

## History Culture and Banal Nationalism in post-War Bosnia<sup>1</sup>

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### **ABSTRACT**

This article analyses post-war history culture in Bosnia and Herzegovina using the concept of banal nationalism. Through a description of Bosnia's post-war history culture – that part of public culture where people face the past in their daily lives, i.e. books, films, monuments, museums, buildings, pictures, photographs, plays and so forth – the article demonstrates the division of Bosnian history culture into three variants and analyzes the main characteristics of each variant.

The analysis shows that contrary to classical, more self-conscious forms of historical presentation such as museum exhibits, the past exists in post-war Bosnian society in a banal way. The article concludes that such a banal presence of history can have a strong impact on the identity and historical consciousness of Bosnians.

The presence of “history” took on a dramatic role in Bosnian society starting in the twilight years of the former Yugoslavia. The significant role that history plays in thinking about present-day Bosnia led British historian Noel Malcolm to argue for a general account of Bosnian history in the mid-1990s: not only was there a need to understand the origins of the fighting, but also “to dispel some of the clouds of misunderstanding, deliberate myth-making and sheer ignorance in which all discussion of Bosnia and its history has become shrouded” (1994/1996: xix).

This article approaches the presence of history in Bosnia with an emphasis on the post-war period (the Dayton Peace Agreement ending the war was signed in late 1995). The focus is on *history culture*. By history culture I refer to that part of public culture where people are confronted with claims about the past in their daily lives. It is important to see this in opposition to academic historical research: history culture embraces a much wider social arena within which people from all walks of life come to terms with the past and from which common understandings of history emerge. A focus on history culture includes examining the ways in which claims about the past are mediated within a field of cultural production, by looking at cultural artefacts such as books, films, monuments, museums, buildings, pictures, photographs, plays and so forth. In particular, this means paying attention to the symbolic content of such objects, understanding how particular meanings come to be associated with them, and makes possible an understanding of the mechanisms and avenues whereby knowledge about the

past is produced, transmitted, presented, used and experienced within a society.<sup>3</sup>

The analysis below will show that in contrast to more self-conscious, classical forms of historical representation (such as museum exhibits and history books), history mostly exists in post-war Bosnian society in a *banal* way. My understanding of “banal” here draws upon Michael Billig’s concept of “banal nationalism”. By banal nationalism, Billig refers to the ways in which a nation is symbolically “flagged” in the habitual, everyday life practices of ordinary people. This can encompass all sorts of public presentations, including flags, songs, stamps, banknotes and so forth. Although Billig developed the concept to analyse the presence of the nation in relatively stable Western societies, the idea of banality, the taken-for-granted nature of meanings that this concept refers to and which provides a continuous background for cultural production and political discourse, is a fitting characterization of presence of history in Bosnian society (1995: 6, 8, 37, 174).

The article will explore different forms of history culture.<sup>4</sup> First, I discuss the destruction and reconstruction of objects of historical heritage in Bosnia. I then analyse national symbols and their division. Third, I look at more traditional forms of history culture: museum exhibits and history books. Finally, as an example of the ways in which new narratives and understandings of history are being created, I shortly discuss tourist guides and street names. The article closes with remarks on how post-war Bosnian history culture is an example of banal nationalism, and discusses the possible effects this has on the changing historical consciousness and identity of Bosnians.

#### *The Destruction and Reconstruction of Physical Symbols*

One of the characteristics of the Bosnian war was the systematic destruction of mosques, churches, graveyards and other religious and cultural monuments in an attempt to erase the evidence of Bosnia’s rich, diverse heritage. The total number of destroyed objects has been estimated in several sources. According to (incomplete) data from the Institute for the Protection of the Cultural, Natural and Historical Heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1454 cultural monuments were destroyed or damaged. Of those, 1284 were Islamic sacred and other objects, 237 Catholic, and 30 Serbian Orthodox. Other figures cited refer to over 1100 destroyed mosques and Muslim buildings, over 300 Catholic churches and monasteries and 36 Serbian Orthodox churches (Bublin 1999: 243, Perry 2002: 2).<sup>5</sup>

