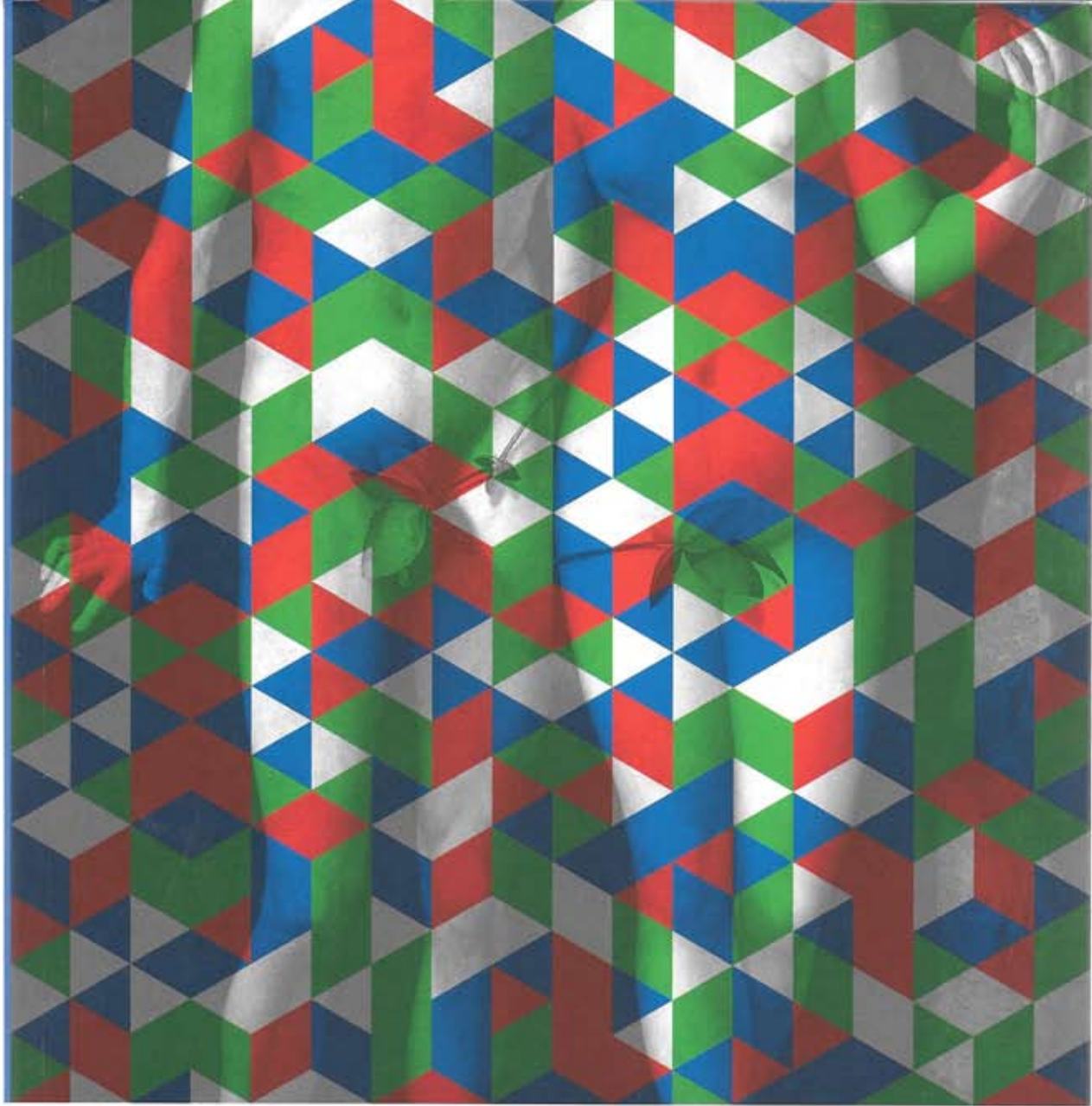


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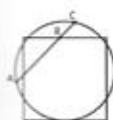
## The Limits of Heritage

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# Anti “Aura”: The Use of Heritage in the Politics of the Yugoslav Wars (1991–1999 (2004))

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## On “Aura” and Reproduction

Every historical object can be instrumentalised as heritage. Therewith, the historical object becomes particularly attractive for political purposes. The significant precondition for the instrumentalisation of historical objects as heritage consists in their disengagement from the historical context. The U.S.-American historian David Lowenthal distinguishes between the ideal “of history as universal, and universally accessible” normative within the “global community of scholars” on the one hand, as well as history, “tribal, exclusive, patriotic, redemptive, or self-aggrandising,” which he denotes as heritage “masquerading as history” on the other hand.<sup>1</sup>

The reproduction of historical objects in large quantities in a random context and for an arbitrary purpose and, therefore, their charging with symbolical meaning is a significant feature of their instrumentalisation. This applies as well for historical objects during the wars in the former Yugoslavia from 1991–1999 (2004).<sup>2</sup> It is to be emphasised that the reproduction of historical objects as heritage can secure or endanger these objects when attributing them with meaning. Depending on the particular perspective of the warring parties, the meaning of historical objects created in that way let them appear either as worth being protected or destroyed.

