gyarmat,” 57–75.

7 Ginelli, “Global Colonialism.”

8 E.g., Ress, “Bosznia-Hercegovina,” 73–103.

9 Kármán and Kreienbaum, “An Imperial Cloud,” 164–82.

by Hungarian liberalism and Austrian orientalism, but also by European colonial ideologies and practices, Kállay and his circle of subordinate clerks, as well as artists and scholars (Lajos Thallóczy, Mór Jókai, Henrik Marczali, etc.), envisioned the transition of the Kingdom of Hungary into a 'Hungarian Empire.' In their view, this profound but hidden transformation would secure Hungary's existence among the empires of Europe. This message is also implied in Mór Jókai's metaphorical-humorous novel *Kassári Dániel* (1890). The main protagonist of the piece is a modern, economically successful *bey* from Tuzla who integrates into the Hungarian *gentry* elite. According to Csaplár-Degovics, the above-mentioned novel reveals the importance of Bosnia and Herzegovina for imperial imaginaries of a future Hungary. As the hidden message in the novel reveals, the province should not be formally transformed into a colony—neither in Transleithania nor in Cisleithania—however, it has to be colonized, 'civilized,' and played into Hungarian hands.

Kállay's imperial vision did not receive unanimous support at the time of its formulation. The question of whether and under what moral and legal conditions the Kingdom of Hungary could participate in the occupation and annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina was often raised in the Hungarian parliament and press. In the Hungarian public, the pre-*Ausgleich* period (neo-absolutism and the Schmerling provisory) was widely seen as a sort of political and economic colonization of Hungary by Austria. The 'colonial exploitation' of Hungary was, according to the Independentists, still ongoing in the dualist period. Csaplár-Degovics's discourse analysis centers on the meanings of 'empire,' 'colony,' and 'imperialism' and reveals the transformation of opposition political thought regarding the occupation (1878) and annexation (1908) of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Whereas in the 1870s and 1880s, the opposition harshly opposed the rule of Hungarians over another nation, in 1908, politicians of the same political tradition almost unanimously demanded the direct annexation of the said provinces to the Kingdom of Hungary. Such a move, they believed, would shift the gravity of the Empire from Vienna towards Budapest. An important turning point in this ideological-political process of embracing imperialism is the 'colonial scandal' over Kállay's governance of Bosnia and Herzegovina in parliament in Budapest in 1900. The accusations of a Muslim delegation (conveyed by the MP Soma Visontai) about the alleged violation of church autonomy led to harsh criticism by the opposition regarding Bosnia-Herzegovina's status and demands for the establishment of its constitutional order and parliamentary representation. The critique of independentist MPs was directed towards the desirable 'export' of Hungarian political traditions to Bosnia, establishing a 'good despotism' instead of Kállay's 'bad despotism.' As Csaplár-Degovics points out, this momentum can be compared to the impeachment process of the general governor of Bengal, Warren Hastings (1788), in London. The persecution led by Edmund Burke did not succeed in impeaching Hastings. Nevertheless, Burke's thoughts on colonial rule

profoundly shaped the British Empire. Ultimately, as a result of the debate, the existence of the colonial state was differentiated from Hastings' 'bad practices.' Similarly, as consequence of the parliamentary debates in Budapest, the image of a 'Hungarian' Bosnia and Herzegovina was created, and rule over the province was accepted both by the government and the majority in opposition.

In the years after Benjámín Kállay's death (1903), the idea of the 'Hungarian Empire' became increasingly accepted among all major factions in Hungarian politics and the public. This, however, did not mean unconditional support for all colonial efforts of Austria-Hungary initiated by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Agenor Goluchowski (those in Rio de Oro and Tianjin), and the first decades of the twentieth century were marked by the increased interest of the Hungarian industrialists in the Balkans as well. Csaplár-Degovics highlights the developments in the years after Bosnia's annexation: the creation of the Privileged Agrarian and Commercial Bank of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1908) and its failed monopoly over the redemption of the *kmet* (serf) lands. The volume characterizes the associations the Hungarian Asia Company (Turan Association; 1910) and the Hungarian-Bosnian and Eastern Economic Association (1912) as institutionalized colonial interest groups. As the "Epilogue" shows, these emerging groups intended to extend their influence on the occupied territory of Serbia during World War I.

In the fifth and sixth chapters, the author deals with the 'Albanian policies' and the diplomatic and military 'Albanian actions' of the Dual Monarchy. Csaplár-Degovics highlights the participation of Hungarian individuals and associations in colonial endeavors there from 1896 (memorandum of Ferit bej Vlora, *Albanienkonferenz* in Vienna) until the birth of the new state (1912) and the beginning of the war. A chapter is dedicated to the adventurous life of Ferenc Nopcsa and his participation in the 'Albanian actions' of the Monarchy. Particular emphasis is put on his—sometimes troubled—relation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and his role as an expert on Albanian issues, as a politician (as a claimant of the Albanian throne in 1913), and even as a scholar (paleontologist, geographer, and ethnologist).

In conclusion, Krisztián Csaplár-Degovics has published a rich and thought-provoking volume, which reveals the complex relationship between Hungarian nationalism, Austro-Hungarian imperialism, and the dynamics between the Cisleithanian and Transleithanian 'sub-empires' through a series of well-written case studies. The monograph resolves the above-mentioned contradiction between the Hungarian anti-colonial discourse and somewhat hidden colonial practices by highlighting their embeddedness in broader Western and Eastern European contexts. However, one might miss a more detailed analysis of the discourses of non-Hungarian (especially South Slavic) national elites *within* the Kingdom of Hungary. This could have provided a more complex picture of the approaches to (Hungarian) colonialism of

the dualist era. Csaplár-Degovics presents parallel biographies of Hungarian and European politicians and experts serving comparable imperial projects and operating with such discourses (see the comparison of Kállay and Konstantin P. von Kaufman or of Nopcsa and Mary Edith Durham) and reveals how international colonial institutions directly influenced their (Austro-) Hungarian counterparts. The present volume can be characterized as a pioneering piece on the development of Hungarian imperial thought and informal and formal colonial practices in the Balkans. It provides a persuasive theoretical and conceptual framework for researching Hungarian imperial endeavors and highlights new research problems. The monograph, which will hopefully be translated into English, has tremendous potential to inspire further research by historians on the (Austro-)Hungarian imperial project and conceptual history within that context.

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