Non-sacred structures were also targeted for their symbolic significance, including the Ottoman-era bridge in Mostar, Roman ruins, archives, libraries, and medieval and archaeological sites. In 1993, the Council of Europe reported that the destruction was increasingly focused on objects which symbolized Bosnia’s Ottoman heritage. The burning of the national and university library of Sarajevo constitutes perhaps the most notorious instance in which a cultural monument with enormous symbolic significance was destroyed. The destruction of two socialist-era skyscrapers in Sarajevo, the Unis towers, also carried special meaning. The towers were

known as Momo and Uzeir: the latter being a Muslim name, the former, a typically Serb name. The fact that nobody in Sarajevo could say which of the buildings was Momo and which was Uzeir symbolised the multi-national character of the city that was under attack during the war (Perry 2002: 2, Bublin 1999: 11, Riedlmayer 1995: 7-11, Kreševljaković 1996).<sup>6</sup>

The destruction was most organized and systematic in areas outside the war zones, where one national party and army had absolute control. One example is Banja Luka, the capital of the Serb Republic in Bosnia, where all sixteen historic mosques were destroyed. The place where the main mosque of Banja Luka – Ferhadija (dating from 1579) – once stood was turned into a car park after the mosque was destroyed in 1993. In 1998 a leading politician in Banja Luka claimed that he was deeply convinced that Ferhadija, as well as the other mosques in Banja Luka, had been destroyed by the Muslims themselves. Despite such statements, the rebuilding of Ferhadija began in 2001. This, however, sparked demands that archaeological excavations should first be made to determine whether there are remnants of previous structures (e.g. a Christian church) on the site (Lovrenović 2001: 204, 208-209, Perry 2002: 13, Bosnian Institute 1998, 20). In another instance of the sequence of destruction and production, (re)construction of a large Serbian Orthodox church began in 1993 on the site in the centre of Banja Luka where an Orthodox church had been built in the 1920s and then destroyed by the Ustasha in 1939.

This is just one instance of the destruction and “rewriting” of history in physical space that has taken place across Bosnia. In the areas under the control of Bosnian Croat forces, objects and sites with a centuries-old Islamic heritage were destroyed, including urban centres in Mostar, Stolac and Počitelj. In Bugojno, Bosniac authorities demolished a memorial built by Communist authorities after the Second World War on the site of a Muslim cemetery, which itself had been destroyed (Sells 1996: 104).<sup>7</sup> These attempts to change the symbolic and religious environment also entail claims about history. In many places, those who “won the peace” can create the new history culture as is happening in and around Sarajevo where, despite broad criticism, numerous enormous Wahhabi-style mosques typical of the Middle East have been erected.

Religious and cultural monuments and buildings represent the core of the multi-cultural heritage of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the systematic targeting of these objects was aimed at destroying the material, physical evidence of the past that they had come to symbolize. The systematic destruction of sites that are repositories of cultural and historical memory has in fact been seen as an underlying purpose of the genocide in Bosnia. The destruction of cities represents an attempt to destroy their distinctive image and their spirit. Terms such as ethnic and cultural cleansing, cultural genocide, warchitecture or urbicide have all been used to describe what happened (Riedlmayer 1995: 7-11, Vulliamy 1994: 356-357, Perry 2002: 2, Bublin 1999: 7).

As a result of this systematic destruction of religious objects as well as other historical monuments--the products of history culture--the post-war generation lives in many places without seeing an Ottoman minaret or a Bogomil tomb. “The tangible, visible and rich history of their people and its

strange hybrid culture down the centuries, of their curious and inimitable place at a fulcrum between the Orient and Western Europe” has been ruined (Vulliamy 1994: 356-357).

Bosniacs and others with a pro-Bosnian orientation have refused to accept the changes in the physical and symbolic space as inevitable. It is common for Sarajevans to criticise the new enormous mosques and describe in detail what is typical and characteristic for Bosnia (even though that might no longer be visible). Examples of the unwillingness to accept such changes include the sale in 2001 of postcards in East Mostar that display pre-war pictures of the traditional Mostar city centre. These images strongly contrast with the reality of Mostar’s cityscape in 2001, where the old urban centre lay nearly completely in ruins. The same is true of a post-war tourist publication entitled “Mostar. 99 Pictures” which favours pre-war representations over destroyed or damaged objects. For instance, the booklet includes several pictures of the famous bridge before it was shelled, reflecting a desire not to forget the past.

The significance of monuments and other forms of Bosnia’s pre-war history culture and national heritage was such that a special annex was created in the Dayton Peace Agreement. In Annex 8, officially titled the “Agreement on Commission to Preserve National Monuments”, the preservation of cultural heritage is given the same importance as the processes referred to in the other 11 annexes of the Dayton Agreement, which include provisions for elections, the composition of the military, human rights, and so forth. The purpose of the Annex has been to guarantee that the citizens of Bosnia have a right to reconstruct, rehabilitate and protect their national monuments. The regulations of the Annex, however, have only become part of real political work since 2002 (Perry 2002).