Historical objects – works of art count as such – have (or had), as Walter Benjamin in his eminent essay “The Work of Art in the Age of

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1 David Lowenthal, *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*, Cambridge 1998, p. 120.

2 I refer to the war in Croatia (1991–1995), Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992–1995) and Kosovo (1998/1999) as well as to the anti-Serbian riots in Kosovo in 2004.

Mechanical Reproduction” argues, an “Aura.” The essential requirements for the existence of “Aura” related to a work of art according to Benjamin are authenticity, “unique existence” and the imbeddedness of the specific object in a traditional context: “The uniqueness of a work of art is inseparable from its being imbedded in the fabric of tradition.” The prostitution and adoration of the historical object, initially in the religious and later the aesthetic ritual, provided the context described by Benjamin as the “fabric of tradition.” Technical reproduction as a modern phenomenon, however detached the work of art from this traditional context, made the latter become ever arbitrary. The “here and now” of the original became obsolete – the “Aura” of the historical object, therefore, was destroyed.<sup>3</sup>

Benjamin’s concept of the “Aura” has been criticised for its confined approach to the modalities of presentation and reproduction of a work of art. Moreover, it remains unclear in Benjamin’s theory if “Aura” is a specific “configuration of the quality of the object” or, on the contrary, a certain “mode of experience of the subject.” The vague theoretical foundation of Benjamin’s concept of the “Aura” on diverse philosophic traditions on the one hand as well as on mythical-religious thinking on the other hand, also seems problematic.<sup>4</sup> The definition of the “Aura” by Benjamin as: “the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch”<sup>5</sup> in its imagery is, finally, poetic rather than scientific, more esoteric than exoteric.

Although Benjamin concedes that “the work of art has always been reproducible”<sup>6</sup> his essay lacks consequent reflection on the phenomenon of reproduction itself. Reproduction in Benjamin’s essay appears to be constricted to its technical aspects. This theoretical constriction finally

3 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, Paris 1936. I refer to the English translation of the text in: Craig Calhoun, *Classical Sociological Theory*, Massachusetts 2009, pp. 362–384. Benjamin explicitly used the term “historical object” as a category in which a work of art is included (*ibidem*, p. 366).

4 Peter M. Spangenberg, “Aura,” in: *Ästhetische Grundbegriffe. Historisches Wörterbuch in sieben Bänden*, eds. Karlheinz Barck et al., vol. 1, Stuttgart 2000, pp. 400–416, here pp. 404, 411.

5 W. Benjamin, *The Work of Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 366.

6 *Ibidem*, p. 363.

provides the basis for Benjamin's critique of photography and film as the modern media of reproduction. By doing so, however, Benjamin disregards the fact that already the pure existence of an arbitrary object in the perception of an arbitrary subject depends on the more or less complete reproduction of the object during the process of its perception.<sup>7</sup> Every kind of communication of the object, be it by text or image, be it in the religious, the aesthetical, the political or simply the trivial daily ritual, is in effect a specific reproduction of the object itself. This process, as such, provides the object with "Aura" as a certain form of meaning. Technical reproduction, thereby, is only one aspect of reproduction itself. Without reproduction – no matter which *modus* of it – something like Benjamin's "Aura" cannot possibly emerge at all, let alone that the concept of the authenticity of the object; its presence and "unique existence" would imply no meaning without its opposite: the copy, the absence, the duplication.

This basic semiotic assumption coincides with the acknowledged traditional construction of the meaning of "Aura" "on the basis of a sensual experience immediately attributed with meaning" as Peter M. Spangenberg suggests. "Aura," therefore, is precisely not a "configuration of the quality of the object," but comes into being "because of the social role in which the auratic object is embedded."<sup>8</sup>

In this understanding I will use the term "Aura" hereafter. The term of "reproduction," however, I will apply in the broadest extent of its meaning. All operations in which the historical object is communicated will be henceforth referred to as reproduction of the object. This applies to mental, textual and pictorial reproductions in private as well as in public space. I certainly do not understand the phenomenon of reproduction with Benjamin confined to its technical aspects. Arbitrary historical objects are provided with "Aura" as a particular form of meaning in social operations by manifold forms of reproduction in an ever-changing context.

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7 "The dynamic act of recognition implies a fulfillment which appears to us as an attribution of meaning to the object which constitutes itself during perception" (Umberto Eco, *Zeichen*, Frankfurt am Main 1977, p. 135). "The real things have at least no meaning as long as they are not perceived in a society as autonomous objects and therefore become nameable cultural entities" (Ugo Volli, *Semiotik*, Tübingen and Basel 2002, p. 28).

8 P. M. Spangenberg, "Aura," *op. cit.*, here p. 401.

This application of Benjamin's concept of the "Aura" admittedly shows certain contiguity to other forms of attribution of meaning to historical objects. Using a concrete example I will address this issue more precisely.