#### *The Division of National Symbols and Language*

Alongside the destruction and reconstruction of historical and cultural heritage, the country has seen the creation of new variants in Bosnia’s history culture. Namely, the new objects that have emerged from the field of cultural production are aimed to symbolize and promote the division of society into three nationally-defined groups. National symbols are understood here in a broad sense, based on the understanding of banal nationalism outlined above to include the numerous ways that claims about nationhood are “flagged” but which often go unnoticed (Billig 1995). In this section, I describe some of the symbols and claims characteristic of the Bosnian Serb, Bosnian Croat, and Bosniac variants of the country’s history culture.

Characteristic of the new Bosnian Serb history culture is the rejection of Bosnia and Herzegovina as a state and an emphasis on the Bosnian Serb Republic (RS), Serbia, and Yugoslavia. Bosnian flags and other official state symbols appear nowhere on the territory of the RS. For example in the autumn of 2001 at a border crossing between Bosnia (Serb Republic) and Croatia, the Serbian flag (old Yugoslav flag without the star) flew and the passport stamp bore no mention of Bosnia and Herzegovina, only the name of the border town written in the Cyrillic alphabet. At schools one finds maps on

the walls showing either the Serb Republic only, or the Serb Republic connected to Serbia with similar colours and the rest of Bosnia in a different colour so that it appears to be a different country. The same has been true for all sorts of products with maps: telephone cards, weather forecasts in newspapers and on the television channel of the Serb Republic. Schools in the RS are mostly named after Serbian national heroes, and pictures of these heroes and Serbian Orthodox saints often hang on school walls.

During the war, Serb paramilitary fighters in Croatia and Bosnia often referred to themselves as Chetniks (a term that was vilified under the socialist Yugoslav regime) and used a style of clothing inspired by fighters in the Second World War and in the Balkan Wars. Many Serb fighters grew beards as a badge of warrior hood (Rogel 1998: 49, Carmichael 2002: 42-46). Pictures of Chetnik leader Mihailović and the double eagle symbol associated with Serbdom have been on sale in Banja Luka, the capital of the Bosnian Serb Republic, on T-shirts, key holders, stickers and so forth.

Such symbols function to establish continuity between the old Yugoslavias and contemporary Serb culture. Another example is related to the national monuments that memorialise the past. In Banja Luka, polished sculptures of the partisan veterans of World War Two stand in one of the main squares of the town, referred as "national heroes". A few kilometres away, next to the railway station, stands a very similar-looking monument with the faces of Bosnian Serb "national heroes" from 1995. Thus, the memorialization of war heroism is used to draw a direct parallel between the anti-fascist partisan struggle in the Second World War and the struggle of Bosnian Serbs in the 1990s.

Among Bosnian Croats the new symbols of history culture followed the example set by "mother" Croatia. President Tudjman of the Republic of Croatia adopted harsh nationalistic rhetoric in the early 1990s, which was reflected in the symbols that appeared in parts of Bosnia in 1990s. His regime encouraged the public display of the *šahovnica*. Although this red and white checkerboard emblem dated back to the Middle Ages, it served more recently as the main symbol of the Ustasha movement and fascist state of Croatia during WWII. Similarly the name of the new currency, *kuna* (literally meaning marten), while dating back to the 13th and 14th centuries, was also used by the Ustasha state for its currency. Some Croat paramilitary forces also used black uniforms and other images which resembled Ustasha uniforms. Carlmichael has noted how in Croatia in the 1990s nearly every aspect of daily life became saturated with the new symbolism of the *šahovnica*, from chocolate boxes and recipe books to popular and folk music CDs (Donia, Fine 1994: 223,; Unwin, Hewitt 2001: 1009, Sells 1996: 62, Carlmichael 2002: 44, 48, 60).

These symbols were adopted by Bosnian Croats: Croat flags and *šahovnica* symbols appeared throughout Croat-dominated parts of Bosnia, in post offices, on telephone cards, restaurant walls, and street signs such that it has been hard to tell from what one sees that one is not in Croatia proper. By Billig's definition, the Croat nation has been "flagged" overwhelmingly in Bosnian Croat areas.

The third variant of Bosnia's changing history culture is characterised by its pro-Bosnian orientation. It is part of the daily life of Bosniacs and other

citizens of the country who share the multi-ethnic ideal. If Serbs are said to have mobilized Chetnik and royal Yugoslav symbols as well as 14th century myths, and Croats drawn upon the era of King Tomislav and the Ustasha state, the stereotype of the Bosnian variant (by “Bosnian” I refer to Bosniacs, people from other national groups who reject the claims of ethnic division, those of mixed origin and others with a pro-Bosnian orientation) is its multi-national, multi-religious, multi-cultural and tolerant tradition, particularly evident in the urban areas (Rogel 1998: 50). In areas where this variant is evident, school maps represent Bosnia as a unified state and official state symbols (flag, coat of arms and so forth) are widely displayed.

Characteristic of the symbols associated with this variant is that many of them were imposed. Billig has noted how each nation must adopt conventional “national” symbols (such as a flag and anthem) to promote itself as a legitimate member of the global family of nations. It is ironic that the banal symbols of a nation’s uniqueness are the basis of its claim to be like every other nation (Billig 1995: 85-86). As suggested above, these conventional symbols have been the most contested in Bosnia: in Bosnia’s Muslim-Croat Federation it took 32 months for politicians to agree on a flag and a coat of arms (Bennett 1997: 211). The flag for the state of Bosnia, as well as its national anthem (without lyrics) were imposed by the international community. The name of the Bosnian state currency also illustrates the lack of overt national symbolism: it is called the “convertible mark” for it was convertible 1:1 to the German mark prior to the introduction of the Euro (Robinson, Engelstoft, Pobric 2001: 970-971).

These symbols created for the Bosnian state are not as ubiquitous as the national symbols displayed in the Croat and Serb areas of Bosnia, yet they do appear in Bosniac-dominated areas and in areas under Bosnian state government control. State flags are required at the state borders and the buildings which house state institutions. In the late 1990s the imposed state flags were seen flying alongside RS flags in the Serb Republic and alongside illegal flags and emblems of Herceg-Bosna in the Croat-dominated cantons of the Federation. Typically, the often dirty and worn-out BiH state flag is of the same size or smaller than the “national flags”. The post-war situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina thus shows how the conventional symbols signifying the claim of a country to exist legitimately among other nations becomes problematic when the symbols are contested inside the country.

In established Western societies, flags are typically symbolic of an established order, while in places such as Northern Ireland or Palestine they can signal resistance or a claim to the control of territory (Billig 1995: 39, 41). This is also true for Bosnia: flags and other national symbols signal who controls the territory. Perhaps most strikingly, the visible national-religious symbols create and mark borders in Mostar. The Bosniac territory on the eastern side of the main road is marked by a long line of minarets built after the war. On the other side of the road an enormous Catholic cathedral under construction signals the beginning of Croat territory. In addition, the HDZ (Croatian Democratic Union) and HVO (Croatian Defence Council) installed an enormous cross in 2000 on the mountain overlooking the entire town (Bose 2002: 141-142).

Language has also been part of the nationally divided symbolic phenomena. The separation of what was a common standard language into three highlights the symbolic dimension of language as well as its communicative function (Baotić 2002: 157-159).

In the Serb Republic the use of the Cyrillic alphabet has made boundaries visible. This is because in Bosnia, where both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets were traditionally learned and used, the exclusive use of the Cyrillic alphabet (associated with Serbia) in signs, newspapers, and books – simply everywhere – has made the alphabet a marker of both national belonging and exclusion. We could say that in the post-war Bosnian context, language is a good example of how the field of the new history culture is filled with symbols used to signal national division.

The language question has also been central for Bosnian Croats, as the recent appearance of the “first daily newspaper in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the Croatian language” illustrates. Claims have been made that Bosniacs do not use proper Croatian in the Federation administration, and accusations have been levelled that Bosniacs want Croats to speak the “Bosniac language” (*Bošnjacki jezik*), a pejorative expression referring to the term “Bosniac” that Bosnian Muslims adopted to refer to their nationality. Bosniacs themselves usually refer to their language as “Bosnian” (*Bosanski jezik*). Typical of Croat language policy has been the reintroduction of words that had been forgotten during the Communist period or the creation of totally new “Croatian” alternatives to words already in common use (Juka 2001: 6, Husić 1999: 19).

The Bosniac reaction to the language-nationalism of Croats and Serbs has been two-fold. Some have started promoting the idea of a Bosnian language different from Serbian and Croatian, while the majority typically refers to all three official languages of Bosnia (Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian) as “the same language”. A number of new reference books and textbooks on the Bosnian language have been published which try to establish the features of the language as distinct in its history and specific grammar rules. The use of Turkish words and expressions has also become more emphasised among some Bosniacs (see e.g. Isaković 1992, Isaković 1995, Jahić 2000a, Jahić 2000b, Jahić, Halilović, Palić 2000, Husić 1999).