### The "Auratisation" of Objects during the Greek War of Independence, 1821–1829

One of the examples of the technical reproduction of antique works of art, which could barely have escaped Benjamin's notice, is Johann Joachim Winckelmann's writing "Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works in Painting and Sculpture" of 1756. Depicting therein the Laocoön Group as the sublime expression of the "soul" of ancient Greek works of art, Winckelmann outlines the idea of their later often-quoted alleged virtue of "Stille Einfalt und edle Größe" (silent naivety and noble magnitude).<sup>9</sup> But what else, can be asked, is this poetical attribution if not the impact of an "Aura" that Winckelmann, in the literal sense of the word, ascribes to ancient works of art?

Although still without images, Winckelmann's reproduction of antique works of art in the form of printed text is of a technical nature. But already his "History of Ancient Art"<sup>10</sup>, which followed "Thoughts on the Imitation..." in 1764, displayed (printed) images of antique works of art as well, and therewith made its reception more comfortable. These – technical – reproductions, however, have considerably contributed to the "Auratisation" of the selected works of art. Particularly meaningful against this backdrop is that Winckelmann even derived his imagination of democracy from ancient Greek works of art, taking the democratic organisation of the Greek polis as a necessary and basic condition for the specific appearance of the ancient Greek works of art which he saw as exemplary for art. The impact of this concept was obviously enormous in pre-revolutionary Europe: "Not only antiquaries but nearly all of educated Europe was captured by Winckelmann's thoughts."<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der Griechischen Werke in der Malerey und Bildhauerkunst*, Dresden and Leipzig 1756, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Johann Joachim Winckelmann, *Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums*, Dresden 1764.

<sup>11</sup> Raimund Wünsche, "Antiken aus Griechenland – Botschafter der Freiheit," in: *Die Erträumte Nation / Griechenlands Wiedergeburt im 19. Jahrhundert*, eds. Reinhard Heydenreuter et al., München 1993, pp. 9–46, here p. 12.

Another example for the “Auratisation” of antique Greek works of art through textual and figurative – thus technical – reproduction can be found in James Stuart’s and Nicholas Revett’s “Antiquities of Athens and Other Monuments of Greece,” of which the first edition was published in London in 1762. Stuart and Revett, therewith, became the fathers of English Philhellenism.<sup>12</sup> The “Antiquities...” were published again, not without reason, in 1825, about halfway through the Greek insurgency against the Ottoman administration of Greece which lasted from 1821 to 1829 and resulted in Greek independence. The Greek works of art were provided with “Aura” in the narratives of European nobles, diplomats, adventurers and mercenaries to such an extent that Swiss, German and English Philhellenes, the English Poet George Gordon Byron amongst them, flocked to Greece to fight on the side of the Greek insurgents driven by the romantic idea of unchaining the ancient prototype of Europeans from the barbaric Turkish “Yoke.” The idea of the Greek Nation as an import from Western Europe<sup>13</sup> is not imaginable without the technical reproduction of antique works of art and the “Aura” attributed to them in that way. The “Bavarian Pericles,”<sup>14</sup> King Ludwig I, who, by the intermediation of Greek antiquities, was an excited Philhellene, supplied these *Greeks in the making* with money and troops. He deployed “the first official intervention force emanating from a nation state”<sup>15</sup> to Greece. Ludwig’s second-born son, Otto, soon after became the first Bavarian-Greek King.

The Greek insurrection is an early example of the “Auratisation” of historical objects by their reproduction in various forms of media and their enactment not only as the heritage of Greece but of the whole of civilised Europe. Even a military intervention resulted from its political instrumentalisation. Anyway, Greece owes its first law on monument protection to these special circumstances.<sup>16</sup>

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12 Ibidem, p. 15.

13 Constantine Tsoukalas, “European Modernity and Greek National Identity,” in: *Journal of Southern Europe and the Balkans* 1 (1999), pp. 7–13, here p. 8.

14 R. Wünsche, “Antiken aus Griechenland,” op. cit., p. 29.

15 Reinhard Heydenreuter, “Die erträumte Nation: Griechenlands Staatswerdung zwischen Philhellenismus und Militärintervention,” in: *Die Erträumte Nation / Griechenlands Wiedergeburt im 19. Jahrhundert*, ed. id. et al., München 1993, pp. 47–77, here p. 55.

16 The architect Franz Karl Leopold von Klenze issued this law by order of King Ludwig I in 1834 to counter the complete destruction of the ancient buildings at the Acropolis (R. Wünsche, “Antiken aus Griechenland,” op. cit., p. 44).



I admit that the applied concept of the "Aura" by Walter Benjamin may, in connection with the depicted historical events, suggest different interpretive schemes. The central question is to what extent Benjamin's "Aura" can be distinguished from other interpretive models. The influence that, for instance, the theological discourse had on Benjamin's philosophy can hardly be ignored. Under the surface of this discourse lies the doctrine of transubstantiation as well as the dispute on the meaning of the words "*Hoc est (enim) corpus meum*"<sup>17</sup>. Both transubstantiation and Eucharistic controversy have had a strong influence on the discourse of fine arts ever since. Moreover, against the backdrop of the immanent political character of Benjamin's essay, intended to criticise the self-fashioning gesture of the German National Socialists, the question can be raised to what extent Benjamin's text can be read even in the context of the "nationalisation of the religion," and accordingly, the "sacralisation of the nation."<sup>18</sup> Considering this, Benjamin's essay reveals itself to be an attempt to formulate an answer to the semiotic question as such. The specific problem still constitutes the central issue of the theological, scientific as well as philosophic discourse. The crux of the matter lies in a twofold question: Of which reality is the *thing* (*significate*) present in the actual *object* (*signifier*) and how does this presence come into reality?<sup>19</sup> From this very object arises Spangenberg's critique of the vague theoretical foundation of Benjamin's concept of the "Aura" which is based on diverse philosophic traditions and mythical-religious thinking. Benjamin implicitly addressed a central and common problem for the aforementioned discourses, and thereby his essay shows strong influence by these discourses and *vice versa*.

Based on the attribution of meaning to Greek historical works of art throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries I have expressed my dissent with Benjamin's thesis which says that the (technical) reproduction destroys the "Aura" of a historical object. I have claimed *au contraire* that the specific object through the process of reproduction is provided with "Aura." I have referred to the latter as a certain form of meaning.

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17 Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22; Lu 22:19; 1 Cor 11:23-24.

18 Martin Schulze Wessel, ed., *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa*, Stuttgart 2006.

19 Hans Belting, *Das echte Bild: Bildfragen als Glaubensfragen*, München 2006, pp. 86-93, 133-137, 168-172. Also: U. Eco, *Zeichen*, op. cit., and U. Volli, *Semiotik*, op. cit.

However, the significant events of the eighteenth and nineteenth century in Greece as well as in Europe in general have been described in detail by various authors addressing the phenomenon of European nationalism. Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* and Eric J. Hobsbawm's *Nations and Nationalism* are perhaps the most well-known amongst numerous works on nationalism.<sup>20</sup> Both Anderson and Hobsbawm have addressed the Greek example explicitly. Hobsbawm, in the meantime, characterises nationalism as a civic religion.<sup>21</sup> Martin Schulze Wessel speaks in this context of an "analogy in the structure as a result of the transfer of the religious idea from the salvation mediating character of a religious community to the political community of a nation."<sup>22</sup> The different authors gathered in Schulze Wessel's anthology on nationalism in Eastern Europe prove this thesis right by giving examples from Germany, Poland, Russia, Romania and the Ukraine. In some of the papers it becomes obvious that collective memory needs a historical object to materialise itself. The German "Wartburg," the shrines of Polish saints or the memorial for the Polish poet and national hero Adam Bernard Mickiewicz (1798–1855) erected at a churchyard<sup>23</sup> appear to be objects of the "nationalisation of the religion" or the "sacralisation of the nation." The same applies for some Ukrainian sermons and whole ethnic groups whose way to form a nation state has been described by nationalists as an analogy to the Passion of Christ.<sup>24</sup>

On the basis of these examples we are able to recognise that the attribution of meaning to identical objects can be undertaken in different discourses. The question as to whether we are concerned in a specific case with sacralisation, nationalisation, "auratisation" or any other interpretation of a historical artefact, therefore, can only be answered if we

20 Benedict Anderson, *Die Erfindung der Nation / Zur Karriere eines folgenreichen Konzepts*, Frankfurt am Main 1993; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nationen und Nationalismus: Mythos und Realität seit 1780*, Frankfurt am Main and New York 2005.

21 E. J. Hobsbawm, *Nationen und Nationalismus*, op. cit., p. 103

22 M. Schulze Wessel, ed., *Nationalisierung der Religion*, op. cit., p. 8.

23 Stefan Laube, "Nationaler Heiligenkult in Polen und Deutschland," in: *Nationalisierung der Religion*, op. cit., pp. 31–49.

24 John-Paul Himka, "The Place of Religion in the Ukrainian National Revival," in: *Nationalisierung der Religion*, op. cit., pp. 89–99. Klaus Buchenau, "Svetosavlje und Pravoslavije: Nationales und Universales in der serbischen Orthodoxie," in: *Nationalisierung der Religion*, op. cit., pp. 203–232.

take into consideration the type of discourse from which the historical artefact became the very object: Is this a theological, a political, an aesthetic or a historical discourse? Each one of these discourses represents a different attempt to instrumentalise the historical object for the purpose of the discourse itself. The central concern of the discourse, however, is to determine the *being* of a thing – to obtain interpretational sovereignty. Benjamin understood his essay as a contribution to the discourse of aesthetics. Therefore, he chose the term “Aura” to describe a certain meaning of the historical object which in his text is inextricably linked to its impact. The question we have to ask in the close examination of the questionable discourses, therefore, is not concerned with the abstract *reality* of the *object* (a question of belief rather than scholarship) but with the concrete *reality* of the discourse, of which the historical artefact became the object. The *being* of the very object, be it a consecrated host, a sacred building, a sculpture, a drawing or a national flag, and besides its material qualities, depends on the individual alone.<sup>25</sup> However, the term “Aura” seems useful for my subject because of its universal adaptability. The “auratisation” of Greek works of art as well as the nationalisation of religious objects after all took and takes place not necessarily under religious auspices. Not every “auratic” object, therefore, is a sacred or sacralised object. Nevertheless, I understand Benjamin’s “Aura” as a certain form of meaning. The central concern of my paper is to show, on the basis of some sound examples, that the “Aura” of an object is not destroyed, but rather emerges through the process of its reproduction. Therefore, the focus lies primarily on the reproduction of the object and only secondarily on the term “Aura,” which is simply inextricably linked to the term of reproduction in Benjamin’s essay.