#### *Forgotten Museums and Exhibitions*

Museums and exhibitions can be seen as classical forms of celebrating and remembering the past. Before the war most museums in Bosnia and Herzegovina had regular exhibitions, active research programs, and on-going ethnographic projects and archaeological excavations. During the war, museums were usually not the targets of warfare, but did suffer from poor environmental conditions.<sup>8</sup> In the post-war period, however, an atmosphere of indifference and uncertainty as to what to do with the past seems characteristic of the changes in history culture with regard to museums. This has been exacerbated by the lack of material support (which of course appears partly to reflect the lack of public and political interest). For example, the National Museum in Sarajevo, which houses valuable collections, has been without heat since the beginning of the war and became

a topic of a public discussion in 2001. Recently the museum had to be closed since there were no funds to pay the staff. The situation has been similar with other museums. For instance, the Sarajevo City Museum lost most of its buildings, and only one traditional Bosnian house remains on display. According to the director of the museum, the building is mainly visited by foreigners (Seksan 2001: 45-46).

In 1990, Sarajevo's "Museum of Revolution" was turned into the "Historical Museum". It has no permanent collection on display but has hosted several exhibitions. These include "Bosnia and Herzegovina in the 19th century" and "One hundred years of stamped money in Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Seksan 2001, 47). The titles of the exhibitions suggest that they have not been designed to provoke much collective interest in or feeling for the past.

The post-war political and national atmosphere has naturally created additional difficulties. As with the Museum of Revolution, the Museum of the Sarajevo Assassination (formerly the Museum of Mlada Bosna and Gavrilo Princip, the assassin of Franz Ferdinand in 1914) will most likely never be restored to its original form. The exhibits of the museums have been regarded as too "pro-Serb" in their presentation.<sup>9</sup> The most notorious exhibit, the statue of Gavrilo Princip, was removed from the centre of Sarajevo already under Tito because it was seen as a symbol of Serb nationalism. A plan exists to return the statue at least to the city museum, but no official decisions have been made (Seksan 2001: 46).

During the war, the museums in present-day RS tended to display exhibits on loan from institutions in Belgrade, a shift in orientation that reflected the changing national and political situation. After the war, museum staff in the RS said they had preserved everything from the pre-war collections. Comments from the director of the former "Liberation War Museum" in Foča (renamed "Srbinje" by Bosnian Serb authorities) perhaps reflect the general attitude regarding museums in the RS after the war: he said he would never use objects from pre-war collections because the ideology had changed. At the same time, he said that the old collections were completely preserved and he would give them to anyone who would like to use them.<sup>10</sup>

The atmosphere of indifference and uncertainty as to what to do with the past has also characterised relations towards the recent past. One new museum in Sarajevo, the Tunnel Museum, was built on the site of the entrance to the tunnel which ran under the airport to the besieged city during the war. The museum includes a short part of the original tunnel and plenty of information and material related to the tunnel's use, which was extremely important to Sarajevans during the war. So far the Tunnel Museum has been maintained by a private family who make their living from it. The state has provided no support and the tunnel's other entrance is used as a private garage.

To my knowledge, no great interest in the recent or distant past exists in the form of exhibitions, museums, or memorial days. The three national groups do not differ greatly in this respect.

Books on general history are also not widely read. In the capital city of Croatian Bosnia, Mostar, the selection of history books in the main



bookstore in the summer of 2003 included a series of general history books of *Croatia* meant for a large audience, all published between 1998 and 2000 in Croatia (Bilandžić 1999, Matković 1998, Matković 1999, Matković, Trumbetaš 2001, Pavličević 2000).

A recent visit to the main bookstore of “Serb Sarajevo” (Srpsko Sarajevo) showed only one book dealing with history, *The History of Serb Culture*, an English account of the cultural history of Serbs in general (not Bosnian Serbs in particular). In the introduction to the book, the editor writes about “hundreds of thousands of Serbs from Croatia and Bosnia finding refuge in Yugoslavia”, about “the third genocide of Serbs in the 20th century”, and how the book was to respond to “a wave of denials of Serbian spiritual achievements and to the satanisation of Serbs”. The only general historical account of Bosnia I managed to find in Serb-majority areas is written in the Cyrillic alphabet and called *The History of Bosnia*. Although it was published in Banja Luka in 1999 with a contemporary cover design, the book is actually a reprint of a book published by the Serbian Royal Academy in 1940 (Ćerović 1940 [1990]).