### Late Balkan Legacies: “Auratisations” of Religious Objects

When Serbian nationalism reached a new peak after the death of the Yugoslavian president Josip Broz Tito in 1980, the monasteries of Kosovo were instrumentalised as Serbian heritage and associated with the “Aura” of the suffering of Serbian Christians with the aim to reinforce Serbian claims on Kosovo. The Serbian historian and theologian Dimitrije Bogdanović, a member of the prestigious Serbian Academy of Science

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<sup>25</sup> Jochen Hörisch, *Brot und Wein*, Frankfurt am Main 1992, p. 44. Also: U. Eco, *Zeichen*, op. cit., p. 135, and U. Volli, *Semiotik*, op. cit., p. 28.

and Arts (SANU), wrote in his *Knjiga o Kosovu* (Book about Kosovo)<sup>26</sup> in 1986 that in order for the construction of the Sinan Pasha Mosque in the centre of the city of Prizren in the South of Kosovo the nearby Monastery of the Holy Archangels was destroyed at the beginning of the sixteenth century by the Ottoman dignitary Sinan Pasha.<sup>27</sup>

The examination of the respective historical sources which refer to the monastery and the mosque shows that Bogdanović's claim is based only on two folk legends that were both passed down for centuries – a scientific foundation for his claim does not exist.<sup>28</sup> The myth of the destruction of the monastery for the building of the mosque from the monastery's stones has been reproduced so often that it is still taken as a fact. The ethnic Albanian historian Hasan Kaleši wrote in 1972 that: "Many of our scientists and some journalists claim, referring to a legend, that he [Sinan Pasha] destroyed the monastery and built in its place and from its stones the mosque."<sup>29</sup>

According to this legend, the "Aura" of destroyed former Serbian glory was attributed to the monastery. The Sinan Pasha Mosque, however,

26 Dimitrije Bogdanović, *Knjiga o Kosovu*, Beograd 1986. I refer to the German translation of the text published in Zurich the same year.

27 Ibidem, p. 56.

28 Bogdanović himself refers to: M. Kin., "Arhandeli Sv.," in: *Enciklopedija likovnih umjetnosti*, ed. Leksikografski Zavod FNRJ, vol. 1, Zagreb 1959/1960, pp. 131-132, and Vasilije Marković, *Pravoslavno monaštvo i manastiri u srednjevekovnoj Srbiji*, Sremski Karlovci 1920, p. 104-106. Neither in the first nor the second source Bogdanović's claim is approved. Misinterpretation, therefore, is a friendly term for Bogdanović's obvious forgery of sources. Other considerable sources do not confirm Bogdanović's depiction of history either. The first adaption of popular legends about the Monastery consists in: Panta Srečković, *Sinan Paša*, Belgrad 1865. Another source referring to popular tales about the Monastery collected around 1940 by Petar Kostić, a Serbian peasant of Prizren, is: Slobodan Nenadović, "Dušanova Zadužbina Manastir Svetih Arhandela kod Prizrena," in: *Spomenik*, ed. Srpska Akademia Nauka i Umetnosti, vol. cxvi, Beograd 1967, p. 10. Considerable sources which draw upon either Srečković or the collections of Petar Kostić are: Ivan Stepanović Jastrebov, *Podatci istoriju Srpske Crkve iz Putničkog zapisnika*, Beograd 1879, and idem, "Stara Srbija i Albanija," in: *Spomenik*, ed. Srpska Kraljevska Akademija, vol. xli, II, Beograd 1904. Bogdanović's popular depiction is contradicted already by: Radoslav M. Grujić, "Otkopavanje Svetih Arhandela kod Prizrena," in: *Glasnik Srpskog naučnog društva*, ed. idem, vol. III, Skopje 1928. The legendary character of this depiction was addressed for the first time by: Hasan Kaleši, *Najstariji vakufski dokumenti u Jugoslaviji na arapskom jeziku*, Priština 1972.

29 H. Kaleši, *Najstariji vakufski dokumenti*, op. cit., p. 263.

became a symbol of Ottoman oppression – as well as most of the historical mosques in the territory of Serbia and Kosovo.<sup>30</sup>

In 1919, immediately after the second occupation of Kosovo by Serbian troops, the Serbian government, in return, began to tear down the mosque with the aim of rebuilding the Monastery of the Holy Archangels from its stones. The engineer, Ivan Vangelov, who was instructed to demolish the mosque, could only finish off the portico before he was apparently killed by the notable Prizren peasant Haxhi Rrustem Shporta during a violent riot caused by the destruction of the mosque.<sup>31</sup>

Until the 1990s, the ruined monastery existed on the fringes of public awareness. However, as the monasteries of Kosovo were reproduced in Serbian publications in the 1980s and 1990s as birthplaces of Serbian culture, the Serbian Orthodox Church rediscovered the remains of the monastery which had served the local youth until then as a football pitch. Although the monastery had been abandoned for at least 540 years, Serbian monks resettled in its ruins in the 1990s immediately before the outbreak of the war in Kosovo.