Several Bosnia-orientated books have been published about the general history of Bosnia and for these books there seems to be the greatest public demand (Hadžihuseinović 1878/1999, Džemaludin 1998, Bosanski kulturni centar 1994/1998, Bojić 2001). Yet even these do not seem to be of any significant interest for the greater Bosnian population judging from the lack of public discussions, and the dearth of book store selections and copies on people’s bookshelves.

#### *New History Culture through Guides and Names*

Finally, we can look at two forms from the field of historical cultural production which illustrate the change that has taken place in Bosnia in last ten years: tourist guides and place and street names.

The greatest change has taken place in the materials on Banja Luka (capital of the Serb Republic). A guide from 1984 presents a multi-ethnic city, which is emphasised through pictures of mosques, and Orthodox and Catholic churches. One of the mosques is said to be among the most beautiful in the whole of Yugoslavia, and the story of the history of the city through different periods (Turkish rule, Austro-Hungarian times, royal Yugoslavia) closely resembles the story of Sarajevo as presented in the brochures of the 1990s. The coat of arms on the cover includes a stilicised mosque together with a red star. The introduction states that “Serbs, Muslims, Croats and members of other peoples and nationalities of Yugoslavia all live and work there equally” thus echoing a typically Bosnian multi-national ethos (Turistkomerc 1984: 7, 13-16, 51-52, 57-58).

The new Banja Luka tourist guide published in 2000 concentrates on presenting the city as the cultural and political centre of the Serb Republic and mentions Bosnia and Herzegovina only once, when stating that Banja Luka is the second largest city in Bosnia. In contrast to the guidebook from 1984, the historical-cultural dimension of the presentation of Banja Luka has given way to a focus on the future:

These days, Banja Luka rises up in its full beauty, rapidly trying to compensate for what has been lost. This is the town of young people where youth has a very important role in all segments of the society. They are trying to forget all bad things from the past and turn to the future. BL will step into the 21st century as the main town of Republic of Srpska and the center of the crossing of roads in this part of Europe (*Banja Luka*, 2000: 5).

Historical developments are described with new opinions about the nature of the different periods. “The dark period of Banja Luka’s history” is seen as having started with the Turkish capture in 1528. “Almost four centuries of the cruelest occupation and exploitation together with the most brutal terror of domestic population kept Banja Luka underdeveloped territory until the end of 19th century.” The tone is different when describing the Serb rule: “During the Kingdom of Karadorđević dynasty, Banja Luka got its most beautiful buildings and became the Beauty of Krajina.” During the Second World War, the German army and the Ustasha are said to have killed almost a million people, predominantly Serbs, in concentration camps (the entire death toll in Yugoslavia during WWII has been estimated to be 600,000, of whom about a half were Serbs). There is no mention of Chetniks, as was the case in the guidebook published in 1984. The recent war is only referred to in one sentence: “After the latest war and disintegration of Yugoslavia, Banja Luka is the capital of Republic of Srpska and is developing rapidly as a cultural, industrial and economic center important in this area especially in the beginning of new era” (ibid: 11, 13, 15). Overall, a selective historical approach to and ignorance (or wilful forgetting?) of the past and forward-looking attitude is characteristic of the guide.

The unimportance of history is also clear when the guide mentions historical objects, how “frequent wars took a toll together with the great earthquake in 1969 so there are not many old buildings that will greet 2000 . . . soon . . . Orthodox temple of Jesus the Savior which was destroyed by ustašas in 1942, will be erected on the site of the original.” The guide also presents small Orthodox churches from the 18th and 19th centuries which appeared nowhere in the guide of 1984. The buildings from the Turkish period are not mentioned at all, as though they had never existed in Banja Luka (ibid: 17, 19).

The tourist guides of Sarajevo have not undergone such major changes. They concentrate slightly more on the Turkish-Bosnian tradition, and the Orthodox icons are not as widely presented in the 1990s as in the 1980s. Generally, however, the nature of the guide is similar in its presentation of Sarajevo as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious city. In Mostar, the Bosniac-dominated East Mostar continues to present the entire city in ways similar to before the war, while West Mostar concentrates on that side only and mentions nothing of the Turkish-built old city of Mostar at all (Turiskomerc 1986, Husedžinović 2001, *Mostar. 99 pictures*. Mostar, published in the late 1990s).