In March 2004, an Albanian crowd, outraged by a rumour that Serbs had drowned three Albanian kids in the river Ibar in the north of Kosovo, stormed the site of the former monastery. An argument can be made that this was part of a well-planned and organised eradication of some selected Serbian symbols (mostly monasteries and churches) in Kosovo during 17 and 18 March 2004 by Albanian nationalists. A unit of the German Federal Forces stationed at the site was unable to protect it. The monks and soldiers were evacuated; the facilities erected during the resettlement of the monastery in the 1990s were burned down by the crowd.

The Serbian Orthodox Church later reported in its publications that Albanian terrorists had burned down the medieval Monastery [sic] of

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30 I am not pretending that Dimitrije Bogdanović represents Serbian History (of Art) in general but a certain generation of Serbian nationalist propagandists in disguise as historians during one of several historical periods when the Serbian Academy of Science and Arts acted alongside the Serbian Orthodox Church (SPC) as the leading promoter of Serbian national chauvinism. Compare: Nenad Stefanov, *Wissenschaft als nationaler Beruf*, Wiesbaden 2011. Dimitrije Bogdanović actively presented himself as both: theologian of the SPC and member of the SANU.

31 Muhamed Shukriu, *Prizren i Lashtë*, Prizren 2001, p. 298.

the Holy Archangels. The monastery was reproduced as a Serbian Golgotha and was furnished with the "Aura" of eternal Serbian sacrifice.<sup>32</sup>

For the European public, who had never heard of the Monastery of the Holy Archangels before, it sufficed to recognise the words "Medieval," "Monastery," "Destroyed" and "Albanians" combined in one sentence to reproduced the alleged "barbarian mentality" of the Albanians. The German art historian Friedbert Ficker said in an interview with the Serbian daily *Politika* in March 2004 that even the Turks respected the sacred sites of the Serbs<sup>33</sup> – unlike the Albanians today. One of his Italian colleagues stated that although Islamic sites had obviously been destroyed before during the war in Kosovo, the Christian heritage of the region had undoubtedly to be considered as more important.<sup>34</sup>

With the help of the German Federal Forces, the residential building of the monks was re-erected in another place, and the site literally became a fortress. Since then, the site – as well as other Orthodox religious sites in Kosovo – has *de facto* become a Serbian enclave.

#### War on Heritage: The "Aura" of Dubrovnik

On 16 December 1991, the Serbian journalist *Danica Đurđević* wrote in the Serbian daily *Politika*:

The principal point of the scenario of the propaganda war is pretty clear: by the use of many tricks, disinformation, panic, and dramatisation, besides the exaggeration of the worth of their own monuments of culture and the neglect of the Serbian ones [...] a war drama has

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32 *Holy Archangels Monastery (Fourteenth Century), Looted and Burned in the Presence of German Soldiers Who Failed to Protect It.* (The Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church, *Memorandum on Kosovo and Metohija*, Belgrad 2003 (2004), p. 122.) *Holy Archangels Monastery (Fourteenth Century), Robbed and Torched in the Presence of German KFOR Troops Who Failed to Protect It.* (Vojin V. Ančić, *Crucified Kosovo and Metohija / The Holy Serbian Land*, Belgrad 2007, p. 76.)

33 D. Radović, "Nedela neprijateljstva culture" (One week of hostilities against culture), in: *Politika*, 31 March 2004, p. B4.

34 "Fra 1998 e 1999 numerose sono state le distruzioni di monumenti tanto cristiani quanto islamici, tanto serbi quanto albanesi. Posto che il rispetto del passato non deve privilegiare l'una o l'altra 'etnia' o confessione non v'è tuttavia dubbio che il patrimonio 'artistico' del passato serbo sia stato assai più importante e, soprattutto, assai più danneggiato di quello albanese." (Valentino Pace, "Kosovo: Passato, presente e futuro dei suoi monumenti cristiani in pericolo," *Kunstchronik / Monatsschrift für Kunstwissenschaft und Denkmalpflege* 12 (2004), pp. 561-568, here p. 562.)

been staged to the world's public in which, besides people, a great culture has been killed, thousands of churches, monasteries, old city centres, everything that, especially western people, value has disappeared. [...] In this way old Dubrovnik was killed in the Croatian and world's media several times.<sup>35</sup>

After July 1991, Croatia was afflicted by a gory war. Slavonian Vukovar fell on 18 November after three months of persistent shelling. After October, Dubrovnik, too, lay under fire from the Serbian forces. The only effective "weapon" of militarily inferior Croatia until then had consisted of its media which was distributed in the United States, Germany and other European countries by the Croatian diaspora.

After about September 1991 the two major Croatian daily newspapers, *Vjesnik* and *Vecernji List* (Evening Paper), began to repeatedly report on the destruction of heritage. On 13 September 1991, a supplement to the *Vjesnik* named *Panorama*, which was solely dedicated to the destruction of heritage, was published for the first time. The heritage on Croatian territory, which beyond any question underwent several forms of destruction, was specifically instrumentalised in the Croatian reporting of the war.