The names of places and cities have similarly gone through a great change. The town of Foča that is located in the Serb Republic is now called Srbinje (meaning “Serb place”) by the Serb authorities and on official maps

of the RS. A 15-member commission consisting of artists, writers and historians renamed 403 of 1044 streets in Sarajevo after the war. Names referring to Marxism and Communism and to supporters of the Yugoslavian communist regime mainly disappeared, replaced by names associated with key events and individuals from the Ottoman period and, to a lesser extent, from the Austro-Hungarian period (Robinson, Engelstoft, Pobric 2001: 966-968). The main street remains named after Marshal Tito. In Bosniac-dominated East Mostar, most of the street names have remained the same, and the street of Marshal Tito still exists. In Croat-dominated West Mostar, the street names resemble those in Zagreb, the capital of Croatia proper. In post-war Banja Luka, the tendency to replace Communist names with those of Serb national heroes is reflected in the change of Marshal Tito Street into Skendera Kulenovica or Kralja Petra Karadordevica Streets, and V. I. Lenin Street to Vuk Karadžić Street. Generally, all Muslim names have been removed from the city map of Banja Luka. As one of the new names, we find the historically-loaded "Detainees of Jasenovac" referring to the Ustasha-held Jasenovac concentration camp during the WWII (Maps used: *Mostar et ses environs. Petites monographies Touristiques Numéro 9*. Zagreb 1985, *Mostar Plan grada/City map*. No date specified, post-war period, Torsti 2002, *Banja Luka and its surroundings. Pocket guides for tourists number 94*. Zagreb 1984, *Banja Luka 2000. sa preporukom*. Banja Luka 2000).

#### *Practical Consequences of Banal History Culture*

This article has outlined the dramatic change Bosnia's history culture has undergone in the last ten years, and the countless ways in which the past is present in the public sphere. Regarding history culture in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina, we can conclude certain tendencies. Among Bosnian Serbs, the symbols drawn from the past are mobilized to make claims in the present. The selective remembering and forgetting of the past is also characteristic, as is an orientation towards the future which is at-times ahistorical in nature. Among Bosnian Croats, claims about language and the construction of new buildings to signal a Croatization of public space have both been instrumental in creating a separate history culture. Bosniacs, on the other hand, do not seem as concerned to create a new, separate variant in Bosnia's history culture, and many of the new objects from the field of cultural production that they use are imported or imposed by outsiders. It is ironic that while Bosniacs are unwilling to accept the changes in history culture, many have adopted symbols of the state which have little significance. The new history and language books are part of this same phenomenon; they build a foundation for the legitimate place for Bosnia, Bosniacs, and Bosnians among the global family of nations.

However dramatic the changes and all-inclusive the presence of the past in the national division of Bosnia's history culture, it appears more in banal, everyday forms rather than as the result of active interest. Indeed, from the destruction and reconstruction of objects and sites of cultural heritage, to changes in forms that constitute the context for everyday life practices and such "unhistorical" cultural products as tourist guides or street names, the past is present in people's lives in banal forms instead of a more explicit

curiosity in the classic representations of history such as museum exhibits or history books. In fact, the so-called 'ethno-histories' and school history textbooks seem the only official or conscious examples of an aggressive use of history.<sup>12</sup> All other aspects related to the dramatic process of constructing three separate variants within Bosnia's history culture can be characterised as banal nationalism. The concept of banal nationalism seems to describe well the way the Bosnians relate to the past through language, symbols, physical environment and other "flaggings" of the nation and the past in their daily lives.

This has resulted from a failure to deal with the past, and leads to the dramatic changes that Bosnians' *historical consciousness* has undergone in both form and content. By "historical consciousness" I mean the orientation that humans have with time, the relation between experience and expectation. It connects the understanding of the past to the experience of the present and expectations about the future. Thus, history culture is central to the processes by which humans and societies construct their historical consciousness (Torsti 2003:50-52).

This article has described the aggressive changes to Bosnia's physical and symbolic environment and shown how everything is divided into three. Serb-dominated areas celebrate Serbian symbolism, Bosnian Croat areas associate with the symbolism of Croatia--and increasingly of Herzegovina--while Bosniacs and other Bosnians try to get used to celebrating symbols mainly imposed as part of the Dayton Agreement and other international decisions. Lovrenović has analysed the change from the Bosnian perspective: "To be Bosnian was to have a feeling for otherness, for the different as part of the daily reality of one's most personal environment. It was this experience of the different that made it possible to be Bosnian. In the new territorialisation, grown from the poison of chauvinism, Bosnians have ceased to be Bosnian and become just Bosniac Muslims, Serbs and Croats" (Lovrenović 2001: 209-210).