Old myths of Croatia as a European stronghold of Christianity, the *Antemurale Christianitatis*,<sup>36</sup> were reproduced. On 21 September, *Vjesnik* published an open letter from Croatia's Ministry of Education to the world's public, international ambassadors and UNESCO. The main subject of this open letter was the destruction of heritage in Croatia. By the end of September, many newspaper articles had subsequently reported on the destruction of heritage, too.

Finally, on 22 September 1991, the first article appeared in the American daily *The New York Times* on the subject of the destruction of heritage in Croatia. Under the heading "The Sacking of Croatia" it said: "Destruction on this scale has no precedent in Europe since Nazi Germany's

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35 Danica Đurđević, "Hrvatski tisak protiv srpskih spomenika kulture u Hrvatskoj / Neistine kao istine" (Croatian press against Serbian cultural monuments in Croatia / Untruth as truth), in: *Politika*, 16 December 1991, p. 12.

36 For the myth of the *Antemurale Christianitatis* in Croatian political imagery see: Ivo Žanić, "Nationale Symbole zwischen Mythos und Propaganda: Das politische Imaginarium der kroatischen Nationalgeschichte," in: *Der Jugoslawien-Krieg: Handbuch zu Vorgeschichte, Verlauf und Konsequenzen*, ed. Dunja Melčić, Wiesbaden 2007, pp. 286-292, here p. 287.

vengeful 'Baedeker' raids on English cathedral cities in 1942, and the Allied firebombing of Dresden."<sup>37</sup>

Solidarity statements from all over the world followed. The fate of Croatian heritage was their first concern. Ugo Bergamo, at that time the mayor of Venice, and the Minister for Ecology and Urban Planning of Croatia agreed on a joint appeal to the world's public, which pleaded for the end of the destruction of heritage.<sup>38</sup> The editors of *Vjesnik* even sent a delegation with images of destroyed heritage to the World Monument Foundation in New York which reportedly spread the word regarding the fate of Croatian heritage in its network which included several newspapers such as *The Wall Street Journal*.<sup>39</sup>

On 1 October 1991, Serbian units began to shell Dubrovnik. The British journalist, Robert Bevan, commented on the incident: "The shelling of Dubrovnik was an enormous mistake for Serb propagandists." London's *Daily Telegraph* was headed: "Like the Barbarian Hordes advancing on Rome, the Federal Forces have abandoned all restraint."<sup>40</sup> Dubrovnik, it was reported in the Croatian media in turn, was threatened by the latest horde of European barbarians. The Balkan conquerors were intimidating Europe as the Turks had in their time.<sup>41</sup>

The destruction of the medieval city of Dubrovnik was reproduced in different media worldwide. With this reproduction, the city was provided with an "Aura" that hardly anybody could miss. Dubrovnik appeared as a symbol of occidental Christian culture, as a city and a fortress at the frontier of civilisation, threatened by a barbaric enemy from the east.

On 28 November, two UNESCO observers, the Canadian Colin Kaiser and the Frenchman Bruno Carnez, arrived in Dubrovnik. Bernard Kouchner, back then the French Minister for Human Rights, spent ten

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37 "The Sacking of Croatia," in: *The New York Times*, 22 September 1991, <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/09/22/opinion/the-sacking-of-croatia.html?scp=1&sq=Croatia&st=nyt> (accessed: 11 September 2012).

38 Mirjana Dugandžija and Branka Džebić, "Obrana hrvatskog identiteta" (The defense of Croatian identity), in: *Vjesnik* (Zagreb edition), 24 September 1991, p. 11.

39 Maja Razović, "160 bogalja (160 Cripples)," in: *Vjesnik Panorama "Hrvatska: Razaranje Kulturne Baštine"*, 27 September 1991, p. 7.

40 Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory / Architecture at War*, London 2006, p. 86.

41 Suad Ahmetović, "Barbari protiv sv. Vlaha (Barbarians against Saint Vlah)," in: *Vjesnik*, 3 October 1991, p. 3, and "Novovjeki Huni (Contemporary Huns)," in: *Vjesnik*, 3 October 1991, p. 10.



days in the city during the shelling of Dubrovnik. The human tragedy of Vukovar did not attract a fraction of the public attention that the fate of Dubrovnik and its heritage did. The human tragedy of the war was linked to the "Aura" of the strange and unknown, the fate of heritage in turn to the "Aura" of the common and the familiar.

However, Serbian political propaganda also instrumentalised Dubrovnik. On 27 November 1991 – at the peak of the shelling of Dubrovnik – the Serbian Embassy, the permanent representation of Yugoslavia at UNESCO and the Yugoslavian Cultural Center were invited to a bizarre screening at the UNESCO palace in Paris. On the programme was Lordan Zafranović's *Okupacija u 26 slika* (Occupation in 26 images). The subject of the movie was the occupation of Dubrovnik by Croatian *Ustaše* during the Second World War and the crimes they committed during that period. The Serbian justification of the shelling of Dubrovnik in 1991 in turn was the alleged occupation of the city by irregular Croatian troops frequently designated as *Ustaše* in the Serbian media.

#### **A Lack of "Aura": Muslim Heritage in the Yugoslav Wars**

Unfortunately, the Bosnian Muslims did not have such an influential lobby among its Western diaspora. Moreover, the Bosnian Islamic heritage was neither known nor particularly valued in Europe and in overseas countries influenced by Christian culture.