Perry argues that the protection of national monuments and cultural heritage in a multi-ethnic society is important and controversial precisely because "it cuts to the core of regional identities, fear of 'the other', and the development of people's narrative of the past, as well as their vision of the future" (Perry 2002: 2). The construction of historical consciousness is based on the visible representations of national heritage (or the lack thereof) and therefore the protection of national monuments and cultural heritage is at the heart of constructing historical consciousness. Similarly we can assume that, just as destroying a mosque greatly injures and influences Bosniac historical consciousness, so the reconstruction of that mosque at twice its original size has significant meaning for the construction of Serb historical consciousness. In fact, it can be assumed that the process whereby the historical consciousness of the three communities is divided intensifies with the (re)building of new physical surroundings and the creation of new symbolism. If we understand historical consciousness to be the orientation that humans have with time, as the relation between experience and expectation, Bosniac dominance in Sarajevo continues to grow as other nationalities leave and do not return. Because the physical appearance of the city differs from what it used to be, claims about Sarajevo's multi-ethnic

character are unconvincing for many Serbs, who no longer feel historically connected with the city. Over time, they can come to expect that this will not change in the future. A similar process is true for hundreds of thousands of Bosnians from the areas now controlled by the Serbs (mainly Croats and Bosniacs), who still live “displaced” from their pre-war homes and whose slow return has been one of the greatest failures of the Bosnian peace process.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The official name of the country in English is ‘Bosnia and Herzegovina’. In this article ‘Bosnia’ and the abbreviation ‘BiH’ are used as synonyms for the official name of the country.
- <sup>3</sup> I have developed the definition for history culture in greater detail elsewhere. See Torsti 2003: 47-50.
- <sup>4</sup> The article is based on part of a broader study in which I analysed the history textbooks used in post-war Bosnia and Herzegovina by the three national communities (Serbs, Croats and Bosniacs) and the ideas about history carried by the young people studying those textbooks. The general presence of history and history culture was discussed as part of that study to contextualise and give background for the other analyses. See Torsti 2003.
- <sup>5</sup> Other reports of the Council of Europe and the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM) compiled in 1993–1997 on the war damage to cultural heritage list dozens of examples of destruction and demonstrate the significance and magnitude of the devastation. The ECMM reports concentrated only on sacred buildings, while the Council of Europe defined cultural heritage to include “monuments, historic towns and districts, vernacular heritage, both rural and urban, art galleries and museums, libraries and archives”. See *Information Reports on war damage to the cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, presented by the Committee on Culture and Education. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe* (Strasbourg) ADOC6756, February 1993; ADOC6869, July 1993; ADOC6904, September 1993; ADOC7133, August 1994; ADOC7308, May 1995; ADOC7464, January 1996; ADOC7740, January 1997 and *Cultural Heritage Report Nos 1–5 on the situation in Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina*. European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM). Humanitarian sector (Zagreb 1995 and 1996). These are not separately listed in the bibliography of this article.
- <sup>6</sup> Also *Second Information Report on war damage to the cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, presented by the Committee on Culture and Education. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg), ADOC6869. July 1993, 26. *Third Information Report on war damage to the cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, presented by the Committee on Culture and Education. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg) ADOC6904. September 1993, 5.
- <sup>7</sup> *Seventh Information Report on war damage to the cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, presented by the Committee on Culture and Education.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe ADOC7308 (Strasbourg May 1995), 39.

- <sup>8</sup> *Tenth Information Report on war damage to the cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, presented by the Committee on Culture and Education. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, ADOC7740 (Strasbourg January 1997), 13–14.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ninth Information Report on war damage to the cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, presented by the Committee on Culture and Education. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, ADOC7464 (Strasbourg January 1996), 11.
- <sup>10</sup> *Tenth Information Report on war damage to the cultural heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina*, presented by the Committee on Culture and Education. Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, ADOC7740 (Strasbourg January 1997), 14–15.
- <sup>12</sup> As one example of the new historiography developed and characterised as “ethno history” we can mention the work of Bosnian Muslim historians who have been keen to analyse the origins of Muslims and their nation-building. One of their common theories is the historically untenable Bogomil-theory. On the other hand, Serb historical sources portray the Bosnian Muslims as the offspring of Serbs who were Islamised during the Ottoman period, and Muslims are blamed for believing the wrong faith and betraying their ancestors 500 years ago. I have analysed the history textbooks elsewhere. See Torsti 2003.

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