The isolated geographic position of Bosnia and Herzegovina, its mostly unknown history in the Western World, the complicated political, social and religious relations and not least the European anti-Islamic *resentiment* grown and cultivated since the crusades in the Middle Ages, consolidated during the Spanish *Reconquista* and the Ottoman Wars and finally the establishment not only of national but also of confessional borders between the *Orient* and *Occident*, the *East* and the *West*, during the period of the formation of modern nation states were the essential pre-conditions for the Western ignorance towards that region during the war from 1992–1995. The unprecedented eradication of Islamic heritage from Bosnian *Ahinci* to *Zvornik* by Serbian and later Croatian Forces until the tragedy of Sarajevo did not provoke Western appeals of solidarity as was the case for Dubrovnik.

Although the second highest representative of the *Islamska Zajednica* (Islamic Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina), *Naibu-Reis al Ulema* Mustafa Ceric, also referred to Europe, in 1993, when he said that with the war

against the heritage of the Bosnian Muslims, Europe is attacked as well,<sup>42</sup> his appeal for the protection of that heritage was not heard by European and overseas powers.

It is significant that it was a secular and not a sacred building – the Old Bridge in Mostar – which later became the symbol for the destruction of heritage in Bosnia and Herzegovina.<sup>43</sup> The names of the destroyed Bosnian mosques however are barely known. The reason is remarkably simple – they have not been reproduced in the media. According to the Islamic Society of Bosnia and Herzegovina 1,347 religious objects (among them 614 mosques) were destroyed by Serbian and Croatian forces from 1992–1995.<sup>44</sup> Despite the excellent and dedicated work of the Canadian Colin Kaiser, who was amongst the first to evaluate the destruction of heritage in Croatia and Bosnia,<sup>45</sup> the actual extent of destruction has never been evaluated comprehensively by independent institutions, neither in respect of quantity nor of quality.

The same applies for the 218 mosques destroyed by Serbian forces in Kosovo, mostly in 1998.<sup>46</sup> A heritage-specialist at Harvard University, András Riedlmayer, conducted his own field research in Kosovo immediately after the end of the war in 1999, because UNESCO did not plan

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42 Mustafa Cerić, "U Bosni umire Evropa (In Bosnia dies Europe)," in: *Vjesnik* (Interview), 1 June 1993, p. 6.

43 *Stari Most* was destroyed on 9 November 1993. Among others, the Croatian General Slobodan Praljak was accused of the destruction of the Old Bridge. *The International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia* (ICTY) convicted Praljak on 29 May 2013 to 20 years imprisonment. The destruction of the Old Bridge was emphasised in the Judgment of the ICTY, [http://www.icty.org/x/cases/prlic/tjug/en/130529\\_summary\\_en.pdf](http://www.icty.org/x/cases/prlic/tjug/en/130529_summary_en.pdf) (accessed: 31 May 2013).

44 Muharem Omerđić, *Prilozi Izučavanju Genocida nad Bošnjacima (1992–1995)* (Contribution to the studies of the genocide of the Bosniaks (1992–1995)), Sarajevo 1999. "Bosniaks" is a term used for the Muslim Population of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

45 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, ed., *Information Report on the Destruction by War of the Cultural Heritage in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina* (1–10), Strasbourg 1993–1997.

46 *Bashkësia Islame e Kosovës*, ed., *Barbaria Serbe ndaj Monumenteve Islame në Kosovë (Shkurt '98 - Qershor '99)* (Serbian Barbarities against Islamic Monuments in Kosovo (February '98 - June '99)), Prishtina 2000.

studies of that kind<sup>47</sup> and to my knowledge has not yet conducted such studies that are particularly worth mentioning.<sup>48</sup>

Neither was the heritage of the Muslims from Bosnia nor those of the Muslims from Kosovo "auratic" in the eyes of Western observers. The Islamic heritage of the Balkan Peninsula had and barely has any meaning in the so-called Occident shaped by Christian belief and culture. The destruction of this heritage has been carried out mostly unnoticed in the so-called West.

47 Andrés J. Riedlmayer, "Crimes of War, Crimes of Peace: Destruction of Libraries during and after the Balkan Wars of the 1990s," in: *Library Trends* 56(1) (2007), pp. 107-132, here p. 124.

48 A study of the UNESCO-office in Venice on cultural heritage in Kosovo from 2003 (four years after the end of the war) mentions only 13 Islamic architectural sites of which six were destroyed or heavily damaged during the war in 1998-1999. All six objects are mosques. That accounts for 2.75 per cent of the total number of destroyed mosques in Kosovo. The study is based on field visits of UNESCO representatives and specialists which were conducted from 13 to 17 March 2003. Forty-two sites were visited; the time spent for research at each of the different sites was barely one hour (UNESCO, ed., *Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe: Kosovo*, Venice 2003). Another UNESCO study was a reaction to the anti-Serbian riots in Kosovo on 17 and 18 March 2004. This study deals with 26 Orthodox sites and one museum in Prishtina/Priština. Islamic sites are not mentioned at all (UNESCO, ed., *Cultural Heritage in South-East Europe: Kosovo*, Venice 2004).